

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
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HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	
<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 17, 2011

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 29—The Child Sexual Exploitation and
Human Trafficking Act**

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 29, The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act; Loi sur l'exploitation sexuelle d'enfants et la traite de personnes, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: This bill creates a protection order that will be available to children who are victims of certain forms of sexual exploitation. This is modelled on the protection order available to persons facing domestic violence and stalking and will offer children protection from predators and abusers. This protection order will also be available to adults and children who are victims of human trafficking. Second, the bill creates an action of human trafficking; it will permit a victim of human trafficking to sue and recover monetary damages from those who've exploited the victim through human trafficking.

I look forward to the Manitoba Legislature passing this groundbreaking legislation to protect vulnerable children and adults.

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

PETITIONS

Mount Agassiz Ski Area

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

For several decades, the Mount Agassiz ski area, home to the highest vertical between Thunder Bay and the Rocky Mountains, was a popular skiing and snowboarding destination for Manitobans and visitors alike.

The operations of the Mount Agassiz ski area were very important to the local economy, not only creating jobs, but also generating sales of goods and services at area businesses.

In addition, a thriving rural economy generates tax revenue that helps pay for core provincial government services and infrastructure, which benefits all Manitobans.

Although the ski facility closed in 2000, there remains strong interest in seeing it reopened, and Parks Canada is committed to conducting a feasibility study with respect to the Agassiz site and future opportunities in the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the appropriate ministers of the provincial government to consider outlining to Parks Canada the importance that a viable recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area would play in the local and provincial economies.

And to request that the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider working with all stakeholders, including Parks Canada, to help develop a plan for a viable, multiseason recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area.

This petition is signed by E. Brunel, T. Tucker and Nicole Andersen and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by J. Noszczyk, K. Szyszło, J. Joczov and thousands of other concerned Manitobans.

Convicted Auto Thieves—Denial of MPI Benefits

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

In Manitoba, a car thief convicted of stealing a vehicle involved in a car accident is eligible to receive compensation and assistance for personal injury from Manitoba Public Insurance.

Too many Manitoba families have had their lives tragically altered by motor vehicle accidents involving car thieves and stolen vehicles.

It is an injustice to victims, their families and law-abiding Manitobans that MPI premiums are used to benefit car thieves involved in those accidents.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Justice deny all MPI benefits to a person for injuries received in an accident if he or she is convicted of stealing a motor vehicle involved in the accident.

And this petition is signed by B. Bartley, C. Sutton, M. Pritchard and many, many more fine Manitobans.

The Winnipeg Foundation Act Amendment

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

These are the reasons for the petition:

The Winnipeg Foundation Act was amended in 2004, but in the ensuing years the increased size, activity and governance matters of The Winnipeg Foundation require the size of its board of directors to be increased.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To amend The Winnipeg Foundation Act by increasing the board of directors to a maximum of 17 members to be able to properly manage and administrate its operations and affairs.

This petition was put forward by R. Bracken, G. Hanson, and R.L. Frost, among others.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): The Assiniboine River crest continues to move eastwards and is expected to reach the Portage Diversion later today or tomorrow. Even after the crest, river levels are expected to remain extremely high for several weeks.

Work to reinforce the vulnerable spots in dikes will continue and our crews will remain on high alert until the acute risk of an uncontrolled breach has passed.

For many, the flood fight will continue as well into the summer and fall. Due to extremely wet conditions in 2010 and the record water levels in the province this spring, lake levels on Lake Manitoba and almost every other major lake in the province will remain very high for months to come.

On Lake Manitoba, this will mean the highest levels in 50 years, threatening hundreds of homes, cottages and farms, particularly in times of high wind and waves. Outflows from Lake Manitoba have been at maximum for months to help draw the lake down and lessen the impact of these extremely high levels.

As we often see in high-water periods, the outflows to help lessen the flood burden in one area then becomes someone else's flood. Lake St. Martin,

which receives outflows from Lake Manitoba, is also experiencing record flood levels.

There is no question that this continues to be a very challenging time for many Manitobans. While we can hope that the acutely high water levels being seen in many areas right now will soon recede, we expect to be in a high-water period for several more years.

* (13:40)

Just as was done after the major floods of 1950, which led to the construction of the Shellmouth Reservoir, Portage Diversion and floodway, and 1997, which led to the floodway expansion and significant permanent flood protection in the Red River Valley, the Province will be taking a serious look at what improvements to permanent flood protection need to be made throughout the province after this flood.

For now, we continue to focus on the immediate needs around the province. Additional staff and sandbags have been sent to Lake Manitoba, and this will continue to be a major area of focus in the coming days. As water continues to recede on the Red River, allowing the opening of PTH 75 last night and officially opened this morning, we will also be continually looking at redeploying resources to where they are most needed.

This has been a long and hard flood fight for many, and it's unfortunately far from over. I would again like to thank all of those staff, our Armed Forces personnel and particularly the volunteers, who are on the front lines of this flood fight working with flood-affected families, for their ongoing work.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the latest update on the flood situation. There's been considerable focus in recent days on the preparations for the Assiniboine River dike breach and on difficulties being experienced by residents around Manitoba. These efforts will be ongoing for the foreseeable future. We again extend our ongoing thanks to those many individuals, groups, the military and levels of government involved in this important flood protection work.

We also recognize that the flood fight is continuing on multiple fronts elsewhere across the province. More than 3,600 Manitobans are still out of their homes in different regions. Some have been out for weeks, and this creates unique challenges for those affected.

Assiniboine River is close to its peak in Brandon; hundreds there remain evacuated, the disruption to businesses being considerable as well. Highway 75 is now reopened, which is a welcome development, particularly for the trucking industry and for businesses and communities like Morris. While this major artery has reopened, travel remains difficult in many other areas, with more than 100 provincial and more than 760 municipal roads affected by flooding.

We look forward to continued updates on the flood situation in Manitoba, in particular as it relates to details of compensation programs for those affected. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister for the statement, and, certainly, the fact that Highway 75 is open is welcome news. The flood continues at high levels along the Assiniboine River, and, certainly, the people around Lake Manitoba are very, very concerned about the prolonged potential of this flood to impact well through the summer. And I think it's going to be very important in the days ahead to provide a clear picture of the expectations.

I would note that I've had calls that because of the flood-stage level, and the very high level on Lake Manitoba, that the—some of the drains are backing up and not flowing as well as they should be in the area around Eddystone and Lonely Lake and so on. And it's clearly a critical time for a lot of people. And, if this is going to be prolonged, it's going to be a real difficult situation continuing for many weeks.

The situation, as the minister alluded to, on Lake St. Martin, the levels affecting Little Saskatchewan and Lake St. Martin communities are very high. I noted, just in the last two or three days, that there was a reference in one of the press releases, the ministers—that levels were approaching flood levels on Lake St. Martin. Well, I think when I was there nine days ago they were already very much at flood stage and probably the highest they'd ever seen them, and many homes in the community badly affected. And, certainly, not only short-term, but long-term effective planning is needed in that area.

And I think that the same applies in terms of the long-term planning and short-term approaches and some decisions made relative to Shoal Lake, which is

very critical for people living close to there. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today, we have students from Willow Creek Colony School who are the guests of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Lake Manitoba Flooding Compensation Information for Residents

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): As the flood fight continues throughout our province, there are many people who have come forward from all walks of life to assist, and we note the great assistance of many of the Hutterite colonies from around the province of Manitoba and happy to see representatives of one of those colonies here today. And we thank them for the great role they've played as citizens of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the issues around the shores of Lake Manitoba and the significant impact on people who live around the shores of Lake Manitoba are matters of significant urgency and anxiety for many of those people.

With the outflows at the Portage Diversion at over 30,000 cubic feet per second flowing into Lake Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, those residents, quite rightly, view themselves as being on the receiving end of water sent in their direction through deliberate actions of government.

Mr. Speaker, obviously in a flood situation government's options are difficult, but we do seek in this province to be fair to those who are flooded as a result of deliberate decisions.

Will the Premier acknowledge that the people living along make-Lake Manitoba have a very valid and significant claim to special compensation as a result of the circumstances they now face?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): There's no question the people in the Lake Manitoba area are subject to high water levels and that's in no small measure to the amount of water going through the Portage

Diversion. Also, the existing rivers that go into Lake Manitoba are running at record high levels as well.

And we will certainly work with them to provide them the support they need to prevent damage to their homes, to prevent damage to their property, and in the event that they do get untoward damage to their homes and to their property, we will work with them on a special compensation program.

Mr. McFadyen: I want to thank the Premier for the—for that acknowledgement and the indication that those property owners will be considered within the special compensation program, and it's many people from different communities around the lake who are dealing with the high-water challenges.

Can the Premier just indicate whether the compensation to be provided to those residents will be comparable or the same, in terms of its criteria, as those that will be applied to people living southeast of Portage la Prairie who are the victims of a very direct decision on the part of government to deliberately open that dike and flood that property?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

The special compensation we offer to all folks affected by these extraordinary circumstances in Manitoba west this year and the extraordinary amount of water that has flowed both through the controlled release area as well as into the Lake Manitoba area and into the Lake St. Martin-Fairford-Little Saskatchewan area. These communities are being negatively impacted. We will look at a special compensation program for them.

The details of that are being worked on, but the objective is to hold—to ensure that people are treated with fairness and a certain degree of recognition of the role they've played in storing water, which has protected not only their own communities in terms of the farming and rural communities in the controlled release area but also their own communities in the areas where we are doing extra diking, and we are doing mitigation projects up and down Lake Manitoba as we speak.

And I was able to see some of the efforts that were being made yesterday. They are already, in some cases, making a very significant difference for people that own property or live in that area.

**Assiniboine River
Compensation Information for Residents**

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): There are individual property owners in the path of the oncoming water whose property has already been flooded who are indicating that they are getting some conflicting messages about what will be covered and what won't under that program.

We recognize that the significance of the current flood was not understood until about nine days ago and that much has been going on over that time period.

* (13:50)

I would just ask the Premier if he can be specific about when it is that Manitobans who are being negatively impacted by flooding will be made aware of the level of compensation and the criteria that will apply so that they can have some degree of certainty and relieve some of that anxiety that many of them are very understandably feeling today.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, the first priority is to work very closely with the local municipal leadership and their emergency operations committees to do everything possible to protect people so that they could live safely, to protect their properties, their homes.

Yesterday in St. Laurent, for example, they were mobilizing their emergency operations committee. We had 70 officials up there, 70 staff from the Department of Conservation that were engaged in sandbagging those properties and protecting them with various forms of flood protection. And that is the absolute top priority is to minimize negative impacts and harm on people and their property.

And, yes, the special compensation program is being worked on right now. We have said we want to, in broad terms, acknowledge any property damage issues that need to be addressed. If there's income loss issues, they will need to be addressed as well. And then recovery—what is required in terms of recovery, particularly for people like producers. So, those are the broad dimensions of it.

We do have some experience in 1997, where the federal government was the lead on a special program to address the concerns of people that were flooded during that time. It gives us a base upon which we can design our program, but we will be making every effort possible to put resources in

place, not only to prevent damage but then to deal with it if—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, on a new question.

The concern that is being expressed by many is that if the details of the program and the commitments are not made soon enough, that as water recedes, that the willingness on the part of government to provide that compensation will also begin to dissipate. And so, the important—*[interjection]* This is the concern being expressed by landowners and which we are bringing to this House on their behalf. Members opposite may not like the fact that we are speaking on their behalf, but these are the questions that are being asked.

Mr. Speaker, the question is: When can they expect to get the details? We understand that the commitment has been made. That commitment has now been made over several days and, now, I think, what people are looking for is a timeline, a date on which they can look forward to receiving some confirmation as to the level and some of the detail that they can expect, given that for many of these people dealing with this challenge, the passage of one or two days is like a lifetime when you're dealing with this level of fear and anxiety about your own circumstances.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it is true that people like certainty and would like to get as much information as possible. It's also true that the more we can do to prevent harm to people, their homes and their properties, the better off everybody is: less disruption in their lives, less disruption to the property and the homes that they own, less cost to the taxpayers because we've taken those measures. And that has been the focus of everybody: at the local level, the leadership level, the emergency operations committee, the provincial Emergency Measures people, the people in Infrastructure and Transportation who have been working so closely with local folks on putting diking and other infrastructure in place that protects them. All of those measures are intended to minimize damage.

Compensation program is certainly being worked on, as I said earlier. There's some experience from the '97 experience where there was a program put in place. We're looking to have a program that is—fully recognizes the role that people have played in helping store water in this flood, and fully recognizes that they've protected other Manitobans in

doing that. And we will move that—on that program expeditiously, but we will continue to focus on prevention, which is where we're at on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, and certainly the focus on prevention, where that's possible, is absolutely appropriate. But there are many who are already experiencing flooding and there are many who have already done everything that they possibly can do in terms of prevention and protection, who are now waiting hour by hour, day by day, to have some certainty in terms of what the level of compensation will be.

We know that where the political will exists, this government has shown that it can move very quickly to make commitments. And I'm just asking the Premier if he can be specific about the date on which he expects to announce the details, so that people can have at least that level of certainty to look forward to a date on which they will receive some confirmation as to whether they qualify, what will be covered and how that will work in terms of the flow of compensation funds, to allow them that level of certainty as they attempt to plan their lives and emerge from these very challenging times.

Mr. Selinger: We've initiated conversations with federal officials and federal leadership on these very matters. We've provided them with the experience of the 1997 package that was put forward. We are, obviously, have a priority to prevent as much harm and damage to people and property as possible in their homes. We are fully seized with doing that. As the member knows, we've got over 700 public servants in Manitoba working full time on this flood. We've got 1,500 military personnel in the province. Municipal officials are working almost full time, in many cases, more than full time on emergency operations activities to protect people. People are taking time off—holidays from their employment to work full time on these things. People are volunteering to help out their neighbours, and they're travelling to other parts of Manitoba to help each other out.

