

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 21, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 25—The Manitoba Evidence Amendment Act (Scheduling of Criminal Organizations)

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Innovation, Energy and Mines, that Bill 25, The Manitoba Evidence Amendment Act (Scheduling of Criminal Organizations); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la preuve au Manitoba (établissement d'une liste d'organisations criminelles), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, this bill would amend The Manitoba Evidence Act by creating a process to place a group on a schedule of criminal organizations. When a group is placed on the schedule, it's conclusive proof in any proceeding under provincial law that the group is a criminal organization. Manitoba leads the country in working within its constitutional powers to assist in the fight against organized crime and this bill is another important step. Thank you.

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

PETITIONS

Multiple Myeloma Treatments

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Health Canada has approved the use of Revlimid for patients with multiple myeloma, a rare, progressive and fatal blood cancer.

Revlimid is a vital new treatment that must be accessible to all patients in Manitoba for this life-threatening cancer of the blood cells.

Multiple myeloma is treatable, and new, innovative therapies like Revlimid can extend survival and enhance quality of life for the estimated 2,100 Canadians diagnosed annually.

The provinces of Ontario, Québec, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Alberta have already listed this drug on their respective pharmacare formularies.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the provincial government consider immediately providing Revlimid as a choice to patients with multiple myeloma and their health-care providers in Manitoba through public funding.

This petition is signed by N. Peters, R. Graham, B. Poustie and many, many others.

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

Education Funding

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Historically, the Province of Manitoba has received funding for education by the assessment of property that generates taxes. This unfair tax is only applied to select property owners in certain areas and confines, including but not limited to commercial property owners.

Property-based school tax is becoming an ever-increasing burden without acknowledging the commercial property owner's income or owner's ability to pay.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth consider removing education funding from—by school tax or education levies from all property in Manitoba, including commercial property.

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth consider finding a more equitable method of funding education, such as general revenue, following the constitutional funding of education by the Province of Manitoba.

And this petition is signed by K. Roseman, M. Falce and D. Mason and many, many more fine Manitobans.

PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north a priority project in order to help protect the safety of the motorists and pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by M. Wollmann, J. Hofer, E. Wollmann and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Ophthalmology Services—Swan River

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley

region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health has told the Town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program; however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

This is signed by T. Highmoor, L. Highmoor, M. Doucette and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Medical Clinic in Weston and Brooklands Area

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:

Walk-in medical clinics provide a valuable health-care service.

The closure of the Westbrook Medical Clinic has left both Weston and Brooklands without a community-based medical clinic.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider how important it is to have a medical clinic located in the Weston-Brooklands area.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by L. Babiak, M. Stephenson and R. Squires and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

* (13:40)

Bipole III

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct its next high-voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba, a decision for which the NDP government has not been able to provide any logical justification.

Since this will cost Manitoba ratepayers at least \$640 million more than an east-side route, and given that the Province of Manitoba is facing its largest deficit on record, the burden of this extra cost could not come at a worse time.

Between 2002 and 2009, electricity rates increased by 16 percent, and Manitoba Hydro has filed a request for further rate increases totalling 6 percent over the next two years.

A western Bipole III route will invariably lead to more rate increases.

In addition to becoming cheaper, an east-side route would be hundreds of kilometres shorter and would be more reliable than a west-side route.

West-side residents have not been adequately consulted and have identified serious concerns with the proposed line.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the cheaper, shorter and more logical east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, to save ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars during these challenging economic times.

This, Mr. Speaker, is signed by P. Shelvey, D. McFadden, K. Vinthers and many, many other very, very concerned Manitobans.

Whiteshell Provincial Park–Lagoons

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial parks were established to protect our natural resources and the environment for future generations.

In July 2009, the lagoons in the vicinity of Dorothy Lake and Otter Falls in the Whiteshell Provincial Park overflowed, creating concerns that untreated sewage made its way into the Winnipeg River system and ultimately into Lake Winnipeg.

In addition, emergency discharges had to be undertaken at lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park four times in 2005, once in 2007 and once in April 2009.

Concerned stakeholders in the Whiteshell Provincial Park have repeatedly asked the government—the provincial government to develop plans to address the shortcomings with the park's lagoons and to ensure the environment is protected, but the plans have not materialized.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider acknowledging that more timely action should have been taken to address the shortcomings with the lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park in order to protect the environment.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately developing short- and long-term strategies to address the shortcomings with lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park and to consider implementing them as soon as possible.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by M. Pogorzelec, N. Pogorzelec, S. Pogorzelec and many, many others.

Southwood Golf and Country Club

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

WHEREAS the Southwood Golf and Country Club was continued as a corporation pursuant to Southwood Golf and Country Club incorporation act (RSM 1990, circuit 188).

AND WHEREAS it is desirable to make certain amendments to the act,

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

TO amend the Southwood Golf and Country Club Incorporation Act:

- (1) a) to restate the terms and conditions applicable to the issue, redemption and holding of shares in the capital stock of the club and to calls on such capital stock;
- b) to clarify the purpose of the club;
- c) to provide for the application of The Corporations Act to the club; and
- d) to make other incidental changes to the act.

Dated at Manitoba, this 15th day of March, 2010.

Southwood Golf and Country Club
101 Markham Road
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3T 5V2

President, Bill Reid

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Third Report

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts—

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions:

- March 24, 2010
- April 20, 2010

Matters under Consideration

- Auditor General's Report—Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations—A Review dated March 2009

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the March 24, 2010 meeting:

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mrs. DRIEDGER
- Mr. JHA
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Ms. SELBY
- Mrs. STEFANSON
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK

Committee Membership for the April 20, 2010 meeting:

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRICK
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mrs. DRIEDGER
- Mr. JHA
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Ms. SELBY
- Mrs. STEFANSON
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK

Officials Speaking on the Record

Officials speaking on the record at the March 24, 2010 meeting:

- Carol Bellringer, Auditor General
- Hon. Mr. ASHTON
- Mr. Doug McNeil, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation
- Hon. Mr. SWAN
- Mr. Jeff Schnoor, Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General
- Hon. Mr. MACKINTOSH
- Mr. Grant Doak, Acting Deputy Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs

Officials speaking on the record at the April 20, 2010 meeting:

- Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS
- Ms. Joy Cramer, Deputy Minister of Housing & Community Development
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK
- Mr. Hugh Eliasson, Deputy Minister of Finance

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- *Auditor General's Report—Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations—A Review dated March 2009*

Mr. Derkach: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): I'm pleased to table the 2010-2011 Departmental and Expenditure Estimates for Manitoba Education.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I'm pleased to table the 2010-2011 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Department of Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from St. Claude School, we have 34 grade 5 and 6 students under the direction of Ms. Karen VanDynes, and this school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Probation Breaches Government Policy Review

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Just over two years ago, Antonio Lanzellotti, at the age of 55, lost his life in the most violent way imaginable. On the night he was killed, Mr. Lanzellotti was at work supporting his family driving a cab. His life was taken when his cab was demolished by a speeding stolen SUV. Behind the wheel of that speeding SUV was a convicted car thief.

Only seven weeks earlier, Mr. Speaker, this young offender had been sentenced for earlier crimes of car theft, drug offences and breaches of court orders. With the knowledge of subsequent breaches of court orders that followed that sentence seven weeks earlier, this young offender was allowed to remain free. On the night of March the 28th, he was

free to drive the stolen SUV that killed Mr. Lanzellotti.

And will the Premier today acknowledge that his government could have prevented this tragedy but failed to do so?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, this clearly was a tragedy, one that we believe should not be repeated, and we express our condolences again to the family, and we, more importantly, want to put in place practices that will manage risk in such a way that these kinds of incidents don't happen again.

The department has reviewed their risk management practices for probation. They've brought in a new system that puts additional resources on what are considered to be high-risk cases, and this will ensure additional supervision of individuals that could undertake these kinds of activities to the detriment of public safety and security. And the minister and I have discussed going beyond these additional risk management practices to seeing what additional measures could be taken.

But I am pleased the department has moved on this in the last year and have put in place an approach to managing probation that moves beyond the same level of monitoring for all different types of cases to a form of monitoring that zeroes in on high-risk cases.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the issue here was not one that there were insufficient probation officers. The probation officer was aware of the subsequent breaches of court orders that took place in the seven-week period between the original sentencing for the crimes that this person was convicted of and the night of this tragedy. He was under new court orders after having been convicted for breaching previous court orders and having been convicted for auto theft and drug-related crimes. They were aware—the department was aware that he was breaching court orders over that seven-week period and yet failed to take any action to enforce those orders.

Mr. Speaker, they can talk all they want about spending money, providing resources, doing all of these other things that he's now promising to do. But the reality is it was their policy, a policy of neglect that resulted—it was their policy, a policy of neglecting these situations and failing to enforce court orders that directly led to this very, very sad and significant tragedy.

* (13:50)

Will he today apologize to the family, and will he indicate why it is that they failed to enforce these orders and how we can be assured that it won't happen again?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the old practices under which this incident occurred have been changed. The department now follows a new risk management approach where they allocate additional, more intensive resources to cases that are considered to be high risk, and—high risk to the public security and to the risk of citizens of Manitoba.

They have taken very seriously this incident. They have identified a better approach to managing probation—court-based probation orders. They have followed what is considered to be best practices around the world in other jurisdictions in identifying this new system that they have put in place. It has been in place just shy of a year now, and this system is intended to put resources to individuals that pose an additional risk to the public to ensure that they get more serious supervision, more serious monitoring and more serious alternative courses of action that can be taken with them in order to prevent these kinds of tragedies from occurring again.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, the trouble, Mr. Speaker, is that there was a similar tragedy which occurred in the spring of 2007—a similar tragedy in the spring of 2007.

This terrible tragedy involving Mr. Lanzellotti took place a year later, and now, Mr. Speaker, that there are news reports of what happened, the government is claiming to have made changes. They had the opportunity to make changes prior to this tragedy happening.

How can we take them at their word when they've made similar promises over the last 11 years and have yet to follow through on a single one of them, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, in 2004 the government brought in an auto theft risk and mitigation strategy. That strategy has resulted in a 75 percent reduction in auto thefts inside of Manitoba. That strategy has been reviewed in the literature and across the country, and it's been considered one of the most effective strategies for suppressing auto theft, for providing intensive supervision of young people involved in auto theft and providing programming that allows people to be moved into other activities and other lifestyles. Consequences are there, serious monitoring is there and alternatives are there. That

strategy started in 2004 and has made significant progress.

This incident builds on that experience in the sense that additional probation risk management methodologies have been put in place to strengthen the Auto Theft Suppression Strategy to ensure that probation resources are concentrated on those individuals that are of a particular high risk to the public. It's based on research and best practices throughout the entire corrections system in North America.

Probation Breaches Government Policy Review

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, this is like a nightmare that repeats itself over and over again.

Almost every time there's a serious violent incidence in Winnipeg, it's a result of somebody who had a court order. Criminals in Manitoba know that these court orders under this government are nothing but a joke. They scoff at them because they know the minister doesn't take them seriously.

If in Manitoba we had a government that took court orders seriously, this 14-year-old, who was breaching his orders, might have been sitting in a jail cell instead of racing down Portage Avenue in a stolen vehicle, and Mr. Lanzellotti might be alive today for his family.

Why has this Minister of Justice allowed court orders to become a laughingstock in the criminal justice system here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Certainly, we do take the issue of car theft and crime very seriously.

In this particular case, I can't speak about it. The member opposite knows I can't speak of a particular case before the courts.

There is no question that auto theft has been a major concern in this province, and we have taken major steps.

Questions that I think all Canadians need to ask is why young offenders, who are convicted of what I think all of us in this House would agree are serious and violent offences, are, then, under the terms of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, released back into the community. And frankly, I don't have the answer for that. I don't believe the member for Steinbach has the answer for that.

The federal government has indicated they are prepared to open up that act. We are hoping that will improve the situation for all provinces in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: Antonio Lanzellotti is dead, and this minister blames the federal government. That is the response that he gives to the family and to other victims.

Mr. Speaker, the 14-year-old who killed this individual is classified as high risk, but his court breaches were never reported to police officers because the probation officer said that it was common practice in the Department of Justice, under this NDP government, not to report these offences, these breaches, even if there was numerous of them, even if they were high-risk offenders. Time and time again, we see Manitobans who are victimized by individuals who are breaching their court orders.

I want to ask the minister, Mr. Speaker: Would he be surprised that criminals ignore their court orders when he has been ignoring those court orders as well?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, let me repeat, the young offenders who are released into the community by judges who follow the Youth Criminal Justice Act, they are released into the community and then Probation Services picks up the pieces to provide the monitoring of those individuals. Anytime individuals, who may have committed a serious or violent crime, are into the community, there is a risk. Our Probation Services officers actually do a very good job of using their judgment, using their professional experience and using policies to manage that risk.

And it's disappointing, actually, the member for Steinbach would criticize the Probation Services officials. I know he's gone on record criticizing the police. He's gone on record criticizing Crown attorneys. We believe in supporting those groups, but as the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has indicated, we will be looking at best practices across Manitoba. If further improvements can be made, we will make them.

Mr. Goertzen: Let there be no mistake, I am critical of this minister and his government and his predecessors for not taking this issue seriously.

We have raised in this House, and many others across Manitoba have raised the issue of court orders which were not being enforced. Time and time again, Manitobans have been put at risk. When an

individual violates a court order, it's a clear warning that that individual is not going to obey by the law. It's a clear warning that law-biding citizens in Winnipeg and Manitoba are at risk.

I want to ask this Minister of Justice: Will he at least acknowledge today that he was not doing his duty, or his predecessor's, by ensuring there was a strict policy in place so that court orders would be enforced? And, will he tell Manitobans today, will he be transparent, how many people are out there today who have violated their court orders, who are free on the streets of Winnipeg in Manitoba?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, and if the member had listened to the Premier's answers in the first set of questions, he would have heard that in the past year Manitoba Justice has implemented a new risk assessment system. As the Premier indicated, where there are higher risk individuals, there will be more resources put to ensuring compliance. The job of probation officers is to ensure compliance with court orders. We want to continue giving them the tools to do so.

And it is interesting that every time we bring in a budget that adds more resources to our justice system, the member for Steinbach and the Conservatives and the Liberals vote against it, time and time again, Mr. Speaker.

Probation Breaches Government Policy Review

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, what a disgrace of an answer that is. There was an officer in place who knew that the breaches were taking place, and they were following NDP policy. He ought to apologize for playing politics with this very serious issue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to—I just want to ask the Premier if he will today acknowledge responsibility for the fact that over and over and over again, through the 11 years of this NDP government, we see this story playing itself over again. I want him to indicate today: Why should anybody believe them today when they say they care about this issue, when all they do is come into this House, blame the federal government, try to blame the opposition, blame everybody but themselves, the people who are truly responsible for the mismanagement of our justice system?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, in 2004, this government brought in an auto-theft suppression strategy, which has resulted

in a 75 percent reduction in auto theft in this province. It had escalated throughout the entire '90s. The strategy brought in in 2004 has seen a 75 percent decline in auto thefts. That is this government taking responsibility to put resources in place that will make a difference for public security for Manitobans.

* (14:00)

In addition, after this incident occurred that was—we are discussing today, the Department of Justice brought in an additional evidence-based approach to probation management based on best practices. It has been implemented in the last year. It adds additional resources and concentrates resources on those cases, through validated research, which are at—indicate being of a high-risk nature to public security and safety. Resources are now being put to those types of individuals to ensure that there is an absolute minimization of these types of incidents.

Mr. McFadyen: Minimization of these types of incidents? Mr. Speaker, this is not acceptable from a government that for 11 years has had a policy of announcements and news conferences and a failure to follow up with real action to protect Manitobans.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, in this case is that this individual had been convicted only seven weeks earlier of crimes involving auto theft, drug offences and breaches of prior court orders. The new court orders were put into place. He was breaching them not for the first time, but based on new court orders that were in place because of earlier breaches of orders that had been in place.

This is a warning to the department. It's a warning to the justice system that this person has no regard for the law. They have no desire to comply.

Why didn't they heed those warnings? Why didn't they act to protect Mr. Lanzellotti?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, that's the point I've been making, is the Auto Theft Suppression Strategy has focussed on reducing these types of very serious incidents that put the public at risk. The strategy, since 2004, has shown very strong results, a 75 percent reduction in auto theft. It has been looked at and widely emulated in other jurisdictions in Canada because of the success achieved here. That strategy not only focusses on suppression and consequences, it also focusses on moving those individuals that are involved in auto theft into other lines of activity which are legal, publicly safe and

publicly secure. So it's a comprehensive strategy which puts very intensive resources onto individuals engaged in this kind of activity.

In addition, the department has now reviewed its probation practices and has gone with a best-practice approach based on evidence, based on research in other jurisdictions, and now allocates resources to high-risk individuals to reduce and absolutely minimize these types of incidents in Manitoba.

Mr. McFadyen: He is not at all convincing, Mr. Speaker, and for this reason: For three years the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has been asking them to release the number of people who are currently on the streets today in breach of court orders. They have those numbers. They know how many there are and yet they won't release the numbers. They won't release the numbers because they're trying to hide something. They're trying to cover up the number of people on the streets today who are breaching court orders with the full knowledge of this department, this government and this minister.

Why won't he release the numbers? What are they covering up, Mr. Speaker, and will he guarantee today that they will enforce every breached court order and guarantee the protection of Manitobans who deserve it?

Mr. Selinger: There has been a full public disclosure of the results of the Auto Theft Suppression Strategy. It has generated a 75 percent reduction in auto thefts in Manitoba, which used to have a very poor record. It is now a much improved record, one of the better ones in Canada. That model has been looked at and reviewed. It has received nominations for awards for the work it's done and it has been emulated elsewhere.

Manitoba Justice and officials in this government continue to want to build on that—those positive results, which is why we have adopted a new probation risk management strategy which allocates and places resources on those individuals deemed to be at high risk given their profile, given research that supports that they are at risk of recidivism. Where an individual who is under probation is at risk of recidivism, they will get extra attention, extra attention which will ensure that they comply with court-ordered probation requirements and ensures that they are an absolute minimal risk to public safety and security.

Waste-Water Treatment Facilities Nitrogen Removal

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question and a new topic—on a new topic, Mr. Speaker.

The—we know in the area of justice that they have new, new, new policies all the time, Mr. Speaker, and they've got new, new, new policies which are not convincing to anybody.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of the quality of Lake Winnipeg, which is one of the most important assets in our province today. It provides a livelihood for thousands of Manitobans, it provides a place of recreation for many Manitobans who are cottagers, and it provides an important legacy to the next generation. Lake Winnipeg, according to the scientists, has been declining in quality and in particular, has had significantly increased levels of blue green algae.

Mr. Speaker, with tomorrow being Earth Day, I want to ask the Premier if he can do something for Lake Winnipeg, very concrete and specific today, as well as saving money for the ratepayers of Winnipeg. And will he show some leadership and be decisive and make the decision to take the nitrogen directive out of the order to the City of Winnipeg, clean up Lake Winnipeg and save ratepayers in Winnipeg millions?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, yes, we do believe in doing things to protect Lake Winnipeg, which is why we have introduced septic field rules which they were opposed by the members opposite, which why we have new restrictions on lawn fertilizers, which the members opposite were sceptical about, which is why we were the first in Canada to ban phosphates in detergents because detergents seem to find their way into our natural water systems like the lake. We were the first to do that. And we have committed over \$385 million for water and waste-water upgrades throughout this province. We have expanded the Riparian Tax Credit to protect those forested areas along waterways, rivers and streams, including the lake itself. And we have a wetland protection and restoration initiative and we have a moratorium on hog barns in sensitive areas.

All of these measures are intended to protect the water in Manitoba, are intended to protect Lake

Winnipeg, and most of them have been opposed by the members opposite.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, which is just completely unbelievable. The reality is we've opposed their political measures that aren't based on science and that hurt Manitobans, but we've supported those that are based on science and that are implemented in a responsible way.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, we support the position that's been advanced by Dr. Schindler and many other scientists who have said that nitrogen removal may in fact make the problem in Lake Winnipeg even worse than it already is, in addition to costing an additional \$350 million to the people of Winnipeg through their water rates, which have gone up over the last few years as a result of their policies.

I want to just ask the Premier, who indicated yesterday in Estimates that he's referring the matter back to the CEC, not for the first, not for the second, but for the third time: Rather than playing this bureaucratic game of shuffling back and forth between this government and the CEC, why not just make a decision to do the right thing for Lake Winnipeg?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, because there's one big difference between the members opposite and us. We actually do like to investigate the science and get an informed opinion—and get an informed opinion. *[interjection]* I know that's hard for them to swallow. We would get an informed opinion from the Clean Environment Commission, which reviews all the pertinent and relevant variables that affect the quality of water on Lake Winnipeg: blue-green algae, diversity, other forms of algae, other forms of things that could enter that system that will be toxic and unhealthy, not only for the wildlife diversity within the Lake, but the people that enjoy and benefit from the lake, which is why we have taken these concrete actions that the members have opposed.

And I can tell you that there is scientific controversy on whether nitrogen should be in or out. It is clear that phosphates should be reduced, and then the question is, what's the best way to reduce phosphates? There is a continuing trend all across North America to use biological nutrient removal to reduce phosphates because that is a system of reducing phosphates, which then makes it available for application for the land for the positive role it can play. Member opposite—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, it's a—this is just a repeat of so many other politically guided decisions that aren't grounded in reality or science.

We've got Dr. Schindler and 63 world-renowned scientists all saying don't proceed with nitrogen; it may make the lake worse in addition to costing a lot of money. We all agree on phosphorus, Mr. Speaker, but we've got these 63 renowned scientists presenting an opportunity to clean up the lake, save money for Winnipeggers.

He hasn't been able to name any scientists. Maybe there are some social scientists in the NDP caucus who think it's a good idea, Mr. Speaker, but there are no scientists of water who are saying it's a good idea.

* (14:10)

And I want to ask the Premier why it is that he seems to be so stubborn about not dealing with this issue, Mr. Speaker? Why the stubbornness? Is he getting e-mails from Cape Cod telling him not to proceed in this way or is he going to listen to the scientists?

Mr. Selinger: It's quite obvious the member actually hasn't read any of their documentation and the reports put forward by the Clean Environment Commission, and now he claims he's on the side of science. You actually have to read some of the stuff.

This is what Peter Leavitt said, the Canadian research chair in Environmental Change and Society: Arguments concerning the economic cost to upgrade the waste-water plants are inaccurate and misleading. At present the City of Winnipeg has no means of removing dissolved nutrients from its waste, unlike every other major inland city on the prairies.

Peter Leavitt goes on to say: The cost to upgrade the waste-water treatment plants of the City of Winnipeg are largely fixed by the unavoidable need to meet federal regulation concerning the release of ammonia.

There are other scientists out there that have a different view than the members opposite seem to subscribe to. It is important that those views be brought together. The entire picture on Lake Winnipeg and waste-water treatment needs to be carefully considered to ensure that when we do invest scarce public resources, they get the best results for today and for future generations.

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III Aspen Parkland Impact

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, the proposed Bipole III will pass through the widest band of aspen parkland in Manitoba. The aspen parkland is home to a huge range of species, and due to rapid regrowth, this ecosystem is seen as one of the best carbon sinks in the province.

I ask the minister: Why has this NDP government completely ignored the aspen parkland region of Manitoba in ordering the route of Bipole III?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, you know the members opposite just keep thinking that they have no respect for what research tells us. They have no respect for what Farlinger has said.

And I want to put on the record that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) was wrong in fact, and he has received a letter where it says: I want to thank you for an interest in our intact forest—boreal forest mapping work. With respect, I wish to clarify that I am not aware of Global Forest Watch—has never said that the west-side line is wrong. They have not said that. The member opposite has the wrong information on the record, again, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite will take and attack at just about anybody he can, Mr. Speaker, and the members opposite will continue to disregard the work that was—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see the minister referring to the Farlinger report, which also said in reference to the west side: This region has greater urgency for protection of ecological integrity than the vaster boreal shield forest of the east side.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed Bipole III route passes through the largest irrigation area in Manitoba. This area produces most of the potatoes of Manitoba, an industry that contributes over \$200 million to Manitoba's economy. Hydro towers and irrigation equipment are not very compatible.

I ask: Why is this government willing to jeopardize the potato industry which adds over \$200 million per year to Manitoba's economy?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would urge the member opposite, who had just made those comments, to think about what this government has done with the potato industry and how we have helped the potato industry grow in this province.

When they said that the plant at Portage la Prairie would not go ahead to process potatoes, Mr. Speaker, they had no faith in it. We worked with the industry and now we are processing potatoes.

But, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Farlinger report, the Farlinger report says on page 12: The western corridor provides opportunities to fully existing transmission lines, railway lines and highways for most of the length.

On another page, he said: The forested areas in the west side are much more intensely developed than on the east side with roads, railways, geotechnical survey lines and transmissions lines, as well as mining and forestry industry.

Further on, he says, on page 14: However—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, the minister obviously missed reading page 9 on the Farlinger report. It said that this region—referring to the west side—"has greater urgency for protection of ecological integrity than the vaster boreal shield forest of the east side."

What part isn't she getting? Mr. Speaker, aerial application of fungicides are critical to potatoes and sunflowers and corn production. Low-flying aircraft and hydro towers are not very compatible either. The Manitoba aerial application association stated that Bipole III will jeopardize the safety of their professional applicators and will have long-term negative consequences to agricultural lands and producers. And I'll table that letter.

Why is this NDP government refusing to acknowledge the long-term impacts that Bipole III will have on aspen parkland, on some of the most productive agricultural land in Manitoba and on the aerial applicators of Manitoba?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I'll refer to the member to page 8 of the Farlinger report where it says—the report says clearly that the east side—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have a little decorum, please.

The honourable minister has the floor.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On page 8, Farlinger says: Clearly, the east side has greater existing ecological integrities than the west side.

The member opposite is ignoring the fact that Manitoba Hydro is looking at three options for the line. They have been in consultation with all of the people. There have been public meetings that the members opposite tried to rig. That's what the members opposite did. I would encourage the member opposite to let Manitoba Hydro do their work. Let Manitoba Hydro determine which of the three lines will be selected, and then the work will continue with how the line will be put in and how farmers will be compensated.

Budget Projected Deficit

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, this Premier must be terribly confused. This continues to be a government of contradictions. The Premier is on the record as saying that we suffered through the largest recession since the greatest—the Great Depression. Yesterday, in contrast, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) said he is having difficulty keeping up with the tremendous growth in the province. It seems you can suck and blow at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: If the economy is booming, why a \$600-million deficit? If the economy is bust, why does this government keep saying that the economy is booming?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, this is the problem with the members opposite. They believe there's no role for government. Yes, there was a very serious recession that gripped the world, and then government came in and stimulated the economy, and, as a result, the economy's growing. All they have to do is pay attention and see the things we're doing to grow the Manitoba economy.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, now I'm terribly confused because we have four years of budgeted deficits by this Premier. Perhaps the Premier should have a Cabinet meeting to get his ministers on the same talking points. The Premier is quoted, and I say, what is the next performing economy? It's 0.02 percent negative growth. So what does that tell you? Flat is the new up when it comes to economic growth. That's the Premier. Yet the Justice Minister is quoted as saying Manitoba's economy is performing well despite global uncertainties and our

growth rate has outpaced Canada's growth rate for the past four years.

Mr. Premier, are we in recovery or a recession? Is the deficit out of choice or out of necessity?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I know the members have no faith in the role of government to make a difference in the lives of Manitobans. I know that. And that's exactly why—and that's why they have voted against—that's why they voted against the stimulus program in this year's budget, which will generate 29,000 person-years of employment. They voted against that. Their solution would be to lay people off, to slash and burn the budget, and then they would say it's somebody else's fault, we have no role in the economy, government should step aside and let the market do it.

* (14:20)

I can tell you, private sector is saying the government is helping enormously with the role we are playing in building infrastructure; in the role we are playing in educating and training workers; in the role we are playing by advancing significant infrastructure projects such as roads, such as CentrePort, such as clean water and sewer; and all of those things which will allow us to come out of this recession even stronger than we went in, and everybody on the other side of the House will still be trying to drag this province back to the '90s.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government does not know if it's up or down. This government is playing the part of Jekyll and Hyde to perfection. Is it yin, is it yang? Is it ridiculous, is it sublime? Is the message boom or is it bust? Is it recession or is it growth?

What we do know is that the NDP government is very, very comfortable with a \$2-billion operating deficit over four years.

Will the minister, the previous minister responsible for Crocus and Manitoba Hydro, please admit he is running a deficit only because he does not believe in balanced budgets? Will he admit he is running a deficit because he wants to?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, you know, 10 balanced budgets isn't a bad record upon which to have this discussion, and the members opposite voted against every one of those budgets as well.

