

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

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
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BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
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TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	
<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 8, 2011

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Yes, good afternoon, 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 L. Liljegren, R. Keicher, D. Everaert and thousands of other concerned Manitobans.

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

Bipole III—Cost to Manitoba Families

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been directed by the provincial government to construct its next high voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba.

This will cost each family of four in Manitoba \$11,748 more than an east-side route, which is also shorter and more reliable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to build the Bipole III transmission line on the shorter and more reliable east side of Lake Winnipeg in order to save each Manitoba family of four \$11,748.

And this petition is signed by L. Sanders, D. Darling, L. Schultz and many, many more fine Manitobans.

**Agricultural Compensation Programs—
RM of Sifton**

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the petition—the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition—the background to this petition is as follows:

In the Rural Municipality of Sifton, flooding has affected the Assiniboine River Valley, Oak Lake, the Oak Lake Marsh, Plum Lake, Plum Creek, the Maple Lake area and the Griswold Marsh.

Farmers, as well as Oak Lake beach home and cottage owners, have been severely impacted by this flooding.

Water from the RM of Sifton was required to hold back in its catchment area due to provincial government requirements, has caused even more hardships and losses in the area.

Those affected by flooding would like the Premier and appropriate ministers to visit the region as soon as possible to see first-hand the impact of the flooding.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider enacting a compensation package program to help address the extra costs facing agricultural producers due to severe flooding in the Rural Municipality of Sifton.

To urge the provincial government to consider developing a long-term strategy to more effectively address future flooding events in the RM of Sifton.

And this petition is put forth by D. Chyzk, C. Corbett, K. Corbett and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Much of western and eastern Saskatchewan—pardon me—western Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan were soaked with rain again yesterday. The rain, almost two inches in places, caused additional road washouts and quick rises in many rivers and streams feeding the Assiniboine River. This is the fourth major rainfall we have seen in a very short period of time, and these abnormally high precipitation levels are having a serious cumulative impact on water levels throughout the system. Unfortunately, a fifth major rainstorm is forecast to affect most of southern Manitoba for several days early next week. Saturated soils across the province are unable to absorb additional moisture, and if this storm or additional rain comes to fruition in the Souris and Assiniboine River basins, the resulting water levels will challenge our flood protection systems.

Much like we saw with the early April blizzard before the 1997 flood, the timing and cumulative impact of these storms is having a major impact on how this flood unfolds. These extraordinary precipitation levels are well beyond typical unfavourable weather models used for long-term forecasting. The unpredictability and seriousness of future weather is something we cannot control or calculate, but we continue closely monitoring forecasts and updating Manitobans on potential future weather impacts. We're also continuing to

quickly assess the effects of rain as it falls, and we are incorporating it into flood forecasts as rapidly as possible.

*(13:40)

On Lake Manitoba, work continues to fully assess damages and restore access where safe to do so. The RM of St. Laurent indicated yesterday that due to the forecasted peak and potential for further bad weather on Lake Manitoba, there will be no permanent habitation along the beach until water levels have declined. The RMs of St. Laurent and Woodlands have organized a single location recovery assistance centre for property owners, including provincial and federal officials, as well as a crisis—pardon me, as crisis supports from the Interlake RHA.

For many Manitoba families, communities and farmers, the impacts of the record-breaking 2011 flood are real and immediate. To provide some context to other Manitobans, the volume of water flowing down the Assiniboine during this very extended flood will be 50 per cent more than the highest volumes ever recorded. We will continue to provide families and communities with immediate supports that are required to assist them through this very difficult time.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): And I thank the minister for the latest update on the flood situation. Yesterday's high wind and rains were not a welcome development for those still dealing with the 2011 flood.

We must, once again, thank all the people that are working so diligently to help others cope with this situation, be they representatives from municipalities, First Nations, the provincial and federal government, the Canadian military and many non-government organizations, like the Red Cross and others. We must also recognize the countless Manitobans who have so freely volunteered thousands of hours of their time to help their fellow Manitobans who have been so hard-hit by the flooding.