There's a full mobilization going on among the citizens of Manitoba to prevent the damage, and we have acknowledged the principle of compensation. We've said it will go beyond the normal disaster financial assistance criteria, which are set by the federal government. They have deductibles, they have limits. We have said we will go beyond that, and we will go beyond that and provide additional

support to people that are negatively affected by this very difficult—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: And, Mr. Speaker, the points made by the Premier are good points in terms of the issues that he's addressing. But the point that he's avoiding is the issue of the timing of providing people with certainty around that special compensation package. People are asking questions about whether there will be deductibles, and, if so, what will they be. Will there be limits? If so, what will those limits be? Who qualifies in terms of those who are being impacted by deliberate decisions of the provincial government either directly or indirectly? These are the sorts of questions that are arising. They are all very good questions.

And the simple question to the Premier is: When can people expect to know the details of the promised special compensation plan that he speaks of?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question because we all know how much stress Manitobans are under that are in these areas where there are high water and where there have been flooding impacts. It's been a very difficult time for them, and that's why it's all the more impressive how they've taken that stress and they've mobilized that stress to further protect themselves and to help out their neighbours. And I've seen very direct examples of this, that people have put aside protecting their own home to help another farmer next door move grain, for example, or to move livestock and then return to protecting their own home.

So there's been an enormous amount of co-operation at the community level supported by their local leadership. We've been there to support them through Emergency Measures, through our Infrastructure personnel. The military people have been doing yeoman's work to keep the dikes from breaching. There's over nine helicopters flying sandbags in and out of the dikes on a daily basis and looking at all the pressure points and surveying where new pressure points occur. Up Lake Manitoba they're—the emergency operations committees are mobilizing to protect property.

We will have a compensation package. The details and the principles—the principles have been established, the details will be announced soon. It will be a package that goes beyond the normal arrangements. I expect it to be out in a matter of

days, perhaps late this week, perhaps early next week, but as soon as possible while we keep our focus on preventing damage to people and their properties.

**Assiniboine River
Compensation Information for Residents**

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, this government has indicated that there will be a special compensation program for Manitobans affected by the deliberate breach of the Assiniboine dike, and, as I raised in the House yesterday, these—those affected by the breach are anxious to learn details of the program. In particular, they want assurances that the preparations they're undertaking now will be eligible for coverage later.

So I'd like to ask the minister responsible again: Can he please clarify whether there are any special steps people in the inundation zone must be undertaking now so that they will be eligible for compensation later?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, actually, this question was raised by my critic this morning in Estimates. We had some discussion about the broad situation, but also the particular situation there. We are targeting getting the details out by the end of the week.

* (14:00)

And I want to assure the member here that job No. 1 for everyone, including local residents in the impacted area but also all our provincial staff, the municipalities that have been potentially impacted and, of course, the Armed Forces, has been in terms of the immediate flood protection, and we'll make sure that whatever legitimate expenses are incurred will be covered.

Our focus has really been on protecting those homes. We've made significant progress on that, but we will be getting the details of the program out by the end of this week.

Mrs. Taillieu: And we recognize the efforts right now are in protection of the homes, and certainly there have been enormous efforts made by a tremendous number of people in regard to the situation.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's an important component of the preparation for flood related to the Assiniboine River dike breach is the construction of other dikes. In the past, there have been questions raised as to

when there is coverage for a construction of a dike, particularly if it's a permanent dike or a temporary dike.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister responsible explain how the cost for these dikes being constructed relative to the Assiniboine dike breach will be treated under the special compensation program? Will all these dikes be covered?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I've made this public declaration on more than one occasion, but we've had very good conversations with the federal government. I've had a good conversation with the Prime Minister.

The existing DFA program, Disaster Financial Assistance, frequently and usually did not cover mitigation investments. The government of Manitoba went ahead with a dramatic number of mitigation investments, up to \$60 million, including raising all the dikes along the Assiniboine River between Portage la Prairie and Headingley to record levels—the record level event plus two feet and now further—and further reinforcement and support, and we've done many other mitigation projects with other municipalities in Manitoba. I'm pleased to report again that the federal government has committed to covering 50 per cent of the cost of those mitigation projects.

This is a big step forward for the federal government. The Prime Minister obviously has some work to do with his government system to bring that into full implementation, but he's agreed to the principle of that. We've acted on it before we knew the principle would be supported by the federal government, but this will allow us to put permanent dikes in place that will protect people for the long run.

Everybody understands the common sense and the logic of that. We've done it up in the West St. Paul-East St. Paul-St. Andrews area—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: And I just want to remind everyone that we're asking these questions on behalf of Manitobans who are asking us questions about what is going to be eligible for compensation, because there needs to be a flow of information, Mr. Speaker. And as we've seen through the course of the spring flooding, timely sharing of information is essential.

Everyone is working diligently in the Assiniboine dike breach inundation zone to get ready

and they are anxiously awaiting to see how this event unfolds. People are incurring cost to this, Mr. Speaker, and have questions that they would like to have answered.

So I would like to ask the minister responsible to give us a timeline, again, for the release of details and guidelines for the special compensation program related to the Assiniboine dike deliberate breach. When can we expect to see this information posted on the EMO website, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Ashton: I indicated our time frame earlier, and once the announcement's made it will be put on the website. It will be part of any public communications. I do want to stress that we're developing, in this case, a special compensation program.

I also want to indicate that we announced some time ago there would be a Disaster Financial Assistance program for the province. I do want to indicate that we have spent a lot of time making sure that the municipalities, who are partners in terms of emergency response and flood recovery, are aware of not only the basic parameters but some of the significant progress that we've seen, some of the changes in the last period of time. I'd remind the member that we raised the maximum claim in 2009 to \$200,000 under DFA. This, again, is DFA, not the special compensation program.

We also have brought in a new formula that's going to make a real difference to municipalities who otherwise wouldn't—stuck with a 10 per cent contribution. We've now capped it at a per capita amount, which will mean that communities such as the RM of Morris and many other municipalities across the province will be far less impacted financially. So that has been communicated to municipalities and we're working in partnership with them on the recovery as we speak.

Lake Manitoba Fairford Dam Usage

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, on May the 16th, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) said in Estimates that they'd been preparing for the flood since November 2010. Due to heavy precipitation throughout 2010, Lake Manitoba water levels were higher than usual.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Water Stewardship: Was the Fairford outlet on Lake Manitoba used to capacity to lower the lake levels in anticipation of this spring's flood?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we take the flood seriously on this side of the House.

The Fairford control structure has been running for several months, Mr. Speaker. The capacity to draw down, to draw water through the Fairford control structure, depends on whether it is ice covered, depends on whether there is frazil ice, depends on the level of Lake Manitoba. So we have been drawing down at the capacity that the control structure could bear for several months now.

Mr. Briese: As recently as April the 6th, the outflow at Fairford was 9,000 cfs; that's far below capacity. Mr. Speaker, water from Lake of the Prairies was released at high levels from Shellmouth control structure. The government reports on the Jenpeg facility on Lake Manitoba were fully operational to control Lake Winnipeg levels.

Mr. Speaker, why did the Minister of Water Stewardship not use the same strategy with the Fairford outlet on Lake Manitoba?

Ms. Melnick: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we are—I'm not sure if the member's actually asked his question yet; he's chirping.

Again, we've been drawing down through the Fairford control structure as to what the structure could bear. We've been looking at upstream concerns, we've been looking at downstream concerns, and we're also very concerned about the First Nations communities that are directly affected by the flow of water through that.

There is a lot to balance, Mr. Speaker. These are unprecedented high-water periods, and we are trying to make sure that we are not negatively affecting those downstream while trying to help and aid those upstream.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, ranchers, farmers, property owners along Lake Manitoba are fighting to protect their homes, their livestock and their livelihoods. They believe that Lake Manitoba could have been lowered by releasing more water at the Fairford Dam in anticipation of this spring's flooding.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of water ship again—Water Stewardship again: Why wasn't more water released from Lake Manitoba in the months leading up to this spring's flood?

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, all through this province, we've been moving water as 'expeditiously' as is safe for the structures, the upstream populations and the

downstream. We drew Shellmouth down to historically low levels. Hydro has been running Jenpeg at capacity, again, ice affected and wind affected. We have done the same thing with the Fairford control structure.

We are dealing with unprecedented levels. We are dealing with communities that are experiencing, in real time, the need to protect. We are dealing with First Nations communities that are very vulnerable. There have been evacuations out of Lake St. Martin. Mr. Speaker, again, we don't want to bring hardship on the folks who are downstream while trying to relieve the pressures upstream.

Shoal Lakes Flooding Information for Livestock Producers

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the Shoal lakes have reached a new level and have started overflowing into the Grassmere drains. There's concerns that future diking to prevent the overflow of Shoal lakes into the Grassmere Drain will force more ranchers out of business. The affected ranchers need answers to questions such as when will the lake level be addressed and how are they to be compensated for the loss of their land and their livelihood.

And now, Mr. Speaker, we know that the Minister of Water Stewardship has had trouble rising out of her chair up until today to deal with any flooding questions. Can the Minister of Agriculture tell us if he has a solution for this serious challenge facing Shoal lakes' area producers?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, these are very serious problems faced by ranchers and farmers in the area. What we don't need are political games from my friend from Emerson.

* (14:10)

So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the whole government and on behalf of 1.2 million Manitobans who are concerned about this, I want to assure that my friend from across the way, that we are taking the request seriously from the ranchers and the farmers in the area. We're looking at, first and foremost, working with those ranchers and farmers to make sure that their livelihoods are protected. We know that that—the Shoal lakes is a lake that is rising and it doesn't have a place to go other than up onto farmers' land and into their yards, which we saw when we were out there.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're working very seriously with farmers in the area to address these needs.

Mr. Graydon: The doom and gloom that the ranchers like John Dyck, Howard Hilstrom, Stew Tataryn and others are facing indirectly proportionate to this government's inaction on the Shoal lakes flood file.

Ranchers need answers what—about what to do with their cattle and their bison, like moving them out of the region or bringing in feed for them. The producers' present and future livelihood depends on an action plan by this government.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture share with the producers and this House today his action plan? Ranchers need to know so they can formulate their survival plans.

Mr. Struthers: I would advise the member across the way to pay better attention when he speaks with those very farmers he's just put on the record here, Mr. Speaker.

Those farmers, when I met with them, impressed me as people who were very proactive, who were very concerned about their livelihoods and were very willing to work with this government in terms to put a solution in place. They were much more positive than I hear coming from across the way, Mr. Speaker.

But, you know, I'm not surprised about that because I—we hear a lot of negativity across the way, and I will say, Mr. Speaker, I hear a lot of optimism and a lot of determination when we meet with farmers when their backs are against the wall. I have a lot of faith and I have a lot of respect for farmers who can be positive and proactive in these kind of times. A few lessons can be learned across the way, I think.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, all we get from the minister is road-apple rhetoric. The time for 'rhetoric' is over; the time for action is now.

The Minister of Agriculture has toured the flooded Shoal Lake area. He promised ranchers two weeks ago that he knew his responsibility. He said he was responsible for short-term and intermediate assistance, and that his government would have an answer by Friday the 13th. It was a bad-luck day for the ranchers, wasn't it?

It is now May 17th and still no answers. Producers have now flooded land, no pasture, no equity and no hope.

Mr. Speaker, how can this minister expect ranchers to trust him or believe him now? What will his tragedy—when will his strategy be announced?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, this member complained last year, in July, when we came forward with support on a per-acre basis to farmers as a result of excess moisture.

This same member complained again later in the fall when we announced feed assistance and transportation assistance support we went—when we supported farmers right across the province in terms of that program.

I suspect—I fully expect, Mr. Speaker, that in the not-too-distant future, when we come forward with support for farmers and ranchers in the Shoal lakes, he'll get up in his seat again and he'll complain again.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to listen to the ranchers and the farmers, and I'm going to work with them instead of listening to the member for Emerson.

Business Tax Returns Waiver of Late Penalties Due to Flooding

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, the minister of Finance announced yesterday that if businesses are unable to file their provincial tax returns by the required date because of flooding, they may submit a request to have the penalty and interest charges waived.

Mr. Speaker, given that there are many businesses in Manitoba who will be similarly affected, will the Minister of Finance agree to waive these penalties and interest charges for Manitoba businesses who are adversely affected by the flood?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, when we've been faced with a situation like this in the past, we have addressed it and we've waived penalties. And certainly we recognize the challenges that our people are facing right now. We recognize that people are more interested and more concerned about protecting their homes, about protecting their businesses, and there is the possibility that they not—may not be able to file the papers that are needed immediately, and, as a department, absolutely we will consider that.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, given that in Manitoba the retail sales tax returns must be filed by the 20th of each month, that's three days from now.

Will the Minister of Finance announce some relief similar to Saskatchewan for businesses

adversely affected by the flood? She's announced that she will. When will she do that, Mr. Speaker, because this is three days away?

Ms. Wowchuk: Again, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that people that are involved in businesses in the flood area are more interested in protecting and more concerned about protecting their business, in sandbagging and ensuring that their families are safe. Those are their priorities, and very easily there would be the ability of not filing your income—your retail sales tax in the period.

We've made exceptions like this, we've recognized it in other situations, and, certainly, in this one we will as well.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba the retail sales tax returns must be filed by the 20th of each month. That's three days from now.

And I guess I will ask the minister: When does she plan to make this announcement to ensure that those businesses who are adversely affected by the flooding will be somehow offered compensation in this way or offered relief? And will they?

Mr. Speaker, we're three days away, and I think Manitobans who are 'adversary'—adversely reflected business owners in our province have a right to know. How does this Minister of Finance plan to get that message out to those Manitoban—those Manitoba businesses who are adversely affected by the flood?

Ms. Wowchuk: This is standard practice in this province. When unforeseen circumstances arise that people are not able to file their—or their—for their sales tax or other papers, Mr. Speaker, there is the ability to delay those. And, certainly, in this situation, when people are looking after their families and protecting their homes, the standard practice will fall into place, and people will not be required to remit their taxes if, in fact, they are flooded or if their businesses close.