And Mr. Speaker, when we came into office—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Can't even hear what you're saying. Order. Have a little decorum, please.

The honourable minister has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: And Mr. Speaker, one of the things we did during that decade was we looked at the fact that the members opposite had done absolutely nothing on the growing pension liability for teachers and public servants. In the last three budgets, the employers' contributions for teachers are being paid. In the last three budgets, the employers' contributions for civil servants are being paid. That is reducing that liability.

In addition, we are paying down the general purpose debt at a higher level than ever occurred when members opposite were in office. There will be \$600 million of general purpose debt paid down over the next four years, Mr. Speaker.

And the members opposite always like to skip over that little fact when they look at our economic recovery program, which will grow the economy, keep Manitobans employed and make Manitoba a better place to live and work.

Water Bomber Aircraft Purchase

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the Premier has committed in excess of 126-million tax dollars because he wanted to have a photo op with having some new water bomber aircrafts.

And Mr. Speaker, one would question the intelligence of bringing forward a policy of that nature at this point in time, when the Province of Manitoba is experiencing the highest on record—in terms of an annual deficit, we're projecting four years of ongoing deficit. There are many infrastructure programs that are necessary, and this guy is flying high, thinking in terms of the need for a water bomber.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I've cautioned members many, many times. When addressing another member in the House, do it by the constituency or ministers by their portfolio. "This guy", that's—I don't think it's very parliamentary, and I caution all honourable members to pick their words very carefully. Members in the House will respect one another, please.

The honourable member for Inkster has the floor.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the term "this guy," and I would look to the Premier to

do the honourable thing and recognize that today is not the time in which we should be purchasing brand new water bombers. That's the reality of it.

My question is: Did the Premier incorporate this \$126-million expenditure in the budget that we're actually debating, and if so, where?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I am aware that the member opposite voted against new water bombers, as the members opposite did. We're aware of that.

And, Mr. Speaker, the only person that's trying to fly out of Manitoba is the member opposite, by running federally. All the rest of us want to stay here and make Manitoba a safe place, which is why we're buying these new water bombers. They have to be ordered ahead of time. They're handmade. They're made in Canada. They require extra care to produce them because of the enormous stress that they occur when they pick up that water and add chemical treatment to suppress fires in Manitoba. Manitoba's already had 50 forest fires this year, and counting. It looks like a dry year.

This is a good investment. This is a time to think forward. It's part of our stimulus program and I know the member voted opposite but I know he's going to try and fly out of Manitoba as soon as he can.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Premier—Mr. Speaker, this Premier is one of the greatest reasons why maybe I shouldn't be going to Ottawa. Maybe the reason why, this Premier scares a lot of Manitobans.

There is no reason to be purchasing those water bombers this year or next year, Mr. Speaker. It makes—there is no rationale, other than he wants a photo opportunity. He wants to be able to spend tax dollars. This is a Premier that has no sense of responsibility. It is not his money; it is the taxpayers' dollars, and today is not the time to be squandering \$126 million because you want new planes. What do you want a new plane for? What's your next project, Mr. Premier? One day you want a stadium. Now you want new aircraft for water bombers.

Mr. Speaker, where's it going to end? Where in the budget do you have it planned to spend \$126 million, Mr. Premier?

Mr. Selinger: I honestly believe the minister—the member has missed the point. There's no question that we have to continue to provide basic public protection to Manitobans against natural disasters such as forest fires, and we have to do that with modern equipment so that our people that are

suppressing those forest fires can do the best job possible to protect Manitobans. This equipment is an investment in the future of Manitoba. It's an investment in the—other opportunity to train people to use this equipment, to suppress forest fires.

This is a three-year look-ahead decision. It requires time. Only four of these water bombers are manufactured every year in this country. We're in line to get one in the fall of '11. We're in line to get another one in the winter of—spring of '11 and the fall of '12, as well.

We want to ensure that we have the kind of equipment that can allow Manitobans to be safe from forest fires. It is a dry year. I know only a couple of weeks ago we were addressing issues of flooding. The reality is precipitation levels have been low and we have a high risk of fires in this province.

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

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I request leave to finish the question.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave for his last supplementary question?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think that the Premier is the one that is actually lost the focus on this.

Mr. Speaker, there's a time in which it is appropriate to be able to spend monies of this nature for the types of projects that the Premier is talking about. Had he came up with this idea three years ago, for example, there might have been a valid argument. Today, when you look at the record-high deficit, today when you look at the many needs of people throughout the province of Manitoba dealing with health care and so forth, you have to put things into a proper perspective, and I believe that the Premier has lost the perspective on this issue.

There is no need to replace those current water bombers today. The Premier has failed to be able to demonstrate that need. The Premier is making a mistake by purchasing them at a time in which Manitoba's deficit and other concerns that are before us are there.

I ask the Premier to be very clear as to why he believes the need is now to have—to make that purchase.

* (14:30)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I've made it clear that this is looking like it's going to be a very dry year. We have seven existing CL-215 Bombardier planes right now that are very well serviced to protocols that exceed federal standards and, as a matter of fact, the protocols used in Manitoba are being adopted across the country because of the excellent results they've got. In spite of that, the existing fleet has been in service in some cases for over 30 years, and it requires careful planning on the capital side to replace it, and that is the purpose for this order, to bring new planes into service as soon as they can be manufactured, when only four are manufactured a year.

The first one will come in October of this year. It will be available. It'll be—it'll have faster times to take off, faster times to land. It'll carry bigger payloads. It'll be able to go farther. It will protect the people of the north. It will protect people that live in forested areas.

All Manitobans deserve proper support. Many Manitobans live in communities that do not have a fire service that's available on the ground. They need these water bombers in order to have a secure lifestyle just like people in the south, and we're committed to doing it, and I know now why the member voted against it. He doesn't care what happens to those other people.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, question period has now expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Gladstone Legion 110 Curling Champions

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, members of this House probably don't know that Manitoba curlers won another important national curling championship that took place in March. A foursome from Legion 110 of Gladstone represented Manitoba at the Legion Dominion Curling Championships in Stephenville, Newfoundland, and became the Legion Canadian Curling championship—champions—for 2010. The rink was skipped by Jeff Stewart, with Craig Douglas at third, Dwight Ferguson at second and Jeff Mowat throwing lead rocks.

Earlier in the year, the Stewart rink had won the zone playdowns at Neepawa and then won the Manitoba-northwestern Ontario regional playdowns at Beausejour. The national championship at

Stephenville was held from March 13th to 18th, with eight provincial regional champions involved.

The Gladstone foursome compiled a record of six wins and one loss in the round-robin play. They then went on to victory over Québec in the semi-final. The championship game was between Manitoba, northwestern Ontario and B.C., and, once again, the Gladstone rink dominated and claimed the hardware as Canadian Legion Dominion Champions for 2010.

The Gladstone foursome were fortunate enough to have Joe Fraser with them as a team coach. Joe is a long-time legion member, an avid curler and a World War II veteran.

The curlers assure me that the hospitality in Newfoundland was of the highest level and they all had the opportunity to be screeched in.

Mr. Speaker, I invite the members of the Manitoba Legislature and, indeed, all Manitobans to join with me in congratulating Jeff, Craig, Dwight, Jeff and Joe for their accomplishments at the Canadian Legion Curling Championships. Once again, Manitoba was well represented on the national stage.

Dalhousie School Handbell Ensemble

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is home to some of the most talented young performers in Canada, and last Wednesday, at lunch, I was privileged to watch one of our youngest and brightest troupes perform right here on the steps of the Legislative Assembly.

Dalhousie School, located in my constituency, near the University of Manitoba, is well known for its strong musical traditions. Chief among these is the Dalhousie School Handbell Ensemble, a remarkable group of 24 grade 6 students that came together because of their common appreciation of music. The ensemble is a diverse group of students that aptly reflects the cultural mosaic of the school's community, bringing together families and students from all over the world.

Although this group has only been in operation for the last couple of years, the Dalhousie Handbell Ensemble is already well known throughout our city. This ensemble received gold in the Winnipeg Music Festival last year and is frequently invited to perform at many events around Winnipeg.

In their recent performance at the Legislature, the ensemble picked pieces from different cultures to

represent their own diversity. They also performed a number of original works showcasing different compositional techniques they have learned in their practice.

The Dalhousie ensemble performed at the Legislature as part of Music Month in Manitoba. First proclaimed in 2004, Music Month celebrates the great musical talents in Manitoba schools through grants and special performances in the Legislative Building.

In 2007, Dalhousie received a Music Month grant allowing its grade 6 students to work with Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra musicians Fred Liessens and Tavon Gillam.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of this House to celebrate the success of the Dalhousie Handbell Ensemble and the great talents of its young members. I would like to thank them for coming to the Legislature and entertaining us all with their wonderful works.

I would also like to thank the group's conductor, renowned handbell expert Karin Klassen, who is currently in Australia on a teaching exchange. Australian Barbara Byrt is conducting in her place, and she did a wonderful job on their debut at the Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Charles Bergstresser

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I rise today to honour one of Manitoba's young leaders. I would like to congratulate Charles Bergstresser for receiving the Premier's Youth Volunteer Service Award and the Manitoba School Board Association Student Citizenship Award for his volunteer work in the Morris community.

Charles Bergstresser is a grade 12 student at Morris School, who volunteers countless hours as a—on a number of initiatives in the community. Charles organized and volunteered for the winter coat collection and the used hockey equipment drive in Morris.

Mr. Speaker, Charles notes that since he was blessed with that opportunity to play organized sports as a child, it is only fair to give others the same opportunity. Charles is also a fixture at the local arena, as he volunteers countless hours there.

Charles' hockey skills have been—also been recognized. Earlier this year, he was named the

Manitoba High School Athletic Association's Tri-Star Rural High School Athlete of the Week for the week of January 12th. Playing defence for the Morris Mavericks hockey team, Charles was also named to the Zone 4 All-Star Team.

I invite all members of this House to join me in thanking Charles for serving as a great role model, not only for our youth, but for all Manitobans. Our communities and our province are strengthened by the dedication of people like Charles. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Royal Manitoba Winter Fair

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): In 1913, the city of Brandon hosted the last Dominion Fair held in Canada. For that August Canadian agricultural fair, parks and pavilions were developed for a national audience, placing Brandon and our province, again, at the agricultural centre of Canada.

The Wheat City was defining itself and Manitoba as being at the centre of promoting agricultural excellence in our country. Since 1882, and the founding of my home city, agriculture had been the dominant social and economic reality. By hosting the Dominion Exhibition in 1913, Brandon was being reaffirmed as the Wheat City of Canada and celebrating the fact.

Today, the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, patronized by Her Majesty the Queen, continues to place our province on the international stage. Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of this historic legacy in our province and of the role the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba plays in nurturing and sustaining it.

Mr. Speaker, this past month, at the 2010 Royal, I stood with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) at the Keystone Centre to announce funding for the restoration of the 97-year-old display—Provincial Exhibition in Manitoba Display Building No. 2. Popularly known as the Dome Building, Display Building No. 2 is Canada's only remaining building built for the Dominion Fairs and has been protected by Provincial Heritage designation since 1884. The Province's \$500,000 allocation, in partnership with the federal government and the Provincial Exhibition in Manitoba, will be directed towards renovations to the building. The building, popularly known as the Dome Building, aspires to be home to mixed-use space combining agricultural themes, museums, office space, and plans to be a centre for economic development and tourism in our region of western Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate and thank all those working to build more fairs and continue to do the legacy of agricultural exhibitions in the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

Chronic Diseases in Manitoba

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk about chronic diseases in Manitoba. An excellent study released today by Dr. Finlayson shows that the costs of chronic disease in Manitoba are enormous. The cost of those with arthritis was more than two billion for April 2005–2005 to March 2007. The cost for asthma and chronic obstructive lung disease, one billion; the cost of coronary heart disease, 925 million; diabetes, 774 million; stroke, 588 million.

The statistics speak to the terrible job the NDP in Manitoba have done in preventing chronic diseases. When I was with the Healthy Kids task force in Thompson several years ago, one of the presenters told the story of huge efforts taken to pull people out of a river. The efforts to address the situation were totally ineffective until they went around the bend of the river upstream and took measures to prevent people from being thrown into the river in the first place.

* (14:40)

I also remember talking to one of the people who attended the session. He'd been appointed by the NDP to the board of the RHA, determined to do everything he could to improve health by preventing sickness. After several years under the board—on the board under the NDP, he was so upset by the lack of effort at prevention, in spite of his advocacy efforts, that he left the board in disgust because he wasn't getting the support he needed for change from the NDP government or the RHA.

This—these stories illustrates what's been happening under the NDP. There's been much talk and little action. Indeed, except for the ban on smoking indoors in Manitoba, where we're seeing a decrease in smoking, which over time should be reflected in a decrease in respiratory diseases like COPD and contribute to a decrease in heart disease and stroke, there's been little evidence of effective action to date under the NDP.

And when we had the task force on environmental tobacco smoke, as we were going around the province, I remember Gary Doer commenting that he didn't support a ban on smoking indoors. It certainly wasn't NDP leadership that

achieved the change. It was leadership from Denis Rocan and John Loewen and the Liberals which enabled the change to happen.

Much action is needed in Manitoba to reduce chronic diseases. We need to be able to measure outcomes on a regular basis, not several years after the fact as happens now with diabetes. We need to have complete data not partial data. Even the report on the initial costs of chronic disease in Manitoba, good as it is, appears to have missed many diabetics in First Nations communities and thus is incomplete.

There's much that needs to be done to improve and Liberals are pushing hard to get the improved prevention we actually need.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Arthur-Virden, on a grievance?

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. On a grievance.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, it's always regrettable to have to rise on a grievance in this House but, however, today is the eve of the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, and I would be remiss if I didn't put a few words on the record about this government's poor track record when it comes to protecting the environment.

Let's start with this government's failed attempts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. Last week, Environment Canada issued its national inventory report with respect to greenhouse gas emissions in Canada for the year 2008, which is the latest information that is available.

And what were its findings, Mr. Speaker?

Well, they reported that greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba have reached 21.9 megatonnes, an all-time high. This is an increase of nearly 1 percent over the previous year. By the way—by way of comparison in 1990, Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions were 18.6 megatonnes, a decrease of—down—the increase that has taken place is over 3.3 megatonnes, Mr. Speaker, going completely in the opposite of what the government's intention were back in 1990.

Manitoba was one of only three provinces to report in this national inventory report that an increase in greenhouse gas emissions in Environment Canada's latest reporting period. In fact, nationally,

the emissions fell by 2.1 percent. That's quite a contrast to what happened here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

In recent years, this NDP government has boasted long and loud about its ambitious target for greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Just to refresh the memory of the members opposite, and for the information of Manitobans, that target from The Climate Change and Emissions Reduction Act stated, and I quote—that's from the NDP's own act—and I quote, the initial emissions reduction target for Manitoba is to reduce emissions, Manitoba's emissions, by December 31st, 2012, to an amount that is at least 6 percent less than Manitoba's total 1999 emissions, end quote, Mr. Speaker.

While I would suggest that even though the former Premier is no longer here, he would expect the current members of the government to fulfil the responsibility to meet the target that they set. They need to be held accountable for their ongoing failure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Mr. Speaker.

There are many questions as to how the government is, in fact, going to achieve the target. To meet the target, the Province needs to reduce annual emissions by 4.4 megatonnes. As has been pointed out in the local media, that is the equivalent of taking 841,300 vehicles off the roads in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, but we only have 734,929 vehicles on our roads to begin with in Manitoba, so it's an impossible task.

The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) conceded in the *Winnipeg Sun* on April 17th that meeting just passed—that meeting his government's legislated goals will be, and I quote, "a real challenge," end quote.

Well, I agree, Mr. Speaker, that the government has a real challenge on its hands. It's a time for them to come up with some meaningful strategies to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our province. We've heard enough hot air about this challenge. It's time to find some workable solutions.

It's clear that the NDP made a commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, Mr. Speaker, but, instead, they are taking us in the opposite direction with some of their ill-conceived policies. If they're concerned about the environment, why are they insistent on wasting 40 megawatts of clean energy on a continuous basis by building a transmission line down the west side of the province?

Building the transmission line down the east side would also save Manitoba taxpayers at least \$640 million, disrupt fewer woodland caribou, and preserve more forest, Mr. Speaker, but the government steadfastly refuses to revisit its decision with respect to Bipole III. That is not acceptable.

I note the provincial government put out a press release today touting its efforts when it comes to electronic waste recycling and capturing household hazardous waste, Mr. Speaker, but while we recognize their efforts here, I must point out that there are many regions of the province where it is still difficult to get year-round waste—or year-round access to local facilities where people can readily drop off e-waste and household hazardous waste, Mr. Speaker. And I know, in my own community of Virden, that has certainly been the case. It was established but only lasted about a month, and so they have no accountability in that regard.

Manitobans want to do their part to protect the environment and we have to find ways to help more of them do that close to their homes. This NDP government likes to talk endlessly about its efforts to clean up Lake Winnipeg. Yes, it is a laudable goal, but we have many questions about some of the strategies they are pursuing to meet this goal.

Take, for example, the requirement the City of Winnipeg treat its waste water for both nitrogen and phosphorus removal. The Clean Environment Commission has ordered the City of Winnipeg to undertake costly repairs to its waste-water treatment systems in order to address nutrient management issues that impact the health of Lake Winnipeg. However, a group of 63 top scientists have found that the key to controlling algae growth in lakes is to remove phosphorus, and that the removal of nitrogen could in fact make the algae problem worse.

The *Winnipeg Free Press* recorded, in September 2009, that a document prepared by the City of Winnipeg water and waste engineer, Nick Szoke, shows it would cost the City \$430 million to overhaul the North End treatment plant with the necessary equipment to meet provincial demands to filter out both nitrogen and phosphorus out of waste water. It would cost 130 million to filter phosphorus only, Mr. Speaker.

The *Free Press* also reported that when debt financing and operating costs are spread over 20 years it will cost \$750 million more to remove both—nutrients, rather—instead of just phosphorus—end quote, Mr. Speaker. That's a tremendous cost and

we have to be assured that we are taking the right approach on this issue that achieves the maximum environmental benefits.

Every member of this House shares a common goal of reducing nutrient loading into Lake Winnipeg but we also want to make sure the waste-water treatment processes being used by local governments are the most effective both from a scientific perspective and from an economic perspective.

The City of Winnipeg and taxpayers, in turn, are being asked to spend tens of millions of dollars on treating nitrogen. We need to know if that's the right approach and if we're spending taxpayers' dollars wisely. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) has indicated he has sent this matter back to the Clean Environment Commission for a third time for review, Mr. Speaker. We need to resolve this issue quickly.

There are other environmental issues that this government has shown little willingness to address. Several times a year raw sewage flows into the Red and Assiniboine rivers due to challenges related to the City's combined sewer system.

The Clean Environment Commission has told the City of Winnipeg that they must reduce the numbers of these incidents to four annually. We recommend that it—we recognize, rather, that it will take considerable financial resources to tackle this infrastructure challenge, but we hear virtually nothing from this NDP government about their interest and willingness to help the City address this issue.

* (14:50)

Still, on the matter of managing waste water, Manitobans were appalled last summer to learn of ongoing challenges with overflowing lagoons in our provincial parks. The government had been repeatedly warned that they need to address these shortcomings, but they have been slow to act. It's a shame that the government, charged with protecting the resources in our provincial parks, is failing so miserably.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to bring to the attention of the members of the Legislature and the citizens of Manitoba that the government's contradiction in their own terms is also in relation to the bipole line, the reasons that they say they can't do it. But yet they have also—by going the west side, they were cutting down 50 kilometres more trees than they are if the line comes down the east side.

And they proudly expound every spring that they have put 600 more kilometres of roads into the east side of Lake Winnipeg to take them off ice, to make it more safe and to protect the environment, Mr. Speaker.

Well, how can you knock down trees to protect the environment for a road, but knocking down trees for a hydro line is not protecting the environment? It's a contradiction of terms that we find all too often in this government and it's very, very similar to the greenhouse gas talk that they have in regards to emissions in this province, where they say they're going down, but the statistics that come out of Canadian volumes on this issue indicate very clearly that Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions are up, and that this government has no idea how they're going to get them under control by the year 2012, the deadline that they set for their own mandate.

Thank you very much.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, at this time I would just indicate that the House would now resolve itself into consideration of Estimates.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we will move on into Committee of Supply. And in the Chamber will be Executive Council; Room 255, Health; Room 254, Justice. And would the respective Chairs of those committees please go to those rooms to chair your Estimates.

The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Madam Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

JUSTICE

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Mohinder Saran): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Justice.

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

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank my critic for giving me the opportunity to go on the record to answer a few questions that came up yesterday.

One of the first responses I can give was the question about my travel as minister since the date of my appointment, November 3, 2009. There have been two out-of-province trips. One was an opportunity to travel to Ottawa to present to the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism. It's an inquiry panel hearing at the House of Commons. That was February 7 to 8, 2010, in Ottawa at a total cost of \$927.52.

The other was a trip with Boys and Girls Club of Canada. It was a gang prevention through targeted outreach forum in Toronto, March 17th to 19th, 2010, and, happily, the cost to the taxpayers of Manitoba was zero dollars as those costs were paid by the Boys and Girls Club.

There's also been a number of in-province trips. I'm not sure if the member wants me to raise those or not.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Well, if you've had them and you've gone to the trouble of compiling them, why wouldn't we present them?

Mr. Swan: As minister, since my appointment I've travelled to Brandon for the Association of Manitoba Municipalities convention and ministerial forum on November 25 and 26. On January 28th, I travelled to Portage la Prairie to tour the courthouses in Portage and also Agassiz Youth Centre. March 15th, I travelled out to Ste. Anne to meet with the mayor and the chief of police there. March 16, I travelled to Winkler to meet with the mayors and chiefs of police of Altona, Morden and Winkler. And later that day, on March 16, I travelled over to Morden to tour the courthouse there.

One of the other areas that was questioned about yesterday were the payments to Hanford Drewitt, so I'm able to provide some details on that, and I can give totals for '08-09 and '09-10. First is the deputy minister's office. I'm informed that my deputy minister went on a spree and spent \$107 in '08-09 on a new shirt and tabs. He also wants me to read into the record that he is still using his predecessor's robes on those occasions when he has to be robed. He's a bit more svelte than his predecessor, but he's making

do. For Judicial Services, court attire for judges and judicial justices of the peace, those costs came to \$19,023.53 in '08-09 and \$15,473.27 in '09-10. Costs for Prosecutions, robes, court attire for prosecutors, in '08-09 it was \$4,948.75; in '09-10, as we continue to increase the number of new prosecutors, \$13,487.62. For the sheriffs—apparently, Hanford Drewitt also assists with uniform alterations and sewing on crests—in '08-09 it was \$3,638.02; in '09-10, \$921.28. In '08-09, the total cost paid to Hanford Drewitt, \$27,717.30; in '09-10, the total paid to Hanford Drewitt, \$29,882.17.

I'm told the cost of complete court attire for a judge averages around \$1,500. For prosecutors, and, as I expect my critic is going to be aware right around now, the cost of the robes for lawyers are around \$800. The attire for the court clerks apparently is purchased from Gaspard and Sons, not Hanford Drewitt.

My critic then asked about the prosecutor workload, and that has been pulled together. I can—I'll start by giving the three classifications of Crown prosecutors. I'll put it on the record. Three classifications, LF1 is the most junior prosecutors. As of April 20, 2009, their average workload was 319 cases; as of March 26, 2010, that's now down to 212. For the LF2s, the Crown prosecutors with the—it's the middle range of experience, as of April 20, 2009, their workload was 176 cases per prosecutor; as of March 26, 2010, it has gone up modestly to 195. And for the LF3s, the most senior Crown prosecutors, the average caseload was 135, as of April 20, 2009; as of March 26, 2010, that's decreased to 116.

In Winnipeg, the general trial unit, domestic violence unit, the youth unit and the Auto Theft Unit assign files according to severity and complexity. The less serious files are assigned to those LF1s, prosecutors with zero to four years of experience. More serious and complex matters go to the LF2 prosecutors with four to nine years of experience, and the most serious matters go to lawyers with 10-plus years of experience, which include general counsel, and the caseloads are reduced in terms of numbers for those prosecutors taking on the more serious matters, and, accordingly, LF1s had the highest caseloads and general counsel, the lowest.

In Winnipeg there's some specialized units, including the Criminal Organization Unit, which prosecutes gang members; the High Risk Offender Unit, which prosecutes serious sexual offenders; and

Special Prosecutions, which prosecutes commercial fraud. The prosecutors assigned to those units are experienced lawyers. The cases assigned to these units are difficult and complex and frequently require the assignment of two Crown attorneys and, due to the nature of this very specialized work, the caseloads of prosecutors in those units are relatively low.

In regions and circuit points, the assignment of cases is based on the court and location, with the prosecutor being responsible for all matters in that location. And the result is that regional Crowns will usually have a—typically have a larger caseload, as they will have files that range from serious violent offences down to The Highway Traffic Act matters.

I do have more detail on the average number of files per unit and per regional office if the member wants me to go into that.

Mr. Goertzen: I'd be happy for the detail. The minister may just want to table that and provide that.

Mr. Swan: We're here today, so I won't have you waiting in suspense for that information.

By unit, the average number of files as of December 7, 2009: Articling students handled an average of 275 files; general prosecutions, 170; the Criminal Organization Unit, one of these specialized units, only 57; the Domestic Violence Unit, 207; the Special Prosecutions Unit, just 29; Youth Prosecutions Unit, 199; and the provincial statutes unit, 123.

There is some variance across the regional offices. Again, as of December 7, 2009: Brandon prosecutors did an average of 220 files; Dauphin, 230; The Pas, 356; Thompson, 263; and the prosecutors who handle the circuits out of Thompson have an average number of 278 files.

Portage la Prairie, as of December 7, 2009, was up at 346. Over the course of the last year, some new resources have been added to assist those Crowns. A new Crown attorney who articulated in Portage la Prairie was retained by the office, increasing the complement of Crowns to four, and a new support person has been hired, bringing the support staff complement to three. And, as well, I'm told Winnipeg has taken over the Stonewall circuit from Portage la Prairie which is a busy circuit point.

So, if we were to look ahead, I'm told, from April 2009 to April 2010, the caseloads of Portage la Prairie Crown attorneys, which were higher than

the other southern centres, have been reduced by an average of about 30 percent. And I'm also told we'll be piloting some new processes in Portage la Prairie to use some of the good experience with front-end processes in Winnipeg, to try and improve efficiency in the Crown office and the court system.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister and his department staff for providing those responses.

I gather there wasn't any response yet on the Probe Research expenditure.

Mr. Swan: Yeah, I've got some preliminary information, but I expect I'll have a full answer because I expect you'll still be asking me questions tomorrow.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I will for sure now, just so I can get to those. Otherwise, you never know, I might have wrapped up.

And I want to get back to the issue of the prosecutions. But I want to take a slight diversion because I think it's important on the issue that the minister and I just discussed in the House, and the change of policy, I gather, that's taken place or that will take place in the department regarding breaches and how breaches are filed from court orders with the police.

Can the minister indicate, in the specific case of Mr. Lanzellotti, not referring or discussing the nature of this case or his sentencing, but when was he made aware of the issue that was raised by the probation officer, that there'd been several breaches on the accused in this case and is now convicted?

Mr. Swan: You know, I mean the member's asking a question about a specific file and, as he knows, I'm not at liberty to talk about individual files that are before the court, and, as well, doubly so with a young offender. I can't discuss any details of the case. But I don't want to be difficult and we can move on, just speak in more generalities, which, I think, would be helpful.

* (15:10)

Mr. Goertzen: One of the things that both the minister and his Premier (Mr. Selinger) did put on the record just about an hour ago was the fact that they've given new direction in terms of the breaching of individuals and when that's supposed to be reported. So can he—since it was he that raised that, actually—we were not—were not aware of that going into question period. Since it was he and his Premier

who raised that issue, can he indicate when that direction was given?

Mr. Swan: Manitoba Corrections is always striving to improve their processes, but I can speak specifically about what I think we can describe as a new case management model in Manitoba Corrections. Starting in September 2009—so, within the last year—Manitoba Corrections began training staff in new risk tools which are intended to replace the existing primary risk assessment youth and adult versions.

Following a review of what was available and looking at various jurisdictions, Manitoba Corrections opted for a title that doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, but it's described as the YLS/CMI system. We'll just call it the system, which is supported by a large body of literature, and Corrections is satisfied it's theoretically well grounded. It's validated by empirical studies and it's intended to be as predictive as possible of general and of violent recidivism. And whenever individuals are in the community, it's always a manner-matter of managing risk and this is intended to improve the management of those risks.