In excess of 2,000 Manitobans remain evacuated. It is possible that more may have to leave if conditions warrant in certain regions. This is extremely challenging for those affected, and we appreciate those who are trying to help ease the evacuees' burden.

Protective work continues in earnest in areas such as Lundar, Ochre Beach, Crescent Beach, the

RM of Siglunes and along the dikes at Ralls Island, among others.

In addition to the impact of the flooding on people, we know there has been substantial impact on the agricultural sector. Tens of thousands of acres of land will likely go unseeded this spring. Thousands of head of livestock have also been relocated due to the flooding, and it is uncertain when some of these herds will return home, particularly around Lake Manitoba.

We continue to urge the provincial government to maintain strong lines of communication with all those affected by the 2011 flood. The challenges will continue in some areas for the foreseeable future, and effective communication is essential. 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: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the statement from the minister about the very severe wet conditions that are affecting many parts of Manitoba and of which we in this Chamber are all too aware.

And, clearly, the problems are very widespread, both in farming communities, communities around our lakes and along a number of our rivers. And, indeed, there is a major concern with the predicted new water coming next week.

It's very important under these circumstances for communities like St. Laurent, where they have had substantial flood damage, that with the rising waters that we ensure that areas which have not been flooded are adequately protected in case the waters continue to rise. And it will be very important for the Province to work with communities which are struggling under the impact of this very difficult situation, for the Province to work very carefully with communities and very well with communities like St. Laurent.

I think it's also very important that there be adequate warning when conditions change. I received word, for example, last night that the Grand Rapids spillway was opened and that there wasn't adequate warning in the Grand Rapids community and that many people were caught unawares and that the—because the spillway has not been kept clean of trees and debris, that there may be a lot of trees and

debris going out into the lake. And, nevertheless, I mean, I think that this communication is extraordinarily important, and here's an example that we should know what is happening and the—particularly people in the community should know what is happening.

So I just urge members on all sides to make sure that there is good communication, and I raise this because it has been raised with me. 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 Mr. Josh Schettler from SI SIRI Project; and Hugh Coburn with students from the Aboriginal Criminal Justice class.

And also we have in the public gallery Errol Black, who is the guest of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

And the others are the guests of the honourable Minister for Education (Ms. Allan).

And also we have from Kelvin High School, we have 30 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Raymond Sokalski, and this school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

And also in the public gallery, we have from Eriksdale School, we have 21 grade 5 and 6 students under the direction of Ms. Laurel Roberts. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for the Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Flooding

Water Level Forecasting and Preparation

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): And with the incredible devastation being dealt with by Manitobans from all walks of life in different parts of the province, including Dauphin Lake, around Lake Manitoba and around other lakes around the province of Manitoba, the government has acknowledged that the conditions for this flood were present as of October of last year and early indications were provided as far back as 2003.

My question to the Premier is this: In light of the fact that they've acknowledged that the soil saturation was high going into the winter, they've acknowledged the fact that the snowpack was denser with moisture than what has been the case previously, and the other factors were known to government, why is it that the government now seems to be scrambling, unprepared and unable to protect the properties of Manitobans?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we did alert Manitobans to the fact that there was extraordinary soil saturation conditions in the fall and started very early in our emergency planning with local municipalities and the emergency operations committees and made very strategic investments in communities all across Manitoba to ensure that they not only had immediate protection, but in many cases permanent protection in terms of the dikes we built.

It is also true that the amount of precipitation in Manitoba now has reached unforeseen proportions, one-in-300-year event, and in some cases now along the Assiniboine River the levels have reached one-in-350-year event.

Manitobans are working very hard at the local level. Hundreds of civil servants, over 700, are working very hard on this full time. Officials at all levels of government are working very hard on this. Many people are volunteering their time over and above their regular workday to help out their friends and neighbours and to travel to communities to assist them as well, and, as the member knows, we have put extra resources in place for young people, many of whom have volunteered to be employed this summer to help people with protection and restoration work.

Mr. McFadyen: Manitobans have responded in a remarkable way to the current challenges, Mr. Speaker, but it is the government of Manitoba, in particular the Department of Water Stewardship that's responsible for forecasting and for outlining the preparations that need to be made in the event that a major flood is coming. It's quite clear the forecasting was wrong. The preparations weren't done and now people are scrambling and doing the very best that they can.