NOR-MAN Health Authority Release of External Review

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Flin Flon concerned citizen's health care committee wants nothing short of the full report from the NOR-MAN Regional Health Authority, not just the recommendations.

Will the Minister of Health give them the full report? Mr. Speaker, Manitoba taxpayers want the details of the investigation of the corruption allegations which were dealt with in the full

NOR-MAN report. Will the minister provide the full report?

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are aware of the suspicious timing about the transparency amendments to Bill 38.

Will the minister lead by example and provide the full report and be transparent?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): And, again, I can say to the member that he has been sharing information with the public that is just plain wrong, and I'll take the opportunity to correct that. He is wrong when he suggests that amendments to The RHA Act are in response to the NOR-MAN external review. We announced that we would be amending that act in the fall and again in the budget speech in April.

He's wrong when he suggests the report is complete and ready for release. It's not yet complete. He's wrong to suggest that I've refused to release the full report. That's incorrect. In fact, it said in the *Flin Flon Reminder* on May the 11th, Mr. Speaker, that the—we will release its final report to the public in the spring. We're releasing the full report, the recommendations, the full monty.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard from the minister about releasing the recommendations. We did not hear about the full report, and I'm glad that we're going to get the full report. It's about time. Why doesn't she release that full report today? You know, one of the problems—one of the problems, in her own Bill 38, it says that the regional health authorities have got to release public documents, and that's a very important part of her own bill. And it's important that we get that full report as soon as possible.

* (14:20)

I ask the minister: When will she release that full report?

Ms. Oswald: When it's done.

Mr. Gerrard: We had a promise earlier on that it was going to be in early spring; we had a promise that it was going to be by the middle of May. It's still not here.

Why is the minister delaying? Is the minister going to make changes to the report? Look, it's very important when we've got a very serious situation, when we've got the CEO of the NOR-MAN Regional Health Authority resigning, when we've got the wife

of the CEO who was given a plum position in the NOR-MAN Regional Health Authority resigning last week, to have some explanation. It's about time the minister come clean with explanation for why the resignations occurred.

What is going on? When is the full report going to be available?

Ms. Oswald: By his own admission, now, in question 3, he says that I said that I would be releasing the report this spring. In the first two questions, he claims that I said that I wouldn't release the report.

This is a very troubling pattern, Mr. Speaker, with the member opposite. I can say that he has misled the media by saying to him that a constituent wrote to me and I didn't respond, when, in fact, he was in receipt of an email response to that constituent the same day.

We saw this same member, Mr. Speaker, misquoting Professor Ryan on the issue of the bipole and the underwater line, prompting a letter from Mr. Ryan that says, this is most regrettable because it is not the case.

This is the same member, Mr. Speaker, that held a press conference about long-term care while an individual was on their deathbed. The same member—a quote from the family, saying, it was absolutely incredibly insensitive and it infuriates me. I've begged him to apologize; he won't. It's a troubling pattern indeed.

Office of the Fire Commissioner Rescue Services Resources

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Well, the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) is upset because I ask more questions in this House than he does, Mr. Speaker.

You know, maybe they'll take the muzzle off him, Mr. Speaker, but on a serious note, yesterday, we celebrated the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member for Selkirk has the floor.

Mr. Dewar: Yesterday, we celebrated the important role that the emergency measures personnel play in this province, Mr. Speaker, particularly the role they're doing in helping us affect—in helping individuals affected by the flood.

My question is to the Minister of Labour: Could she inform the House of measures taken by the Office of the Fire Commissioner to help in this effort?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Thank you very much for that question.

Well, I think the folks that work in EMS are quite important and I think we should all recognize that. I'm not sure what is so humorous to the member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), but I would say that the Office of the Fire Commissioner, like so many other first responders, are full of people who we hope are there when we need them—who we know that they'll be there when we need them; we hope we never do need them.

And the Office of the Fire Commissioner has been working with local EMS and local responders to make sure that water rescue teams are on standby and are available should they be needed. One of the things that they are working on there—available—that is available this year is the aerial rescue crew and the water rescue crew stationed in Portage la Prairie at Southport, where they've been working very hard to make sure that those resources are in place. They've also been working very hard with local municipalities to support them in being able to continue to provide rescue services during the time of the flooding.

Souris River Water Levels

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, the level of the Assiniboine River continues to be impacted by the continuing high flow levels on the Souris River. There is water spilling over the dams at Alameda and Rafferty in southeast Saskatchewan, and flood-level proportions of water are still coming through Oak Lake. All these waters end up in the Manitoba leg of the Souris River.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) tell us what the expected flow levels are from the Rafferty-Alameda reservoirs, in particular, and what her expectations are for the timing of peak flows on the Souris River in Manitoba?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, we have two situation reports daily. We update all the flow information—in fact, it's being finalized as we speak, and on a daily basis since day 1 of the flood, and I've

actually lost track of how many days now—it's 40-plus we've been doing that. We will continue to do that, and the member will see the flows not only for the Souris River but also all of the affected rivers, and, by the way, Lake Manitoba's in the flood sheets. I'd like to remind members opposite if they go to the flood sheets, they have been there from day 1, so—but I want to stress that that information is made available.

And I want to put on the record, by the way, the terrific, you know, work that a lot of our staff have been doing, working round the clock with the Department of Water Stewardship, EMO, many of the key departments. And I want to put on the record, by the way, for members opposite, we work together as one team in this province, 1.2 million Manitobans. And I tell you, that is one of the key issues we've been dealing with throughout the flood, and I urge members to get on board, Mr. Speaker. We're still in a major flood situation. Let's work together instead of reverting back to the kind of partisan politics we're seeing in this—

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Melita Banana Days

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, August 7th, 2010, a large crowd of about 400 people gathered in Melita at the corner of Front Street and Highway 83. The highlight of the weekend celebration, called Banana Days, was the unveiling of the much-anticipated banana statue, which stands a whopping 33 feet high and weighs in at about 6,500 pounds.

According to the mayor of Melita, Bob Walker, the idea of a roadside attraction in the form of a gigantic banana statue was conceived about five years ago to encourage tourism and economic development. The Melita and Area Tourism Committee worked hard and fundraised to make the statue a reality. The statue, which cost \$106,000, was funded entirely through donations from Melita and area residents.

So why was the banana chosen as a theme for the statue? Melita and southwestern Manitoba is known as a banana belt of Manitoba, due to their average—above-average temperatures. Some residents favoured a bird statue because Melita is also considered the grassland bird capital of Manitoba. However, there are about 60 bird statues

across Manitoba, so the community decided that a banana statue was a unique alternative. As a compromise, a six-foot blue jay was placed in the banana's hand.

The Melita and Area Tourism Committee approached Shawn Thompson, a professional graphic designer with NRG Signs, to make a conceptual design of a cartoonish-banana statue wearing a belt and holding a blue jay.

The banana statue was successfully garnered attention in Manitoba—has successfully garnered, pardon me, Mr. Speaker—attention in Manitoba and across Canada. The CBC has been updating the statue of the banana since its early construction, and *Maclean's* reported on the concept of the banana in 2007.

A large crowd, consisting of area residents and travellers, enjoyed Banana Days and the unveiling of the statue. People took pictures in front of the statue, enjoyed complimentary banana splits and many other town activity—festivities, which included fireworks, swimming in the Melita pool, slo-pitch baseball, road hockey and the 16th annual Show and Shine.

In the fall of 2010, the Melita and Area Tourism Committee held a naming competition for the blue jay and banana, which closed at the end of September 2010. More than 130 entries were submitted for the blue jay and more than 140 for the banana. Potential names came in from all over Manitoba and North America, including New Jersey, Minnesota, Maine, Alabama, Tennessee, BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday, October 18th, 2010, town officials decided to name the banana Sunny and the blue jay Breezy. I encourage all Manitobans to check out Sunny and Breezy and all the other attractions that Melita and area have to offer visitors. Thank you.

Rachel Dunsmore

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, it's a joy to hear about people who dive into team activities simply because they love learning and working with other people. Rachel Dunsmore, a nominee for this year's Gerrie Hammond Memorial Award of Promise, is one of these people. For her efforts to bring others together, Rachel's community is now giving her the chance to be recognized.

Rachel is a grade 12 student at J.H. Bruns Collegiate. She works hard with several volunteer groups on being on top of—on top of being an honour student and a dedicated athlete. Rachel is a member of her school peer support group called Natural Helpers, a student-led social justice group called Students Helping our World or SHOW, which is currently working on anti-poverty measures in Winnipeg. Rachel is also involved in Rachel's Challenge, which aims to spread kindness and compassion by drawing inspiration from Rachel Scott, one of the first victims of the Columbine shootings—school shootings.

* (14:30)

With unlimited energy, Rachel seems to focus continually on everyone but herself. She says that she loves being involved because her fellow students inspire her every day. This is part of what makes her a role model. She finds what is special about each individual around her and that in turn brings out the best in others.

With her nomination for the Gerrie Hammond award, which is part of the YMCA-YWCA Women of Distinction Awards, Rachel now has the opportunity to be affirmed by her teachers and friends. The awards gala was held on May 4th and I hope that Rachel enjoyed getting together with other brave women who have both the imagination to envision a better world and the drive to work for it. Congratulations on your disturbed—deserved nomination. I'm sure that is only one of the first recognitions of many, and thank you for being a leader in our community.

Gregorash Family

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Minnedosa, I would like to take some time today to recognize an exceptional family in my constituency. The Gregorash family of Minnedosa have worked hard to raise awareness for neurofibromatosis, or NF for short. On April 27th I had the opportunity to celebrate with the Gregorash family while they were honoured for their tremendous work and dedication at the Manitoba Volunteer Awards ceremony. They received the Manitoba Lotteries Family Award. Tracy is the founder and spokesperson for the neurofibromatosis support group. She runs marathons and is always looking for ways new and unique to bring awareness to NF. Her husband Troy is the focused, quiet partner of the support group and ensures the support group is functioning to the best of its ability.

Sharing an evening with Tracy and Troy and their children, Seth and Levi, gave me precious insight into how close-knit the family is and how dedicated they are to bringing neurofibromatosis the awareness it is—so greatly deserves.

Neurofibromatosis is an incurable disorder that affects one in 3,000 people. It results in tumour growth in tissues that surround the nerves. The Gregorash family started the Manitoba Neurofibromatosis Support Group in 2005 because their son Seth was diagnosed with the disease. The group provides an opportunity for adults, children and families affected by NF to share their experiences, stories and resources. Their group publishes an annual newsletter, hosts two support group meetings a year, hosts the events for families to support those living with NF and also hosts many fundraising activities throughout the year.

The Manitoba Neurofibromatosis Support Group recently campaigned for the Pepsi Refresh grant of \$25,000 to put towards purchasing a CinemaVision for the Children's Hospital here in Winnipeg. CinemaVision, or what the kids call MRI goggles, are a tool which can be made—which make the—a tool which can make the life of those children that need an MRI scan much easier.

The goggles allow children to watch a movie during their scan. They help with the loud noises of the MRI scanner and help take away the closed-in feeling for the children. The microphone attached to the goggles can assist children who may be needing assistance or need to speak to a technologist in the other room.

Mr. Speaker, I would again like to congratulate and thank the Gregorash family for all that they do through the Manitoba Neurofibromatosis Support Group and wish them the best of luck as they continue to promote better awareness to the challenges of families dealing with this disease.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Eileen Personius

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, there is a woman in Opaskwayak Cree Nation that I would like to recognize before this House today. Eileen Personius has been an active volunteer firefighter with the OCN fire department for 20 years.

Eileen started as a volunteer firefighter with our department. It didn't take long before others noticed

her diligence, dedication and respect for others. After only a short time, Eileen was promoted to the position of deputy fire chief. I would imagine that suddenly finding herself in charge of a 30-person fire crew comprised entirely of men was not easy. But with her quiet style of leadership, Eileen quickly won the crew's respect. That's because she took the time to listen to what they were saying and fought for them when it was needed. Before long, the crew started referring to Eileen as mom. And I know that even after all these years Eileen still listens to what each crew member has to say and still fights on their behalf.

At the fire department, it's Eileen that makes sure everything runs smoothly. She makes sure the crew has enough water and food to get them through a long call. She works with the schools, promoting fire safety and prevention, and other promotional initiatives that didn't exist before Eileen took the lead. She always ensures that everyone is accounted for and drops everything if something doesn't seem right.

We all know running into burning buildings is one of the most difficult things to do. Eileen knows this better than most, which is why she goes the extra mile to make sure that every crew member has access to full support and debriefing following a traumatic call.

In spite of such a challenging and often emotionally draining job, Eileen has truly enjoyed years spent at the fire department. She loves learning from her fellow crew members and facing challenges head on. But Eileen does much more in her community beyond her work in the fire hall. Eileen is a community health representative and co-ordinates the Aboriginal diabetes program. She's a single mother who has done everything to ensure her daughter has had the opportunity to go after whatever it is that she wants out of life. Following her mother's example of perseverance, she is currently studying at the University College of the North and working towards her goal of becoming a doctor.

I would like to thank Eileen, not only for her past 20 years at the OCN Fire Department, but for her energy and willingness to put in the time and effort to help others. Thank you.

Martin Brocker

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): It's a pleasure for me to pay tribute to Martin Brocker, a resident of

Teulon who is the recipient of the 2011 Lieutenant-Governor's Make a Difference Community Award. It is through Mr. Brocker's contributions that organizations have thrived in the Teulon community.

The volunteer awards were presented each year to deserving Manitobans by Volunteer Manitoba as a way to recognize and pay tribute to volunteers. It is through these awards that volunteerism is celebrated and promoted, and individuals can be thanked for the contributions that they have made to the province.

Martin Brocker and his wife, Anne-Marie, have been volunteers in Teulon since the couple moved in the area in 1964. Mr. Brocker has been on the board of directors for the Teulon Riding Club, managed Teulon's hockey club, driven cancer and dialysis patients to their appointments, volunteered at Goodwin Lodge personal care home, acted as building overseer for the St. John Vianney Church and volunteered with the Teulon and District Memorial Gardening program.