I'm told that those new tools were developed by Canadian researchers. There is a firm called—or group called Multi-Health Systems in Toronto. They're also being used in the U.S. and internationally, and if the member wants, I can give a bigger summary of the tools and the research supporting its validity.

What I think the member is probably more interested in is the way in which offenders are defined. There's a consideration of the risk level and there's a risk-calculation component of the system which is made up, apparently, of eight skills, with 43 items to try and identify the offender's risk to reoffend. There's also a provision to take positive characteristics into account to allow for the inclusion of strengths which can be drawn upon and fostered in designing the case management and re-entry plans.

There's a model of criminal conduct based on a model which really focusses on risk need and responsivity and, dealing with those three, the one is risk, which refers to the fact that offenders differ in the level of risk they present. The idea, which, I believe, was addressed in the House, was that it's our goal to target more resources to the higher need offenders so that there's a greater impact of the system.

Need refers to the dynamic or changeable aspects of risk and represents treatment targets. The term which is used by the academics and some of the bright people in Corrections is criminogenic needs, things such as alcohol or drug use, which are things that could be directly related to an offence pattern. And, although other needs, non-criminogenic needs, are not necessarily related to offending, they could also have an impact on the offender's behaviour and quality of life and could be important considerations when planning successful management and re-entry.

And other examples of those non-criminogenic needs are financial problems, or of somebody being suicidal. And the intention of this new program is to present a checklist of needs that will guide and assist probation officers in helping them identify the various needs that are unique to each offender.

Responsivity considerations or characteristics of the offender that could affect how he or she responds to intervention, some of the considerations which have been identified are cultural issues, gender issues, anti-social personality traits, or psychopathy, which are examples of special factors that would be considered in treatment choice or implementation format.

The idea is to follow a case management component which will include a review of needs, along with a goal intervention type and the time frame appropriate for each need targeted, and for each offender there would be a progress report and also a discharge summary, when, hopefully, at the end of the court-ordered probation, that comes to an end.

I understand that there is a great deal of theory and research that I'm not going to pretend to be an expert on—I can go through in some detail if the member would like me to.

What I can probably go on to do is talk a little bit more about the case management model. The intention is that Probation Services will develop a case plan based on the needs that I've talked about, as well as the specifics of the court conditions. They will intervene with the offenders by finding different ways to motivate offenders to change by providing one-on-one work to try and intervene to provide some behavioural changes, where appropriate; to offer group programs that are aligned with the person's specific needs by monitoring their behaviour; and, also, by engaging external supports and service providers, which means partnerships, not

only with government departments but also with community agencies.

So the goal has been to acquire new risk tools which will enhance our capacity to identify, 'prioritize' and focus interventions on the offenders' most relevant criminogenic needs, and, accordingly, Corrections is evolving its practice of managing offenders according to the level of risk.

So this is not the be-all and end-all. Corrections will continue to work and to continue gathering the best evidence that's available out there, and they'll continue to improve the services offered out in the communities.

Mr. Goertzen: Rather than the minister providing the foundation or the basis, the research that resulted in the formation of the new policy, can he provide the policy itself that was provided to probation officers, and also in my understanding from what's known publicly, in this particular case the individual was reclassified or classified at some point by the probation officers as high risk.

So it seems to me—and the minister can correct me if I'm wrong—that the problem wasn't that they weren't identified as high risk; it's that they didn't—there wasn't a direction to act upon that.

Mr. Swan: Okay, again, I can't speak to the particular case that the member is asking about, and what I've described, this new—this new case management model is more of a methodology, if I can call it that, than a particular policy.

There are some policies which guide probation officers as happened a couple of times during Estimates last year. I would not want to put details of that on the record because we don't necessarily want offenders in the community to have more details on what factors have a greater impact on the probation system.

Mr. Goertzen: So, in terms of implementation, then, if it wasn't a specific policy, if it was methodology, was it a matter of the department officials meeting with those in probation and having a—the discussion about generalities? Was there nothing sort of reduce the paper in terms of what future direction they were going to take?

How is it implemented, I suppose, is what I am asking.

* (15:20)

Mr. Swan: Training of this new methodology began in the fall of 2009. It began by being delivered to probation officers, and then work is still ongoing to push the information out to correctional staff at each correctional centre.

I can tell the member that all new cases—so, all new examples of people—I'm sorry, all new community cases—all new cases coming into the system of the community disposition are part this new case management process.

We are also in the process of transferring current cases into the new tiers of supervision for the community. So that means, as I indicated in the House, those individuals who, under this new methodology, have a higher risk profile would then have more resources allocated to them. Those individuals who would be—who'd show a lower risk profile would be given less resources towards their supervision. But, of course, there are some specific exceptions; for example, sex offenders are a higher concern in terms of their risk. So while they won't be—there may be some differences in how the supervision works.

There is still some work being done to integrate the tool into the various computer systems, which is still being done. We've completed facilitator training and we've trained all of our staff, although, again, we still have some work to do with some correctional staff at the various correctional centres across the province.

We also sat down and spoke with the judges, with the Crown attorneys and also the defence bar to make sure they were aware of where we were moving prior to the implementation.

So, as of today, I think it's fair to say that Corrections is still in the process of transitioning to the new case management system. Not every case is under this new system yet, but eventually it will be, and we've commenced implementation in the community, with the various institutions or jails to follow.

So, again, Corrections is quite certain the new tool is state-of-the-art, and it allows the department to focus on risk but also be responsive to public safety issues.

Mr. Goertzen: And so the issue around providing resources and working with offenders that might be deemed to be high at risk is not something that I think would find great opposition. There might be

question about, you know, why it took so long to get to this point.

But how would that change a scenario where an officer, a probation officer, has already determined that somebody is high risk and they've been in breach, but isn't reporting to police? Is anything in this new—the resources are fine, and I think it might be helpful in ensuring that people who are high risk have more access to services, the probation officers are able to work more closely with them, but will it ensure that a report is made when an individual who is high risk has breached, whether that report is made to the police so that they know about it?

Mr. Swan: Okay. It's a pretty broad-ranging question, so I want to make sure that I get my facts straight. Obviously, with individuals—convicted individuals who are in the community there are a number of different factors that come into play.

Even before these—this new case-management system came into play—I mean, there has always been—shouldn't say always, but for many years there has been the acknowledgement within Probation Services that some offenders need more attention than others.

The goal of this new methodology is to better match up the resources with those individuals who truly need more supervision. I think it's important to remember a couple of things. I mean, first is that—the first is that whenever anybody's in the community, I mean, there's always the risk they're going to reoffend. I mean, the goal is to highlight who is more likely to reoffend than others and put the resources there.

It's also important to remember that Probation Services—I mean, their first goal is to get compliance with the terms by which the person is released into the community. So there may be breaches. There may be more minor breaches that don't necessarily trigger the corrective—potential corrective action of going and reporting to police and instituting a criminal case. There may be other steps that are taken within Probation Services to try and direct compliance.

The triggering point will be different for different levels of offenders. It'll also be different for the nature of the offence. So there may be, and there are, a number of examples where a breach will automatically give rise to the probation officer putting a warrant into place. There may be situations with a lower risk offender where that same breach

would cause a summons to be issued. There may be lower risk offenders where that same action, in and of itself, would only create an internal process within Probation Services to find some other ways to have the individual comply.

So I know it's kind of a lengthy answer but I hope it helps to explain the role that Probation Services have in exercising their discretion under section 20 of The Correctional Services Act, which, I understand, has been in place in this province for well more than a decade.

Mr. Goertzen: What was it about the September date that caused the trigger for this new policy? Is it something that the department had in place for a long time, or was there a particular event that caused this to move forward?

* (15:30)

Mr. Swan: It's certainly helpful to have individuals advising me with some good institutional knowledge.

I am told that the previous risk management approach had come into play in the aftermath of the Headingley jail riot back in 1996, and Manitoba went ahead and developed a risk management tool which, at the time, was based on the best evidence available and was state of the art. Over time, it's been—I think overtaken is a fair way to put it by other systems, by research that's being done elsewhere in North America, by systems that different provinces and states are putting into place.

So a couple of years ago, Manitoba was sort of at the crossroads of either going back and revitalizing its own system or finding some new system that would be better. And the decision was made to use this new methodology because it seemed to be validated by a number of jurisdictions by research, with the added benefit of then—since other provinces have adopted it—of having common language, so it's easier to compare apples to apples when looking at what's going on in different provinces.

So the planning for this new methodology, I understand, had been in the works for a couple of years before it was—before the rollout started in September of 2009.

Mr. Goertzen: Will the new methodology or anything that relates to it allow the minister—not that I don't think the capability exists currently—to provide statistics on the total number of court order breaches that exist in the system at any given time?

Mr. Swan: This new methodology is not going to result in the collection of any new data. I mean, it's still remains that individual probation officers will want to use the best available program and the best available evidence to determine what the plan should be for each individual offender.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister. Is it true to say that at the end of the day—and this is certainly what's been related to me—that individual probation officers know how many of their clients—for lack of a better word—are under a breach, who've breached their court orders?

Mr. Swan: I mean, the difficulty in answering the question is, as we've talked about earlier this day, the difficulty in defining what is a breach. I mean, if a probation officer has more contact with an offender, which will usually be because they've been identified as someone at a higher risk to reoffend or to breach, it may be possible to have a higher number of examples of a breach.

But the other piece of it, too, is that there's all different kinds of breaches. I mean, there may be some which are very serious; an individual not residing where they're supposed to reside. It may be an individual whose conditions say that they will not associate with certain individuals. There may be other breaches where somebody is five minutes late for their appointment with the probation officer, or somebody is 10 minutes late for school that they've been ordered to attend.

So there's some great difficulty in trying to quantify that. I mean, each probation officer works with their own caseload and manages them on a case-by-case basis, which I think we can all agree is the way we think the system should work.

Mr. Goertzen: I guess to try to narrow it a bit for the minister, then. Certainly, if clients that probation officers had, if they registered a breach with the police, that's a pretty clear definition. Is that not correct? That they would know how many clients they have registered a breach with the police. Is that not correct?

Mr. Swan: Okay. Well, just, I mean, just to clarify for the record. I mean, the probation officers don't register breaches. They may choose if they think it's appropriate then, in accordance with the policy, in accordance with all the other information and their professional judgment, they may choose to square information and have the police proceed with action. But, no, they don't—there's no statistics kept of how

many times that occurs. Each individual probation officer would certainly keep it on their own file for that particular offender, because obviously that will determine where they fit along the risk profile.

Mr. Goertzen: Right, and so officers—probation officers themselves would have that information, but the department hasn't made any effort to collate that information to get a handle on whether or not issues are getting worse, better, not changing. There's been no effort by the department to bring forward that information.

* (15:40)

Mr. Swan: It's the best advice of the department that the actual number of breaches is not really indicative of how well the system is working. What is far more important is the relationship each probation officer has with the offender, and how that individual probation officer is able to encourage that person to comply with their conditions of being out in the community.

Mr. Goertzen: I suppose we might disagree about the value of that information but I also recognize it's probably still not going to be forthcoming, whether we disagree about it or not. My general sense is that people wouldn't believe that the system is working well now. Today's incident aside, I don't think that there was a great deal of confidence before, so I'm not sure how it would diminish that confidence in the system.

Having said that, I don't want to belabour a point that I don't think is going to allow us to break new ground. Just one somewhat related issue, and then I'll return back to the planned questioning regarding prosecutions, and I thank the staff for the diversion today—for putting up with the diversion today.

The pilot program with Nova Scotia on the ankle bracelets and supervision with ankle bracelets, where's that review at?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Chairperson, the electronic monitoring, which, as the member knows, was a partnership with Nova Scotia to try this out, it was a pilot project but it has been extended for a further year by our government. So the program is still a go until at least March 31, 2011, and in a year we'll have a better look at what the results have been.

It's important to know that Manitoba Corrections has partnered with the University of Manitoba to conduct an evaluation of the electronic monitoring

pilot, and I'm told that a preliminary report, at the very least, is expected in the near future.

Mr. Goertzen: Is that a report that'll be—I know we've heard about that report for a while. Is that report going to be made public?

Mr. Swan: We haven't made that decision. I mean, we'll need to have a look at the report. I mean, again, as we've already covered today, we would not want the release of any information to compromise the pilot project by giving information to people who may be inclined to cut them off or not follow what they're supposed to be doing. So we haven't made a decision on that. We'll take a look. I expect we'll rely fairly heavily on the conclusions that report comes to in deciding whether to make the pilot project a permanent part of justice in Manitoba.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and that's fine, I wouldn't mind even if certain parts are redacted. Seeing that report, (a) I doubt highly that many offenders will be reading reports, but to the extent that some are that incentivized to do so I—some of it could be redacted, I'm sure. The vast majority of it, just in terms of its effectiveness, I don't think would be something that would be of great value to those who are looking to get around the system. But, in any event, how many bracelets are in use now, or how many offenders are currently under the program?

Mr. Swan: Yes, there's 20 units that are available for the pilot project.

Mr. Goertzen: And, at any given time, would most of them be in use on—they're limited to level car—level 4 car thieves, is that still correct?

Mr. Swan: Yes, that's correct. They're limited to level 4 car thieves. There may not necessarily be 20 in use on a given day as they are transferred around, but the intention of the department is to use the capacity of the 20 of them as fully as we can.

Mr. Goertzen: Which I think is good advice. How many level 4 car thieves are there currently in—about, just to get a sense of proportion between the number of bracelets and the number of those who would possibly qualify for their use?

Mr. Swan: I'm afraid I don't have that information available today, but I'm told by my department that that can be pulled together for any questions you may still have lingering tomorrow afternoon.

* (15:50)

Mr. Goertzen: That's fine, and I thank the minister for that undertaking. Are there considerations, or will there considerations be given, I suppose, after the report is provided to extend not only the program in relation to level 4 car thieves, but to other offenders as well? Is that part of the report? Is that part of the analysis that's being done about its application to other kinds of offenders as well?

Mr. Swan: Well, the report that's being done by University of Manitoba is really focussing on the successes and challenges with this particular group, but we expect that the results of that will be useful to us as we decide what to do in the years to come.

Mr. Goertzen: Can the minister see the benefit of future application extended to other offenders?

Mr. Swan: You know, any decision that would be made will obviously take the costs and the benefits into account. There's no question that there are some advantages to electronic monitoring, but there are certainly some challenges as well. As the member knows, there's been some frustrations with youths being able to remove the devices, being able to cut them off.

The system really works best when we can be sure that there are people monitoring these units in real time so if there is a breach occurring, if somebody is where they ought not to be—they really only help if there's a response that's going to be available, which does have a cost. Certainly, it has an impact on probation services and on police.

So any decisions we would make for the future would be based on the costs of running a program as opposed to the benefits that we get. So I don't rule out the possibility of there being some expansion, whether in number or to the type of individuals, but we would have to look very carefully at what we're getting for it. And we'd also have to look very carefully to make sure that if we put more electronic monitoring devices out there, that there will be an immediate response if somebody appears to be breaching.

Mr. Goertzen: Does the minister have any information on how many offenders have either attempted or successfully removed their bracelets since the program has come into place?

Mr. Swan: I'll try to give the best numbers we have to the member. I am told that between the time the program started in April 2008 and February 25, 2010, there have been 49 youth outfitted with the devices, and Corrections describes the youth

response is varying from resistant to compliant. Twenty youth successfully completed their electronic monitoring term as of February 25, 2010.

There were 34 instances where youth were able to remove the device. The device is, of course, not created within Manitoba. It's, as we understand it, the best system that's available. Of course, one of the things that was taken into account in getting the electronic monitoring system was the ease of removal. Obviously, a number of youth have found a way to do it. I'm told that two youths have been able to remove their devices four times, which is a matter of some frustration and, certainly, we hope that electronic devices in the future will be less able to be removed by youth.

Mr. Goertzen: For my own clarity, when these devices are then removed, it sends a signal to those who in the monitoring centre—for lack of a better description, I'm sure there's a better term for it—and are they then aware immediately of the location of where that removal has taken place?

Mr. Swan: The member is right. When the device is cut off, that triggers a signal—a device tamper notification, I'm told—that's then tracked. Then a call is—or notification is given to Probation Services, and the practice has been for Probation Services to then notify the police.

The frustration, of course, is that when that happens, we know where the electronic monitoring device is; we don't necessarily know where the young offender is, except that we know that they've removed their device. But the member is right on that front.

Mr. Goertzen: Would the minister agree then, though—I mean, I know that sometimes it's reported that a device has been removed and some will value-load that that outcome is indicating that the system doesn't work or that the device isn't working, but there is value in knowing that they've breached. There's value in knowing that they have—then police can then look for them and try to get them off of the streets.

So it's not—he wouldn't label the program a failure simply because of the ability to remove a device, that there is value in knowing of the breach that you wouldn't have otherwise known about before without that device.

Mr. Swan: You know, generally, I don't have any disagreement with the general idea that the member is putting forth. I mean, right now, the pilot is with

20 of the highest risk offenders in Manitoba. We think that when we measure the costs and benefits, the benefits are highest for that group.

Before I can give anything firmer, I will want to have a chance to look at the University of Manitoba report and see what that assessment indicates, but generally, I don't disagree that having that information can be of assistance. Right now, we think we're getting the maximum benefit, given the nature of the offenders that are being outfitted with the devices.

Mr. Goertzen: One last—I believe, one last question on the issue of the electronic monitoring. Has the minister or has anybody in his department looked at the SCRAM bracelets that are pretty popular in the States for monitoring blood alcohol level for repeat drunk drivers?

* (16:00)

Mr. Swan: I understand we've looked at some other electronic responses, but we—as far as I understand it, my department is not aware of the particular item that the member is talking about. If you have information you want to pass along, I'll make sure I get it in to the appropriate people in the department.

Mr. Goertzen: I have no opposition to opposing—or to providing the information. He could also just google the word "scram" and I'm sure that he'll find lots of information on the particular device, and I'm not suggesting it's good or bad in its usage. I suspect, like any program, there will be different opinions on it. But it's fairly widely used in a number of the United—in the U.S. states, so it's something just for the department to be aware of.

I'd like to return, then, to the line of questioning that I had promised to return to today on the issue of prosecutions.

In relation to turnover of staff in Prosecutions, Winnipeg regional special prosecutions, appeals, what are the turnover rates for staff and how is that measured in the department?

Mr. Swan: Today I don't have particular statistics. The last count that I was—the last information I was given is that as of October 2009, more than 80 percent of our Crown attorneys had been working for the Province for five or more years, and more than 60 percent of our Crown attorneys have worked for the Province for 10 or more years.

When I take into account that some judges have been appointed to the Provincial Court or the

Queen's Bench, when I also take into account that we've been adding Crown attorneys over the past number of years, it actually paints a pretty positive picture of Crown attorneys making a career of their employment with Manitoba Justice.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm sure it's a good career, one—maybe sometimes we regret our own decisions on career choices, but maybe not.

Can the minister indicate how many files were opened in 2009?

Mr. Swan: We do have some statistics for the total number of new files open in Prosecutions. I mean, this includes absolutely everything. I mean, this is Criminal Code charges, everything from there all the way down to The Highway Traffic Act people wanting to fight their speeding tickets.

So for 2008-2009, that total number was 47,383. In the current year, I don't yet—we don't yet have the total numbers for '09-10. I can report that in the first quarter the total was 11,031; second quarter, 11,435; and the third quarter, 11,848, which would indicate, unless there's some major departure in the fourth quarter, a total of slightly less cases being opened in '09-'10.

Mr. Goertzen: Yeah, and I don't know if these are—if those numbers are seasonal or they change. I've only seen sort of the year-to-year comparisons and it seems to be sort of an increase of a thousand, 1,200 every year. So we'll see how that—till the numbers are out for the rest of 2010.

Are there any new policy directives that the minister has issued to prosecutors, at least since the time that he's been minister?

Mr. Swan: I can advise that there has been one policy directive that's been issued since I've become the minister. It was issued in January, 2010, and it deals with expert witnesses. I can add that all of these policy directives can be found on-line through the Manitoba Justice Web site.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you for that. Are they also published in the *Gazette* when they're released?

Mr. Swan: They're not. They're not to treat as regulations, but we do keep the entire list of them for public accessibility on our Web site.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for that. I know I think B.C. does, but their—the structure of their departments is slightly different, as well, and so they

have different regulation. And I think it's certainly fine that they're put on the Web site.

In terms of independent prosecutors, how does the department go about determining who's eligible for—to be an independent prosecutor? Do they keep a sort of a cadre of lawyers on a list and how do they sort of qualify to get on that list?

Mr. Swan: About a year ago, the department put out an expression of interest to find competent lawyers who were interested in doing the independent prosecution work. From the individuals who applied, the department selected eight, based on their particular experience and their particular knowledge and reputation.

I'm told that in the past year some of those have dropped off; some because they then decided to pursue a career with the Prosecutions service, and some of them were appointed to the bench. So there's been a couple of ad hoc additions to that roster, I'm told, including a bilingual individual to satisfy some needs. And there are now nine independent prosecutors in the province.

* (16:10)

And this was, in fact, one of the results of the Taman inquiry. The suggestion was to broaden the efforts to get independent prosecutors, so we've moved on that and that's why this process took place over the past year.

Mr. Goertzen: So, just to elaborate, how did that process take place? Was it a public call for an independent prosecutor? I sort of doubt it, but—how was the intake?

Mr. Swan: I understand that the advertisement was placed with the Law Society so that everybody who is a member of the Law Society, which is every practising lawyer and even some non-practising and inactive lawyers would receive the information. There was a formal application process, there was also an interview process which involved some standard questions and the successful applicants were chosen from people who went through that process.

Mr. Goertzen: And so who would've done the interview process? Is that your ADM, or director?

Mr. Swan: I understand that a Crown prosecutor named Brian Kaplan, who is now retired, had—was involved in those interviews. He was the director of Regional Prosecutions and Legal Education and had

sort of managed the independent prosecutor file for probably a decade.

I'm told that Don Slough, who is now the Assistant Deputy Attorney General, is now stepping up to fulfil that role.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for that response. Would I be able to be provided with a—the names of the current legal professionals, lawyers, who are on a list of being independent prosecutors, and the number of cases that they were assigned, and fees that were distributed to them?

Since, the least, the minister has been there and then going back two previous fiscal years? Not necessarily right now, but surely at some point in the future.

Mr. Swan: Yeah, we can certainly provide a list of the individuals that are filling that role. I'm told by my staff that there are some concerns both with the difficulty of pulling it together but, secondly, perhaps, some privacy issues about specifics.

But what I can do is provide for the member the hourly rate, which, I understand, is based on experience, and some of the terms of conditions of retaining those independent prosecutors. I hope that will be sufficient. *[interjection]*

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the Minister for Local Government for his input about what's reasonable on the issues of privacy.

But for greater clarity, I want to—what's the concern? Is it the concern about the amount of dollars that have been paid out—public dollars that have been paid out to individuals to act as independent prosecutors?

So their names are available; that's been committed to for this year and the two previous—for the current list and the two previous fiscal years. I suppose the number of cases that have been assigned is reasonable, but is it the dollar figure that the department's having a problem with?

Mr. Swan: We'll try to meet somewhere along the path. I'm told that there's—there are some—there's some operational difficulties with pulling together some of the information. But what we can do is, for each of the independent prosecutors, we can provide the member with details of the total amount of fees that have been paid out to that prosecutor for the fiscal year and presumably for the previous two fiscal years.

Right—after some further discussion that offer remains open. If the member wants, we can provide details of how much was paid out to each of the independent prosecutors in the '09-10 year. We can also go back and find that information for the two previous fiscal years if that'll be helpful.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, that's fine. I thank the minister and his staff for that undertaking.

The minister had referenced the Taman Inquiry and the recommendation from Justice Salhany and that some of them had been implemented, and I know some legislation that's changed as a result of that.

Of the 14 recommendations, have all of them been acted upon at this point?

Mr. Swan: We're still gathering together some of the information. So I believe that, of the 14 recommendations, all 14 have been implemented—with one comment that I'll make.

Recommendation No. 13 was that the Minister of Justice would examine whether there are means to furnish independent prosecutors with complete access to the PRISM system and, if so, to make the PRISM system available to independent prosecutors.

PRISM is the prosecutions information management system, which is used by Victim Services to communicate with prosecutors and vice versa. My predecessor directed that the PRISM steering committee would examine the issue of access to PRISM for independent prosecutors. The PRISM steering committee carefully considered that issue and concluded that PRISM could not be made available to independent counsel. The system is not set up for partial access, and, because some of the counsel who are special prosecutors have a criminal law practice which could involve individuals in the prison system, unrestricted access was considered a security issue.

So we went 14 for 14 with an asterisk.

If there are any other nuances that I don't have in front of me today, I'll try to get those for the start of proceedings tomorrow afternoon.

* (16:20)

Mr. Goertzen: I appreciate that. I'm not sure it was 14 for 14 with an asterisk, or 13 for 14, but, in any event, the rationale that Justice Salhany had for that particular recommendation, I'm assuming, had to do with victims' rights. Is that correct?

Mr. Swan: The member is correct. It spoke to the communication between the independent prosecutors and Victim Services, who can then provide information to the—to victims.

So what's happened is, because the PRISM system isn't going to be available, there's a policy directive now in place to confirm that crime Victim Services workers and independent prosecutors outside of PRISM mutually inform one another of any contacts with registered victims and their family members. So that contact will happen, it just can't happen through the PRISM system as it would for a regular Crown attorney in Victim Services.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank the minister for that clarification. Can he indicate—or can he provide for me the new copy, I guess, which would have a change incorporated from recommendation No. 5 of the appointment of independent counsel terms and conditions?

Mr. Swan: Yes, in accordance with recommendation No. 5, the policy has been amended, and I understand we can provide that to the member.

I can advise that the policy was revised. It was referred to the Provincial Court Liaison Committee, and that committee endorsed the proposed amendments that were revised as a result of the inquiry recommendations, and now that has been approved. So we'll get that out to you.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank the minister for that undertaking. One last question. It's probably—it's more of a policy perspective from the minister.

Manitoba is, maybe not the last, but one of the few provinces that hasn't separated out the function of the Attorney General from other duties, and so lots of jurisdictions have the Attorney General [*inaudible*] Prosecutions and in some cases Corrections and then having a separate public safety department.

Has the ministers—has he ever personally considered that configuration for the department or has there ever been any discussion about a configuration or advantages of reconfiguring the department in that way?

Mr. Swan: If I was being cute, I would suggest the member for Steinbach is advocating an increase in the size of Cabinet, but I know he's not doing that nor would I take that liberty.

It's true, Manitoba is one of four provinces that still keeps the Attorney General's role together with

numerous other duties. And I suppose, on a philosophical bent, one of the advantages of having the Attorney General and Minister of Justice in one portfolio is that it actually I think maximizes the opportunity for communication between the various divisions, and I know it's probably easier, as a minister, to convene a meeting if there's a matter that Courts and Prosecutions need to deal with or Courts and Corrections need to deal with than if it was spread across two or more ministries.

I think for—I suppose, as well, for accountability, it gives the opposition members the chance to ask all of the justice-related questions of one minister and have us here having I think a very good discussion this afternoon on Estimates without having to run back and forth between two departments.

So it isn't something I've given a lot of—I've paid a lot of attention to. I think I'll leave it at that.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and I thank the minister for that. I was not advocating for the increased size of his Cabinet. I think that it's increased enough in terms of size.

But there are, you know, governments who put different focuses on different departments. I know, going back to 1999, which happens sometimes in our line of work, there was a split of the Department of Environment into water and conservation, and so there may have been concerns about communication and those sort of logistical issues at that time, as well, but there was I think was decision made by the department to put a focus on—or by the government to put a focus on them separately, for whatever reason. I'm not saying that was a good or bad decision.

So I just simply wanted to have the minister respond to that, just noting that there are many jurisdictions who do things differently. I've had conversations with his—one of his counterparts, Minister Morgan in Saskatchewan about sort of the differences of their department, and it's interesting to hear their perspective and what they think works well and doesn't work well under a different model.

In any event, that is somewhat philosophical and I don't want to get into a philosophical discussion, so I'm happy to move on to the area of Corrections at this point.

Can the minister provide, either now or tomorrow would be fine, the current rated capacity of each of the provincial adult and youth, male and

female facilities and then the most current actual capacity that they have?

* (16:30)

Mr. Swan: Yes, thank you. I've got figures from 9:42 yesterday, the 20th of April. What I'll do for each one is just give you the name of the facility and then the in-house population and the rated beds. So I'll try and move through this quickly.