In light of the fact that the government was aware in terms of moisture levels, in terms of snow cover levels and as a result of other factors that this was coming, it's quite clear that they weren't prepared, and I want to just ask the Premier how he

can expect people to take him seriously when he now claims that his government didn't predict that it might rain in May in Manitoba.

*(13:50)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite was one of a chorus of many people that said that there was too many announcements, too much work that had been done, that we'd been overdoing it on flood preparations early on in the spring. We took all those measures necessary to build support into our system for the flood event of record of 1976, plus an extra two feet of freeboard in protection for people.

And the reality is we've seen an event of precipitation in this province of unforeseen proportions, one-in-300 years plus. The amount of precipitation that Manitoba has seen in May in the Assiniboine Valley is three times the normal amount. That same amount of precipitation has occurred in Saskatchewan. That same amount of precipitation has occurred in North Dakota.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? We've all been amazed by the amount of precipitation we've had, and everybody is working to solve the problem except the member opposite who now wants to be a weather forecaster.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, we know where this NDP leader's focus has been. We know about the 23 photo ops that he did before the flood got started. We know he's been spending a lot of time on advertising. We know photo ops, advertising, PR.

But the reality is that the people around Lake Dauphin today, the people around Lake Manitoba today, including First Nations, including property owners, including others, are fighting hard to protect their property and are worried about the future of their livelihoods and all they get from this NDP leader are 23 photo ops, Mr. Speaker.

And that's the difference, Mr. Speaker, between this NDP leader and past premiers of this province: Duff Roblin, zero photo ops and a floodway; this Premier, 23 photo ops and a flood.

Why doesn't he now acknowledge that he failed?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we made unprecedented investments in preparation for the flood of record in the province of Manitoba, and we went out there and did that and the members opposite were complaining that we were overdoing it. That's what they were saying at the time.

And you know what? All of those resources we put in place have been used to the maximum. They have been stretched to the limit to help out Manitobans, and Manitobans have responded in enormous amount of energy and commitment to fighting this flood. Public servants have been with them. The government has been with them. We've announced the best-ever compensation program in the history of the province. For the first time ever, there's been cottages scoped in for structural damage, a level set at 200,000; more than double it was in '97.

And let's remember where the Leader of the Opposition was in '97 when we were volunteering to fight the flood. He was privatizing the telephone system. We were out there fighting the flood.

Lake Manitoba Flooding Government Position on Property Buyouts

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that there are more than a thousand Manitobans right now who are displaced from their homes. There are people who have spent their entire lives building toward having retirement homes. There are people who have built farms and businesses and livelihoods around these lakes.

And now we have, in this House, the spectacle of this NDP leader claiming that he's doing a great job in managing this flood. He is out of touch with what is happening around the province of Manitoba and the devastation that people are dealing with as a result of his incompetence.

So I want to ask this Premier, Mr. Speaker—that they change their flood forecast from day to day. They say one thing one day; they reverse it the next day. One minister says one thing; another minister says something else.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Premier said to those people around Lake Manitoba, no to the issue of potential buyouts. This morning, he said yes to the issue of buyouts.

Mr. Speaker, it's now four hours later. What is the Premier's position on that issue or is he going to try and flip-flop again?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, in the 1997 flood, 28,000 people were displaced from their homes. At the peak of this flood, we've seen over 3,500 people. It's around 2,000 right now.

In the last decade, we've spent a billion dollars on flood prevention, and every time we've made investments in flood prevention, the Leader of the Opposition and all the members of the caucus have voted against it, every single time. They don't believe in spending in capital that will improve the ability of Manitobans to withstand natural disasters.

We do believe in investing in that, and we will continue to do that, and when it comes to the issue of buyouts, Mr. Speaker, our first obligation is to restore and protect properties, and in those special cases where it is either impractical or impossible to rebuild, we will consider buyouts.

Our program is completely consistent with our first objective, which is to minimize damage to people and their property, and we'll invest in doing that, and you'll vote against it every time.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that there are 36 Manitobans who think he's doing a great job in this bubble right here in Winnipeg, but there are thousands of Manitobans who today are evacuated from their homes and who are dealing with very significant challenges.