Martin Brocker has travelled to Mexico for three months every year where he's involved with the Habitat for Humanity. Throughout the 10 years that he has spent with the organization, Mr. Brocker has helped build five houses, a church and a daycare.

Martin Brocker was presented with Make a Difference award by Lieutenant-Governor Philip Lee at the 28th annual volunteers' award that were held on April the 27th, 2011, at the Winnipeg Convention Centre. I was happy to attend the event to congratulate Martin on his extraordinary accomplishments. Martin's wife, Anne-Marie; his son, Darryl; his daughter, Michelle; and her husband, Wayne Hazleton; the mayor of Teulon, Bert Campbell; former MLA area, Ed Helwer; and town CAO, Grant MacAulay; and senior resource co-ordinator, Bob Mankewich, who nominated Mr. Brocker for the award, were also there to support him.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my congratulations to Martin Brocker, recipient of the 2011 lieutenant's award—Make a Difference award. Mr. Brocker is a worthy recipient of the volunteer award as he worked tirelessly in the community to support local organization. His work has supported numerous organizations and individuals throughout Teulon and the surrounding area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

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

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on House business.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I want to table the list of ministers to be considered in concurrence tomorrow and they will be considered concurrently.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The ministers that will be called for concurrence has been tabled.

The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): On House business.

I'd like to announce that, pursuant to rule 31(8), the private member's resolution that will be considered next Tuesday morning will be the one brought forward by the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady). The title of the resolution is Affordable Housing and Tenant Protection.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. It's been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one that will be put forward by the honourable member for Kirkfield Park, and the title of the resolution is Affordable Housing and Tenant Protection.

The honourable Government House Leader, on further House business.

Ms. Howard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on further House business.

For the information of the House, it's my understanding that Estimates in room 255 will be starting around 3:30 today in order to accommodate the daily flood briefing, and with that I ask you to resolve us into the Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker: For the information of the House, in room 255 the Estimates will be starting around 3:30, and, now, we will resolve into Committee of Supply. And in the Chamber will be Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, and in 254 will be Water Stewardship.

So would the appropriate Chairs go the rooms that they will be chairing, please.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

WATER STEWARDSHIP

* (14:50)

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

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Chairperson, I do have more questions, so it's an opportunity to do that just as soon as we get the mike settled here.

Speaking yesterday, we were just—left off, Mr. Chairperson, in regards to areas in regards to the spring flooding and the steps that have been taken to ensure the information and resources have been disseminated as quickly as possible, and I wonder if the minister could just elaborate on that. And does she believe that the, you know, with—that some confusion by some people in the public is—just in regards to the controlled breach, and does she—can she just elaborate on the communications process and whether she thinks it could've been handled any differently?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Can I just get clarification from the member—is he talking about—what communications is he referring to?

Mr. Maguire: The communications between municipal officials and the public announcements with regards to what's needed to be done by citizens to protect themselves in many areas of the province from the flooding.

Ms. Melnick: It was last Monday that it became clear that the flows upstream of the Portage Diversion were going to be maximum and then some. So we had to decide, with the extra flow that was anticipated, how we would deal with that. So we had a discussion and there was agreement from the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the Minister of MIT and myself that we would let the community—let Manitobans know that there was a concern around

the flows, and that we were looking at a way to protect the Assiniboine River dikes which were under stress, increase the flow of the Portage Diversion.

With concerns around the dikes at that point in time, we did not want to risk an uncontrolled release which would have affected—I don't have the map in front of me, but, at that point it was, I believe, 225 square kilometres, and that we wanted to have a controlled release and to be very clear on where we felt the controlled release would go, and, in fact, control the controlled release and to work with the rural municipalities that would be affected and to work with the people as well, who we felt may be affected. This was done to relieve pressures upstream. We wanted to make sure that the situation that might have developed otherwise where some 15,000 cfs would have broken out from various points on the Assiniboine River dikes at that time would be relieved of that pressure.

So we had some communications with the local RM; we had communications directly with the people. It did not go as smoothly in the first few days as we would have liked, and we agree that there was some confusion. There were questions that we didn't have answers for right at the time when people were asking. The majority of the questions focused on when would the water come and how high it would be.

What we did is we worked with the RM. We got surveys in place so that each location of the some 150 properties identified at that time would be receiving information about how high the water might be, so they would know how to flood-protect. We have brought in a series of communication points for people, and I just want to find my note on that, because it was something I was wanting to share yesterday as well, and we unfortunately ran out of time.

We have been working with the RMs to provide information. We have also brought in flood liaison officers and have got a government inquiry phone number, the general inquiry phone number. And through MAFRI, we now have a specific 1-800 number for calls dealing with concerns that MAFRI would be able to provide information on. We have always had the daily flood sheets. We have the general government and the Water Stewardship Department website, the daily media briefing, and the RM conference calls on the flood outlook and flood preparations.

We have the reeve of the RM of Portage la Prairie, Kam Blight, is right in the EOC, and his councillor whose area is being most affected is also in the EOC. And there are daily phone calls to individuals who are or may be affected. There is discussion about whether or not they'd like calls back on a regular basis. Certainly, when there's new information to share, we call these people back. We make sure that we're calling a number that these people are most accessible at. So there has been a great improvement in communications. The first few days were, indeed, rocky, and we admit that we wish that those first few days had gone better and were more easy on the folks whom we're communicating with now.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairperson, I'd like to ask the minister how much the government has spent on upgrades to the dikes along the Assiniboine River since it took office, and that's not including the work that was undertaken this year.

Ms. Melnick: That actually was done through MIT, so the question would be better directed toward the Minister of MIT.

* (15:00)

Mr. Maguire: When was the minister first personally notified that there were problems with the stability of the Assiniboine River dikes and that improvements would need to be taken there in advance of this spring's flood?

Ms. Melnick: We have daily briefings in my office at 11 a.m. every day, and I think we're on about a day 47. We knew when we were putting the dikes in that they were being put in under winter conditions and that we had to keep monitoring very closely. We were also aware that as time went on, that we were dealing with unprecedented water levels, and wanted to make sure that we were able to protect the downstream of the Assiniboine River. As well as, I was very pleased that we had done the sort of preparatory work on the Portage Diversion, that we had done.

So we have been watching the dikes and shoring them up as we've been going along. The situation that we're currently dealing with, which are the dikes, which have been greatly stabilized thanks to the great work done by the military over the last week, week and a half, and also the increased capacity along the Portage Diversion, and the controlled release, which is—all of these are being monitored 24-7. So there has been a constant watch,

there has been a constant upgrading and maintenance of the dikes, of the Portage Diversion and, of course, now of the controlled release.

Mr. Maguire: I guess the final decision to undertake the upgrades from the dikes, as the minister indicated in her previous question—in her previous answer to my question, was made by MIT, or did Water Stewardship have any input into the decisions that were made to upgrade the dikes, or was it a multiple department decision?

Ms. Melnick: Well, again, in my previous answer, there's been monitoring that's been going on on the Assiniboine dikes right from the start. There has been input from MIT, input from Water Stewardship, there has been a lot of discussion about we handle the 50 per cent more water that is in the Assiniboine basin now than the previous flood of record, which was in 1976. So we've been making continual—pardon me, we've been getting continual updates and having a discussion on how best to protect all of the—all the control structures throughout the province and working together to look at what's happening and how we can best make sure that we're moving the water through, now, the Assiniboine River downstream of Portage, the diversion and the controlled release.

Mr. Maguire: A quick question in regards to the Shellmouth as well. The—I guess it was last August the federal and provincial governments announcement the addition of gates to the Shellmouth Dam spillway, and I just wondered if the minister can provide me with anything in regards to the expected time frame for the completion of that project and who is being consulted about any potential impacts of the project.

Ms. Melnick: I was trying to get a time frame for the environmental assessment that will be carried out between the—or in partnership with the federal and the provincial governments. I don't have that time frame with me. I know it hasn't started yet. So that would have to be completed and then that would be presented through comprehensive public consultations with affected stakeholders. So those would be the people around, both up and downstream. As well, they would be presented with some preliminary engineering studies. So all of that activity hinges on the completion of the environmental assessment.

Mr. Maguire: The—I'd like to ask the minister about the situation with Devils Lake. There's been discussions last fall between Manitoba and North

Dakota. I believe the minister indicated she and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had gone to Washington to deal with Devils Lake as well, and those areas. And I just wonder, you know, it was agreed that Devils Lake is a worst-case scenario that would be uncontrolled—that had not—would be an uncontrolled release with the lowest quality water through Tolna Coulee. They've announced that they're going to look at a project there to put a connection to the—from the east Devils Lake area into the Tolna Coulee bypassing the outlet at Tolna Coulee to get it into the Cheyenne River further south.

I just wondered if the minister can give me an—just an update on the discussions that are taking place between Manitoba and North Dakota in regards to the situation at Devils Lake.

Ms. Melnick: Staff from both sides of the 49th parallel continue to follow up from the October and November meetings of the principals. The November meeting is the one that the member was just referring to.

The immediate focus between the jurisdictions is to manage the current spring flood situation. So, sharing information between the jurisdictions is ongoing. Work is continuing towards developing a basin-wide nutrient management strategy. There have been two official meetings—meetings of officials—the first in January and the second in March of 2011. And they—the officials are developing a draft approach. Work is continuing on this document. So there has been a lot of work going on between Manitoba and North Dakota and, right now, the focus, of course, is on the spring. I believe in North Dakota they're seeing some relief from spring, as we've seen here. We're able to open up southern Manitoba through opening up Highway 75 just yesterday evening. So this is the first day that southern Manitoba has been opened up from the spring events, and I know North Dakota is seeing a bit of relief from the spring as well.

*(15:10)

Mr. Maguire: I'd like to ask the minister if the International Joint Commission is looking at the Devils Lake file.

Ms. Melnick: The international joint committee has been active through the International Red River Board—the board, yes. There was a draft presented to them of the parasite and pathogen study.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me when that presentation was made and if it's public?

Ms. Melnick: Progress does continue to be made on the Devils Lake fish parasite and pathogen study under the leadership of the International Joint Commission, again, through the International Red River Board. Data has been analyzed and is presently being compiled, and an experts workshop was held on April 12th–11th and 12th of this year. A draft risk assessment will be going to the IJC and timing on that will depend on the IJC.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me whether there's any outstanding court cases or legal actions under way between Manitoba and North Dakota in regards to Devils Lake?

Ms. Melnick: No, there aren't.

Mr. Maguire: Can she indicate to me when the action that Manitoba had taken with North Dakota was withdrawn?

Ms. Melnick: Manitoba did not withdraw. The actions were concluded through the courts, and I don't have that exact date. It's been—I believe it's been a couple of years, but I don't have that exact date with me.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, can the minister just give me a quick update in regards to the Northwest Area Water Supply, Garrison Diversion projects in North Dakota as well? There were discussions that took place there in November last fall as well, as I understand, and I just wondered if the minister could provide me with an update on those discussions.

Ms. Melnick: The discussions are focusing on adequate disinfection resistance protozoa and how to treat—adequately treat that. As a result of the Manitoba court actions that were taken on this issue, North Dakota is actually doing a more complete EIA, so they are going through an almost new process, looking into also what would be adequate treatment levels. So there's a couple of processes that are going on in regards to the Northwest Area Water Supply project.

Mr. Maguire: I'd just like to ask about the drainage licensing backlog in regards to applications, and I wonder if the minister can tell me what the current backlog of drainage licence applications is.

Ms. Melnick: Well, as the member knows, we are in a very, very wet cycle and we have been doing a lot of work on drainage. Drainage is essentially protecting producers downstream from illegal drainage upstream and making sure if there's any serious effects that occur on the downstream that

it's—or that could occur, that it is prevented. So, previously, many of these works would have been constructed without authorization, and now we've brought in 14 water resource officers. This number has increased the ability for real-time review of suggested drainage and the ability to respond and to look at possible problems and make sure that we're doing our best to deal with issues so that they don't become problems. So, since 2007, the number of drainage applications has increased more than sixfold from 591 to around 4,000 in 2010. We did bring in the resource—water resource officers during this time to deal with the situations that we've seen.

* (15:20)

Since—over the last four years, the Province has more than quadrupled the number of licences issued. I'll just give you the numbers here. In '07, there were 250 licences issued. In '08, there were 460 licences issued. In '09, there were 1,200, and in 2010, there were 1,600. So we've gone, in four years, from 250 to over 1,600, which shows you not only the response that the Province has given, but also the requests and how the requests have increased during this time.

One of the things that we've done is temporarily reassigned staff throughout the province to address the backlog, and we've also put in place a formalized complaint process to increase efficiency and assist with prioritization and—of the work. This is an issue that continues to be high when water levels are high. There's a little bit of relief when water levels are low but, in the current situation, I think we can expect to see a large number of requests as well as a large number of licences being given. But this is an issue that we have worked on and we will continue to work on.

Mr. Maguire: Is the—can the minister just indicate to me whether it's, you know, the 4,000 that are outstanding are kind of equal or the applications come in fairly equal from all over the province, or is there one area or two that are of greater significance in the backlog?

Ms. Melnick: We know that we have moved resources into the Interlake area, that there are an increase of requests in that area. I don't have the numbers in front of me that would compare year to year for specific areas within the province.

Mr. Maguire: The minister, just in case she doesn't have them here, are those numbers available by

district, and if she could even make them available to me at some other time, that'd be fine.

Ms. Melnick: I can take that under advisement. What I do have in front of me is the increase in the spending on drainage capital and the maintenance. From '01-02 fiscal year, it was \$3 million. Now it's more than \$10 million, in accordance with the '10-11 budget.

It's unfortunate that during the '90s the water resources budget was cut by 43 per cent, which certainly caused some of the problems that we're seeing today. So we need to make sure that we are continuing to work on drainage, that we are providing as many resources as we can and that we're making sure that the right decisions are being made for people upstream and downstream.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate how long she thinks it'll take to clean up the backlog?