First area is the youth population. At Agassiz Youth Centre, population, 76, rated beds, 100; Brandon youth unit, in-house population, 10, rated beds, 6; Manitoba Youth Centre, in-house population, 181, rated beds, 150; and The Pas youth centre, in-house population, 4, rated beds, 4.

For the adult population, Brandon Correctional Centre, in-house population, 269, rated beds, 164; Dauphin Correctional Centre, in-house population, 83, rated beds, 61; the Headingley Correctional Centre, in-house population, 755, rated beds, 485; Milner Ridge Correctional Centre, in-house population, 315, rated beds, 300; Portage Correctional Centre, in-house population, 71, rated beds, 35; The Pas Correctional Centre, in-house population, 144, rated beds, 74; and the Winnipeg Remand Centre, in-house population, 364, rated beds, 289.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for that. He may not have it with him or his staff may not, or they may. I shouldn't underestimate them. Does he have a breakdown of remand versus sentence offenders? *[interjection]* See, I knew I should have underestimated them.

Mr. Swan: Yes, they were anticipating you might touch on this aspect somewhere during the course of Estimates.

With respect to the youth population, the total in-house sentenced population is 271, of—sorry, total youth centre population is 271. Of those, 56 are sentenced—that's 21 percent; 215 are in-house remanded, which is 79 percent of the population. With respect to the adult population, total population is 2,001. Of those, 631 are sentenced, which is 32 percent. The remand population is 1,370, which is 68 percent. So, in the inmate population as a whole in Manitoba, exactly 30 percent are sentenced inmates. The other 70 percent are there on remand.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister and his staff for that. They're either very well prepared or I've

become very predictable over time. So I won't ask them to comment on which that is.

Could he indicate the number of people in Manitoba serving conditional sentences?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Chairperson, for 2009-10, the average number of offenders serving conditional sentences is 804.

Mr. Goertzen: How does that compare with the two previous years of record?

Mr. Swan: It's up slightly over 2008-2009, when the average number of offenders was 798. It's also up over 2007-2008, when the average number of offenders serving conditional sentences was 701.

Mr. Goertzen: So when he uses—when he says it's the average number of offenders, that's not then the total number—or is it the total number that have been sentenced through the year, or is that just the average at any given time?

Mr. Swan: I understand the method is to take the average. The average is the totals for each month-end in the fiscal year, divided by 12.

Mr. Goertzen: In terms of capacity or projected capacity, in-house population at Manitoba prisons—youth, adult—has the department done any studies on what they project will be the capacity going forward, or the in-house population going forward?

I know some of that is impacted by what happens federally on the legislative side, but there has sort of been a steady increase. I think it's 20 or 25 percent over the last three years in terms of increased in-house capacity or in-house population. So has there been any sort of analysis about what it's going to be going forward?

* (16:40)

Mr. Swan: Certainly, the inmate population has been a challenge and remains a challenge. So we've tried to make investments over the past 10 years to add the adult custody and youth custody beds. Since '99 we've—at Headingley we've added 238 beds. At Dauphin we've added eight beds. At Milner Ridge we've added 172 beds. I mean, that's almost equivalent to building another Headingley Correctional Centre which is, of course, the largest facility in Manitoba.

We're now under way in the replacing the women's jail which dates not just from last century but the century before that, and, frankly, the opening

of that facility can't happen soon enough. There will be 100 beds at Portage.

Construction has also begun on an 80-bed expansion at the Brandon Correctional Centre as well as a 40-cell expansion of the Agassiz Youth Centre in Portage la Prairie. And, as the member knows, we've recently announced additional investments in The Pas Correctional Centre and in Milner Ridge Correctional Centre. At Milner Ridge we also added 150 beds, which was completed on March 13, 2009.

So we have investments across the correctional system to add more bed space and more capacity for the correction system. I think the member has touched, correctly, on a couple of challenges. We know that—I know that, actually, we personally agree on the steps that the federal government took to bring an end to the two-for-one remand system.

Manitoba has been—had been calling on the federal government to do that for some time. Although it's a positive step, we do know that it's going to create a challenge, at least in the short time, as individuals may be spending more time in provincial jail than they were before.

There will be a positive impact, speaking only for the provincial jail front, that some individuals will be more likely to spend time in a federal institution than in the provincial jails. But, certainly, it is going to create some challenges.

I know the member from Steinbach and I both take a broader approach. I know we've both done some researching and reading about the experience not just in Manitoba and across Canada but in the United States, as well. And I know there's been some challenges from—in various states about their expanding populations.

And I know some states have taken some pretty extreme steps that I don't think would ever work in Manitoba. And I think particularly of our friends in California simply letting people go because they have budgetary challenges. I don't think the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) nor I, at any point in the future, would ever advocate the California model.

So there's a lot of challenges out there. Corrections is continuing to monitor where things go. We know there's going to be some pressures on the system. There may be other legal changes happening which have an impact as well. Again, I think the member for Steinbach and I stand together on wanting to strengthen the Youth Criminal Justice

Act, which could very well have an impact on youth populations.

So there's all kinds of factors that are being considered as we look at where Corrections is going to go over the next number of years.

Mr. Goertzen: The question was more specific about whether or not the department has actually done an analysis, and what they would expect the in-house prison populations to be in the years ahead, whether that's a two-, three-, five-, 10-year analysis. Has any of that research been done, in terms of what the expectation is for Manitoba?

Mr. Swan: I think it's fair to say there is ongoing work that's being done by Corrections to try and look into the crystal ball and project what is going to happen in the years to come.

From time to time, I will be advised about some various thoughts on where we should be going in the correction system and that will continue as we move into the new end of the two-for-one regime, and perhaps some other changes to the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Mr. Goertzen: So has the department reduced that to paper, in terms of actually producing an analysis, a report in terms of where they expect prison populations to go in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Swan: Yes, you know, again, there's various discussions that have been had and I have received—I do receive briefings and information as the minister, but there's nothing firm I can communicate to the member for Steinbach.

Mr. Goertzen: Would there be any objections to providing those briefings. I wouldn't expect there'd be anything in the area—of a nature that would be sensitive in terms of current crime. Can he provide the information—the briefings on the projections for both what the in-house population would be in the years ahead and what potential changes on the federal side, those that are already realized, such as two for one, and perhaps other changes to statutory release, what impact it might have.

Mr. Swan: You know, no, I'm not in a position to provide that information. There's a great deal of interest in various communities about when and where there may be expansions of jail capacity and I don't want anyone to get their—to get unrealistic expectations of where we're going. We'll continue to manage the inmate population in light of the challenges. We will make changes on the fly if it

turns out that populations expand faster than might have been expected.

Mr. Goertzen: So what the minister is indicating is that they have done some analysis then at least on the potential expansion of certain facilities, future expansion on facilities that currently exist or perhaps even new facilities.

Mr. Swan: Well, I can say, in my role as the Minister of Justice, I receive information from time to time in my role as minister. I ask for information from time to time in my role as minister, and I'm not prepared to share particulars of what I've discussed with Corrections officials.

Mr. Goertzen: Would that include analysis on what the impact of two for one—the end of two-for-one sentencing would be and what the impact of changes to mandatory minimum sentences which may come up again before Parliament? Would that analysis be done by the department?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I think—I mean, there is some difficulty in answering the question because it's not really possible to isolate any one particular change or any one particular issue in driving the corrections population. So we'll continue to monitor where the numbers are going. We'll, internally, try to do whatever modelling we can to figure out where things are going. As the member knows, it's not incredibly easy to quickly expand jail capacity. I'm actually very proud of the work that Corrections has done and the input we've received from the union, and the help from management to get going on a lot of the expansions that've—that are either under way or will be taking place over the next 12 to 18 months.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I find it—not disconcerting, but maybe a little difficult to fathom that this minister, the previous minister and the minister prior to that all had agreement, along with myself, about the need to end two-for-one sentencing. So there was unanimity; the minister is correct in terms of what our positions were across party lines. There was some dispute, I think, about what impact that would have on the prison population. The minister's predecessor was on the record saying that he believed that the end of two-for-one sentencing would have a positive impact on the in-house population in Manitoba. This minister is probably more along the lines that I might have about—that it might not be quite as positive, or that perhaps it's still unknown.

But, given the fact that this unified lobbying effort has been happening for the last number of

years, has there been no formal analysis about what the impact would be with that reduction?

* (16:50)

Mr. Swan: I'm glad the member did highlight that I think we are all agreeing on the impact—or rather, all agreeing on the benefit of the end of the two-for-one credit system. Of course, my predecessor was prepared to go to Senate jail to make his point on that front.

Again, I mean, there's just a great deal of difficulty in trying to break down in any certain or even any remote way of exactly what the impact is going to be. There's a number of other things going on. There's—there may be more mandatory minimum sentences. There's the impact of some of our suppression strategies, which I think in the short term will have a—will tend to increase the inmate population, which we sincerely hope over time will result in a lower inmate population—which are all moving at different times.

So I'm not trying to be difficult. It just seems that there's a lot of moving pieces that make it very difficult for Corrections officials to say the impact of any one of these things will be this many more beds filled or this many less beds filled.

Mr. Goertzen: In terms of analysis, then, on sentencing and populations, would there be analysis done on the increase of conditional sentences between 2007 and 2009? The average number of people serving conditional sentences grew by about a hundred, if I wrote down the numbers correctly, which probably means that the actual numbers were significantly higher.

I mean, is that a result of a change that happened federally? I mean, in my understanding would there be probably less application of conditional sentences, not more application of conditional sentences.

So what would account for that change between 2007 and 2009—or are there just that many more offenders in the system?

Mr. Swan: Well, there's some general consensus from my officials that the member's asked a pretty good question as to why the number of—*[interjection]* I'll let you know next time, too.

We're actually speculating on why the number of individuals on conditional sentences is continuing to rise. The thought is that maybe it's simply taken some time for those cases to work their way through the system, just as the ending of the two-for-one

credit. It's going to take some time before there—before whatever impact there is will start to play out in the corrections system. So it's a decent question for which we don't have a solid answer.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I appreciate the accolades. They are few and far between when you're in opposition, I can assure you of that.

The qualifications—I'm speaking sort of off my head, but—on the issue of conditional sentencing, the qualifications are that the, I believe, that the sentence would have been eligible for two years less a day. Is that not correct?

Mr. Swan: That's correct.

Mr. Goertzen: So, if the changes in terms of conditional sentencing move their way through the system and it put downward pressure on the number—we're not sure why it's putting upward pressure now—that would lead one to believe that there'd be more people in the provincial jail system. Is that a logical conclusion?

Mr. Swan: Well, it's, you know—we could spend a lot of time dealing with the theories as to exactly what the impact would be.

Just as with the end of the two-for-one remand credit, the difficulty's that, of course, conditional sentences were still available for people who were charged before the changes to the act came into effect. There's a whole host of variables. A lot of individuals who received a conditional sentence, may have been convinced to plead guilty to the charge because they knew there was a good chance of getting a conditional sentence. Those individuals might very well have been preceded to a trial with uncertain results. There may have been other options. There's a lot of different factors that come into play.

So I'm not prepared to say that if suddenly there was nobody else that was still serving a conditional sentence, that would necessarily mean an equivalent rise in the inmate population. I just—I don't think we can draw anything that clear out of those numbers.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and on that specific issue, I may agree with the minister. I suspect, though, that when you look at the totality of it and what has come down from changes with the Criminal Code and what may be coming, that all of the pressure seems to be upward, and that a lot of things would have to happen for the pressure not to be upward, and there has been some analysis done in other provinces that

indicate that. But in any event, I don't want us to go back and forth on the issue for days.

The incident, some have labelled it riot, that happened in Brandon, can the minister indicate whether or not he believes that overcrowding played a role in that incident?

Mr. Swan: Yeah, I mean, the disturbance in Brandon is a matter that's still before the court. There have been charges laid as a result of the incidents. So I really don't want to go and speculate on the record as to what may have caused those individuals to do what they did.

Mr. Goertzen: Then, that issue, or that particular incident aside, would the minister agree that when you're dealing with a system that's well above capacity, that that not only puts pressure in that particular institution, but the ability to move inmates around and to manage where inmates are, can sometimes lead to those sort of actions happening?

Mr. Swan: You know, there's—I don't think there's any question that the above capacity creates challenges. I think we're very lucky in Manitoba, that we have good correctional officers who certainly help management to deal with those issues and to provide a safe environment for themselves but also for the inmates. But there's no question that a large population creates challenges for the system.

Mr. Goertzen: I'll just pose the question. Perhaps the minister can get back tomorrow.

I'd like to know the type of reporting that happens from guards within the system about incidents. Not—obviously, the Brandon incident was widely reported, but when does a guard file a report about something that's happened in a prison system? An incident where he's spat at or they feel threatened or whatever that might be, what categories they are and how they're reported, if that could be provided tomorrow.

Mr. Chairperson: Order. The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

HEALTH

*(15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Health.

As has been previously agreed, questioning in this part will proceed in a global manner, and the floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Prior to getting back into questions on eHealth, there's a couple of things that came up today on Lucentis that I would like to ask the minister about.

Apparently, there are some seniors that are very, very worried because they have heard—and I'm assuming from my conversation that they were people that had wet macular degeneration and they were getting Lucentis. Apparently, they have heard that they will not be accepted into this new program, that the program, when it starts up in June, is for new people.

Can the minister just indicate whether the program actually accepts or doesn't accept people that are already getting injections?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I had heard a similar question come up, and I wanted to assure the member that people will not be excluded if they've been receiving Lucentis treatments before. It's just a go-forward program as of June 1st, so they need not worry that they'll be excluded.

Mrs. Driedger: Is there any way of getting that information out there, because it seems like—and that isn't the only concern that's been brought up about Lucentis, but there seems to be a lack of knowledge about what is happening with the program. Is there some way to make it more widely known?

Ms. Oswald: I would think there would be and we will endeavour to provide as much information through a variety of avenues, so I thank the member for raising the issue. We don't want anybody to have misunderstandings about who will be eligible, so we are going to work through a variety of channels—professionals, you know, publications if necessary—to find a way to get that message to people as appropriate.

Mrs. Driedger: Would there be any consideration to having a second site open in Brandon so that people from that huge part of Manitoba do not have to come all the way into Winnipeg?

Ms. Oswald: It is our intent to expand outside of the Misericordia site as quickly as we can, and certainly Brandon would be a very logical next step to go. I'm not absolutely certain on the timing of the expansion of the program. There are some reviews that will need to take place about how the program is

unfolding, but it has, all along, been our intent to go outside of Winnipeg and we hope to do that as soon as we can.

Mrs. Driedger: And I knew the intent was to move it out throughout the province, but is there no way to start it in dual sites rather—you know, rather than forcing everybody from all over rural Manitoba to come all the way into Winnipeg? I understand that there are doctors there that already do injections, so they must have the expertise. Is there not some way, right off the hop, of having dual sites right at the beginning?

Ms. Oswald: It is our intent to try to move as swiftly as we can. We did have these discussions early on about how far to expand right out of the gate, and in the name of just absolutely being sure, you know, on the quality assurance side, we do need to start at one site.

But again, as the member says, if the expertise out there, you know, is as strong as we think it is, it shouldn't take too long. But we are, I can tell the member, going to start in the one site with a view to moving out as quickly as we can.

Mrs. Driedger: And what's as quickly as we can? Are we talking months, or a year?

Ms. Oswald: It would be my hope that it would be months, but what the findings are as this brand new program unfolds will be what determine that, and so I don't want to presuppose the analysis and the outcomes of that analysis. We want to go as quickly as we can, but safety, of course, has to be job one.

Mrs. Driedger: And I don't dispute the safety aspect of it, but—and this program isn't new, it's—there have been people that have been receiving the treatment in Manitoba for quite some time and paying for it on their own, so there is a level of expertise, certainly, that is out there.

And so, you know, the minister's certainly given a straightforward answer on it. I guess I would just say that I don't necessarily agree that she couldn't start in two sites. I think that sounds like a very reasonable option, to start with dual sites. I don't know why you couldn't manage the safety aspects and the analysis at two sites. But, having said all of that, I just wanted to ask those questions and put those comments forward.

* (15:10)

Going back to where we left off yesterday, I'd like to ask the minister—we were talking about

eHealth and how there wasn't anything very—well, there wasn't anything transparent in terms of the Estimates document in the budget itself about the spending on eHealth in terms of what that amount is. It tends to be lumped into some very, very big numbers within the RHAs.

I'd like to ask the minister why she's not insisting on a specific line in the budget so that all of the spending on eHealth could be appropriately tracked.

Ms. Oswald: Just a couple—one last comment on the issue of Lucentis. I wanted to reiterate for the member that, indeed, we do want to try to take care and new programs outside of the city of Winnipeg into rural and northern Manitoba as quickly as we can.

She may or may not be aware that the overwhelming majority of people that are receiving Lucentis treatments today happen within the city of Winnipeg. It's a very, very small number, almost immeasurable, that are happening outside of Winnipeg. There have been questions from doctors in Brandon or specialists elsewhere, and that's why we want to move outside the city of Winnipeg, but there is perhaps an impression being created that people all over Manitoba are currently going through the process of getting these injections into their eyes with this drug, and that's just simply not what's happening in practice right now.

So, you know, in an abundance of caution and with the safety of the patient being paramount, it was the decision of a number of experts advising us on the development of this program that we proceed with this phased approach, and that's why we're choosing to do that. But I hear the member's point about being swift and cautious in the analysis so that people may not have to travel so far to have this Lucentis program with its full coverage. So I just wanted to put those comments on the record.

On the subject of budgetary lines for eHealth, I'm informed that the appropriation structure has not changed since the beginning of regionalization, and there wasn't an intent at that time to have a line-by-line for every RHA and the programs within it. So, I mean, that's not something that has changed over the history of budgeting with the RHAs.

Having said that, I do think that there is a national interest in providing more information about investments in eHealth. I know that there have been many questions regarding the investment of Canada Health Infoway and announcements that have been

made over time and then the delay in the rolling out of that money, and so there have been a number of calls for more information to be provided.

And so I hear what the member is saying about trying to capture more easily information about—the financial information concerning eHealth. You know, again, I would reiterate there is an annual report that is put out. The Canadian Institute for Health Information does provide information on eHealth programs. But I hear the member's point and we'll look at it.

Mrs. Driedger: I'm not sure why it would be that difficult. I know that, you know, there's a format and the government hasn't hesitated to change certain things in many different areas, and I'm not sure why it couldn't be something that would specifically—especially because of its cost, and the significant amount of money that is spent.

I'm not sure why that line, a particular line, couldn't be added to the budget and to the Estimates book, especially when we do see what happened in other provinces, you know, in Ontario and B.C. When we're looking at probably hundreds of millions of dollars, it just doesn't seem appropriate to me that we do not have a separate line item for eHealth. And it's not something that's going to shrink. I would assume it's something that is going to grow, and in order for there to be accountability and transparency about it. Because, when you look at what has been happening across the country, and when you look at what some of the other provinces are doing in reaction to a lot of the spending, you know, in some instances, a pulling back because of concerns that are being raised. It does not come across here in a very transparent way at all. And considering that, according to the comments of eHealth, that Manitoba has its own budget envelope for this, according to the language used by eHealth, it would make some sense to me that there would be a specific line then for it, within the budget.

And then, certainly, we would be able to track it better. Right now, it actually looks like it's buried. And there's a total lack of accountability and transparency by virtue of the fact that we can't track it, we can't follow it, especially in terms of how much is being budgeted, and are they over budget. I doubt that they're ever going to be under budget.

We certainly know that CIHI said that Manitoba spent the least of almost of all the provinces in Canada on information technology; eHealth has even put that on the record—that Manitoba has been very

slow on the uptake of it. They're trying to catch up within the last very short period of time, but Manitoba's underfunded. Information technology—the last document I saw from CIHI had us pretty much at the bottom. So there was a lot of catching up to do.

But we also see that there's a huge amount of money going into this, and, I guess, you know—does the minister not feel that it would be something that's appropriate to bring forward in a more transparent way, so that taxpayers can actually see what's happening in this area?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Chair, and, again, I believe I indicated in my last answer, that it is something to, you know, to take into consideration and to review. In terms of structure, I think the member has made a good suggestion, or a comment, concerning how other jurisdictions may capture this information and report this information. So I'll just—I'll reiterate that, you know, while there is an annual report that is published, we could look at putting that report on-line. While, you know, there's analysis that's done by CIHI, we can have a look at what other jurisdictions are doing and, you know, see if there are ways to improve this.

I did want to, you know, take a moment to talk about the progress that is being made, just in the context of some of the things that the member said. We are on track to meet or exceed our pledge towards the Canada Health Infoway goal of having 50 percent of the Canadian population covered with an electronic health record by early on, in 2011. And Canada Health Infoway is recognizing that progress. I think it was in their '09 annual report that they found Manitoba tied for fourth, actually, among provinces in terms of progress towards the electronic health record. They made mention of the progress we've made with client and provider registry, the diagnostic imaging, the drug information systems, lab information systems, clinical reports on immunization. So, you know, we have come a very important distance.

* (15:20)

Mr. Alvarez, the CEO of Canada Health Infoway, just around a year ago, said the following: Manitoba continues to make terrific progress in its efforts to modernize the information flow in its health-care system. Manitobans are well on their way toward having their health information move them throughout the health-care system, an important change that will improve patient care, create efficiencies and save money.

So, again, we are making strategic investments. I think that that's a critically important piece. And we know that we've been very successful in garnering support from Infoway. And the people that work in the WRHA and in regions across Manitoba, as well as the people in the eHealth program, should take a lot of credit for that and should be very proud of their achievements and they don't plan on stopping anytime soon.

So I just wanted to get that information on the record as well.

Mrs. Driedger: I would indicate to the minister that the annual report for eHealth, their first one, is on-line. And I do, actually, give the eHealth people a lot of credit for doing that and for that level of transparency by putting their annual report on line.

They do make a comment in their report that—and I quote: to improve the effectiveness of regionalization, the government of Manitoba needs to make ICT a much greater priority and fund it accordingly. Manitoba, after several years lagging behind others in Canada, is beginning to make up for lost time.

And I note that, you know, within the last couple of years, they certainly have seem to have picked up speed. They're certainly asking for a lot of money to be able to move this forward. And there's, you know, lots of questions that need to be asked, especially when we see the history of what happened with eHealth across the country.

The minister just made a comment and I just need clarification. She indicated that by 2011, 50 percent of patients will have an electronic health record in Manitoba. Is that accurate? Is my interpretation accurate?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, Mr. Chair, again, what I said was that we're on track to meet or exceed our pledge towards the Canadian Health Infoway goal of having 50 percent of the Canadian population covered with an electronic health record by early 2011.

So we are targetting the end of 2010 to launch the first phase of the electronic health record which will include patient demographics, drug and immunization history and some lab results as a pilot with a portion of the population.

This includes a viewer for participating primary care clinics and family doctors. So our pledge in the overall Canadian goal was to have aspects of the infrastructure initiated and developed so that we

could be on the road to do this. This will subsequently be expanded to include other health records like diagnostic imaging, hospital records, information from other providers.

So our pledge in that goal was to reach a certain stage. So it's not that 50 percent will have a fully complete electronic health record, but the stage that we pledged with Canada Health Infoway toward that goal will be met or exceeded.

Mrs. Driedger: I thought I saw somewhere that the commitment for 2012 was for patients to have an electronic health record and that it was a 50 percent pledge for a health record.

Now, is the minister saying we're not going to be seeing 50 percent of patients having a health record, that we're just going to see pieces of this put together—or put in place?

Ms. Oswald: So the commitment, of course, by Canada Health Infoway was to have 50 percent of the Canadian population covered with an electronic health record by early 2011. And each province pledged and signed on to complete certain aspects, to get portions or overall parts of their population through the different phases of going towards an electronic health record. So I can inform the member that Manitoba's electronic health record project will meet and exceed its commitment to the Infoway target by contributing 100 percent of its population toward the goal of half of Canada's population having EHR by the end of 2010.

This is not to say that everybody in Manitoba will have every facet of an electronic health record completed, but the first release of Manitoba's electronic health record will be operational by about the end of this year. And that release will include the base demographics, you know, having to do with PHIN numbers and so forth, retail drug prescription history, immunization history for Manitobans, as well as selected lab results on a more limited set of the province's population.

So we are going to be seeing the infrastructure in place for all Manitobans to have that record, and then it will start—the information will start to be layered into it. So, in my case, for example, if I were to go to the doctor, there would be certain elements of my information that would be in there, but not absolutely every contact that I'm making in the health-care system yet. That's going to be built on as we go.

But I will be counted as somebody that has begun the journey of an electronic health record and

therefore, according to Infoway's pledge as I understand it, am counted as a Canadian that's on the tally of who's got an electronic health record in flight.

Mrs. Driedger: It's in—the minister's answer is interesting because it certainly sounds like you could be doing just a little bit, but you're still going to count towards meeting this fairly significant promise that had been made about, you know, 2012, but it sounds like you could only—you know, you only need to do a little bit in order to take advantage of saying you're doing a lot.

I understand right now that less than 10 percent, or somewhere in that vicinity, of physicians—and maybe I should ask it as a question. Is it true that only maybe around 10 percent of doctors right now use electronic records, that most of them still use paper charts?

*(15:30)

Ms. Oswald: Again, the concept of taking the entire nation from the current paper record into an electronic health record, and all of the benefits that come from that, is an enormous undertaking, that's to be sure. And Manitoba, and our approach, is consistent with Canada Health Infoway's approach across the nation in terms of how to build the system.

And while the member says it doesn't sound like you have to do very much to just get some information connected into the electronic health record, I want to assure her that that's not the case. There is an enormous amount of work that has to be done to lay that electronic groundwork to go forward in transforming how health care is going to be provided. And Manitoba is in very good stead across the nation for where we are in the process.

Certainly, I know that the number—10 percent of people that have an electronic system right now, doctors that is, came—I know I saw it in the regional health authority review a few years ago. I think it may be higher than that, but not outrageously higher, and so we do have a great distance to go. There is a program that, of course, is being rolled out with family doctors' offices concerning electronic medical records, and we're going to continue to work with them and get very good advice. We get very good advice from the participants in the Physician Integrated Network on technology, broadly, and so we're going to continue to work on their advice with the expertise coming from Canada Health Infoway to take our health system to the next level.

I would agree with the member that there's still a lot of paper out there in an age where, you know, our children sometimes don't even know what to do with paper.

So it's time to change, and that's exactly what we're committed to do.

Mrs. Driedger: And I don't want to leave any impression that I don't understand the enormity of this project. I know that it is probably one of the biggest projects we've ever seen happening in health care.

What I was indicating when I was making my previous comments, I thought the way the commitment had been made had sounded to me at the time that 50 percent of patients would have an electronic health record. Now I think the minister is indicating that, you know, you can be given credit for some of that, if only even a small portion of a patient having a health record, you know, helps you to meet that goal.

But I understand that, unless you've got the family doctors having an electronic health record, it makes it very difficult to, you know, create the kind of system that I think this is intended to create. And if we're only seeing about 10 percent of Manitoba doctors having an electronic health record, it seems to me it's going to be difficult to move this forward in Manitoba.

I understand that Alberta—in Alberta they—25 percent of their doctors are using electronic health records, and I also understand that Manitoba is near the low end of the scale in Canada, in terms of the number of doctors that have picked up on this.

So it sounds like there is work to be done. It sounds like other provinces have also offered incentives to doctors to get them to buy into this. And I understand in Manitoba there's no financial support, for instance, for Manitoba physicians who want to adopt this technology in their practice. So it sounds like we could be a long way in Manitoba from achieving this, and it sounds like it's going to cost a significant amount of money to get to where we're going.

What I am, you know, wanting to see is, certainly, more accountability and transparency, you know, in progress, but also in terms of how much money is being spent on this.

I understand the project that is going on right now at St. Boniface Hospital is supposed to be the

creation—and I could be wrong and this is where I would ask for clarification from the minister, is the establishment of an electronic health record for a patient and that the intent that once it has been piloted there and the kinks worked out, that that is going to move through the province. Is that correct?

Ms. Oswald: Thank you to the member for her patience.

Again, I just want to reiterate on the subject of the EMR. Again, I think that we are higher in Manitoba than the 10 percent number. I don't think we've hit what the member raises today, that Alberta is stating that they've hit at 25, but there is lots of progress that has gone on in this issue, and that progress has involved a lot of work with doctors' offices in discussing and debating the best possible vendors for this because, of course, it doesn't really make any sense at all if there's all kinds of technology out there that doesn't co-operate or communicate with one another. So there's been lots of work done to choose vendors and develop interfaces so that this is going to be a seamless entity.