Ms. Melnick: I think we're dealing with more than requests. We're dealing with having an increased volume. We're also dealing with having increased our ability to respond. Again, I'll remind the member from Arthur-Virden that we've gone from 250 licences in '07 to 1,600 in 2010. So, again, that's an increase of—that's about a six-fold increase over a six-fold increase, so it's a challenge in high-water times. Some licences are very easy to deal with. Others are more difficult, and I've just been given a note that this fiscal year to date we've done over 2,300 licences. So we've gone from, in '07, 250 to this fiscal year over 2,300.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

So there's a lot of work being done. There's a lot of co-operation being done. I'd like to thank the producers and thank the RMs who are following the guidelines, who are working with us there recognizing that very good steps have been taken in drainage, making sure that authorizations are being run through the proper channel. The Ombudsman has described a lot of the work that we've done on drainage as commendable.

Unfortunately, it was not supported by members of the opposition. They said it was not necessary and have called the water resource officers the water police. We believe that water resource officers are helping on a landscape. The increase in the number of applications also shows that the producers and the RMs themselves are supportive of what we're doing. They want some processes stepped up. We agree;

that's why we've moved people from different parts of the province to high-request areas and we'll continue to work on drainage requests to make sure that the right decisions are being made even under some pretty stressful conditions.

Mr. Maguire: I'd just like to move along. The Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation has a relationship, of course, with all Manitoba fishers, and there's many of those fishers that are indicating to us, and quite publicly, that they are wanting to capture new markets for off-quota fish not sold through the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, such as mullet and carp. And they're hoping to enhance their economic opportunities for fishers and those who would be involved in processing those fish markets outside the province. And so I just wanted to ask the minister, because the Lake Manitoba Commercial Fishermen's Association recently passed a motion to exclude Lake Manitoba fishers from the FFMC's mandate, has the department had any discussions with the Lake Manitoba Commercial Fishermen's Association about this?

Ms. Melnick: Yes, there have been discussions recently with the Lake Manitoba commercial fishers.

* (15:30)

Mr. Maguire: When was the last time she had a meeting with them?

Ms. Melnick: I'll be meeting with them roughly at the end of June. There have been ongoing discussions with senior staff within the department.

Mr. Maguire: I just wondered if the minister has had a chance or with her or her department to discuss the matter with—on export dealers' licences and related concerns with the federal—or Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, with the federal minister.

Ms. Melnick: Yes, I have been in touch with the federal minister, and there is also regular communication between FFMC and senior members of the department.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, part of my question was just: Can the minister just tell me when the last time she met with the federal minister was on this issue?

Ms. Melnick: There has been ongoing discussion. I have corresponded with the federal minister. She was in town in the fall. Unfortunately, we weren't able to meet that day. But there was—there is senior staff who are in discussion with FFMC, with the Lake Manitoba commercial fishers and the NDFO on a regular basis.

Mr. Maguire: Can she just inform me as to what steps the department's taking into, you know, in looking at helping expand the opportunities for these commercial fishers in Manitoba in regards to, particularly, the off-quota fish that they've got as well as other areas?

Ms. Melnick: Well, we worked closely to—with FFMC and the fishers; there was a desire to get an EDL. There were some concerns around that time. We did work with the fishers and FFMC, and I did write letters at that time that I think did help to move forward the EDL. That was before the EDL was actually given, which would have been, I believe, about a year to a year and a half ago, and I understand that the EDL was awarded shortly after that time.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, the government of Saskatchewan, as the minister knows, has made an announcement that they're going to pull out of the freshwater fish marketing agreement with the government of Canada on April 21st, next year. And I guess—I know the government would like to be a part of the New West agreement with Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC, and I'm just wondering if she would follow Saskatchewan's lead in regards to that area. In regards to this, there's concern in that area, and so what's the minister's position in regards to the Saskatchewan situation?

Ms. Melnick: The fishers in Manitoba have not taken the actions that were taken by the fishers in Saskatchewan, and we're watching very closely to see how the fishery plays out over the next couple of years or the next—the years directly after the—directly following the pullout from FFMC.

We have fishers in Manitoba who are very supportive of FFMC. We also have a situation of northern fishers that we have to be very careful with, making sure that they have a good route to market for their catches. So we're watching what is happening in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Maguire: Can I just get an update on the types of assessments that the department has undertaken and the extent of the damage along Lake Winnipeg in regards to the weather bomb that took place last fall? There's been asked a number of times about the Shoreline Erosion Technical Committee to examine methods to help mitigate the shoreline erosion problems over there in Lake Winnipeg and—be it on private or public lands. And so I just wondered if she could provide me with an update on where that's at

and whether the erosion technical committee will be undertaking similar work in the near future.

Ms. Melnick: The Shoreline Erosion Technical Committee, which is funded by the provincial government, is brought into situations as requested by rural municipalities. It could be an individual municipality; it could be more than one municipality.

We are currently supportive of a pilot project in the Victoria Beach area. It's a project which would see—it's a gradation project which would see almost an implant of a very large super sandbag down into the shore. When you put something on top of the sand, the sand will just go around it. So to make sure that we're able to secure the sand, we actually have to implant, and this has never been tried in the—that we know of—in Canada. I think there were some attempts down in the Florida area that we're also looking at and seeing how effective that is.

So there were diking systems that were put up in '05 and '06 to protect shoreline at that time. They were quite effective. We have been working with the mayors and reeves of the southern basin around initiatives that they would like to see. We are rebuilding the walkway along the Winnipeg Beach area, which was quite seriously affected; that is, of course, part of a provincial park.

So we're working in partnership with the various mayors and reeves of the southern basin, and most particular in this point, with the reeve and council of Victoria Beach.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister supply me with a bit of an update on the Lake Winnipeg Action Plan, the, you know, in regards to the improvements of the health of the lake being measured and reporting criteria, and is her department able to report any notable changes since the plan was first put in place?

* (15:40)

Ms. Melnick: Well, several actions have been taken under the Lake Winnipeg Action Plan. We established the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board, which ran from 2003 to 2009, and the board's February twenty—2006 recommendations and their final report of December 2010—report on progress have provided important guidelines and guidance to the Province and others to work on the plan.

I know that Bill Barlow, the former chair—and now he works in an advisory capacity on Lake Winnipeg—has said he's very pleased with the actions we've taken. In the 2009 report of progress, the board

said—the board was still functioning at that time—said it was confident that the Province's actions to save Lake Winnipeg were concrete and on track.

We reported then that we had completed or taken action on 95 per cent of the Lake Winnipeg stewardships board's 135 recommendations. Another action taken under the Lake Winnipeg Action Plan included issuing new environmental licences for the City of Winnipeg's waste-water treatment plants; requiring full nutrient controls by 2014—that, of course, is ongoing; requiring new and expanding waste-water treatment facilities, such as those serving the food-processing sector, to reduce nutrients in their effluent; implementing The Phosphorus Reduction Act of July 1st, 2010. This was a first in Canada. We lobbied the federal government and were pleased when they brought in national regulations that pretty much mirrored what we had done in Manitoba.

The nutrient management regulation has also been enacted to protect water quality by encouraging responsible nutrient planning, regulating the application of materials containing nutrients and restricting the development of certain types of facilities in environmentally sensitive areas. The nutrient management regulation includes restrictions in the use of phosphorus in cosmetic lawn fertilizers. Again, that was a first in Canada, and we want to thank the folks in the state of Minnesota. They had legislation that worked in their area, and we looked at that and made it into the Manitoba model. So we want to thank them for their leadership.

Amendments to the Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation was another act that was taken to include maximum phosphorus limits in agricultural soil. The Planning Act was amended to include mandatory municipal land-use planning, including the requirement for municipal development plans to include a livestock operations policy that sets out where livestock operations will be considered and where they will be prohibited.

We introduced new regulations for septic fields and implemented enhanced enforcement and monitoring of onsite waste-water systems. We established a new program that provides incentives to landowners to restore wetlands on their land. Together we've worked with Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation and Ducks Unlimited Canada to bring in this new program which provides financial incentives, technical support, and advice to

landowners wanting to restore wetlands on their property.

We're building capacity in communities to resolve water issues including the expansion of the Conservation Districts program. The 18 conservation districts in Manitoba now cover approximately 85 per cent of municipal Manitoba. Many have undertaken to work to develop integrated watershed management plans for their local watersheds and, in fact, some have successfully completed those plans. So I want to thank the conservation districts for all the work that they've done on the front lines in their community and again, for working on a watershed basis, recognizing that's how we can best deal with water on the front lines.

Manitoba Water Stewardship and others have been working towards educating all Manitobans on what they can do to improve the health of Lake Winnipeg. This has increased awareness in simple activities that can be done to help reduce nutrients being loaded into our waterways such as phosphorus clean-purchasing and use of phosphorus clean-phosphorus-free cleaning products, preserving vegetation along lakes and shorelines, and maintaining septic fields.

I'm very pleased to have been the minister that partnered with the mayors and reeves of the southern basin to bring to Manitoba—I believe it's a unique campaign, a unique initiative throughout North America, and I don't know if it exists anywhere else in the world, the Lake Friendly products campaign which encourages consumers to choose products that are the best environmental choice for Lake Winnipeg.

This, of course, was done also with the Environment Canada EcoLogo juried list of products that people can also refer to. And I was really pleased to be at the announcement that this Legislature is, in fact, environmentally friendly and lake friendly in the products we are using and to stand with Lotteries, with Red River—with the Red River College, with several other individual organizations throughout Manitoba who are also taking on this challenge.

Manitoba Education has now completed the development of a curriculum for Lake Winnipeg aimed at a grade 8 level, and educating youth, of course, is key to the strategy that will help us move forward and bring positive change in the Lake Winnipeg watershed.

In the area of science and research, Manitoba has contributed more than \$750,000 to the maintenance and operation of the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium's research vessel, the *Namao*. And that, of course, offers a research platform from which governments and universities and other participating agencies can conduct scientific work on Lake Winnipeg.

I was also very pleased to sign the first-ever agreement of its kind with the federal government on Lake Winnipeg and the watershed. This was part of the Wahtopannah watershed agreement where, for the first time ever, the federal government came to the table and said, we will be full partners working on the health of Lake Winnipeg and the watershed, and that was a very, very good day. And we continue to work with them.

In addition, the Premier has announced provincial support some time ago for a unique pilot project at Netley-Libau Marsh, \$150,000 in funding. This project will include the harvesting of cattails. We know that cattails will soak up a lot of the nutrients that cause the algal blooms that everyone is so concerned about, and instead of turning—having the cattails be a problem, we're looking to turn it into a clean, bio-energy product.

*(15:50)

So these are just some of the actions that have come from the Lake Winnipeg Action Plan, and I know that we've seen very good co-operation throughout the watershed, more and more people becoming more involved in the watershed. It's taken many years for the lake—for Lake Winnipeg to see the sorts of algal blooms that we're seeing now, and I know people want to be part of the problem—part of the fixing up of the problem.

We have, for the last three years in the province of Manitoba, had high spring water events, 2009, 2010, mostly coming up the Red River, of course, that empties directly into Lake Winnipeg, and now this year seeing action on lake—on the Red River into Lake Winnipeg, but now the Assiniboine as well. So I know the press has talked a couple of months ago about the possibility of algal blooms this summer as well.

There's an awful lot of loading that will happen as a result of these events. When water sits on the land, it absorbs nutrients, can become quite nutrient 'rich'—rich, and that is, of course, at this point in time a lot of it is going into Lake Winnipeg. So there

have been a lot of very good steps taken; there's certainly more to do.

Mr. Maguire: I'd like to move to line by line on the Estimates.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): Resolution 25.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$16,075,000 for Water Stewardship, Ecological Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 25.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,075,000 for Water Stewardship, Regulatory and Operational Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 25.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,579,000 for Water Stewardship, Water Stewardship Initiatives, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 25.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$330,000 for Water Stewardship, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 25.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$77,000 for Water Stewardship, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 25.1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 25.1.

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

Mr. Maguire: It's a—I just have some concerns in regards to the area here that I want to express in regards to this department and the minister's handling of these issues. And there's several reasons that I'm speaking to this section of the budget, dealing with the Minister's Salary. And I've had several concerns with the minister's leadership that I'd like to put on

the record. And one of them, I guess, Mr.—Madam Acting Chair, is that Manitoba is experiencing one of the most serious flood events in its history, and the Minister of Water Stewardship is responsible for one of the key departments involved in any flood situation, particularly in such areas as flood forecasting and the day-to-day management of the issues related to the flood.

And, unfortunately, the minister's management of this file has not inspired confidence, and we've heard that from a lot of people in the province. The case in point, the minister is visible in early photo ops related to the flood-preparedness activities, such as ice coring programs and the operation of Amphibexes, but since—once the actual flood events began, the minister's become invisible.

Rather than face to face—or face head-on the challenges caused by the flood, she's, instead—leans heavily on her colleague the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) to shoulder the heavy lifting on this file, and she's really still in charge of the forecasting. The minister's ducked virtually every question asked in the House on flood issues, and she's been largely invisible in the daily media briefings. This approach certainly doesn't inspire confidence from the hundreds and hundreds of Manitobans whose lives have been put on hold by this flood and who have affected—who are affected by significant decisions made by her department, such as the deliberate breach in the Assiniboine River dike, and there's a lot of concern there as well by those individuals.

And we also have questions about the minister's leadership on other important issues in her department and, for example, as the management on—her management of the Lake Dauphin fishery issue, and it continues to be a problem. The issue has been studied for years and tens of thousands of dollars have been spent on the development of a co-management plan that's yet to see the light of day after many years, Madam Acting Chairperson.

We've had a—had to prod the minister, on numerous occasions, to enact temporary conservation closures on tributaries in Lake Dauphin in order to protect the walleye stocks. Stakeholders expect leadership on this important file, but, again, the minister has proved—provided none. I might add that the minister often ducked lines of questioning on this issue during question period, again deferring to one of her colleagues, the member from Dauphin-Roblin.

These are just two of the examples that I cite before problems with the level of leadership demonstrated by the Minister of Water Stewardship, and so, for all these reasons: I move

THAT the Minister's Salary be reduced to \$1.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): It has been moved by the honourable member for Arthur Virden

THAT the Minister's Salary be reduced to \$1.

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

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): I do, indeed, want to make a few comments on this.

We are in a very challenging time with regard to the high level of water, and we have been in a very challenging time since early in this year when the flood forecasts were coming to us about the—and we knew in the fall that there was going to be high levels of moisture in the land, certainly from last fall the types of rain we had. And I know both departments, all of government took that very seriously, and steps were taken to begin that preparation to begin with the whole issue of how we prepare.

And, in fact, the decision to dike the Assiniboine River and—was something that was not considered before, but we knew how high the level was, and, certainly, all departments have worked together, and the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) has certainly taken leadership in this role.

I hear the member opposite say that the minister is not answering questions in a House—in the House. Well, I would want to remind him that we are in an emergency and we have a Minister responsible for Emergency Measures, and government's put their plan together and we act on it together. There are regular briefings every day. Everybody is well aware of the challenges that we're facing. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) has been out on a—almost on a daily basis meeting with people.

But the Minister of Water Stewardship is the person that has been the lead on all of the flood briefings and has pulled all those people together that need to be there for—to address these serious challenges. There is co-ordination from the water—or Department of Water Stewardship to bring everybody together. It is this department that has done all the monitoring and prepared people for the events and provided them with the information.

*(16:00)

And it is very easy—it is very easy to say—it is very easy to say, Madam Acting Chairperson, that there isn't co-ordination and to try to blame one person for something that is going on. I want to say that I believe that this matter is being handled very well by all members of government, and the Minister of Water Stewardship is doing her job. She is, as I said, co-ordinating and ensuring that there is information out there for everybody. Was—could—when we got into this unprecedented situation and had to do the controlled breach, information was put out. Was it handled the best that it could be? We were in unknown territory and people have worked on it.

So I would think that rather than spending our time trying to single out one person in government or one department that is—and saying that that department is not doing their work is disappointing to me because this is a challenge that we're facing for all Manitobans and this is a time when we should be all working together. This is a time when a government is prepared to share all information. Government has been taking the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party, the government has said anybody that wants a briefing on this particular matter can have it.

So, if there is—I would say, again, that when we're facing a challenge like this I want to pay tribute and I want to recognize work that all people have been doing and want to recognize leadership that we have had from the Minister of Water Stewardship and her department in providing information on the levels of water, providing information on what some of the challenges are and working with other departments, whether it be MIT in preparation, whether it be with Emergency Measures, or getting all people—getting the information out.

I think that this kind of work is important. It's—it would be for me very important that we show a united front at a time when we've got over 1,500 military in this province working side-by-side with Manitobans; 1,500 military, government staff all—going to all parts of the province where they're needed and moving equipment, working at all hours to get this done. I think rather than try to blame one person and say that the minister is not doing her job, what we have to do is, in fact, give confidence to the people of Manitoba and say, yes, we are working together and, yes, the opposition.

The federal government has been here supporting us, and I think it's important that the opposition as well not take this to a political level. There are places where you take things to a political level, but in this particular case, we have to show a united front and we have to support all of those people, including the minister who has been very much showing leadership in this particular area. Thank you, Madam Acting Chairperson.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Madam Acting Chairperson, I just want to say that, yes, we are in challenging times and the member from Portage la Prairie seated next to me and myself know that very well, certainly have seen it first-hand. And I think it's all the more reason that the minister should be performing the duties of her office. She is the Minister of Water Stewardship and, in fact, whenever we've had a briefing it's been graciously provided to us by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton). He has taken the lead; he has been the one that has provided all of the media opportunities, the briefings and the opportunities to accompany for travel. Certainly, we welcome that from him and appreciate what he has done. However, to say that the Minister of Water Stewardship has shown leadership is not quite accurate and, in fact, all media reports have been calling the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation the Minister of Water Stewardship. So that is what Manitobans are beginning to believe, is that he is also the Minister of Water Stewardship.

In any event, I think that if there's disappointment, yes, there's disappointment with the minister from Manitobans in her approach to this very serious flood event that we're having, which is why we have had to take this necessary step to move that the minister's salary be reduced. Thank you.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): It has been moved by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire)

THAT the Minister's Salary be reduced to \$1.

Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Voice Vote

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Maguire: Can I get a recorded vote please, Madam Acting Chairperson.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): A formal vote has been requested by two members. This section of the Committee of Supply will now recess to allow this matter to be reported and for members to proceed to the Chamber for the vote.

If the bells continue past 5 o'clock, this section will be considered to have risen for the day.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

* (15:50)

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 Infrastructure and Transportation.

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

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I just want to go to a few questions on rural water and rural water infrastructure. And I guess, first off, Mr. Minister, I'd just like to ask what projects are under way in rural water at the present time—and, for this year, I should say.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Are you talking about—up to the—the member—rural water supply in terms of municipal—

* (16:00)

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable minister.

Mr. Ashton: Yes, I was going to suggest I could—while we're getting that information, and if you want to proceed in the next—rather than have, sort of—we started a bit late. Rather than having a lot of dead space, we'll—as we speak, we'll either try and get it now or commit to provide it tomorrow.

Mr. Briese: There's—the municipalities have had some concerns over the way rural municipal waterlines are going to be funded going forward by the government. They used to be funded one-third, one-third, one-third with the federal government and the provincial and local involved, and now the federal government has rolled their funding into Building Manitoba and the Province is offering 50-50 funding, which is beyond the means of most of the municipalities to afford outside of the oil-rich ones down in the southwest corner.

I just wonder if you could comment on the funding formulas, please.

Mr. Ashton: It's always been one-third, one-third, one-third in terms of the basic elements, although I do know what sort of amount they—they're looking at expenditures that do exceed that. We do have some situations where, you know, if we can access other funding, we will, but I think the member has pointed to the real issue here, which is, notwithstanding the excellent support from the federal government on infrastructure the last couple years, it's nowhere near enough to meet the actual costs and the broader needs.

And I am advised here, too, in terms of specific projects, North Norfolk, Pipestone, Westbourne, Portage and Brenda are some of the major projects we have been working on right now in terms of water—rural water supply.

And I should, since—I should add to the, you know, the discussion as well—certainly, the member, as the former AMM president, knows that we've been, you know, working with the AMM on supporting lobbying to get ongoing funding. I wouldn't underestimate the degree to which we've got by a significant amount of progress in the last couple years on rural water supply because of infrastructure funding and without, you know, significant infrastructure funding into the future, it will put pressure on both the Province and the municipalities and ratepayers. So we're very aware of how important an issue this is.

Mr. Briese: Just for clarification. Did you have Westbourne in that list?

Mr. Ashton: That's right. I'm just trying to read Dick Menon's handwriting here, and it's Westbourne with a check mark next to it. Yes.

Mr. Briese: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Would—could you indicate what the demand is in dollars and cents—well, dollars, I don't think we need to go to cents. But could you indicate what the application level is at to Water Services on rural water infrastructure?

Mr. Ashton: Just to clarify, you mean like the number of applications versus the amount of dollars available—that end of it?

Mr. Briese: Yes. And further, I know there's some 35 or 40 municipalities out there that are looking for rural water projects. I would like to know how much funding the department has for rural water lines and what the application numbers are and amounts.

Mr. Ashton: We get upwards, I think, of \$200 million, you know, of either, you know, applied for or scoped or, you know, I mean, projects that are on the books in some way, shape or form. The amount of money that's available—we have our own budget. We also do have, you know, have significant access to infrastructure funding over the last few years, so the—we're making progress.

We've seen some significant investments the last number of years, and I know the member's aware of some of the major projects we've rolled out both in terms of water and waste water, and we've also committed this government long term to both urban and rural and northern water supplies as well.

So we're seeing a, you know, a significant amount of that. And last year, I know we just spent about \$15 million on pipelines. And I'm separating out here, like municipal from, you know, farm. I mentioned this, I think, in one of our previous sittings, that we, you know, we did a few years ago, particularly, partner on, you know, with PFRA when it still existed on rural water supply, you know, and this being non-municipal. Because, again, water supply is absolutely critical, as the member knows, to a lot of agricultural, you know, operations. So what we're talking about here, I'm assuming, is on the municipal side.

Mr. Briese: Excuse me for not knowing, but are the Northern Association of Community Councils funded through Water Services too?

Mr. Ashton: We provide technical expertise but not—no, it's—they have a separate capital budget. Although, one of the things I really want to commend our staff, under Dick Menon's direction, is that we've done a lot of work to also help provide advice and assistance both to municipalities and also to the Northern Affairs communities. But they have a separate funding allocation that comes under Department of ANA.

Mr. Briese: So, did I get a figure yet on—what is your basic budget that can go into rural water lines in a year?

Mr. Ashton: Well, if you're talking about what we have spent, that was the 15. Again, it depends how you define water. You know, I mean, you got water, you got waste water, water treatment plants, I mean. So, if that's the information that the member is asking, I—we could break down drinking water versus waste water as well, because we're dealing with a lot of pressures. And it's all part of our, you know, total dollar allocation in the budget.

Mr. Briese: Right at the moment I'm trying to zero in on rural water lines in rural municipalities. That's what I'm trying to zero in on, because I know there's roughly 35 or 40 municipalities that are looking for funding and can't afford the 50-50 breakdown of funding, feel they could afford one-third, and I'm trying to zero in on what the status of that is. Whether it would be better to do less projects and have them funded a little higher or—I know your director of Water Services is very talented at stretching dollars, and he has been most of his professional career, but I'd like to know how much money is available to go in there.

It used to be under the—when PFRA was involved, PFRA put about a million and a half a year into Manitoba. It was matched by Water Services. In total, there was about \$5.5 million went into western Canada, and a \$1.5 million of that went to Manitoba, but if it wasn't all used in the other provinces, we picked up a little bit of it, and the province was always willing to match it, so we usually got more than our \$4.5 million worth of pipelines. We usually got somewhere around 6 or 8 million dollars probably in a good year.

So I'm just wondering what is devoted to those rural water pipelines.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I want to—you know, I want to—

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, folks, a recorded vote, evidently, has been requested in another section of

the Committee of Supply. I am therefore recessing this section of the Committee of Supply in order for members to proceed to the Chamber for the formal vote.

AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL INITIATIVES

* (14:40)

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): We are on page 41 of the Estimates book. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Minister, I'd like to start off with the BSE recovery loans and as you're probably aware they were issued over the life of the program. How many—can you tell me how many were issued over the life of the program?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Just before I get to the question that the member for Emerson has asked, I see the member from Carman is here and we had a discussion yesterday that I can report back to him on.

We had been talking about a proposal in his area, the PowerLog proposal. In 2006, ARDI, which is the ARDI Council, agricultural resource development—Research and Development Initiative, provided \$80,000 to Kevin Lumb for early stage development of his product. That is federal and provincial money. Of course, we continue to work with Mr. Lumb to try to identify more sources of revenue. The fellow that we mentioned yesterday is the right contact, Eric Liu. His last name is spelled L-i-u. I think I got the vowels backwards yesterday. Eric Liu is our department staff that can assist his constituent.

In terms of the question on BSE recovery loans, that program. The Manitoba Agriculture Services Corporation approved 1,815 loans for a grand total of \$70.2 million. As of the end of December—31st of December 2010, there were 889 loans outstanding for a total of \$25.5 million.

* (14:50)

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that, Mr. Minister. Could you tell me what the current interest is—interest rate is being charged on the loans?

Mr. Struthers: I'll give the member an average interest rate. The interest rates varied a little bit depending on when each of the BSE loans termed

out. The average of all of the loans was 5.925. But, again, as I said, that there could be some variation to that on individual loans depending on when they termed out.

Mr. Graydon: Can the minister indicate how much money—the interest that was being paid—how much that generated up to today, or up to the end of last year?

Mr. Struthers: We don't have that number here for—to give to the member. But I do want to explain that if MASC—MASC borrows its money to begin with at a rate of interest as well. If MASC comes out ahead on that formula, they don't hold that money. They use it to keep costs down for their clients. MASC makes every attempt to make sure that the farmer gets the break in that formula. But I can endeavour to get a more specific number for the member for Emerson.

Mr. Graydon: I thank the minister for that. I know that it—I can understand the difficulty in trying to arrive at the number, but, obviously, it is there someplace to show that they're at least breaking even. I mean, that's just good business. I understand why it may not be there, and if he would endeavour to get that for me, I'd really appreciate it.

Perhaps—are there any loans being called at this time?

Mr. Struthers: I want to be very clear about how we handle the number that I reported earlier of outstanding loans. It's not that we are calling in those loans. I don't want the impression to be left that we've got a hammer overtop of the farmer's head on this.

We recognized the tough times that the farm community went—the ranch community went through from 2003 on as a result of BSE. We recognized that they needed the help, so we put this loan program together. There is an amount that is outstanding and we work pretty much on a daily basis to work with farmers to work on schedules of payment, to work on alternative approaches that they can take to paying back that money. It—of the 889 part 2 loans, 640 loans are current, and 249 are experiencing some level of difficulty with payment.

And, as I said, we want to work with farmers to make it as easy for them to make these payments as we can.

Mr. Graydon: I thank the minister for that. I truly do understand the difficulties that have been

encountered by those affected by the BSE situation. And not just that, there was country-of-origin labelling that went along with that, and the change in the dollar value and many, many things affected the price of beef. And it certainly has been a challenging time for producers, and so I appreciate that the department is making every effort to work with these individuals.

Could the minister perhaps tell us how many of the loans were deemed non-recoverable?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, as of January 25th, 2011, MASC wrote off 42 BSE recovery loans. The total of those 42 would come to \$1.4 million. The—of those 42 a number of those would be ranchers that are leaving the industry that have no ability then to pay off these loans.

A number of them would be people who have been in contact with our staff and with MASC and have indicated that there was no way they'd be able to pay those loans off. We're not in the business of forcing ranchers out on the basis of these loans. We don't want them to leave because we're, you know, putting the screws to them in calling these loans or anything like that. Our approach has been to work with ranchers who have had enough stress already and look for ways that we can be helpful when it comes to responding to that crisis.