I also wanted to let the member know that with money that we have secured from Canada Health Infoway and provincial money, there's lots of work going on to develop the electronic medical record with a view to an electronic health record. We do have a plan for this and we do want to move as swiftly as possible, so we are making progress and we'll continue to be committed to do that.

On the subject of St. Boniface, the system that is being tested there is—the member's quite right in that the intent is to roll it out. It is an acute care kind of system, a hospital-based info system that is intended to roll out across other hospitals, in particular large—larger hospital settings.

* (15:40)

So it's not an all-encompassing primary care kind of technology, but it certainly is the acute care hospital-based information system that once, you know, tested and amended as appropriate will be intended to be rolled out.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate how much was budgeted for that St. Boniface project? I would think that there probably is a lump sum amount that was targeted. I would assume that the—a lot of those determinations were able to be made ahead of time, and that there would have been a—you know, an amount tagged for what that was going to cost. Can the minister indicate what that was?

Ms. Oswald: I'd have to do some review to find some specifics on the history of the HISP funding, and we'll endeavour to provide as much information as I can for the member. I just—I don't have it right here right now and I know there's an interest in moving it along.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us whether or not the project at St. Boniface Hospital is over budget?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, as I stated yesterday when we were discussing this variety of information projects, capital projects, you know, have varying degrees of being over or being under, and I would want to do some homework and return to the member with more information about the current status of this enormous project.

Mrs. Driedger: And I guess that concerns me that the minister wouldn't have a better handle on it. The—certainly, there's people on the front lines that are quite concerned about what is happening with the St. Boniface project.

There are comments out there that it is over budget. There are comments there that, no way is that project going to move beyond St. Boniface Hospital. There's, you know, some interesting comments actually being made. And I would ask the minister, you know, what type of updates is she getting about what's happening there?

I would've thought that this one would have been more top of mind for her, especially as it is a significant project. There are many comments being made about it at different levels out there and, you know, there must be ongoing evaluation as this project is taking place.

I realize that it's a big change, so certain comments are going to come forward because it is a change. But, also, I'm hearing comments, you know, of various natures about how this is progressing.

Mr. Gregory Dewar, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

So I'm assuming that she has been given updates on this project, and I would ask her for her current understanding of where that project at St. B. is at.

Ms. Oswald: Yes, of course, we have, you know, monthly financial meetings on some issues. We have biweekly financial discussions on other issues and indeed this is a very big project, you know, very, you know, several elements to the project. And, you know, I understand that the member is absolutely

entitled to listen to people's theories on, you know, the ebbing and flowing of money within the budget.

What I'm committing to her is to get her the most up-to-date information that I can that is factual. So I'm going to continue to work with that. You know, there have been reports at times in the project where HISP was on budget; there have been reports over time that it was over budget. I do believe I even recall a meeting where it was under budget.

So, again, I've committed to the member to provide her with information that—you know, as much as I can gather, and I'm going to provide her with as many facts as I can. We know that the St. Boniface initiative was the first one of its kind. We are taking time to get it right. You know, there are going to be bumps along the way. I think the member acknowledged that. And changing systems, especially when it comes to technological systems, is always challenging and we acknowledge that.

But, again, I'm going to go by the most up-to-date information I can get for the member and not rely on, perhaps, a frustrated person's supposition of the budgetary status. So, again, I'm going to try and get her the facts.

Mrs. Driedger: The St. Boniface project would be one aspect of that. Does the minister have a—like, one number that actually indicates how much has been spent so far on eHealth in Manitoba?

Ms. Oswald: Just as a point of clarification, is the member talking about a one-lump-sum number of what has been spent on eHealth since eHealth itself was created? Is she talking about what has been spent on technology with a view towards an electronic health record that may have preceded eHealth?

I think you might be talking predominantly about capital but maybe you're talking about operating—maybe just some clarity on what, you know, the big total is that you might be looking for.

Mrs. Driedger: That's exactly the kind of line I'd like to see in, you know, the budget. Because if it is a provincial program, if it is a funding envelope—no different really than some of these others that we see in the Estimates book—it would be something that would be in there, that would include capital, that would include operating.

I know the government made an announcement a few years ago of 150 million. And then, you know, I'm looking at the annual report for eHealth and they

want 40 million in capital every year. They want an annual operating budget of over 50 million, and I don't know whether capital is included in the 50 million.

There's a lot of numbers out there; 400 million, I guess, if we take the capital needs of 40 million times 10 years, I suppose we might be looking at 40 million over that period of time. There's a lot of numbers out there and this is pretty soon going to be, like, a billion-dollar project.

I think that kind of information needs to be very clear in the government's books because that is just too big a number not to have its own line, so that it can be monitored very, very closely.

So I guess, you know, my question would be, you know, if eHealth as an entity has been given so much money, like, you know, the minister announced 150 million over a number of years ago, is there a way that her department has tracked this so that right now, you can say, yes, we've spent, you know, 300 million on the project right now and so much is capital and so much is operating? Like, is there such a number?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, and I mean I guess I would begin by saying, you know, the member said that I made her point when I asked that last question. And in a way I feel like she's making my point, in that if we were to say here's the one-lump line for what's being spent on eHealth and then put a number down there, pretty big number, as the member says, it wouldn't begin to capture the kind of detailed information that I think you're seeing in a financial report.

* (15:50)

When I look at eHealth's financial report, you know on—you know, 6.1 summarized statement of operations, I think you're getting a pretty decent breakdown there of the operations and how things are unfolding in that respect.

On the subsequent pages, there is a summary of capital investments included in that report that gives a sense of what's being spent on the big projects like HISP and risk packs and so forth. So it does break it down in some more detail. There's also the issue that eHealth isn't just projects per se. We're talking about the fact that some of its budgets is used to run, you know, the day-to-day operations of that, which is being installed. Once you install a project, you also have to run it every day and maintain it. So that's part of the day-to-day operations.

So I think, overall, what I'm hearing the member say is that she would like to see more information about eHealth, with a view to having people understand where investments are, the progress of those investments, ongoing operations, which I think is well on its way to being reported in those annual reports.

But, again, in the context of some of the national dialogue on eHealth and eHealth systems, I think there are going to be a number of recommendations made about how reporting might be transformed. Again, I said to the member we would look at how other jurisdictions are reporting their eHealth monies. We know that when the Auditor General in Ontario was doing a review of their situation, that we immediately endeavoured to review those recommendations and discovered Manitoba was in very good stead in relation to those recommendations.

So I hear the member saying she wants information to be presented differently, and I'm hearing her suggestion and I believe a number of times have committed to look at the suggestions that she's made with a view to making to some changes.

Mrs. Driedger: Who actually approves eHealth spending?

Ms. Oswald: Again, we talked about this a little bit yesterday, that there are a variety of levels of approval that various elements of eHealth go through. Of course, Manitoba Health would provide the WRHA with monies, you know, in—as part of the budgeting process, the WRHA would be involved.

Capital projects, of course, these large ones that we've been talking about, like HISP or risk packs or what have you, go through regular capital project approval processes within government spending. So there really are, you know, multiple levels of oversight, depending on the nature of the spending that's taking place.

I mean, I'm making the assumption the member is perhaps talking about capital projects. Maybe that's not necessarily the case. But that, of course, would go through the regular government channels for capital projects.

Mrs. Driedger: I guess I'm probably talking more than just capital projects because the, you know, eHealth is spending \$50 million, or spent \$50 million in fiscal year that ended 2009. So somebody would have had to approve that money, and I see Manitoba Health funded that to the tune of pretty much \$44 million.

So Manitoba Health then, I guess—they show some recoveries here but, generally, Manitoba Health is funding eHealth and, you know, a lot of that salaries and benefits. I'm not sure again, you know—I mean, here's a question that just jumps right out at me, \$28 million on salaries and benefits. Like, I have no idea where you're going to be spending that kind of money. But somebody in Manitoba Health is obviously approving a request for money, so that's why I am, you know, I'm suggesting that maybe we need to include it in a more clear way in the minister's own budget statements because, ultimately, if it's a provincial program, the buck stops with the Minister of Health. But she's saying, well, she gives the money to the WRHA and then they make a whole bunch of decisions, too. But, ultimately, if she's giving \$44 million to this plus perhaps a whole lot more on the capital side of things, then I think there just needs to be more transparency.

My question from this is around professional fees. They show that they spent a lot of money, actually, on professional fees, and it looks here like \$2.5 million. Only a million was budgeted. They spent \$2.5 million. They went in deficit by a million and a half. What kind of professional fees would be paid out by eHealth?

Ms. Oswald: Again, I want to reiterate for the member that very close attention is paid to how these large sums of money for investments in technology are being made in the province in terms of the governance and how it works in Manitoba.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, eHealth is a provincial program starting back in '06. It is administratively housed within the WRHA and, as such, it's subject to all WRHA policies and procedures which we spent some time on yesterday talking about; how strict they are, actually, to the point of maybe annoying some people, but very, very strict rules that exist concerning procurement, strict rules concerning conduct of people under the purview of the WRHA. And this admin arrangement with the WRHA provides Manitoba eHealth the ability to also leverage important administrative functions like finance and human resources, permitting eHealth to focus on the core mandate. So the housing within the WRHA is actually in an effort to share resources and, arguably, save money.

* (16:00)

So the chief information officer of Manitoba eHealth is an employee of the WRHA and reports to

the COO of the WRHA, who also serves as the chair of the provincial eHealth Program Council.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I talked a bit yesterday about oversight being provided by the oversight committee, which includes deputy ministers of Health, of Innovation, Energy and Mines and the CEO of the WRHA. And there's also additional oversight by the Manitoba eHealth provincial program council, which is an executive committee reporting to the deputy minister of Health.

So within that context—and, I would say, lots of oversight—we look at the issue of spending and tendering and accountability. So, of course, as I've mentioned, we asked for a review of the recommendations from both the Auditor-General of Canada's '09 report on electronic health records and Canada Health Infoway and the report that was done in Ontario by their OAG. And again, we have been advised that the Manitoba eHealth program, due to substantial administrative and governance structures, already follows a bunch of the recommendations found within these reports.

On the issue of professional fees or consultants, they are used in Manitoba for specific projects when shorter term specialized technical experience and skills may be required, and they are hired through a competitive process, which we weren't necessarily seeing in other jurisdictions. Almost every one of Manitoba's eHealth procurement issues is subject to competitive, rigorous and transparent tendering policies, and in the pretty rare events where sole-source contracts occur, they are minimized and they are subject to rather heightened scrutiny, I would say. Before any sole-source contract is approved, a sole-source justification form has to be signed off not only by eHealth's chief information officer but by WRHA Logistics Services, the chief operating officer or financial—chief financial office and the WRHA CEO, so there's sort of a triple layer of caution there. And again, all requests for proposals are published on the Bidding Web site, they're publicly available, and our requirements and evaluation processes are very similar to what's used in Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia.

So while professional fees, you know, on the line that the member is citing, you know, might appear to be a large number, they are done in a fashion that is under lots of scrutiny, that—compared to what we saw happening in some other jurisdictions or in other reports. Manitoba was already ahead of the game in its scrutiny for that.

So, again, there's lots of oversight. Do we think that, you know, it's impossible for us to do any more oversight? No, probably there's room for more, and we're going to continue to work with our partners in the WRHA and take advice as there's additional scrutiny on other eHealth programs across the nation and make sure that we're doing the best that we can.

Mrs. Driedger: There's no independent oversight, though, is there? It seems all of the people that are involved in the oversight committee are maybe some of the people that are on the eHealth provincial council or they're part of government. There doesn't appear to be any external, outside, independent person or persons looking over eHealth. It's sort of all of the same people monitoring themselves is what it appears.

Ms. Oswald: Again, I would say to the member that it's not measurably different than other government programs. I mean, I can say that, of course, the WRHA has an external audit that's done. The Canada Health Infoway has oversight over the spending of the money, CIHI does analysis. The money is subject to—or the spending is subject to review by the Office of the Auditor General here in Manitoba. So, actually, I think there are, you know, a number of eyes outside of the program that would be having a look at spending at any given time.

Mrs. Driedger: My concern with that, however, is that in 2004, when things got hot for the WRHA about their admin costs, they buried them within—you know, they created a new line in their budget, and they actually buried their corporate admin costs within a broader line. So, I'm, you know—I'm—I don't have a whole lot of faith in the fact that there will automatically be transparency in the system.

I would also ask the minister, related to all of the capital purchases for eHealth, is all of that debt financed? Are we looking at 400, you know, perhaps \$400 million in debt that will be accumulated over 10 years? As, you know, if eHealth gets what they are asking for, and that's, I think, 40 million a year in capital spending for the foreseeable future. Are we looking at all of that being debt financed?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, so working backwards—yes, it's debt finance; it's part of the overall capital plan. I wanted to let the member know that there's another source of information within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority's consolidated financial statements. Information services is, indeed, a line item that exists in there, so there's yet another source where information can be found.

And, then, just going back to the beginning of her statement about admin costs—I mean, I think we spent the whole first day on this—seems so long ago now—that again, there's more and more work being done to ask regional health authorities to provide more information about admin costs, which—I think the member and I had quite a lengthy discussion on—in my view, should also be explained as, you know, corporate costs versus front-line care, you know, patient-oriented kinds of costs.

So there's lots to be learned and lots of work to be done. But again, CIHI, in doing its analysis, shows those costs as trending down. And, again, when we look at peeling out patient costs for the WRHA, patient-focussed costs, we are seeing the WRHA at roughly 3.1 percent. And the member's own election target, back in '07, was 3 percent, so I think that we're moving in the right direction.

Again, the member and I, you know, may not necessarily agree on how information is captured or where it's captured, but we know that more information is being provided in different ways, trying to respond to requests that the member and others might make about improving transparency, and we're committed to do that.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us what kind of progress has been made on privatizing the backroom operations of the WRHA, where payroll, HR, finance, supply chain were all going to be privatized. And I understand an RFP went out and I'd like to just, right now, ask the minister how far along has that proceeded.

* (16:10)

Ms. Oswald: I can tell the member that negotiations are moving forward with a contractor in developing systems to do whatever we can to be improving efficiencies. Again, just to be clear on language of privatizing and so forth, this—there is an outsourcing that's going to be going on. We are working to—with this contractor to develop, you know, under, you know, SAP protocols the best possible way to find efficiencies, and that negotiation is ongoing at this point.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate, then, it's ongoing, like, nothing has happened? It's still all a work in progress, that there's been no changes made to, you know, this company taking over some of these functions?

Ms. Oswald: No, there's lots of work, actually, that's been going on. Again, just to be clear, the company

isn't taking over. They're working on developing a system that's going to help with financials broadly, issues of payroll. Those are the first steps that are happening. So lots of work has happened, but the negotiations continue on the shape and form that that needs to be taking.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate which company is working on that?

Ms. Oswald: I need to find some clarity. I know the rules on tendering and contracts can be very complex, and I'm just not sure at this point if I'm permitted to disclose that. So I would need to clarify that prior to putting it on the formal record. I'm sure the member understands.

Mrs. Driedger: I thought that was already all public information, and I thought it was EDS that actually ended up getting that RFP—got that tender.

And I thought that the amount for this was 30 million a year over 10 years for \$300 million. Is that not what is actually going on right now, then, at the WRHA?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, again, I can inform the member, I believe, within the fair baseball of contracts and so forth, that it is the same company. EDS has been purchased, so that's part of an issue and, also, it is a scaled-back version of the original plan. There has been a lot of work that has gone on. There are—they are developing a system for the things I mentioned, finance thing—issues and payroll, but there are still some elements that are being developed and negotiated. So, as I say, work is being done. Lots of work is being done but there are negotiation elements of the project still to be completed. So, you know, that's why I'm saying that it isn't totally complete in terms of settling the contracts. There's work going on.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister clarify her statement for me, saying that there isn't a company coming in and taking over this? Is that not what the point of outsourcing was? That—I believe it was EDS, and they might have been purchased by Hewlett-Packard or some other company, I can't totally recall, but I thought—wasn't that the point of this? That it would be outsourced to a company that already has the ability to do all of these things. Is that not the same process?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, there was some initial proposals that came forward and ideas were discussed but, as I indicated earlier, this isn't being outsourced. The

company is doing work on the issues that I've suggested. It's not outsourcing.

Mrs. Driedger: That's quite a dramatic change then from how Tim Sale started this project moving forward. There was, you know, a significant amount of media coverage on it. I know the union was upset because it would've meant a loss of union jobs. But the need was well defined, that this was an appropriate thing that needed to be done. These jobs would've been kept secure because these jobs would've moved over with the company, so there wasn't going to be any loss of jobs. But there was also indication that within the system the equipment and everything was so old that in order to buy internally what was needed, it would've cost an arm and a leg.

But is the minister now saying that that's exactly what is happening and that's the decision now? They didn't outsource all of this. They're doing it all internal and bearing this huge price tag?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Chair, so—yes, the member is correct in saying that there was an original proposal that was a city-wide initiative, you know, a very large project, you know, of a significant magnitude. And as work continued to develop on what the best path forward would be, there was a decision made to implement on a more incremental basis.

Certainly, analysis was showing in other jurisdictions, you know, projects of large scale tended to, you know, get in trouble, and this wasn't a path that we wanted to continue on. So the incremental approach was chosen to be the preferred approach, starting, of course, with HSC. So the citywide, massive project is now going to take a much more phased in and, arguably, cautious approach. We don't think that's a bad thing, and, as we go forward implementing the project and learning from it, we believe that the potential exposures for larger scaled bad things to happen, you know, will be minimized, of course, and that is—that's the path that we're on right now, and, yes, as the member said, it was HP. I can say that.

Mrs. Driedger: The union was really taken by surprise at the time that this was happening. Did this minister change her mind because of the concerns being raised by the union?

Ms. Oswald: I spoke to some members that were very concerned about what would happen to their employ. You know, there were some very compelling stories that were brought forward, but I

can let the member know that as we, you know, certainly listen to those voices, the issue of the exposure of the very large project just, in my view, became concerning, and an incremental approach to implementation appeared, on the best analysis, to be the safer way to go. So it was—it is a more cautious approach, I admit that. But, you know, there were a number of reasons that the course of action was amended. Of course, you know, as was pointed out today, this is taxpayer money, and I think a forward-moving approach, but a cautious one, is not a bad way to go.

Mrs. Driedger: Tim Sale had indicated that if the government didn't move, and move fairly quickly in how this was originally established that this actually was going to cost taxpayers a significant amount of money because, indeed, it would be taxpayers that would be forced to pay for it. The outsourcing was meant to protect taxpayers by taking some of the—you know, some of these issues and old equipment and lack of IT and lack of expertise and outsource it so that, in fact, the taxpayer would be better protected, and Tim Sale sounded like he'd done quite a bit of work on that, quite a bit of homework. He was very articulate in it, and it sounded like, you know, it made good sense at the time. And then—now the minister—and RFPs went out, tenders came in, a certain company was chosen.

Is the minister indicating, then, that a contract was not then signed with EDS at the time?

Ms. Oswald: Again, I'm not going to dispute with the member the articulate nature of the former Health minister, Tim Sale. He can certainly sound eloquent on lots of subjects, because he is.

What I can say, though, is that there was plenty of due diligence done when information came back about how the project would unfold on the massive scale, and so more due diligence was done to review options and the costs, and the decision to scale back was made at the time in an abundance of safety for the taxpayer. And I want to assure the member that that scaled back version is moving forward. There were—certainly, arrangements were made, and EDS—at the time, there were negotiations that were entered into to do specific pieces of work. And, again, there's work that is moving forward, as I mentioned in the last couple of answers, but, again, the more information that you have, the better positioned you are in real terms and in real time to make the best financial decisions that you can. And that's exactly what was done. The project is moving forward, not

in the magnitude that was originally intended, but we believe that having done due diligence, you know, on a variety of options, is actually lessening exposure to cost and we think that's a good thing.

Mrs. Driedger: I think the minister's really spinning me, considering the information that was available at the time. The due diligence had been done. There was a lot of work. I read the RFP. I talked to people in the industry, and, in fact, somehow this minister came in and has taken a sharp turn in a—opposite direction. Is she indicating now that this, basically, is all staying within house now, that there is no outsourcing of any of this work?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, and, again, I want to say to the member that HP is doing lots of work, as I've said, on the development of the project, you know, helping with change management, you know, the implementation of changes being made to the system. They're doing the work on the financials, but the broad outsourcing, as it was originally intended in that—in the announcement of the, sort of, the magnitude of that project, that has changed, yes.

Mrs. Driedger: So would EDS or Hewlett-Packard or whoever is doing it now be actually just a consultant, then, on this, and that the work itself is staying within the public system?

Ms. Oswald: So HP, again, in the name of clarity, they are developing the system, and the running of the system, which was originally purported to be outsourced, is going to be done in-house.

Mrs. Driedger: I've run out of time. In fact, I have to apologize to my colleague and to everybody from Finance that's sitting outside. I've taken their time. But—and I'm sorry I didn't get onto this topic a lot sooner, but I would encourage that when concurrence comes along, I will pick up on this issue. And I'll give the minister fair warning so that she can have her briefing notes in order for that period of time.

* (16:20)

And my one final question is: In terms of advertising, would the minister be prepared to provide us with a list of all of the advertising that has occurred within Health in the past year, which would include Manitoba Health and the WRHA, and a list of all of the advertising, what it was about, how much was paid for each one, and where those ads would have been run.

Ms. Oswald: A point of clarification, you're including H1N1 in that, I'm presuming.

Mrs. Driedger: Yes, for sure, H1N1, appreciating that it was an unusual circumstance. So, yes, H1N1, but all of the advertising that was taken on by Manitoba Health. I don't know if you can provide me with WRHA's advertising, but if you're able to do that, I would like to see theirs as well, and also the budget for the coming year for any paid advertising that you plan. Is the minister prepared to do that?

Ms. Oswald: I'll work on getting the information as best I can to the member.

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

Resolution 21.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20,040,000 for Health, Corporate and Provincial Program Support, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,077,000 for Health, Health Workforce, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$52,081,000 for Health, Primary Health Care, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,363,000 for Health, Regional Affairs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$46,420,000 for Health, Public Health, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,399,024,000 for Health, Health Services Insurance Fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$95,172,000 for Health, Capital Funding, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,126,000 for Health, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.10: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,012,000 for Health, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for Estimates of this department is item 21.1.(a) the Minister's Salary, contained in resolution 21.1.

We'll pause for a brief moment while the minister's staff leaves the table.

The floor is now open for questions, if any, on this subject matter.

Ms. Oswald: Yes, Mr. Chair, I move that 21.1.(a) the Minister's Salary be reduced by 20 percent, or 9,000, to 37,000.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable Minister for Health that item 21.1.(a) the Minister's Salary be reduced by 20 percent, or \$9,000, to \$37,000. The motion is in order.

Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

Seeing none—oh, honourable minister?

Ms. Oswald: I'm just—yes, thank you, Mr. Chair—wanting to provide additional clarity. As members are acutely aware, this reduction is already in effect and legislation will be brought forward to make the reduction law.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for that clarification.

Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Question. The question before the committee, very briefly, once again, is the

Minister's Salary being reduced by 20 percent, or \$9,000, to \$37,000.

Shall the motion pass?

The motion is accordingly passed. Okay.

An Honourable Member: I didn't hear anybody.

Mr. Chairperson: I need a "yea."

An Honourable Member: Yea.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. Okay. All right, so just to be clear, the motion has accordingly passed. The Minister's Salary will be reduced by \$9,000.

Now, moving back to

Resolution 21.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,515,000 for Health, Administration, Finance and Accountability, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Revised resolution agreed to.

This concludes our considerations for the Department of Health. Thanks to all.

And the next set of Estimates, I believe, to be considered are for the Department of Finance.

Would committee members like a brief recess while we change the guard, as it were? I'll take that as a yes. The committee is now in brief recess.

The committee recessed at 4:27 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:29 p.m.

FINANCE

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Order. We'll now resume Estimates in this committee.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is the ever-popular Department of Finance.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Indeed, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Please proceed.

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to begin by saying that I'm very pleased to be here to present the Estimates and to address the Estimates of this budget.

It is a—the whole budget for Finance is \$354.5 million, and this includes our government debt, public debt expenditures and net tax credits payments. But the actual operating expenditure related to department programs is \$44.8 million. And this was a reduction in spending of 5.5 percent of the 4–60–\$46.8 million that was in the budget last year.

And there is 449.2 FTEs in the department, and in this budget we will see two additional FTEs added in, for 451.2.

* (16:30)

The financial—Finance programs and services are under 10 main appropriations, and we could—we will go through each of them in detail, and as I indicated to the—my critic, that if there's a particular section that she wants to go through, that if she could provide us with that, we will certainly be able to answer the questions whether they'd be in the area of Administration and Finance; Treasury; Comptroller; Taxation; Taxation, Economic and Intergovernmental Fiscal Research; Insurance and Risk Management; Treasury Board Secretariat; Costs Related to Capital Assets; and Net Tax Credit Payments. The Public Debt costs are statutory and not voted on, as part of the appropriation, but I'd be pleased to—I'm prepared to discuss the SILSC, the supplementary information that includes information on Canadian capital investments and Manitoba Securities Commission. So all of these are areas we can cover.

When we look at this budget, I know that we've said many times that we are—the recession has had an impact on us in Manitoba. We've—although we have not seen the same kind of impact or slowdown that Canada has, we have seen some impacts. But our diverse economy has—one that's not in this—one industry dominated has helped our economy to come through, become—be more stable over the past decade.

Because of the focus that we have put on jobs in training, Manitoba is one of only three provinces that has been able to avoid employment decline in the last year and still grew above the national average. Members opposite will know that we've looked very seriously at the impact of this economic downturn and we have put forward a five-year plan, and I've outlined that five-year plan in the Legislature. But I just want to point out the areas: Investment in vital front-line services, stimulus and economic growth by investing in infrastructure and capital renewal, managing government spending, restoring balance and keeping Manitoba affordable.

If you look at the front-line services, certainly we have made huge investments to improve front-line services in the time we're in office, whether it be in training more people, or improving front-line services, such as the services that are improved for people with mental health issues, whether it be the various initiatives that have been launched to improve its apprenticeship and, in fact, this year there's \$2 million to create over 600 apprenticeship seats, expanding tax credits that make it easier for businesses to hire students. In that area we've done a lot of work and we continue to increase the number of doctors and nurses. Public safety is an important issue for many people and certainly the police helicopter and cadets in Winnipeg, and new prosecutors will help us in that area. The Premier's Economic Advisory Council on education, poverty, and citizenship will help us focus better on the challenges of poverty.

In the area of stimulus, we have increased the spending, and this budget invests a further \$1.8 billion in infrastructure and that's equivalent to creating about 29,000 new jobs. And this new infrastructure, whether it be in social housing, investing in drinking water and treatment, new schools, or health-care facilities, will help—will—same time as creating jobs will have a long-term infrastructure to help Manitobans and improve the quality of life into the future.

Investments are being made to restore and improve public assets while still being sustainable with a net debt-to-GDP ratio that has declined over time. Our net debt-to-GDP is projected to be 26.8 percent or almost 19 percent lower than it was in the 1999 level at 32.9 percent.

So I think that's very important to look at what we have, what our total liabilities are because net debt is the most appropriate measure of debt, as it represents the total liabilities of government, less its financial assets, including pensions assets, debt repayments for Crown such as Hydro.

As well as that, we have, in that same period that we have been able to reduce our debt to GDP, we have also—the cost of servicing the public debt has been reduced by more than half, from 15 cents on the dollar down to 6 cents on every dollar. At the same time, we continue to make investments in education, at public schools at 3 percent, universities at 4.5 percent, creating new opportunities for apprenticeships, as I had mentioned earlier, as well as focussing on research and innovation and

environmental-focussed projects to position—that will help us meet our targets.

There are many projects that are on that are helping stimulate the economy, such as the Wuskwatim generating station, in partnership with NCN and Manitoba Hydro, the wind project at St. Joseph—all are economic projects.

One of the challenges that we—one of the issues that we said we would address is managing government spending. We've said we have to be realistic and that's why there has been—half the departments have had a reduction in their spending. We've asked MLAs to take a salary pause. We're asking for, as we do negotiations to have a wage pause with the public sector. All those things we are doing to keep—to live within our means.

And if you look at the record, over the past decade, Manitoba's growth in per capita expenditures is the second lowest amongst all of the province.

We know that we are in a challenging time, that we face financial pressures, but we know that we also—our commitment is to restore our balance over several years in both financial—in both a financially and socially responsible manner.

We are going to draw down on our rainy day savings account to pay down debt incurred as the result of the economic downturn, preserving investments in vital front-line services. Budget 2010 dedicates \$96 million from the account to start paying down principal and interest, and an estimated \$600 million from the stabilization fund will be paid on principal and interest over the next four years.