*(15:00)

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that.

I just have one more question on this, in this particular vein, and perhaps—when you went from the initial loan which was, I think, secured with cattle. I'm not sure, but I think it was secured with cattle. And then you went into the part 2. How was that part 2 secured?

Mr. Struthers: The part 1 was secured through a general security agreement that we had with the farmer. We thought that was a level we were comfortable with because it wasn't as onerous as anything higher than that. It was general.

The part 2 was a little more specific. It was secured by assets. For example, land would be one example of an asset that would be taken into consideration for the part 2 loans.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): One question for the minister as it pertains to a very specific issue in Portage la Prairie, and that being the greenhouse operations operated by the Doherty

family, and in the designated area that would be affected by the deliberate controlled release.

They were originally told that their operation would be isolated by flood waters and that they would not be able to conduct business but they would be fully compensated for the loss of their crop. As you can appreciate, it is a harvest situation with greenhouse plants for flowers and replanting and potted plants for residential purposes. And it was then, as recent as last night, that the operators of our farm were informed that the road access to their location would be reopened so that they then could conduct their business. However, in the interim period, because the road access was closed and has been designated as an evacuation area, there was no maintenance of the crop within the greenhouse. The plants were sparsely watered, and also, too, the plants have been affected by mildew because of the uncontrolled and maintained atmosphere of the greenhouses.

With this morning's reopening of the road and being told that they could now—can resume their business, they are very, very concerned because the product that they have is deteriorated because of the absence of personnel and attention to the plants in the last five days that they were restricted.

And now it is wondering, I mean, the operators, owners of the—are wondering, is that full compensation for lost product promise now in jeopardy, that they have been essentially allowed again to conduct their business, because the operators recognize that their product is significantly less than what they want to put on the marketplace? But, if they don't make this best effort to minimize the losses by conducting business, does that mean that the government is now backing away from full compensation for losses, because this is a family-run business, and this is their harvest season, and the crop loss to this family would be catastrophic?

I'd like the minister's response, and if it is not available today, to take it under advisement because this is a very serious matter as it pertains to the Doherty family, and the word of the minister, shall I say, that was given to the family some four to five days ago.

Mr. Struthers: Like I hope I can kind of do both, give an answer and take it under advisement, because I think these sorts of things are ongoing. That's my reference to taking under advisement.

And I appreciate the advice that I get from the member from Portage la Prairie when he brought this to our staff earlier to—which did allow us to make contact with Mr. Doherty and work with him to make sure that, at the very least, he could have the public come and purchase the plants that he does have available there. So I was glad of that. We've spoken to Mr. Doherty about alternative greenhouses and those sorts of options.

As I've said, over and over in the House, our staff has—is very ready, willing and able to work on very practical solutions that folks like Mr. Doherty come across.

When—the other thing that we've been clear about is that we would be coming forward with a comprehensive compensation plan, a special one, understanding what folks like Mr. Doherty are up against.

The reason I said earlier to take it under advisement as well is that I want to continue to have our staff and Mr. Doherty and others maintain very close contact so that we can fully understand the economic losses that folks like himself face. We don't want Mr. Doherty to walk away from this feeling like he's been ripped off because of decisions that were made to protect the bigger, you know, the bigger good, the rest of the province.

We're—we've been clear that income loss would be covered. We've been clear that business interruption would be covered.

So the main message that I want to get across is that Mr. Doherty needs to be, and continue to be, in contact with our officials so that we can understand very clearly the economic losses that he's suffered so that we could meet his needs.

And I do want to acknowledge the role that the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) played in making sure that our staff was connected with Mr. Doherty and understood his circumstances. And my thanks to him for doing that quickly.

Mr. Graydon: Can the minister provide an update on the Stocker Loan program?

Mr. Struthers: Sure, we could do that. As the member knows, the stocker loans are provided to livestock producers as cash advances to help them retain ownership and add value to their cattle, or to purchase cattle, and provide better efficiencies, efficiencies through economy to scale, that sort of thing.

* (15:10)

Last year, '10-11, this is as of December 31st, 2010, we approved 198 loans for a total amount of \$17,020,000.

Mr. Graydon: How many producers would that have—would that take in?

Mr. Struthers: So the 198 loans, now that could be a different number in terms of the number of producers. We'll try to get that number for the member for Emerson. Some producers may have multiple loans. So we'll try to distill that information out of the numbers.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you very much for that. A lot of times the loans revolve as well, so I was just wondering if it was broke down.

Perhaps, are there any of the—are any of the stocker loans in arrears at this time, and, if so, what would the dollar value be?

Mr. Struthers: Out of the \$17,020,000, in '10-11, \$2,217,000 would be technically considered in arrears, but that number can be a little bit misleading because it's—at any given time, the number of loans would show that. But it also—it's an agreed-upon extension between the producer and MASC, and it reflects changing market or feeding conditions. MASC is comfortable that the actual conversion and security and writeoffs of the stocker loans are low. But it depends on the timing of sale of the cattle, and I think the member for Emerson understands that that's the case with these loans, and it does depend on that timing.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that. And I do understand that. I just didn't quite get the number that you were—that you—

Mr. Struthers: Out of the \$17 million, approximately \$2.2 million is in arrears. But I really do want to stress the, kind of, the caveat that I put on that because that number looks probably higher than it really should be.

Mr. Graydon: So how many loans would that represent, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Struthers: You should be nervous. My deputy minister, I think, can read your mind. I know he can read my mind because he looks at me sometimes and just laughs, so. Now, where was I?

Madam Chairperson, 44. The number would be 44. And careful the thoughts you think and—

Mr. Graydon: And I'm—I'll challenge the deputy minister if he knows what my next thought is. Like how many were written off over the past year?

Mr. Struthers: Two loans were written off for a grand total of \$98,000.

Mr. Graydon: Can the minister provide an update on the agricultural as a solution framework? When was this developed and who was consulted about the development? And what are the short- and long-terms objectives related to Ag as a Solution?

Mr. Struthers: The member for Emerson would be aware of the document, *Destination 2010*, which was a road map that we used to guide our decision making, to guide our approach. In the first decade of this, the 21st century, what we were—what we are developing is the same type of road map to guide us in the next decade, or so, of the 21st century.

The—there's a long, long list of people that we've consulted with. We have, I'll start kind of inside and work my way out. We've—I've asked and I've been part of discussions within the department with GO teams, with advisory groups out in the regions. We did one hook up on teleconference, actually two hook ups on teleconference that I participated in, and included that kind of advice directly from each of the advisory councils that we have out in the regions. There's a long, long list of agricultural producer groups that we've met with—both staff and myself, as minister—that we've met with. First Nations that we've met with in terms of agricultural opportunities and a new approach we can have on First Nations. Everyone from general farm groups like KAP and the National Farmers Union, Manitoba beef producers, Manitoba Pork, you can go down the list of all of the producer groups. We've included the universities. It—I know I'm going to miss someone because it's a very long list of people that we've brought together to get advice from people on this.

* (15:20)

My assumption is—has been that all of those folks know more about Agriculture as a Solution than this minister does. My job is to get that advice and get that guidance from them and develop it into an approach that our department can follow. I think it's a very good approach, a very good concept. Far too often Agriculture gets painted as being the bad guy when, far too often, Agriculture really does put forward solutions. And it's part of providing solutions for many of the challenges that we face in society, whether that's Manitoba or Canadian society,

whichever—however you want to divide that up. But, for our purposes, we are looking at an approach that we can take in Manitoba.

Agriculture supplies solutions in terms of health care. Health care reflects a big part of our provincial budget every year. And we really want to move towards a preventative model rather than always treating somebody once they get sick. And agriculture—just think of the kind of dietary and nutritious—nutrition contributions that we make through agriculture. Healthy diets means healthier people, which means fewer costs down the road and better health care for people.

When you look at energy, we produce some of the products now that could be replacing, you know, the finite amount of oil that we have on this planet. We can develop biodiesel options based on agricultural product.

When you look at the economy, the jobs that we have—I was going to say rural Manitoba, but that wouldn't be giving agriculture enough credit because, in urban Canada, there's tons of jobs connected directly and indirectly to agricultural opportunities and agricultural activities.

So there's health, there's energy, the economy—I'm missing one—health, economy, energy and the environment. For many—for generation after generation, our environmental decisions that have been made by farmers that conserve water or conserve the soil lessen their impact on their surroundings, and agriculture has always been in a position to put forward those kind of solutions. I want to take that and develop it into a strategy that we can use on a go-forward basis and help guide us in terms of decision making when it comes to Agriculture and Food and Rural Initiatives.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that, then, Mr. Minister, and it's certainly a laudable goal. I have to agree with you that agriculture has been a solution, and a much underappreciated solution, for many, many issues. And it's something that they don't brag, they don't advertise what they do, and perhaps bringing that a little bit closer to the surface and doing some of that will help with the disconnect that we have between rural and urban, as many, many people now are third- and fourth-generation disconnect from agriculture in the city. So I certainly applaud your effort in this respect.

I just have a—and it's obvious that the Ag solution framework is going to replace your

Destination 2010 vision document. It was brought in with your predecessor. I'm wondering if there'll be any—well, firstly, I guess, I wonder if the goals that were outlined at *Destination 2010* was actually achieved. And, then, subsequent to that, will there be any additional organizational changes within your department to facilitate your Ag as a Solution framework going forward?

Mr. Struthers: I believe that the *Destination 2010* was an approach that was right for its time. One of the things that we did do was look back over the priorities that were set in *Destination 2010*—and I wouldn't describe it as a report card. We went through and checked off this and that. But I was very pleased with the progress that was made in terms of the priorities that were set in that vision document, which is the way I want to be—I want to get an Agriculture as a Solution vision put in place so that we can do the same kind of thing. Maybe, when the member opposite is the minister 10 years from now, he can look and see how well he did on this document.

I do want to, too, make sure the member from Emerson knows that I appreciate his comments about the kind of the rural and urban divide that we have and how an Agriculture as a Solution vision can help narrow that gap. When there's less than 2 per cent of our Canadian population connected to farms these days, we need to do everything we can to tell our story. Those of us who live in rural Manitoba, rural Canada, we need to tell that story. We have, I think, almost an obligation to do that. And, I think, by approaching agriculture as a solution, that's a very efficient vehicle to get to those folks who, as the member pointed out, are two and three and four or more generations removed from the farm. I think people need to know the kind of solutions that agriculture provides for some of the challenges that we face in even some of our biggest cities.

We're not going to do the kind of reorganization that we saw a few years ago. We were very happy with the reorganization that took place, and we're finding that it has served us very well to—especially, I think, in the area of extension and getting in contact with the people out there who really need to be in contact with us. Out in the regions, out on the farm sites, I think we've done a very good job. Part of this is because we're organized in a good way, but part of it is we got some people who are both well educated and well experienced in terms of agricultural issues out in those offices close to where the action is. Of course, there may be times where we have to make

small adjustments, as we talked about the other day, in terms of meeting the priorities that we set.

And the last point I want to make in this just—in this answer is it's very—setting out this kind of a vision is very helpful to us in our relationships with the federal government. I'm quite pleased with the relationship that we've built with my counterpart and the staff in our department and the staff in Minister Ritz's department. It helps when they know where we're headed. I'll give you a very practical example. One of the priorities we have is the Food Development Centre out at Portage la Prairie where they take very good ideas, agriculturally based ideas in some cases, and help the local entrepreneur commercialize that product. It's part of where we want to go. It's part of what we communicated to the feds.

So that made it easier for us to work with them through AgriFlex just recently to make an announcement of an expansion of our capabilities of the Food Development Centre. I think it's, you know, we—it was a \$2.6-million announcement, about 1.5 or so from the feds, a little over a million from us. It really was helpful that the feds knew where we were going and that they knew that this fit into an overall approach that we have. It's much harder to do ad hoc, one-off kind of agreements with another level of government. But the feds knew all along where we were heading on that, and I think that made it easier for them to work with us on that. So it's not enough, I think, just to set glowing vision statements in place. For me, you've got to follow it up and implement and show how they can be practical and useful too. That's what our intent is with the Agriculture as a Solution vision that we're going to put in place.

* (15:30)

Mr. Graydon: Well, thank you for that, Mr. Minister. I certainly—again, I applaud you for your laudable goals, and I'm sure that all of my agricultural friends will do the same in this situation. It is very, very important—I think it's high time that agricultures took the podium that it so richly deserves for the economics that provides to the province and for the healthy and safe food that's provided here as well as the spinoff jobs, the manufacturing jobs in the urban centres. And I'll just mention some of them like MacDon and Versatile, and there's many other short-line manufacturing in the province and it certainly does add to the economics of the province.

And one of the things that you touched on briefly, and I just maybe need an update on it, is the biodiesel industry, and since the—it's been mandated that we have—what, now, a B12 or B2 or B5—I'm not exactly sure what the biodiesel mandate is, but where are we at with the development of biodiesel industry in Manitoba?

Mr. Struthers: The member specifically asked about biodiesel. I may just gratuitously add in ethanol as well. I'm sure he's interested. Canada has a 5 per cent ethanol mandate that came into force back September, in 2010. We, in Manitoba, have an 8.5 per cent ethanol mandate that predated that, back to January 1st of 2008, and we require about 140 million litres annually.

We have a couple of grain ethanol plants. He—I'm thinking—I—sure he's aware—130-million-litre plant in Minnedosa, Husky Energy, and Ag-Quest, at half a million litres per year at a plant near Minto. I would point out that wheat and corn are the feed stocks.

We have put in place for fuel ethanol—we've put in place an incentive to help encourage—on the biodiesel side, we mandated—at the beginning of November 2009, we required a minimum of 2 per cent biodiesels in the diesel fuel pool, which is 20 mil litres per year. We offer a 14-cent-a-litre biodiesel producer grant, which is in place now, and we have a couple of—I believe, two biodiesel plants that are producing right now: a Greenway Biodiesel in Winnipeg; Eastman Biofuels at Beausejour; and we've been working very closely with a group in Arborg, the Bifrost biofuels. So I think the member can see that we're moving forward on that file, that there are a number of benefits to pursuing this.