We are no different than any other province, or the federal government and, like most other provinces and the federal government, we project a steady return to fiscal balance in a prudent and responsible manner.

Revenue forecasts for the new fiscal year are moderate at 1.7 percent. The forecasted growth for Manitoba in 2011-'10-11 is the third lowest among the nine provincial governments that have introduced budgets.

The federal government, on the other hand, projects—has projections of 6.4 percent average revenue growth over the medium term compared to the Manitoba projections of 3.2 percent.

Revenue growths through this—that recovery when compared with controlled expenditure growth

of 1.8 percent is projected to result in a return to surplus by 2014.

So that's our goal, Mr. Chairman, to return to balance, but at the same time keep Manitoba affordable—an affordable place to live. And if you look at the things we have done to make Manitoba an affordable place to live, we have provided \$723 million in tax relief for Manitoba families since 1999, with no increase in sales tax or personal income tax. We've provided relief for businesses, and when you look at what the other people are saying about Manitoba, when you look at what Saskatchewan is saying, Manitoba has lower tax rates than they are—in fact, Saskatchewan used us in their budget, to compare, and talked about our rates of taxation, and put us ahead of them.

So we've brought some new personal tax changes that include the fitness tax credit, tuition fee income tax rebate advance, fertility treatment tax credit. We've increased tobacco sales, and the sales tax exemption on tanning has been eliminated.

We—so those are the steps that—the changes that we have made but, ultimately, our goal is to keep Manitoba an affordable place to live, and I'm very pleased that the various financial institutes have said that the budget that we have brought forward is realistic during—budget to bring forward during this economic downturn.

* (16:40)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for those opening comments.

Does the opposition critic have an opening statement?

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Just wanted to take this opportunity to welcome the minister to her portfolio. I know this is her first budget that she's brought in. And I know, from time to time, and we get into heated debate, and I'm sure we will through the course of the rest of this session, but there is a time to congratulate. And I think this is the appropriate time to do that, being the, I believe, the first woman Minister of Finance in our province. And so it's always exciting to see women in portfolios like this. So congratulations to the minister on that.

I can recall just when I got involved in—when I was first elected, almost 10 years ago, about nine and a half years ago now, we had—or, certainly, when the NDP first came in a year or so before that in the

general election in '99, and the first budget was, I think, around \$6 billion, maybe a little bit more at that time. And we're now looking at a budget this year of some—of upwards of \$10.8 billion. So there's been a lot of spending that's taken place.

The size of the budget is much larger than it was back in 2000—in 1999, when they first come in. And the one thing that I found pretty consistent over times with this government is that there's been a lot of announcements on where the money is being spent. From department to department to department, they've made announcements about \$2 million for such and such a program, \$3 million for such and such a program. But, in my nine and a half years of being here, I have never once seen an announcement where they're also asking for what are we getting for it, what are we—what are our expectations for the money that we're spending.

And so I think it's unfortunate, and it is a way that, I know, through politics and everything else, announcements can sound really good, that we're spending all this money in certain places. But if we're not getting the results that Manitobans expect to get from the government, then that's where, you know, that's where we differ in our opinions. We would like to see more—if you're making an announcement and spending \$2 million in a certain area, then what are—you know, how long is that going to be? Is it over five years, or what is—what have you. What are the expectations for the results and the outcomes to do with the announcements that are being made? And, if you don't meet those results or those expectations, what are the repercussions, or what is the direction that the government will take from there?

And, I think, as a government, and we need to start moving towards that kind of reporting, as opposed to just announcements after announcements about the money and where it's being spent, because it's very difficult to track, over the years, where the money is being spent and whether or not we're really getting the value for where that money is being spent.

And, you know, I think there are so many examples here of Manitobans who are just wondering, okay, so we've spent—you know, we were, sort of, a \$6-billion budget, we're now 10.8 billion; what are we getting for it? Are we getting more for the money, the tax money that we're spending? Taxes are on the rise, and we're falling out of sync, from a competitive standpoint, with other

provinces. And we know that. And we brought that forward with this government over the years. And I just—I want to reiterate that that's—it's very important for us, from a competitive standpoint, to ensure that we don't continue to fall out of sync from—relative to other provinces.

And I think we can look to Saskatchewan, next to us, where there have been some serious—I mean, Saskatchewan has made some significant improvements in their province. And they have taken themselves from being a have-not province—I can remember asking questions in question period nine and a half years ago when I first came in, and comparing us to Saskatchewan back then. And, back then, Saskatchewan was actually worse off than we were. And now the situation has flipped.

And I see that opportunity that has been lost, over the last number of years, where we could have been like Saskatchewan today, a have province. But what's unfortunate is that we're not. And so I want to see from here, and I know the government has come out with its five-year plan, but in that plan, I have several questions around where is this government really taking us relative to other provinces across Canada, because it is all relative to how we're doing—how other provinces are doing, if we want to be competitive out there and attract the kind of people that we need here to grow our economy.

I think if we're looking at also what we're getting for our money, we cannot overlook and—sort of, where things are going in our health-care system. The health-care system, I believe—have my notes in front of me here—but I believe it's about 38 percent of the entire budget, and that's—and it's growing, and it's an issue that is—and it's an issue that I believe is happening in provinces all across Canada. And we need to try and find ways of—I mean, because before we know it, the health-care system will be 50 percent of the budget. And what are we going to do, and how are you going to work with other provinces to deal with this issue, because it's a very serious issue going forward. And I'm sure that the minister has talked to her counterparts in other provinces and with the federal government and there is some sort of a plan there, but I'd be interested to see what it is going forward.

If I'm to look at just our health-care system here, though, the expenditures within that system for the bureaucracy have increased, certainly for the WRHA, but overall, bureaucracy seems to have increased significantly over front-line services. And I

think as we develop more in terms of bureaucracy and less in terms of delivering services, it comes back to that question: What are we getting for the dollars that we're spending? And if we've got a situation where wait lists are on the rise and, you know, there's bloating bureaucracies in a system that really, quite frankly, in many ways, is only there for those that can advocate for themselves to get in and somehow manoeuvre the system. And I think what people are seeing is that we're spending a lot more in our tax dollars, but we're not really getting out of it what we should be getting.

And, I think, if you look at the child welfare system, where kids are falling through the cracks as well—we look at Gage Guimond and others over the years who—there's been very, very serious issues in that system and, again, I mean, we need to protect, as a government, and it's our role to try and protect those most vulnerable in our society.

And I think, moving forward, we need to make sure that, as a government, when we're thinking about our expenditures and whatnot, where those are going, that they're going to the people that are most vulnerable out there.

And I think the unfortunate thing that we're seeing here, and it goes back to that question again: What are we getting for the money that we're spending? And, unfortunately, what we're seeing is, you know, children continue to fall through the cracks. And so, again, it's that spend more, get less kind of plan that this government has in place.

And, I think, if—I mean, even if you look at our Justice system there's a revolving door on criminals. We talked about this in question period today. You know crime is on the rise and, you know, we seem to be on and off the list over the years as the murder capital of Canada. Lots of money, again, being spent on the justice system but, you know, again, what are we getting for the money that we're spending?

And so it seems that we're spending more but we're getting less in the way of services. And it seems to be a common theme throughout whatever department you, kind of, you look at. And so that's sort of the unfortunate part about that.

The one, sort of, main theme that I wanted to say, as well, is that, you know, again, there is that sort of spend more, get less attitude from this government. And I would like to see a lot more about—from not only where the money is being spent

or how much money is being spent on what programs, but what are the outcomes that we're getting for the money that's being spent.

And, you know, again we hear lots of announcements from this government, announcements, sometimes re-announcements. It's—over the years there's been many re-announcements, and, again, it's just sort of, you know, nice to have these programs that look good and you're announcing to the public and re-announcing to the public. You're spending the money, but what are we getting for the money that we're spending?

* (16:50)

And so I think that that has to be the focus of our questions. We certainly have a number of questions that we'd like to ask today, so I will end my comments there.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the honourable critic for her opening comments.

Now, under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is the last item considered for our Department of the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 7.1.(a) contained in resolution 7.1.

And at this time we would invite some of the minister's staff to join us at the table. And, minister, if you'd be so kind as to introduce them to the committee members.

Ms. Wowchuk: I'd like to introduce my deputy minister, Mr. Hugh Eliasson; Bruce Gray, who is an assistant deputy minister; and Erroll Kavanagh, who is director of finance.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much. A quick question for the committee—is there a wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department chronologically or to have a global discussion?

Mrs. Stefanson: It would be great if we could do a global discussion, but I know the minister and I did speak earlier, and, certainly, we will try to the best of our ability to try and focus our questions in certain areas, so we don't have to have the entire Department of Finance here.

So I do—I will be respectful and mindful of that, if the minister agrees.

Ms. Wowchuk: Certainly. If the—if my critic could give me some idea, if not today but tomorrow of which areas she would like to focus on for the day,

then we would make sure that appropriate staff were in the room.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. Thank you very much everyone. It's therefore agreed that discussion in this department will proceed on a global basis, and the floor is, accordingly, open for questions.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chairperson, some of the questions I have today, and I know we only have about eight minutes or so left today, so I thought, maybe, I would just, maybe, ask a couple of policy-type questions, just to throw the ball up for the minister and let her hit them into the park.

But one of the areas that I—we have talked about before and that is the transfer payments from the federal government. And the—when we've talked about, you know, Saskatchewan, you know, no longer being a have-not province and where they have done and some of the policy decisions they have made over the years to take them away and off, you know, away from being dependent on the federal government to—for their budget.

Is there—do you believe that we should be reliant on the federal government for transfer payments?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, you know, there are shared responsibilities with federal and provincial governments. And the federal government has responsibilities in health care and the health and social transfer are part of those—the federal government paying for those—their share of the responsibility. Every province gets that, every province.

And if you look at the numbers, other provinces in those—some of those areas get quite a bit more. Now the member wants to talk—when we talk about equalization, equalization is part of being in Canada. It's part of our Constitution that there is—part of being Canadian—where this ability to share in resources, revenues that are generated in other parts of the country, and then being able to bring people to a level.

Now—but I will disagree with the member when she says Manitoba is a have-not province. I'm quite, actually, quite embarrassed when people say that Manitoba is a have-not province, when you look at all the wealth.

I'm quite proud of our province, of what we have done as far—in the leadership role that Manitoba has played in many areas. If you look at the things that we have in this province, if you look at the—you

know, I'll say one of the things, the Human Rights Museum, something that puts Manitoba on the world map.

I don't think Manitoba's a have-not province. The member talked about Saskatchewan and, you know, if you look back at history, there was a time when Saskatchewan was in a very difficult situation. There was a time when Alberta needed further transfer payments. It depends on where your economy is. Saskatchewan has now got a—some natural—more natural resource revenue and they have additional monies there.

But do I think that we should have transfer payments? I think equalization is part of our Constitution, and I think transfer payments for health care and social responsibilities are part of the federal—a federal government's responsibility and I don't see that changing.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, and just to be clear, I was—I should have been more clear and I was speaking about the equalization payments and the equalization transfers. But certainly—and just to be clear as well, the term "have not" is used by—not just by members of the opposition, but it's used by—as a term for provinces across Canada and has by many groups and organizations across the country to refer to provinces who continue to rely on equalization payments to balance their budgets or for their revenue stream, for their core operating budget.

And there are other provinces who have made the tough decision that they want to be more self-reliant and they want to be more accountable. And they want to ensure that, you know, as Manitobans, that we're looking after ourselves, and that is something to be proud of, and that is a government decision as to whether or not they choose from a policy standpoint to move us in the direction of being less reliant on other provinces for our core operating budget and to pay for expenses in our province.

And there are decisions that this government, you know—this is—there are things that this government could have done over the last 10 years to take us in that direction. I mean, they've chosen not to, to date. And, certainly, in Saskatchewan, they did make some policy moves, whether it's for taxation or—they made some policy decisions there that have taken us in the direction—or taken them in the direction of no longer having to rely on the federal government for equalization payments.

And I guess what I'm hearing from the minister today is that she does not believe that it's necessary to move in that direction to make us more self-reliant, to make us more proud of what we're doing and less, you know—make us proud of what we're doing and move us away from being reliant on other provinces to fund our core operating budget.

So I guess that's not part of the five-year plan, then, to take us off this sort of stream of being reliant on other provinces in our country to fund our core operating budget.

Ms. Wowchuk: I would encourage the member opposite to look at the growth that has taken place in this province since we have taken office, because there has been huge economic growth.

The member opposite wants to focus on transfer payments and, you know, I think the member opposite is just not thinking about what kind of a country we live in and what our Constitution says, unless she's talking to the federal government about changing it.

But this is a country that has a single level of government. The central government can levy a single rate of tax, and it can better ensure consistent levels of public service across the country. That's the intent of this. It—

Mr. Chairperson: Please excuse the interruption, but the hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (15:00)

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of Executive Council. Would the First Minister's and the Leader of the Official Opposition's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on page 29 of the Estimates book. As previously agreed, questioning will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Just—and on the expenditure side in the Department of Justice, can the Premier just confirm that the collective agreement for the Crown prosecutors expired on March 31st of this year?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I'll have to confirm that information for the member.

Mr. McFadyen: And can the Premier also indicate whether the Crown prosecutors are subject to the zero percent policy target that's been set out by the government in terms of public sector wages?

Mr. Selinger: Again, our collective bargaining strategy is one that tries to have moderation in the salary increases we have as part of the recovery process. But I'll—we don't normally—specific groups, we don't normally put bargaining mandates in the public domain there, for all the obvious reasons.

Mr. McFadyen: I would just say in response to that, that much of the public sector has already been made aware that they are subject to the zero percent mandate, and I don't think it would be a—create issues in collective bargaining if he could just indicate whether the prosecutors are also subject to that, as it has an impact on Justice Expenditure Estimates.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for his comments. I've answered the question.

Mr. McFadyen: The next question is just with respect to the issue which arose today in the media of the tragic death of Mr. Lanzellotti.

I wonder if the Premier can just indicate when he was first made aware of the issues that arose today concerning the department's knowledge of probation breaches by the accused in this case.

Mr. Selinger: Again, I think the public became aware of these issues through the media, and I gave him my answers in question period today about how we're responding to that type of incident and other incidents like that in terms of an improved risk management system for allocating and providing probation resources.

Mr. McFadyen: The public didn't become aware of the probation breach issue and, in particular, the knowledge of the department until yesterday's hearing, which was reported today.

But it's apparent from the answers that were given in question period that the Premier and the minister had been aware of the issues for some time, and I just wonder if the Premier can indicate when they became aware of those issues.

Mr. Selinger: And again, the member seems to have already drawn a conclusion, and I'm simply indicating to him that we have indicated, in question period today, and I indicate it again now that within the last year a new risk management system has been in place for Probation Services that builds upon the Auto Theft Suppression Strategy to further provide

resources where they will make the biggest difference in protecting public safety and security.

Mr. McFadyen: And can I just ask the Premier what led the government to introduce that new risk management system within the last year?

Mr. Selinger: Well, Justice officials are always looking for better ways to deploy their resources to protect public security, and they looked at, as I understand it, how these resources were being deployed in other jurisdictions and followed what they considered to be best practice, based on an evidence-based approach.

Mr. McFadyen: The suggestion today was that the new system was put in place in response to this case and I wonder if the Premier can just confirm that that was what led to the changes.

Mr. Selinger: Again, the system was put in place within the last year which is subsequent to this incident, but the department continues, on a regular basis, to look for ways to strengthen their ability to provide public security. I'm sure they were, as we all are, were aware that this problem had occurred on the probation side. Whether it was directly linked to that specific case, I don't have specific information on that, but I'm pleased that the department was looking for better ways to deploy resources to protect public security and safety.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier said in an earlier response that it was done in response to this case and others like it. Can he just outline which other cases were similar to the Lanzellotti case?

Mr. Selinger: Again, the department officials look at trends in terms of what's happening and they felt that this new system would allow resources to be allocated to those people in the probation system that have a higher risk profile of recidivism, and that's why they employed this system because it will do a job that is elsewhere proven to be effective.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier's indicated there was a trend towards this sort of thing happening and that there were other cases. Can he just undertake to get back to us with—not necessarily the specific names, but how many such cases the department was aware of when—that led it to introduce the new risk management system?

Mr. Selinger: Again, we can ask the—I believe, actually, the—we can ask that in the Minister of Justice's (Mr. Swan) Estimates. Department officials will be there directly, ready and able to answer these

questions. These officials do not have that information at their command, but I am pleased that the department is always looking for better ways to provide public security and safety.

Mr. McFadyen: To that end, would the Premier undertake to release the number, or publicize the number of cases that the department is aware of people who are currently in breach of court orders and who are not in custody?

Mr. Selinger: The department and the government will try to follow best practices in ensuring public safety and security is protected, including through the way they organize and deploy resources for probation services in Manitoba.

Mr. McFadyen: As part of that, is the Premier prepared to provide transparency, not on the specifics of cases, but on the number of individuals who are currently known to be in breach of court orders and who remain on the streets of Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: As I've just said, I support the department in its efforts to use best practices and evidence-based model for risk management of probation cases because the risk management approach seems to have good results for protecting public safety and security, and it seems to follow empirical evidence that supports that in terms of how it's been used and the results of that use in other jurisdictions, and we support the department in following those kinds of approaches for managing probation cases.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier has just confirmed by that answer that these decisions are evidence based and that there's empirical evidence. In that case, why is the Premier not prepared to release that empirical evidence that's driving these decisions?

Mr. Selinger: Well, again, we try to have a professional public service, and that includes in the protections area. And we endorse and support their approach, which uses best practices to provide these kinds of services to protect public safety and security. And we would like them to continue to follow those kinds of approaches in the way they do things in the same way that they brought together the Auto Theft Suppression Strategy, which has proved to be widely regarded as very effective in reducing auto thefts—75 percent since 2004, which was 6,706 less auto theft claims in '09 than there were in 2004. So, when our professional public servants can generate those kinds of results, we like to support

them in them taking it to another level when it comes to probation services, and encourage them to do that.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, in light of this tragedy, when the Premier talks about taking probation services to another level, is that yet another level down or is he talking about another level up?

Mr. Selinger: I think the member might be able to detect from my previous answers that we prefer a probation service that deploys their resources, their people, their trained probation workers and other support staff in such a way that they focus in on individuals that have a high risk of recidivism and therefore give them extra attention in terms of supervision in order to protect public safety and reduce negative incidents in terms of public safety and security.

Mr. McFadyen: And is it the Premier's position then that the public has no right to know what the empirical numbers are, though? That's within the exclusive preserve of Big Brother?

Mr. Selinger: I believe it's important that we provide the best services possible for the public, to protect them in terms of public safety and security and I'm glad that our officials in the Department of Justice have taken a look at what models of probation service supervision and monitoring are effective elsewhere, and have identified how those models can be adapted and deployed in Manitoba for the best results in terms of public safety and security.

Mr. McFadyen: How can Manitobans be in a position to judge results if he has a policy of secrecy when it comes to the empirical evidence and the numbers?

Mr. Selinger: Again, the policy is to follow the models and experiences elsewhere that have proved effective and to try and ensure that resources are put in place that achieve those outcomes that have been achieved elsewhere, and to ensure in Manitoba that people can have confidence in their public probation service in such a way that they know resources are being allocated based on an evidence-based approach of who has the greatest risk of reoffending or falling back into a recidivistic pattern, and that's where we want to put the resources that will suppress and prevent reoffending and recidivism to the advantage of the public, because with less reoffending and less recidivism there's going to be less members of the public that are negatively affected in terms of public safety and security. So we want to ensure that

resources are used to the maximum benefit of the public.

Mr. McFadyen: And, I mean, if the only people in the province who mattered were government insiders, that might be a satisfactory response, but does he not think that regular Manitobans can handle getting statistical information about how many people are in breach of orders at any given point in time? Is that not a fair request on behalf of the people of the province to have a sense as to the scale of the problem?

Mr. Selinger: I believe that the public needs to know that our people that run the probation service and are professionally trained to do that are keeping abreast of best practices and the most effective approaches to protect public safety and security and can explain to the public why they're using those methods and what the benefit of those methods are and the evidence that supports those methods. And so I'm pleased to know that our system has adopted that approach of a risk management approach and is rolling it out to—in here in Manitoba in such a way that it will hopefully achieve the kind of results that they also got when they did the Auto Theft Suppression Strategy which was one that provided intensive community supervision by probation workers, strict enforcement by the Winnipeg Police Service and its stolen auto units, swift action in court through specialized Crown attorneys, compulsory vehicle immobilizers and programming for youth offenders.

So a multipronged approach was brought into play for auto theft suppression. It has been looked at across the country and studied by folks who have an interest in corrections and probation services at the academic level; and an individual called Barry Ward, the executive director of the National Committee to Reduce Auto Theft, is amazed by our success. This is unheard of anywhere in the world, he was quoted as saying in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 27, 2008. So we look for ways to move these kinds of serious risks to public security and safety into a profile that will reduce those risks and ensure Manitobans can live in safety and security.

* (15:10)

Mr. McFadyen: Just to summarize, what the Premier is saying is that the public doesn't have the right to know the numbers, that on the day that the tragic details of Mr. Lanzellotti's death and the failure of the system were made public, what he's saying today is that he's pleased with how the system

is operating. Is that a fair summary of what he just said?

Mr. Selinger: It absolutely is not. It's the member opposite once again trying to mischaracterize things.

What we are saying is that we want to ensure that the resources we put—make available for probation are used to the greatest advantage of the public, in terms of public safety and security, and they were able to do that in the way they designed and implemented and acted upon the Auto Theft Suppression Strategy. They used a variety of techniques, including intensive community supervision by probation workers, strict enforcement by the Winnipeg Police Service—so there was co-operation there between the different levels of government—and it's stolen auto—and the Winnipeg Police Service's Stolen Auto Unit, swift action in courts through specialized Crown attorneys, the availability and requirement to have compulsory vehicle immobilizers, which MPI—Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation was involved in, and programming for youth offenders.

There's a variety of techniques that have been used to bring auto theft down, and I'm glad to know that our Department of Justice and Corrections officials have at the probation level brought into play a model based on evidence, based on theory, based on results elsewhere that they believe will manage risk of people in the probation system in such a way that those people at the greatest risk of reoffending, or falling into a pattern of recidivistic behaviour, are given the additional attention and supervision and supports they need not to reoffend and not to put the public at risk.

I think the public needs to know we're following those kinds of approaches and trying to ensure that what we do in Manitoba builds on the experience elsewhere, and ensures that Manitobans have the best possible deployment of our public resources for which they pay through their taxes.

Mr. McFadyen: So can the Premier just indicate whether he is, as of today, then, pleased with the way the department is handling probation cases and breaches of court orders?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I commend the department for trying to improve the way they do their work to protect public safety and security, and I want them to continue to find ways to improve that, to further protect public security and safety.

There is no such thing as being complacent about this. These are serious matters. We don't want any of these tragedies to occur in the public. They bring enormous amounts of grief and suffering to the families affected and to the wider public who see these things happening to people. And that's why we want to ensure that when we bring resources to bear through the public budgeting process and have a department that is responsible for these kinds of crime-suppression activities, that they use the most evidence-based, efficient, effective methods possible to stop recidivistic behaviour from occurring, to stop reoffending from occurring, to ensure that members of the public know that these probation workers are using an approach that deploys resources to suppress activity and redirect activity on the part of those that face—have a profile of the highest risk of reoffending.

Mr. McFadyen: And so I think the Premier is saying he's satisfied things are getting better, rather than going in the wrong direction.

We remain to be convinced, based on experience with this government. But I just want to ask the Premier, in light of the fact that in the case that's in the media today, it was an individual who had been convicted of auto theft, drug offences and prior breaches of court orders, had been sentenced for all of those offences and received, as part of that sentence, further court orders. And within the seven weeks following that sentencing, carried on breaching court orders and ultimately drove the vehicle that killed Mr. Lanzellotti.

I want to just ask the Premier if he could guarantee that, as of today, there are no other such people with similar records who are free on the streets of Manitoba.

Mr. Selinger: You know, it's really important that we continue to focus on a way to protect public safety and security with never being complacent about it, with always looking for better ways to improve that, and to strive to ensure that not only do we suppress crime where it occurs and prevent recidivistic behaviour, and that we ensure that people have consequences for that but, also, we prevent it as much as possible with investments in education and training and recreation, and those kinds of activities that allow people that might be drawn to criminal activity to find other outlets for their energy that are constructive and do not put the public at risk.

And it's also important to ensure that we have resources in place to make sure that anybody that has

committed a crime and is on probation is properly monitored according to a risk profile of whether or not they pose an additional risk to the public, or further risk to the public of reoffending.

And I'm—I commend the department for trying to—for reorganizing their resources to move in this direction of a risk management approach. I think it makes sense, given experience elsewhere, given the research and the empirical evidence that supports that.

I think it's also important that we continue to suppress auto theft in this province; 75 percent is a good improvement, but it's not sufficient as long as auto theft is occurring. There have been some days in this city where there is no auto theft. That's a dramatic change from the '90s, when it was a growing pattern every year. It's now coming down, but we want to bring it down as low as possible, to zero, on as many days as possible. We want to ensure that auto theft is not a crime that can lead to other tragedies, such as we've seen here. And so we're never satisfied. We're always striving to do better.

We also believe that the Youth Criminal Justice Act could be amended to recognize deterrence as a valid sentencing principle for young offenders to make it less difficult to keep car thieves and serious and repeat youth offenders—to make it less difficult to keep those types of individuals that pose a high risk, in custody, because when they are released, then we have these kinds of challenges.

Some—if there's somebody that has a high risk of reoffending and the Youth Criminal Justice Act recognized the principle of deterrence, we might be able to argue with the courts that these individuals should not be released until their risk profile has changed and they are less of a risk to the public.

But, given the circumstances we have, on the probation file we want to ensure that resources are used to the maximum positive effect of protecting public interest and security—public security and safety.

Mr. McFadyen: I'm disappointed in that pre-packaged response—that he didn't direct his response to the question that was asked.

The question was whether he has made inquiries and can guarantee that there are no individuals with similar records and who are currently known to be breaching court orders free on the streets of Winnipeg, in Manitoba.

We don't need a packaged response of rhetoric. I want to know whether he's asked his officials and received a guarantee and an assurance that, as of today, there are no such individuals who are free on the streets of Manitoba.

And I'm particularly shocked that he would play politics by making his 123rd reference to the 1990s over the last short while, when the people in Winnipeg, in Manitoba, are wondering what's happening today on the streets of our city and province after 11 years of his government being in power.

Mr. Selinger: Again, the member needs to know, and the public needs to know that when we put resources in place in the Department of Justice for probation services that they are going to be used in such a way, the people that are involved, the probation officers and all the support staff, and the co-operative relationships with the Winnipeg Police Service and other agencies in the community, that those relationships and resources are structured in such a way that they maximize public safety and security, and minimize opportunities for people with a high-risk profile to reoffend and to engage in recidivistic behaviour. And that's important, and that's why the risk management model has merit to it.

* (15:20)

If the member thinks that's a prepackaged approach, that's his characterization of it. I prefer to look at it as an approach that actually strives to use our professional staff in the field of Justice and Corrections to the best advantage of the public.

Mr. McFadyen: So the Premier is saying he doesn't know whether or not, as of today, there are any such people on the streets of Winnipeg and Manitoba. And I want to ask him why he hasn't taken steps to assure himself of that situation.

Mr. Selinger: Again, what I think is important for the public to know is that we are using our resources in this department of Corrections and Probation and Justice more broadly, and our support for the Winnipeg Police Service, as well as other policing services, in such a way that we are maximizing the opportunities to protect public safety and security and that is the best way to use the resources in a way that has evidence to support that they will get positive outcomes for public safety and security and minimize, as much as possible, any opportunities for reoffending by people that have a high-risk profile.

And I commend the department for organizing and taking positive action in that regard. I know they believe they can do more and we believe that we can get better results. Are they moving in the right direction? It appears that they are, and we would encourage them to continue to do that and we would encourage them to find approaches that get the same kind of results that we had on auto theft which, unfortunately, was rising in the '90s.

I know the member seems to be counting the number of times I've referred to the '90s. That's really not the point. The point is that, over time, that we get better results and we get better results in terms of reducing public risk of further safety and security, better results in terms of less auto theft, better results in terms of reoffending and recidivistic behaviour on the part of people that have entered the justice system. And that's what we want, is—the member in question period indicated that we always suggest that we've just thrown more resources at it. It is important that those resources that are made available actually get better results, and this approach seems to be one that does that.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier made a factual error earlier and I'm wondering if he could correct—he made reference to the 1990s and I'm very proud to report that in no time in the 1990s did auto thefts exceed 10,000. It's still too high a number, but it never exceeded 10,000. Under his government's watch, it went from 10,496 to 12,056. It reached 16,213 and has hovered in the range of 16,000 over the subsequent years, and only after eight years of neglect and letting the problem get out of control were steps taken. So I wonder if he just wants to apologize for his comment about the 1990s.

Mr. Selinger: I would like to add additional information about the 1990s. My information says that, in '91, there were about 2,473 auto thefts and that it increased by 258 percent, up to 1999, to 8,865 auto thefts, and that's a 258 percent increase, so that it did continue to escalate throughout the '90s.

Mr. McFadyen: You can use percentages in raw terms and the number of deaths resulting from auto thefts has gone up significantly under this NDP government, but it's fruitless to get into a game of what happened in the 1990s, but I would note, Madam Chair, that 7,000 additional auto thefts under their watch, and more people dead in Manitoba as a result of auto theft and, in any event, he wants to have a contest about records on that issue, and I

would like him to explain to the Lanzellotti family why it is that he is playing politics with this issue.

Mr. Selinger: The only person that's playing politics is the member opposite. What we're doing is focussing our resources on those practices which will increase public safety and security, public safety and security, which is why the Auto Theft Suppression Strategy was launched in 2004. And that has resulted in a 75 percent reduction in auto theft and, according to my notes, that says it's the lowest point in 17 years. And that's why they also moved beyond that with their risk management approach in Probation Services to take a risk management approach based on best practices, based on evidence, based on empirical research of what works elsewhere.

And that's good policy, and good policy should result in better public security and safety, which is what we're trying to achieve here.

Mr. McFadyen: And I thank the Premier for his comments. I'm interested in his use of the word "pleased" and good public policy and all of these issues, all these comments he's making on the day of the story about the death of Mr. Lanzellotti. It's good that he's pleased, and I just want to ask him if he can just indicate, just based on one of his earlier answers, he indicated more recreation programs and things for people to do, whether he thinks that more recreation was the answer in the case of the person who, seven weeks earlier, had been convicted of auto theft, drug offences and prior breaches of court orders.

Mr. Selinger: Again, you know, it's—there's never any intention and it's not really appropriate to discuss the specifics of a case at this level. What is important is to recognize that that was a tragedy for the family, for the community at large, for everybody in Manitoba and even more broadly when something like that occurs. And to ask yourself, are there things that government programming can do better to prevent these things from happening? That kind of thing grows on the experience of reducing auto theft, the strategy which was started in 2004—well, actually, August 2005, it was launched. And since 2004 auto theft has gone down 75 percent.

But that's—that also should not be a place for complacency which is why the government and the Department of Justice moved beyond that with their probation services being restructured to take a risk management approach and to profile and understand who—which people were on probation were at the highest risk of reoffending, and to ensure that extra

attention was given to those individuals to suppress any reoffending activity, and to redirect them to other kinds of supports that would change their behaviour so that they wouldn't reoffend.

And so the member—I know the member would like to characterize the government as being complacent in this matter, and I think that's unfortunate, because that is playing politics. What's important to notice is that our professional people in that department, with the support of this government, have moved forward on approaches to dealing with auto theft and probation that are intended to increase public safety and security.

Mr. McFadyen: I just wanted to just say for the record that we don't attach weight to anything this government says on matters of public safety, and I want to just provide the member for Emerson with an opportunity to ask a few questions. And I think some other members would like to make their comments as well. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Premier, I thank you first of all for the invitation to accompany you and a number of others on a flood tour through the valley in the past month. One of the stops that we made was at the R.M. of Montcalm, as you'll recall. And a question arose at that particular meeting about flood mitigation work to be done in southern Manitoba after the flood, to recognize that some of these issues, if they were dealt with one at a time as they came up, they would certainly save money over the long period of time.

Mr. Premier, I'll probably ask you to recall the specific cases of King Street in Emerson, which was rebuilt after the last flood, but there was some mitigation work that needed to be done there besides the rebuilding of that, and that particular upgrade wasn't done and today it suffers again. There will be more repair work there.

* (15:30)

There was the case of James and Dale Buhler's, whose place—and I'm sure that you will recall, you have a letter from them—and also Aline Bouchard. A situation was brought up by a member from the council there, a Mr. LaFond, and at that time we were under the impression that there had been flood mitigation work done in 1997 for the Bouchards and their house was flood proofed, which, in fact, was false information that we had at the time.

It turns out that the Bouchard family had done that work themselves prior to the '97 flood. However—and they were prepared to live with that, but now with so many floods that are happening more and more often, there was a request that Mrs. Bouchard would receive some attention. I'm just wondering if any of these issues have been addressed or you've given any more serious thought to them since our tour.

Mr. Selinger: I do recall the meeting where some of these specifics were raised, and I thank the member for drawing them to my attention again. We did have officials there, as he will know, that said that they would see what the circumstances specifically were that applied to those individuals, and whether anything else could be done. It was also pointed out that these mitigation programs had ended in terms of cost-shared funding from the federal government in this regard even—based on the fact that extensive work had been done, investing in the valley and raising up homes and providing additional protection to people, and that it would be very difficult now to find additional resources to support those specific cases. But I think it's legitimate for the member to raise them, and we will ask our officials what the status of those specific cases are and see whether any additional support can be given, even in the absence of a clear federal program to do that at this stage of the game. So I thank the member for calling it to my attention again.

Mr. Graydon: Well, thank you for that, Mr. Premier. I'm—I'll be looking forward to a response, a written response at some point in the near future then, if that's a fair comment.

Mr. Selinger: I think what is fair to say is that the matters were raised at that meeting that we were at with the municipal councillors, and we asked our officials to look into it, but the officials did give us a very strong caution that the resources were no longer available to do that kind of work right now.

But because you've raised a question with me again today, we will ask them to come back to us with what's possible in those specific circumstances. I believe you identified the Bouchard family and who are—three families, I think you indicated. Do you want to, just for the record again, put them on the record now?

Mr. Graydon: It was the Bouchard family, the Buhler family, James and Dale Buhler the RCMP and—excuse me, but I'll have to go back to my note—oh, the King Street in Emerson that had a—it had an

upgrade or a rebuild after the flood a year ago, but at the same time, it needed additional work in order to keep it from washing out and creating bigger issues. It needed mitigating work with a number of culverts; a study indicated it needed a number of culverts. They weren't put in and, going forward, they're going to be a big issue and you'll end up with a great big expense there again and again, every time that there's a flood.

So it's an economical thing; it's the right thing to do. And I understand the dollars are hard to come by, but at the same time, if you're going to do it year after year after year, it just makes sense that we address these things as they come up.

And I was under the impression that there was some talk that there would be mitigation work north of Winnipeg where the ice had caused a big issue the year before and possibly some of the flooding again this year, that there would be some mitigation work or some consultation with the federal government and this is why it was brought up at that particular meeting in the Montcalm municipality.

But, further to that on our tour, Mr. Premier, I'd like to just go to the trip that we took through the village of Dominion City, and the issue that arose for the town of Dominion City that is surrounded by 65 percent restrictions on the roads, and it was clear that the council was willing to participate if there were two extra miles of 90 percent—raise the road restriction to 90 percent, that it would facilitate the town.

The fuel truck can't—he can get into town if he's going to deliver fuel, however, he can't legally get into town empty or leave town empty because he's overweight on 65 percent. But the law does allow him to come in with a partial load because he's an essential service. So you end up with a lot of fuel trucks in town if you were to follow the law to the tee.

The other situation is, and I pointed out to you, a house that had burned that the individual was wanting to get started at building. Getting cement trucks in was an issue. Right now there's two open basements in the town. They're dug, they're ready for cement, and they can't get in with cement trucks.

If it went up to 90 percent, it allows the trucks to bring in a load economically but, as it stands, it's at 65 percent and it's not economical. The solution is two miles of upgrading to 90 percent and the

municipalities are willing to bear the cost on the municipal roads from there forward.

So that deals with the cement issue and the building—and two houses in a town the size of Dominion City, I might say, is a building boom. It's not a large community, as you are aware. So it makes a big difference.

The other thing is, Cargill have now threatened to pull out of the R.M. of Franklin because they don't have access. So it's a big economic issue and these two extra miles would be a big benefit.

I'm just going to ask the Premier if there's any movement that he's aware of to upgrade that from 65 percent to 90 percent?

Mr. Selinger: I am not aware of any specific movement to do that. I know we discussed it and I thank the member for showing me the circumstances that prove to be quite problematic in terms of getting those houses built in that community.

I believe the member has taken the opportunity to discuss it with the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Ashton), as well in Highways, to see what's possible there. I hope he's done that. I take it he has and that the minister's aware of it and was looking into see what's possible. It does look like a challenging set of circumstances there and the question is whether there are resources available to do it now, in the budget, or whether those resources have already been precommitted to other projects, which also have high priority.

Mr. Graydon: I'd like to remind the minister that the highways that we're talking about were built at the same time as the 90 percent that leads into it and are under the same protocol, and there would be no extra cost to the department to upgrade that to a 90 percent. You're in a speed zone already so you're not—there's no one going to be speeding with heavy loads in there. There would be no costs to the department. It's a matter of notifying the regional office in Steinbach to move the signs one mile and it would solve the issue quite clearly. So it's not an expense that needs to be made by the Department of Transportation at all. It's just the will to give the community the access that they require.

Mr. Selinger: This is actually a slightly different understanding of what I heard before. I thought there was a requirement to upgrade two miles of the road. You're simply saying that the regulatory—there has to be a change in the regulations to allow a 90 percent load on the road—on the existing road?

And I guess, by way of response, I would wonder if the member could inform me whether he had the opportunity to discuss that with the minister of highways and Transportation and whether that department is giving him any concrete answer at this stage of the game.

Mr. Graydon: I did discuss that with the minister briefly. He's a very busy individual. He indicated that there were a lot of roads in the province that he had to look after, and that was the end of our discussion. So I would suggest it wasn't something that was on the top of his priority list. And I'm not exactly sure that he knows where Dominion City is.

* (15:40)

And so, for that reason, I brought it up today because you had seen the situation and you understand the situation, and because there is no money needed to be expended to provide the access, then I felt that it was something that you might want to address, and I was hoping that you would.

Mr. Selinger: Well, thank you, for clarifying the specifics of which we're looking for. I had understood that it required some investment in upgrading the road, even though it was a small distance, but the member now seems to be describing it as a change in the regulatory requirements.

We can ask the department to give us a response to the request, what the implications are, whether it would mean further deterioration of the road, whether there's a cost to that or whether it could be allowed to facilitate the kinds of issues the member has raised with us today in terms of constructing those two houses.

So we will take that up again with the department and see what's possible there.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I'd like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity to put some questions forward to the Premier. And it deals with Highway 59 and Lagimodiere north, the proposed interchange that had been committed to years ago.

This is in the northeast quadrant of the city. This is an issue that has been raised, I know, with the Member of Parliament, Joy Smith, and Councillor Jeff Browaty, and it definitely is a high priority issue.

And the problem is is that we have a Perimeter that is almost complete with Highway 59 and, again, we're talking north. You have traffic going to Grand Beach and all the various cottage areas. You've got

Beausejour, Lac du Bonnet and all areas of central and northern, eastern Manitoba. You also have all the east-west traffic that intersects with that. And one of the main problems, besides a lot of traffic, is that you have a lot of truck rollovers.

For instance, if you're coming west on the Perimeter you must take a sharp turn right to head north, and then, about 1,000 yards later, you take a sharp left to continue going west. And it's that first turn when they're coming—heading west and they go to take that sharp turn right is, there tends to be a lot of load shift and the trucks basically lay themselves down.

It's a nightmare intersection and I believe it was only meant to be very short stop-gap. At one point in time they had even started hauling earth in to start building up ramps and that kind of stuff. So lights have been set up, some very sharp turns, and I don't believe it was ever intended to be a long-term solution to what is becoming a very serious problem in the city.

Certainly, the Premier will know that the Esso tank farm on Henderson Highway supplies a lot of the jet fuel. From what I understand it also supplies a lot of the jet fuel going down into the United States, and those trucks, by and large, would be using that access. There's a lot of truck traffic going through there accessing—depending on which way they're coming from—accessing that intersection to head either towards the airport, if they're coming from the east, and vice versa if they're taking loads away.

And, you know, we talk about this new development at the airport. You know, all of that will add more stress on that intersection.

I'd like to point out to the Premier that two of many constituents, Robert Smith, from Shale Ridge Cove, George Creamer, C-r-e-a-m-e-r, from Hillview Avenue, and many, many other individuals from that quadrant, and people going to cottage country are complaining about it. And I was wondering if the Premier could tell us where it is in the process of being developed.

Mr. Selinger: Well, again, I'm sure the member can understand that I wouldn't have that information at my fingertips right now and that that question would usually apply to the minister of highways and Transportation, during his Estimates, when his officials are right in the room that could answer what they have in the capital budget for that specific issue that the member is raising. And I would encourage

him to do that as his first recourse to try and get further information on the status of that project.

Mr. Schuler: And I thank the Premier for that and, of course, you know, there are a lot of different questions that come at the Premier. We don't expect him to have all the detailed answers at his fingertip.

I would like to point out to him that September of 2007, that would be September 26th, 2007, Committee of Supply, I did raise that issue already at that point of time and I have been raising it with various ministers. This would actually be the member from La Verendrye. I raised it with him and he said: the intention right now—this would be 2007—the intention right now, the department is looking at starting on the project, hopefully in the next couple of years.

That would be over three years ago, and what I believe it needs, more than the Premier knowing all the various details of how the bridge would look and that, what we do need is some political clout behind it.

I would suggest to the Premier this is probably one of the most necessary projects that we have up and coming in the city of Winnipeg and the surrounding communities, simply on a safety issue and on an economic issue. The, you know, the Perimeter Highway is almost now complete. You know it's taken many, many years for all the sections to be complete and that particular intersection is nasty, Mr. Premier.

It is so nasty that on long weekends, if you're driving north, the traffic backup is so excessive. And on a Sunday or Monday, if you're trying to turn onto Birds Hill Road and the traffic coming back from cottage country is coming at you, it's just—you could expire waiting for all the traffic to go by. There is so much traffic and it backs up and backs up and backs up. It is a real problematic corner.

I know that there is a lot of pressure being put on other levels of government. I mentioned Member of Parliament Joy Smith and Councillor Jeff Browaty. I know my colleague from River East and my colleague from Rossmere and my colleague from Radisson—I know that there's a lot of pressure being put on, and I would ask the Premier if he would consider putting some of his political capital and political clout behind this project.

The Province and the federal government are spending a lot of money on infrastructure, and I think that this should be one of those priorities. Certainly,

from what I've seen for—as far as safety is concerned, insofar as quality of life, people travelling back and forth and insofar as commerce is concerned, and I would appreciate if the Premier would take that to Cabinet and perhaps this could become an issue that could be dealt with there.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, that's not how we make decisions on which highway should be fixed up. It might have been under the former government that, you know, one person could willy-nilly decide what the priorities are. But the—*[interjection]* Yes, well—

I would just—you know, the department of highways has a system that they use to evaluate which highway should get investments and they have criteria against which they measure that. On Highway 59 specifically, which the member raised, there is a five-year plan which has committed 35.8 million. And that has resulted, in the first three years of the plan, 34 million has been invested, another five million is planned for 2010 on that specific highway. But, you know, there is a process the department follows on identifying where the resources should be allocated for highways. And I would encourage the member to once again raise that with the department to see where it fits into the plan and how important it is as part of their overall planning.

I take his concern about it as serious but as the member knows, we are spending a record amount on highways, and there is a great demand there for highway improvements all across the province. And they try to 'priorize' that according to their own criteria and method.

So I would encourage the member to do that. But I do want him to know there is being money put into Highway 59.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): And I just want to follow up with a few comments and questions to the Premier on Highway 59 north and that is the—it's certainly the area, the interchange that my colleague, the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) has articulated that so well.

It is one of the issues that I hear in River East constituency on an ongoing basis, and I know that the Premier indicates that under his government and his administration, we—they don't make willy-nilly decisions on what parts and what pieces of highways will be upgraded in the province of Manitoba. But, when we have a commitment from a former minister

of Infrastructure that, within a couple of years, back in 2007, that interchange would be looked at.

Madam Chair, I would think that that would have been something that had been discussed in the department of highways and something that would have been 'priorized', and I guess I'd just like to ask the Premier whether there has been some direction given that this is not a priority.

* (15:50)

It's an area of the city of Winnipeg that certainly, I think, over the years, was short-changed when it came to completion of the Perimeter Highway. We were upgrading portions of the Perimeter Highway that had been built 20 years ago when there wasn't even a link, an eight-mile link, in the northeast quadrant of the city of Winnipeg that had even been begun. And I know it started under our administration and was completed, and we now have pretty well four lanes and note that eight kilometres that hadn't been completed.

But I would like to ask the Premier what has changed from 2007 when his minister of highways indicated that it was a priority and that work would start within a couple of years. We're now three years later, and we're still not seeing anything in this government's budget when unprecedented amounts of money have been spent upgrading highways, not just from the provincial level of government but also significant influx of dollars from the federal government. So maybe he could indicate what information he has that things have changed on the priority level in the department of highways.

Mr. Selinger: Again, the information I have about Highway 59 is that there has been \$34 million projected to have been invested in the first three years and another 5 million for 2010.

I'm not aware of any changes, but, again, I think it would be really helpful if the member's interested in the subject, which I know she is, that she discuss it in the Estimates of the department of highways.

When the officials were there that—so the officials can respond about how they've decided and recommended to allocate resources. There are many important highway projects that need to be done in this province, and that's why we've made a commitment to put additional support into the highways budget, a record amount of support, as matter of fact.

But, on the specifics of that particular project on Highway 59, I think it's well worth discussing with the officials and the minister in their Estimates, when they can give you a more specific response of how that was 'prioritized' vis-à-vis all the other commitment that were made here.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And I appreciate the Premier's response, but, again, I just go back to the significant influx of dollars into infrastructure, not only from the provincial government but a lot from the federal government. And there was a commitment when the road was twinned out in that area, that that interchange would be a very temporary interchange. It's a dangerous interchange.

And it serves the whole northeast quadrant of the city of Winnipeg, not only of River East constituency, but the constituents of Rossmere, constituents of Radisson, Concordia and Elmwood. And there are many, many individuals that have been asking why the northeast quadrant of the city of Winnipeg isn't being treated fairly when it comes to decisions that are being made by this government on significant infrastructure dollars.

So I would again ask the Premier whether he might at least make some inquiries into why, when it appeared to be a priority from his government three years ago, and why on the record the minister then committed to something happening at that interchange over the next couple of years, why that isn't a priority. And why the Premier wouldn't lend his support or at least offer to make some inquiries to assure the people of northeast Winnipeg that he cares about the safety of our roads in that community and that he wants to assure them that he will get to the bottom of why a public commitment that was made three years ago hasn't been followed through on by his government.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for the questions and the comments, and I think the amount of resources we've dedicated to highways certainly, probably at least triple, maybe three and a half times more than occurred when the members opposite were in government. There's been a very significant investment made in highways, and the allocation priorities are determined by the officials in the department, according to where they think the greatest requirements are to build improved roadways and to strengthen existing roadways.

I'm happy to inquire as to what the specific circumstances of this one are. I hope the member would take the opportunity to go to Estimates to

inquire, as well, with the minister and with the officials who are directly available to answer those questions.

But the reality is that there has been, on Highway 59, 34 million projected to be invested there, and another five million from 2010. So it's not as if Highway 59's being neglected. There seems to be resources being invested there to improve that roadway, but in other places. So, perhaps, there are other parts of that road system that need a—more attention, more quickly. And so I think that's worth it in following up on, and I hope the member will do that. And we'll inquire, at this level, what the status is, as well.

Mr. Schuler: We just want to focus this, to be very clear. It's where the Perimeter meets with Highway 59 north. This is a very troubling intersection—lots of accidents, way too much traffic for the configuration that exists. And what we're asking, from the northeast quadrant of the city and surrounding communities, is for the Premier's support.

And I understand we should be going to Estimates with the minister of highways, and we certainly plan on doing that. But what we are asking for is for this Premier's commitment, that he will seriously look into it, and that he will, at least, give some kind of support to this project.

Let's be really clear. Mr. Premier, we're asking, as those who represent that quadrant of the city and province, we are asking for your support of this project, which, by the way, had not been committed to just in 2007; it had been committed to earlier. It's just that I'd raised it in 2007 because the project had been stopped.

Mr. Premier, that quadrant of the city and that quadrant of the province needs your political support to get this project moving. Will you do that?

Mr. Selinger: I've already answered the member's question about how priorities are developed in the highways department, about where—how resources should go and the member's insistence that somehow the Premier should personally intervene to meet his priority against all other priorities in Manitoba, I think, is an inappropriate role for you to ask me to play. I think that's highly politicization of the highways budget. We do believe that Highway 59 should be improved. We have a record amount of resources to do that. You have voted against that every single time that additional resources have been

added. And now you want to hijack the budget for your specific priority.

If the department believes that that is something that should be addressed sooner, as opposed to later, versus the projects they're already doing here, we'd be happy if they would indicate that. So we have made a record investment in infrastructure. You have voted against it, and now you want to ignore all the other needs in Manitobans, including all the other constituencies represented by MLAs in this Legislature, for your specific project. And it seems to me that that's an approach in this Legislature which I don't think would lead to the best planning of the use of our highways budget, if every member operated in the way you're operating right now.

Mr. Schuler: I'm surprised that the Premier's indicating that the members from the northeast quadrant of the city and province voted against this project, because he would be including in there the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), the member from Elmwood, the member from Rossmere, the member from Radisson, the member from Transcona. I don't think that's what the Premier is trying to indicate, because I don't think that the elected officials, Councillor Jeff Browaty, Member of Parliament Joy Smith, Member of Parliament James Bezan, who would be affected by this, as well, I don't think any of them voted against the project.

Over the years, we have consistently asked that, as part of the budgeting, there are a lot of monies that are transferred to the Province for infrastructure projects, if this could be placed as a priority, and a commitment had been given. In fact, I've said to this House, they were already moving earth and bulldozers were in and they were starting to work it. That's why the configuration was changed. There's all kinds of lights that were put up, and they're getting ready to start the project.

* (16:00)

I'm not going to play politics with this like the Premier just did. I'm not going to cast aspersions why it was stopped or it was some devious political reason why. We're not going there and I don't wish to go there. And I don't wish to be that kind of politician on this issue. I'm not going to do that.

Alls that we were asking was, could the Premier give some kind of a commitment to the northeast quadrant of the city and province that a serious look will be made at that intersection where the construction had started and stopped, where a

commitment had been given that within a couple of years—that was in 2007—that a commitment in a couple years—two years or so—that something would be done. That's all we're asking, is if the Premier—I know he represents all Manitobans, we appreciate that—but would he look out for what we believe in the northeast quadrant of the city and the province is an important project? Would he look upon it and give some of his support on that project?

Mr. Selinger: Yes. I am glad the member acknowledged that we—the Premier's role is to look after all the priorities of Manitobans and put them in the proper context, and not simply respond to what the member thinks is the most important priority because it's his most important priority, without looking at all the other needs of roads in Manitoba, which he seems to be ignoring.

And, it's certainly the case that I did not suggest to those other people that he read into the record who are elected in that part of Manitoba and voted against these—the highways budget. I suggest that the member himself voted against the highways budget every single year, and it was him that did not want to allocate existing resources to highways. So I just want to be clear about that.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): And I just have a question for the Premier. It's in regard to the hydraulic study which will be addressing the issue of the closure of Highway 75 during floods.

I want to recognize right off the bat, there's been a commitment to Highway 75, and I also will take this up with the minister in Estimates, but I just did want to ask the Premier, part of this hydraulic study before—my understanding is that before the hydraulic study is to start there's going to be a community consultation process. Now the community recognizes the need for this project, and it's probably a quite technical project.

So I'm wondering what the government is going to be looking for in this community consultation.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for raising this issue. As she knows, we were out visiting Morris a few weeks ago, taking a look at what the flood risk was there at the time that the crest was coming into that area. And we did have a chance to look at the Morris bridge, and we looked at the roadways east and west of that community, as well as north and south. And it was indicated to us by highways officials that they were undertaking a study to look at the best solution to keep Highway 75 open in that

specific community, and that it was a—as the member has said—complicated and technical. And there was no immediately easy solution that did not have negative impacts for other parts of that region, and, at the same time, would allow access to the community of Morris for commercial activity, and, at the same time, protect—keep the roadway open during '97-type flood circumstances.

So the review that's going on includes public consultation to get the best ideas and understanding from the community of how they see the problem and what perspective they have on the best way to address that problem, because there might be—there likely will be more than one alternative on how to do it. And, I believe, the consultation is to allow the community to have some input as to what solutions they think will be the best for the community and make the most sense from their perspective.

Mrs. Taillieu: And I know that the community will appreciate the chance to have input.

But, again, there is a broad recognition that, of course, this—something needs to be done, and there are technical experts, I guess, that would be the ones that would say exactly what—how it's going to be achieved. So I'm just hoping that the process isn't going to be stalled and the consultation process be blamed for that. That—I mean—we all recognize this project needs to go ahead. And I know that it's a lengthy process for the hydraulic study and then a lengthy process for environmental studies after that, and every year we're faced in the spring with prospects of floods. So time is of the essence.

Can the Premier indicate at what stage this hydraulic study would be? Have there been any tenders put out to conduct the hydraulic study?

Mr. Selinger: Again, on that—those matters of specific detail, I would encourage the member to take that up at the Estimates of the minister of highways and Transportation where the officials are there that will have the information at their fingertips.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Madam Chairperson, I do have a question in regards to the budget and the priorities in that budget and the Interlake Regional Health Authority has, for the last five years, had the No. 1 priority for an addition to the personal care home in Teulon, and I've contacted the—all the municipalities and they have sent letters in in regards to support that addition as well.

We have a number of seniors that have to leave the area, and being a strong rural base, a number of those people that are in the home, most of them are of course elderly, of course, not necessarily those with personal disabilities. But a lot of those farm families don't have the ability to commute to Winnipeg or Selkirk where they've been relocated out of their community.

So I was wondering if the First Minister would outline for us the priority of how those facilities are determined, whether or not they're going to be built or not.

Mr. Selinger: Again, the Department of Health looks at all the various requests they get and I'm sure the member could imagine that they get far greater number of requests than they have resources for in any one year. And they look at where the greatest need is for these kinds of facilities, including expansions or additions, and allocate their resources accordingly.

Mr. Eichler: Thank you for that answer. I know the community has raised their share of the money and that's been on the table for quite some time now. I was wondering if, when we look at the—when the overall program, would it be a—do we have a five-year program? Do we have a 10-year program or what's—what should we tell our community in response to the priorities and how that might come about in order to get that addition built for them?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I thank the member for the question. For the specifics of that, he should raise in the Health Estimates, I believe they're ongoing today. As we speak, I think Health Estimates are occurring and he might want to go and talk to the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) and the deputy minister there and see where they're at with respect to that because I think he'd get closer to the answer he's looking for by going into that room.

Mr. Eichler: If it's okay, I'll switch my hat there and put my railway cap on. I do have an issue in regards to the rail line abandonment, and I'm very concerned down the road long term with the rail lines that are being abandoned within the province of Manitoba. And we have one line now in particular, not necessarily in my area, but my neighbouring constituency of Gimli, and that line going up from Winnipeg through to Gimli is on the chopping block, and I'm wondering if there's been any consultation with your office in regards to try and saving that line. I know there's 700 cars that go Diageo alone into that area, and I was wondering if there might be any

discussions that you could—or light that you could shine on us for consultation in regards to that line.

Mr. Selinger: I haven't had any recent correspondence that I'm aware of. I mean, I don't, obviously, get to read every letter that comes in my office, but that hasn't been drawn to my attention. As the member knows, there—a few years back, we did have trouble with that line as well and we made an intervention to keep it open. And if there's some specific threat now or risk with any deadlines attached to it, I would be, appreciate any information that the member has because it has served an important purpose in that community.

And did the member indicate 700 cars for Diageo? Over what time frame?

* (16:10)

Mr. Eichler: I'm sorry. Through the Chair. We carry on this back-and-forth conversation. I know, it needs to be recorded.