First of all, I think it's a good way to put some money in producers' pockets. It broadens the market available to farmers. It also answers some of the, as we said, you know, agriculture can be a solution on the environmental side too. Some point this planet will run out of oil and gas and we will be looking for alternatives, and we want to be well positioned to do that—[interjection]—well, maybe down the road a little.

But we want to be in a position where our farmers can benefit from that.

Mr. Graydon: The minister mentioned Greenway and Eastman at Beausejour are producing. Could he tell me what they are producing?

And Arborg has been in the—has also been working at biodiesel for a number of years, can he maybe update me how close they are to production?

Mr. Struthers: The folks at Bifrost biofuels have been—the member is right. They have been working at this for quite some time. I've been out and met with the principals of Bifrost biofuels. I toured their plant. I know the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) advocates on their behalf constantly.

They have been—you got to admire their determination. They've been moving along. They, like most of these projects, they hit—they try to run over some—jump over some hurdles. They hit some brick walls sometimes. They keep on going. They, for example, they had hooked up with a company in Ontario that was—it was, I think, keen to purchase the product, had some requirements in terms of the colour of the actual biofuel that they were producing, told Bifrost biofuels that that product was way too dark. So the company then had to go back and look to see what process they can put the biofuel through to lighten the colour to make it more acceptable to the market that they were selling into. And I think, quite recently, have found that they've got to the point where they've—they were successful in that. So they're doing those kinds of things in order to nail down a market.

We know that in that area there's—there should be no shortage of supply. There's no shortage of know how. They're always struggling to put together the technology that they need to handle these kinds of requests that come along from their markets.

So I'm hopeful that they will continue to work along on that. We've been working with them, and I'm really very hopeful that they can be successful. And I have confidence that they will be.

In terms of the member's question on capacity, Greenway is at—oh, okay, 20 million litres per year, and Eastman is at 11 million litres per year. Oh, that's their capacity. They may not be at that capacity, but that is the capacity that they would have.

* (15:40)

I think I realize I just, probably, in my previous answer didn't say million litres, but I think I forgot the word "million." Anyway, now I've corrected it.

Mr. Graydon: And so with the current mandate, we have of a—2 per cent in the province of Manitoba. What does that translate into litres that are required?

Mr. Struthers: At 2 per cent biodiesel, that would require 20 million litres per year.

Mr. Graydon: So, then, Mr. Minister, we are in an export situation now, if we are producing what you had said we're producing?

Mr. Gregory Dewar, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Struthers: The 20 million litres is a capacity number. We're not necessarily at that capacity, and whether or not we're exporting or not depends on our markets. We'd like to be selling—exporting and selling into a market, but the numbers that I gave him was a capacity number, at 20 million litres.

Mr. Graydon: So, then, Mr. Minister, can you tell me what we are producing in the province?

Mr. Struthers: We deal with a lot of fluctuations, and so it's hard to give the member an exact figure for what we're producing today. Depends on the price of canola and that sort of thing. But that is a very much a fluctuating number. We're not at the capacity. That we can say for certain. But I can't give an exact number any more than that to the member.

Mr. Graydon: Maybe the minister can reflect or just refresh my memory, but I'm sure that he said that they, the provincial government, was subsidizing the production of biodiesel by 14 cents a litre. I'm certain, then, he'll have some way of calculating the payout to each individual.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Struthers: We can find that number out for the member for Emerson. It's not a number that this department keeps. We'd have to check with our sister department to get that information for him.

Mr. Graydon: I would appreciate that, and I appreciate the minister not having it here at the table too. So that'll be fine.

The—I'd just like to, maybe, just revisit the Bifrost biodiesel project. And because it has been in the works for some time, and perhaps all of them for that matter, did they qualify for any grants along the way from the provincial and, perhaps, the federal government? Are they—is there any Triple R grants that are available? Are there any—has there been any grants that were non-repayable grants from the provincial government? And has there been any interest relief to plants, and especially the one in bio—in the Bifrost area, because it isn't up and running yet at this point. And the minister has stressed that they

are a determined group, and he knows that they are going to get up and running, and perhaps he can tell me what he has done to see that they get up and running.

Mr. Struthers: I'm—as the member has pointed out, I'm very hopeful that this group is successful. So, to that end, our department and other departments have been—tried to be helpful in helping them get started with some of the basic things that they needed to do. We did give them some help in terms of setting a business plan, I think in terms of dollars, and we have people in our department with some know how when it comes to working on business plans. So that was made available to Bifrost. There was a non-replayable loan to help them purchase some equipment, at one point, I think earlier on in their venture.

We offered a CED tax credit program, which they—a \$500,000 program which they used to raise \$491,000 from investors. And they do have—they have received some federal assistance. They haven't received all of their federal assistance yet. I think they still have some criteria that they need to meet in order to qualify for the rest of the federal assistance that they've applied for. I think that about wraps it up.

*(15:50)

Mr. Graydon: Well, I thank you for that, Mr. Minister, and certainly we want to see as many of these businesses as we can and especially in this particular field, because we know that we are capable of growing certain crops. And I know in Europe they grow rapeseed which is used just for biodiesel. It has a special designation and doesn't come under the EU umbrella at that point. It's used instead of summer fallow in their—in EU's program, but then it goes into biodiesel. It's a high-yielding energy crop when it's used in the biodiesel. The other thing is, a lot of times you have out of grade material that can be used in biodiesel as well. And so it becomes another market from our original market that we may have a canola that would be going to a canola oil. So it does provide another market for us.

I'm just thinking that, also with your ag solutions framework, it presents another situation that Manitobans, I think, need and that's another market for their product. We are unique in many things in Manitoba, with the—with our people, with what they are versatile enough that they can—they produce different products that are—probably have a market in other provinces. And it brings up a question of

interprovincial trade. And I'm thinking more along the lines in produce that maybe had been value added here, perhaps pork and sausages, for an example, with Pioneer Meats and their farmer sausage.

But we need—I think we have a restriction with the provincial—interprovincial trade, and I'm wondering two things. First of all, we have the New West agreement that Manitoba's not a part of and then interprovincial trade that we need to build that so that there are no barriers—take down those barriers between us. We have enough barriers with different countries, let alone within our country, and we haven't been able to solve those problems. So I'm wondering if the minister, in his wisdom, can convince his caucus that they should become a part of the New West partnership. And then has he got a plan on how he's going to promote the interprovincial trade?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, a couple of things. First of all, I think the member understands the—I think he gets the importance of the bio-economy and supporting, you know, the Bifrost biofuels of the province.

And I want to add another reason for—because I think he was right in all his rationale—all the reasons he put forward just now. I want to add another one, and it comes from listening to Dr. Murray McLaughlin, who spoke first thing in the morning at the—at our Capturing Opportunities in Brandon, that we held recently. Our whole theme of capturing opportunities is the bio-economy. And what Dr. McLaughlin talked about, he relayed some of his experiences with a large plant in Sarnia, Ontario. And he—one of the points he made was that if we were going to look at a bio-economy, we wouldn't end up with huge, big centrally located facilities like he was talking about in Sarnia.

We would end up with facilities that are much more along the lines of what we saw—what we see near Arborg, with the biofuels, Bifrost biofuels. Smaller, more connected to the farmers in the area, drawing from a radius in that local area and then selling into the larger market. But he foresaw something that I think is very—I think very important for rural Manitoba. And that is a number of localized opportunities spread around the province that would benefit the local farmer and sell into a market bringing money back into our local economies.

I thought Dr. McLaughlin was right on with that, and that is something that we should all try to strive for. That is in addition to the, I think, the good

reasoning that the member for Emerson put on the table here just a few minutes ago.

I do want to say that—let's deal with interprovincial trade first. We have examples of solutions to problems. Our government's approach has always been, when it comes to interprovincial trade, whether it's to the west of us or to the east of us, to the north of us, to bring down barriers that would get in the way of our products being sold in other provinces. We've been committed to that. Our former premier, Premier Gary Doer, was chair of the Premier's committee that was looking into this and making recommendations to his colleagues a number of years ago. Many of those recommendations were accepted by the Prime Minister and other premiers and, I think, went a long way in ensuring that we have a system that is based on common sense.

As far as the New West arrangement is concerned, whether there's—whether Manitoba is part of the New West arrangement or not, that's not preventing us from dealing with Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. There's several examples that I can put on the table. Agriculture, alone, where we're moving forward and working co-operatively with our counterparts in—our west—with our western neighbours. We've had two joint Cabinet meetings which were, I think, were very useful, which were very—produced some very practical outcomes. An example that comes to mind right away is the kind of harmonization that we came together on in terms of rules governing highways that we share between Manitoba and Saskatchewan, something that I think is very important for the trucking industry and very important for the agricultural community as well. That was a move that allowed us to grow our economies both here and in Saskatchewan.

We have spoken with my counterparts in Alberta and Saskatchewan about cattle insurance. We had a discussion last week about cattle insurance, and New West Partnership or not, we've learned a lot from Alberta in terms of their cattle insurance. We've made some good contacts in Saskatchewan, and I would like to be moving forward with a cattle insurance plan that includes Saskatchewan and possibly includes Alberta.

So, whether we're in the New West Partnership or not, the member opposite can count on this government to make decisions that promote the economic well-being of our producers, our economy, and really understand that we should be trading with

all provinces, whether they be to the west of us or the east of us or to the north of us.

Mr. Graydon: The—in a bit of a different vein, the provincial government has paid mustering fees to help producers who participate in a bovine TB testing. A couple of questions: Is this administered by the MASC? If so, how much have they paid out, and, since the program's inception, to how many producers, and is the provincial government's intention to extend this program going forward? So it is a four-part question, and I'm sure you can remember all the questions. Thank you.

* (16:00)

Mr. Struthers: Let's start with the easy ones first. This—the program is administered not through MASC but through MAFRI—we do that. We've—at \$6 a head, since 2006, we've paid out \$386,300. And the key question for me in this is whether or not we can arm twist the federal government to come into this program with us.

It was one of those situations where we knew there was a need. We know that the federal government knows there's a need. We stepped up to the plate and said we would do our six. We'd sure like you to be in for your 60 per cent, which would mean \$9 a head, plus \$6 a head, for \$15 a head altogether. We have yet to have the feds step up and do that.

Now having said that, I do want to say that the federal government has been at the table; Parks Canada has been at the table—the feds have been there. We have been at the table, both Agriculture and Conservation; a whole number of rural municipalities that encircle Riding Mountain National Park have been at the table; the Manitoba beef producers have been at the table; Manitoba Wildlife Federation have been at the table.

Everybody's doing their part and I have no complaints about the federal government when it comes to that. The one little complaint I do have is that I think they should be joining with us and helping us pay this mustering fee, because it is a benefit for—within their federal park. It is a benefit for our cattle producers. I think it's reasonable to—for a cattle producer to say, I—this is a benefit to me. If we can eradicate tuberculosis in the area, that's a benefit to me as well. We don't mind paying our share but I'd sure like to rope the—I'd like to muster

the federal government into paying their part of the fee.

Mr. Graydon: I—in the initial question I asked how many producers were affected and I'm—you probably didn't catch that because I maybe talk too fast, but I'd like to know how many producers were there. And the fact that the federal government aren't involved in a mustering fee, that's an issue that you have to deal with with them, of course.

But, at the same time, in the meantime, are you prepared to continue the way you're going? I mean that's the question that producers are certainly interested in. And I guess, when you say the parks board, or Parks Canada and the federal government are at the table, are they there—what are they doing there? Yes, what are they doing there? Can you explain that?

Mr. Struthers: Maybe I can talk to the member about the role of the federal government and Parks Canada. The staff are attempting to locate the number in terms of producers.

An Honourable Member: If you can't get it now, you can get back to me.

Mr. Struthers: Okay. Yes, if we don't have it right away, we'll get back to the member with that.

I did neglect to mention two other federal partners in this group, and that's Ag Canada and CFIA. To his credit, federal Minister Gerry Ritz convened an expert working group, and the members that I have been talking about are some of the stakeholders in that group. So, clearly, the federal government has shown a leadership role, has shown a leadership role in this whole area. They've been at the table with us. They've been—they've contributed ideas that we could implement.

CFIA plays a role in terms of offering advice if an idea comes forward that they believe will work or not. If another one of the stakeholders brings forward an idea that has some merit to it, I've found that the federal officials at the table have been co-operative and helpful, just as the provincial stakeholders have been, and just as the municipal stakeholders have been, and just as the producer groups have been, whether that's Cattle Producers or Wildlife Federation.

So, in some ways, it's a model that I think can be used in other parts of the country to deal with an issue that is really very tough to deal with, and I want to stress that we're all—all the stakeholders, all the levels of government are committed to the eradication of tuberculosis in this area. And I do want to point to some success by this group in terms of dealing with the area by which some of our markets south of the border we're concerned about and the work that has gone into shrinking that area into a smaller zone, which, then, would impact fewer of the farmers in our area out there on the western side of Manitoba.

Report

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (The Acting Chairperson of the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254): In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 254, considering the Estimates of the Department of Water Stewardship, the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) moved the following motion:

THAT the Minister's Salary be reduced to \$1.

Madam Chairperson, this motion was defeated on a voice vote. Subsequently, two members requested that a counted vote be taken on this matter.

Formal Vote

Madam Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

All sections in Chamber for formal vote.

Madam Chairperson: In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 considering the Estimates of the Department of Water Stewardship, the honourable member for Arthur Virden (Mr. Maguire) moved the following motion:

THAT the Minister's Salary be reduced to \$1.

This motion was carried on a voice vote, and, subsequently, two members requested—*[interjection]*—excuse me, this motion was defeated on a voice vote and subsequently, two members requested a formal vote on this matter.

The question before the committee, then, is the motion of the honourable member for Arthur-Virden.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 16, Nays 32.

Madam Chairperson: The motion is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Madam Chairperson: This section of the Committee of Supply—no.

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

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour now being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 17, 2011

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