But, yeah, 700 cars per year, currently, is what Diageo is using, and as a great employer for the area. They're a great corporate citizen and I know that they have a role to play in this as well, and whenever we can—if we can as legislators and leaders within our community provide that leadership to try and bring them forward I think that would be our responsibility. And, I guess the thing that concerns me the most is once that line's gone—and we just lost one in my area through Lakeside last year—and it's very expensive to maintain. I know they get some funds from CP to maintain that through the municipality. Some of them turn them into snowmobile tracks and recreational uses. But, once that track's gone, I'm very concerned about the future of ever getting that track back again. So I would encourage the First Minister if there's anything he can do as leader of this Province to move forward on it.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I have a question for the Premier with respect to Pine Falls—Powerview-Pine Falls Tembec situation that currently exists.

The community has—the community groups have gotten a feasibility study back from a consultant. And as I understand it from some of the people in the community, it's favourable. Given—for example, if Tembec decides they're going to shut down the mill and an employee group decides they're going to purchase the mill and there's a viable proposal, a good business case, for buying the mill and a good

possibility of profit, would the Premier be in favour of providing a MIOP loan—a Manitoba Industrial Opportunities loan to that group, much the same way as the Filmon government did about 15 years ago when this very same situation occurred in Pine Falls?

Mr. Selinger: And I haven't seen a specific proposal at this stage of the game. I know there is some good work going on in terms of that feasibility study through the resources we made available to the community adjustment committee out there of stakeholders, and I know they're taking a serious look at it and they have some ideas that they think might be fruitful in terms of reutilization of that plant. But the details of that I haven't seen at this stage of the game. So it's, you know, I really can't give them an answer in the hypothetical about the MIOP loan. The MIOP loan is an application made to the department. They study it, look at the business case for it, see what other resources are available in terms of private investment and then determine whether they can participate.

The member will know the last time this occurred there was a very significant private equity made available. Are the market conditions the same this time as they were 15 years ago? Market conditions are very tough right now, as the member knows. But—so it'll be looked at on its merits as to whether the business case would be sufficient to support starting the plant up again, and so I think the proper process has to be followed. But I'm pleased we were able to make resources available to allow them to consider these options.

Ms. Erna Braun, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Hawranik: Well, that's exactly the point I guess, provided there is a good business case put forward, and there is some—is private investment and does meet the requirements of the Manitoba Industrial Opportunities loan requirements.

Do you believe that there would be funds available to assist in the purchase?

Mr. Selinger: There is MIOP loan authority available, but we—before any decision is made at a political level, we usually have a good analysis and recommendation made to us by the officials that are in charge of that program when they look at the specific application they receive. And it's usually on the basis of those recommendations that we make a decision.

Mr. Hawranik: Again, dealing with the Tembec situation, the—and I know that when I've asked a

question in question period of the Premier earlier this year with respect to pension—pensions and the difficulties that the employees are having in terms of trying to get information out of their pension plan and so on, and what's going to happen in the event that Tembec, in fact, shuts the mill down and no one starts up. If that happens, the employees are really concerned because of the fact that they will be able to withdraw only their contributions out of the pension plan and not necessarily the—Tembec's contributions, the matching contributions in the pension plan over the years.

So is the minister—is the Premier considering amendments to the pension legislation to require companies to give not only the employees' portion of the pension plan contributions, but also the employer's?

Mr. Selinger: That is an important question. I understand, and this will be subject to verification again, that the employer's pension benefits that had been accrued were—they were entitled to both employers and employees. I did not understand it the way the members put it across that the employers could withhold their obligation in that regard for the pension, that the pension had to be available to the worker, both employer's and employees' parts of it. So I'll undertake—and the member—I would encourage the member to discuss that with the minister responsible for the pension act benefits in Manitoba, Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard). But, if the member understands that to be the case, I think we need to do a follow-up to ensure what the actual facts are and what the legislation requires.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Hawranik: Yes. I appreciate that and I think the employees will appreciate that too, because there is a—that's all I've been hearing. I've been hearing from a lot of employees who tell me that, in fact, that is the case. And, certainly, if that is the case, I think, and if the government is interested in protecting those pensions fully, I think it would be a good idea to move sooner rather than later on that, so I appreciate your looking into it and look forward to hearing back from you, perhaps, on that.

Mr. Selinger: We did look at it before and we will look at it again, but I encourage the member to directly discuss it with the Minister of Labour as well, at the first opportunity, if he believes that that is the case what he's hearing out there, and, if it's not the case, I think that communication should occur as quickly as possible.

Mr. Hawranik: The next question relates to a personal care home expansion in Lac du Bonnet, and I can advise the Premier that the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has said on more than one occasion in the Lac du Bonnet community that their personal care home expansion is a priority because of the fact that there's such a long waiting list. And I'd like to ask the Premier what measures he takes to ensure that his ministers do follow through on priorities and ensure that those priorities are met.

Mr. Selinger: Again, ministers follow the priorities that are identified in terms of capital spending for increased health-care facilities, such as personal care homes, within the constraints of the budget. And there are many demands. I've just heard of another one in Teulon, and there are many demands for expansions to personal care homes as well as other health facilities all across Manitoba. And the Health capital budget tries to address those on a priority basis, what makes the most sense for the use of their dollars to increase and improve health-care facilities, so I'm sure the minister—and I know the minister would not do anything other than to try and follow the proper priorities on doing these things, and they will be considered. But I know the member has an interest in that personal care home, as do we, and as the resources become available and that priority moves up the list, it will be addressed.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): There was a report today which the Premier may well have seen. I had an advance copy of talking about the cost of chronic disease in Manitoba, and the bottom line is that the costs are huge. And yet the Premier in the Throne Speech in the budget didn't mention diabetes, arthritis or the other diseases. Why is that?

Mr. Selinger: I'm going to have to apologize to the member. I was reading a note and I—could he just repeat the question so I can give him an accurate answer?

* (16:20)

Mr. Gerrard: There's a report out today, which is from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, and it deals with the cost of chronic disease in Manitoba. And the cost of chronic disease in our province is huge, and yet this was not a priority item in the Throne Speech or the budget, but it clearly needs to be addressed.

Why was this not talked about in the Throne Speech and the budget?

Mr. Selinger: I haven't seen this report, but chronic disease is a very important issue for this government. There have been resources allocated to that. That's an important area. It's also why there is a Department of Healthy Living, to address chronic disease with prevention initiatives, et cetera. And so I thank the member for bringing it to our attention. Chronic disease is an area of priority where a difference can be made as programs and resources are made available in partnership with citizens and the communities they live in.

Mr. Gerrard: I would ask the Premier whether he will look at setting targets for reduction of the incidences of disease as part of the effort to address the epidemics like diabetes and major increases in a variety of a number of chronic diseases.

Mr. Selinger: Well, again, tackling chronic disease is an important priority. Initiatives have been put in place through the regional health authorities and through the Department of Healthy Living to do that, and there's a number of ways of tackling it. There are specific programs for specific population groups such as people that have diabetes to try and help prevent type 2 diabetes. There are other programs in terms of recreation and healthy living and keeping Manitoba moving to help people have healthier lifestyles, which also is a way of addressing this, and I know the member supports those things. It is an important area, and to manage health-care costs and to help the population have a healthier lifestyle and prevention of chronic disease is an important part of that, a very important part of that.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the troublesome infectious diseases in the last couple of years, in particular, has been tuberculosis. And, you know, if you look back over the last number of years, there was in place a strategy to approach and make sure that individuals with tuberculosis were treated quickly and thoroughly and people weren't missed. But, you know, about five years ago, the structure in the way that the government supports the approach to tuberculosis was changed rather drastically, and I think that the result of the changes we are now seeing, and that is that there's a big increase in tuberculosis.

So I'm asking the Premier whether he's going to address this issue of tuberculosis in an improved way over what was done in the last five years.

Mr. Selinger: Tuberculosis is another important question to be addressed, and we did announce in '06, 1.7 million to modernize the Tuberculosis

Control program, including funding for additional public health nurses and community health workers in the areas most affected by the disease, including Burntwood and Winnipeg. So there has been a significant increase of resources to address tuberculosis, which I—as the member knows, is pernicious, and it could be very serious if it's not tackled and acted upon.

Mr. Gerrard: I noticed that one of the areas that the Premier stressed in his Throne Speech related to actions to improve the success rate, the education outcome and the graduate rates for First Nation students. And one of those areas of action that the Premier was addressing has to do with school readiness programs for First Nation students. Can you tell us what you're going to be doing?

Mr. Selinger: Well, this, again—actually, this kind of relates even to the other two questions in a broad sense that the better educated people are and the better preparation for education and the longer they are able to continue in education to get a full grade 12 and move beyond that to post-secondary opportunities, the better it is not only for them economically, but also in terms of health outcomes.

So we do want greater preparatory work for—and this is part of the Healthy Child initiative. There's a lot of work that goes into helping young children and their parents have access to schools for children's resource centres, to programs that make available literature and toys to them so that they can interact with those things and improve their learning skills.

There's even an improvement in the way we offer day care in Manitoba, to have a learning agenda as part of the day-care program so that that resource is used to the maximum benefit of the children there. So there's a number of initiatives going on to help young children and families get off to a good start and be ready for school, including screening programs that identify whether there's any learning disability issues that could be addressed early on.

Mr. Gerrard: Just one of the issues, since we're dealing with First Nations students, is whether, you know, these activities will be supported in the First Nations communities or—as well as off the First Nations communities or how is that going to work?

Mr. Selinger: There are lots of partnerships with First Nations communities. One of the obvious vehicles for that is Frontier School Division which does work on—sometimes on a contractual basis with First Nations education authorities and bands to

provide services, professional development support and programming backup. We have, through our Healthy Child program, we have things such as the prenatal benefit which is available to pregnant moms. It's available all throughout Manitoba, and then follow-up support to young babies and children.

We have additional support in the budget, in terms of the formula, for early learning in schools. And we also have resources available to help First Nations citizens of Manitoba have more support to succeed in school, whether it's Bright Futures funding or community schools programming or specific programming with a division that allows for more success and more support for Aboriginal students to stay in school and complete school.

And we're going to be looking at other initiatives in this regard as we go forward, including engaging educators and leaders in various communities to be involved with us at increasing high school graduation rates all across Manitoba. It's going to take partnership. It's going to take engagement. It's going to take a willingness for people to overcome jurisdictional issues and a willingness to work together, but I know the department and the minister's interest in that. I know I'm interested in that. I know the community's interested in that, and so we're bringing people together to further move down that road of getting more success in school for Aboriginal people in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: The second area that was talked about in terms of this activity to try and improve the education outcomes and graduation rates for First Nations students was expanding course offerings available to First Nations students. This is a direct quote from the Throne Speech. And what is the Premier's approach going to be to expanding course offerings for—what's the approach going to be to expanding course offerings for First Nations students in First Nations communities?

Mr. Selinger: Well, again, this is going to require a partnership approach because it's in technical terms or jurisdictional terms, not our jurisdiction, but we are more than willing to work with First Nation education authorities and educators in those communities to support their efforts at increasing high school graduation rates. We're very willing to do that. Frontier School Division, in particular, has always been willing to enter into partnerships with First Nations to offer education programming.

* (16:30)

There's just a great willingness to do that on our part with those communities. And those communities also seem to be interested in getting greater results too.

So we have given Aboriginal education responsibilities to the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) and the Deputy Premier so that he can work with the Department of Education and the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) to further those initiatives.

And I think the member believes, as we do, that getting better educational outcomes will address many other problems that we've discussed earlier, even today, but many of the other more negative social and health problems can be addressed if we can get better educational outcomes. So it's an upstream approach which tries to get resources and supports to young people that are in the education system or could be in the educational system or could return to the educational system. We'd like to do everything possible to help them get the benefit of that—those experiences.

Mr. Gerrard: We're on the same page, but I'm just trying to make sure that I understand what the Premier's approach is going to be and, in terms of also understanding, is the Premier indicating that the—or which minister will have the lead on this effort? Will it be the Minister of Education or the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs? And, coupled to that, one of the other areas is the professional development for teachers and First Nations students. Maybe he can talk about that as well.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for that question. It's a good question because the Department of Education is willing to go into First Nation communities and help them with curriculum, getting better curriculum, getting access to better curriculum. They're also willing to help with professional development, and some of those initiatives are under way as we speak. So these are ways we can partner and collaborate and co-operate with First Nations leadership, First Nations teachers and First Nations educational authorities to move this along. We are willing to do that and we've got a minister and senior officials that are willing to do that. We also have many leaders in the community that want to come together and work with the government to further address how we can get more success in high school graduation rates. It's about 80.9 percent now, the graduation rate in Manitoba. I think it started around 72 percent about a decade ago, so we're trying to

move along in that direction, but we think we can move further, and we'd like to find ways to do that, get more success.

Mr. Gerrard: I mean, I think, clearly, the reason for focussing on these areas and the First Nations students is that, in many First Nations communities, the graduation rates are low compared to the provincial average, some very strikingly so. Just, again, to clarify which minister will have overall responsibility in reciting the budget for Education or the budget for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Mr. Selinger: The resources are in the Department of Education and the Ministry of Education for education. We also have adult learning centres, education centres, and that's another opportunity for people to go back and complete a high school education. And we've put those on a sound footing and financing over the years. We also support literacy programming as well, which also gives people a chance to get back into an educational stream of opportunities, but that's where the resources are in the advanced education in Education. The Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, we think, can provide a role in liaising with the federal government to get better funding for First Nation education authorities from the responsible department in Ottawa, INAC.

Mr. Gerrard: There is also a mention in the Throne Speech of providing for transition arrangements for students who move from First Nations schools to provincial schools. It was an initiative described in the Throne Speech. I wonder if the Premier would, you know, follow up and provide some more details.

Mr. Selinger: Are you refer—can you just elaborate on the initiative you're referring to?

Mr. Gerrard: Okay, components of a plan—this is to improve education outcomes and graduation rates for First Nations students include, and here I quote, "transition arrangements for students who move from First Nations schools to provincial schools."

Mr. Selinger: There are cases where students and First Nations schools after, say, grade 9 don't have an opportunity for high school in their community and they have to go elsewhere into places like Cranberry Portage where, historically, there has been a facility school and some living quarters for them. And we want to continue to work on those kinds of arrangements, but we'd actually like opportunities closer to home for high school for people so that they don't have to necessarily leave their family and their

community to get a high school education. But, where they do, we want to have proper supports.

This is, again, often done through Frontier School Division, or the other northern school divisions, such as Mystery Lake. So it's a question of doing the programming at the teacher, parent, community level to help that transition occur in terms of getting stable housing and then stable supports. And, in some cases, providing group work so that the students that come can have a peer group that they can relate to that helps them continue to survive in school, because, sometimes, when young people move, they get kind of lonely and alienated and they're left on their own. And, sometimes, some social worker or community work interventions could help people have a peer group, or a support group, that will allow them to have greater social support, to succeed educationally and to succeed in terms of adapting to a different community where they might have to relocate to go to school.

So all those things can make a big difference, and we want to support those kinds of initiatives at the school division level and at the community level, and with the Aboriginal and other social agencies that are willing to collaborate on those efforts. And so it's—a lot of times, it's bringing people together at the local level to provide these supports, and to provide those programming and social and cultural opportunities. And where they need some small measure of support, we have, within our educational formula, resources that can support those kinds of activities.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the reasons that I asked this is that now, as opposed to, you know, predominantly going to somewhere like Cranberry Portage, students are going all over the place. And it's rather amazing, for instance, from a community like Berens River, that, you know, they're all over the place. And a fair number might go to southwest college in the southern part of Winnipeg, for example. But you will find them in schools in River East school division. You'll find them in Pine Creek. You'll find them, you know, all over, and Brandon, et cetera.

So that's why I was asking about transition arrangements, because it's going to be much more complex than it would have been previously, perhaps, when the people were going primarily to one or, you know, a small number of places. So I—

Mr. Selinger: The member is right. The Southeast Collegiate in south Winnipeg has been an important post-secondary educational opportunity for students

from various First Nations. I was privileged enough to be out there this—I think it was October, early November—where we made resources available for the Winnipeg Aboriginal Sports Achievement Centre to provide after-school programming and social supports to the students who are adjusting to city life, and to help them to succeed in school.

So we are looking for those kinds of collaborative opportunities between credible, community-based organizations and schools, and First Nations education authorities and tribal councils, who are all trying to ensure that young people get a good opportunity to succeed in school.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Just a couple of brief questions that I have for the Premier. There's been an issue that I've brought forward for, actually, a number of years, and I would be interested in hearing from the Premier, maybe not in the context of a question period, but in the context of trying to get a better understanding.

There's been a bill in which I brought forward that dealt with mandatory bicycle helmets. Over the summer, I had reduced it from mandatory for all ages to mandatory for 16 and under, believing that the government would then be more inclined to support the bill. There are many jurisdictions in Canada that have seen the merit of having such legislation, and I suspect that, if the Premier was to consult with others, that he would find that, even in Manitoba, there is widespread support for such a thing.

The question that I have for the Premier is: Does he believe that there is merit in terms of having such legislation, just given the fact that so many other jurisdictions are acting on it? Would it be something that, at some point, that he would be open to?

* (16:40)

Mr. Selinger: Again, I think the issue of young people on bicycles is important in terms of safety, and the question is, what's the best way to accomplish that?

And we've followed a program of free helmets and education of why a helmet should be used. We haven't gone to a mandatory program. I think there is some concerns about potentially putting kids at risk of prosecutions or fines or enforcement activities that would put them in a negative light with the criminal justice system, or the justice system and broader issues of whether there's resources to enforce that.

But the member is right. We do want young people that are using bicycles to do it safely, and we want to educate young people to the value of using a helmet because it does prevent injuries. The member knows that. I know that. And that's why we've—I think over 56,000 helmets have been made available. I don't have my note here on that, but I believe there's been a large number of helmets made available to young people that might not otherwise be able to afford it but want to be able to bicycle around.

So it's a question of what's the best way to achieve the objective of greater bicycle safety when people are riding a bicycle and greater encouragement for them to use a helmet.

And there's carrot approaches in terms of offering resources. There's stick approaches in terms of mandatory legislation, and, so far, we've—Manitoba has—we have not moved on mandatory legislation for some of the reasons I've just suggested.

Mr. Lamoureux: There are a number of organizations—and IMPACT would be one of them—some health-care professionals that feel fairly passionate about the issue.

And I would just leave—and the Premier can provide comment on it if he so chooses. I would like to see the Premier leave the door open, because I think that there's individuals outside the Chamber, outside of the political realm, that feel fairly passionate about the issue. And I would be—think—I, personally, would be encouraged, but I suspect, more importantly, many outside would actually be encouraged to hear some encouraging words from the Premier that this is, in fact, something that if need be they would take into consideration in terms of bringing it forward.

Mr. Selinger: And I thank the member for his comments. Does he have any thoughts about how these—how this would be enforced and how—and whether that kind of a mandatory program is more effective than an educational program and making resources available to young people program, because I think we would both agree that we want to ensure bicycle safety for people using bicycles, but we want to do it in a way that doesn't stigmatize young people and put them into a negative light vis-à-vis charges, et cetera.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, I'll try to do—even do better than that and provide the Premier's office

some details as to how it could actually work and just encourage a couple of those stakeholders just to make that contact to try to attempt to depoliticize the issue. I know some could say that I might have assisted in politicizing it. Let's see if we can depoliticize the issue, and I'll make sure that he's provided what I believe are viable options dealing with the issue.

Mr. Selinger: Before—just before we end this conversation, I just wondered if the member had any comments right now while we're talking about this about how that might be done in a way that doesn't criminalize people using—that are riding a bike without a helmet.

Mr. Lamoureux: In other jurisdictions, there have been some monetary fines that have been put into place. British Columbia, for example, is a fine of up to \$100; New Brunswick, a fine of \$21; Nova Scotia, a fine of up to \$128; Prince Edward Island, a fine of up to \$100; Alberta, a fine of up to \$69; Ontario, a fine of \$80.

To what degree they're actually, you know—you-like, I find it difficult to believe that you're going to see police on every street corner looking for kids not wearing seat—not seatbelts—bicycle helmets. I think it's just the fact of it being legislated would go a long way.

And I couldn't give him the answer as to how many people have been fined in these provinces. I have been told by fairly reliable sources that the—it has had a huge impact on the number of children wearing bicycle helmets. And, when I say huge, I would define anywhere from a converting low of 20 percent in a certain age group to as high as 90 percent plus in a very short time span.

And, again, you'll have to excuse me for not knowing what our percentage is. I would suspect it would probably be less than 40 percent, but within two years I do believe that we would be somewhere in that 90 percent. But, again, I'm going to leave it up to some of the professionals, some of the individuals that do know the actual numbers to convey that message to the Premier's office. And I appreciate the interest and thank you for the questions.

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Chairperson, just a couple quick questions to the Premier. In the budget speech there was a lot of comment made to the government's effort to flood-proof Manitoba.

In the government's own studies and documents in numerous departments, the threat to ongoing activity here in the province of Manitoba, whether it be business oriented or personally oriented, is that of drought. I'm wanting to ask the minister whether there is any discussions about the preparation of this province to sustain a drought. We already know from committee of Estimates with the Water Stewardship Minister, the Lake of the Prairie, which is the feed to the Assiniboine River, is at decades' low levels, and which is a significant water source for Winnipeg.

And so I'm asking the government: Are they putting any effort into looking at the storage of water, as to effectively drought-proof our province? And I might just say on the record three particular dam sites: the Zelena Dam, located at the mouth of the Shell River, which feeds the—and could be again controlled through the Shellmouth Dam—the Zelena, pardon, Dam which I mentioned, sorry; and the Holland Number 3, which was—would store water on the Assiniboine River; and then the Treherne Dam, which stores water at the headwaters of the Boyne. All three were identified by the previous administration as very important elements of drought-proofing the province.

So, rather than any specifics, I just ask the First Minister, is—if there's any preparation being done by government to position our province to sustain the second highest threat to our existence here in Manitoba.

Mr. Selinger: I just want to clarify. Is the member asking whether we're prepared to build dams to retain water in areas where drought could occur?

Mr. Faurchou: It was a global question about drought-proofing the province, but I used three specific examples, which were previously identified as top water retention projects.

Mr. Selinger: I'm not aware of those kinds of projects in the capital budget right now. And—but I would encourage the member to ask the minister responsible for highways and Infrastructure whether there are any resources in that regard in the budget. I don't believe there are. I think they've been focussed on things like roads, sewer and water.

Mr. Faurchou: Yes, I had to ask the question on the basis that there is a significance of the infrastructure budgeting, and whether there's any discussions about the drought proofing of our province, because of a lot of mention was made in the budget document about flood proofing.

And I do not want the current government to lose focus that Manitoba is equally threatened by drought as it is by flood, and that is well documented within government documents.

* (16:50)

The other thing that bothers me immensely I'd like to make mention to the First Minister is a lot of verbiage was given to innovation and technology specific to agriculture. And agriculture is such a significant industry in Manitoba, providing a lot of employment and gross domestic product for our province. Yet, in this budget that was passed, to list all of the areas that have been cut, like Agri-Food Research, cut in half; grants to the University of Manitoba Faculty of Agriculture, cut; in the grant to the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute, cut; Agriculture Sustainability Initiative, cut. Irrigation—irrigation—which we just—making mention of drought, the budget has been wiped out—zero, down from over a million dollars two years ago.

And these are the type of facts contained within the budget documents that do not jive with the budget speech. And to even state that the Food Development Centre in Portage la Prairie will be receiving capital infusion, but the operating budget for the Food Development Centre is cut.

So it doesn't jive insofar as that, if you're going to build additional space and food development type of activity, but yet the administration and supports are diminished year over year.

So I would like to leave with the First Minister the thought that agriculture is important to Manitoba, and we are being very, very short-sighted when we take away from the research that, indeed, will be the future of agriculture in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for his comments. I do want to assure him that we think value-added agriculture is important in the province, which is why there is more capital for the Food Development Centre, which is why there's support for the Richardson Nutraceutical Centre, and why there is support at the St. Boniface Hospital for that long name that they have over there for what they do in terms of food research and development. And that is a cluster, those three operations; they work together to look at how we can have better food products in Manitoba.

And I've been noticing—and maybe it's because I've been paying a little more attention since I visited the Food Development Centre when I was out in

Portage la Prairie this year, which, I thought, was an excellent centre with excellent products and some top-notch researchers there who the member probably knows, perhaps better than I do, but having met them, I thought they did some excellent work in developing some value-added products, whether it was, you know—I mean, things like flax, but just the products they were developing out of native species in Manitoba, some species which have been considered to be weeds in the past or noxious, and how they see the value in using all parts of those plants to develop different food products, I was very impressed by that.

And I've seen it on the shelves. You have to look a little bit sometimes to find it, but there are some very innovative food products on the shelves. There's a gentleman at The Forks that has a small outlet there, and he carries just about an entirely Manitoba products there, innovative Manitoba products, food products including naked oats and things like that, which, I'm sure, if they'd market that properly, would have a much wider appeal.

But I just thought some of the food products that they had there were really quite innovative and also nutritious, added to your health outcomes. Some of the beverages they had had ingredients that would increase immunity protection for people.

Those kinds of things, I think, are the future, and we got to find a way to move forward on all of those things with private investment, with public investment, with research and development tax credits, which have also been improved in this budget in terms of refundability and more coverage.

So, you know, the member raises important questions. I do want to assure him that we want to move on these things. But, and I'm not trying to be political here, but you also tell us you want us to balance the budget every year and you don't want us to have any deficits. So, you know, the reality is, we're trying to strike the right balance here, of moving forward on expanding the economy and adding value through innovation in the agri-food sector, as well as other sectors, including new economy sectors.

And we're trying to find the strike—right balance on it. If the member thinks that's—any of these reductions are egregious, and will, in any way, cause serious harm, I'd like to know that. They might be the case where it's one program ending and the resources are being transferred to allow a new program to follow that up or to take a new initiative.

But we do believe in innovation. We're the first government to ever have a Department of Innovation in this province and a Minister for Innovation, in this province.

And—so that's an important step forward in recognizing the value of that. We have an Innovation Council that brings together industry and academia and investors to look at how we can add further innovative moves and manoeuvres in Manitoba to grow the economy, a knowledge-based economy.

Mr. Faurshou: I do appreciate the First Minister and the government's recognition of agriculture and its importance within our economy. But I hope the minister recognizes that the cutbacks at the research level end up being very detrimental down the road, and this is why I made mention of the very specific entities that are being pared back in their provincial funding.

The entity is known as the Manitoba Crop Diversification Centre. It is significantly cut back, and that really is where we see the new products being tested here in the province. And so, yes, it's globally—you were saying, that you support it, but when it gets down where the rubber hits the road, I think that's maybe not the case. And so I leave it with the government insofar as raising the issue and that's something that I hope that recognition is there.

I invite the First Minister out. They're planning—hoping for the end of the month, but maybe next month—the facility adjacent to the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute, Westest, is going to be opening its new facilities, enhanced facilities, and we're very much looking forward to that event. And I hope the First Minister and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) will be in attendance and other members of government as well. It—I think it speaks well of the future for our province.

But if the minister—First Minister has a comment—but I'm passionate about research and development and the future of agriculture in our province, and so it is something that I'm gravely concerned about when we see that the numbers being pared back in those vital areas.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for those questions and I know of his interest in these matters. We've had some loge conversations about some of the types of grains that are available and could be

developed in Manitoba and other jurisdictions. And I know you have an interest in some of those things, and if you have good ideas that way, we'd like to hear them. If you think any of these things are going to be egregiously negative to innovation in Manitoba and the agriculture sector, we'd like to know that. We're not—we don't pretend to be perfect on everything we do. We appreciate the constructive feedback.

But I do want to let the member know that there have been additional resources made available for innovation on the R&D tax side, on the capital side, on the programming side, including our commitments to universities and colleges, all of which provide education to people to take those higher advanced degrees. More bursaries, more scholarships to take those advanced degrees. Co-op education tax credits to allow people to work in Manitoba in the field where they're studying. Co-op education hiring tax credits to allow them to get jobs here and employers to attract them. The graduate tuition tax rebate program, which allows an employer to attract people with unique skill sets from anywhere in the world to come and live and work in Manitoba.

So I just want him to know that we're looking at a broad array of ways to support Manitoba becoming a more innovate economy, a more innovative culture, and that includes investments in the arts as well, so that people can have an opportunity to develop their creative skills. But—and we're doing a lot of those things, and I appreciate the member's interest in this area. I hope he's going to vote for the budget.

Mr. McFadyen: Just a quick question on behalf of my colleague, the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck). If the Premier can just come back with the latest on the Tabor Home, I know he'd appreciate that. So I'll leave that with you. There's a great need there. Lots of studies, but no progress to date on that. And so I'll leave that with you for an undertaking.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for the inquiry, and we'll see what the status of that is.

Madam Chairperson: Order. The time being 5 o'clock, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 21, 2010

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