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces who were interviewed in the media two weeks ago who served both in this flood and in '97 said that the main difference was: In '97 when we arrived, the government was ready; equipment was ready; we went straight to work. That was what the Armed Forces said.

They said: This time we got here and we were scrambling. We were having to scramble because the government wasn't ready; the equipment wasn't ready.

Why doesn't he just acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that they got their forecasts completely wrong? Thousands of Manitobans are being flooded out of their homes and, as all of that is happening, his top priority is advertising, 23 photo ops and fake outrage in this House.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, for the member to pretend he can speak on behalf of the military in Manitoba is an insult to the military. It's absolutely an insult to the military.

The military—and I talked to them on a very regular basis during the time they were here—they went from zero to 500 to 1,500 people working on the Assiniboine dikes within a week. And they said

very clearly they were very impressed by the local leadership, the local volunteers, the emergency preparation in this province and the provincial officials that worked with them every single day to tackle the 16 threats along the Assiniboine dikes.

I can tell you what, for him to try to use the military to drive a wedge issue in this House is disgraceful and an insult and an insult to the military. They did a terrific job, and we worked hand in hand with them as we worked hand in hand with our citizens.

The member should apologize for his disgraceful misrepresentation of the facts.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a lot of people that come down to watch question period here and we have a lot of people in the gallery. Let's give them a chance to hear the questions and the answers. A little decorum, please.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you Mr. Speaker, and the fact is that it was a member of Canada's Armed Forces quoted in the *Winnipeg Free Press* who served in both floods who said that in '97 that the government was prepared, the equipment was in place, they knew what they had to do and that this—the difference between that flood and this flood is that they were scrambling when they got here this time.

Now, they may not like the fact that members of the Canadian Forces are saying that. They may not like the fact that the *Free Press* is reporting it, but they can take that up with the Canadian Armed Forces and the *Free Press*, Mr. Speaker, when the reality is today that the fact is over a thousand Manitobans are out of their homes. People have water in their living rooms today. People who have worked a lifetime to build up homes only to see them destroyed who didn't get the warning that they felt they were entitled to are now getting conflicting statements on the issue of compensation.

The Premier said yesterday absolutely no to the potential buyouts. Today he's saying maybe they can. He's flip-flopping on that just as he's mismanaged the entire file. After 23 photo ops and telling people we're under control, just like he told people who were relying on him that Crocus was a good investment when it wasn't, Mr. Speaker, will the

Premier acknowledge that he's failed on this file, just like he's failed on files in the past?

* (14:00)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the reality is this: A billion dollars of investment in flood protection works all throughout Manitoba. The record is a hundred per cent clear. Every single one of those investments was opposed by the members opposite. They opposed every single one of those investments. It has made an enormous difference. They said we were overpreparing for the flood in the spring before the high waters came.

The reality is we've had three times the normal amount of precipitation in May, and the forecasts show additional rain and precipitation coming into the province in the next few days. It's an unprecedented threat to the Assiniboine Valley.

All the people in the valley, all the civil servants, all the public officials, all the military have pulled together, worked shoulder by shoulder to fight this flood with everything they've got, and the member opposite wants to use one-off quotes instead of recognizing the unprecedented—the unprecedented—level of co-operation among all people to fight this flood, and people have done a marvellous job in this province.

And there will be a compensation program for them that will recognize, for the first time ever, the requirement to supply support to structural damage for cottages, as well as \$222,000 for homes. That's what we'll do, and we will support them every step of the way.

Shoal Lakes Flooding Long-Term Mitigation Strategies

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, for the last 10 years this government has known there's a real problem with the rising Shoal lakes.

In fact, July the 4th, 2001, the previous MLA for Lakeside asked the member from Thompson, directly, what about the people around these rising Shoal lakes could expect from this government in terms of strategy.

Fast-forward 10 years and we have a real problem on our hands. The three Shoal lakes are now one very, very large lake and it's about to break out. Many others will be affected when this happens, even those in West St. Paul and those along Sturgeon Creek.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Water Stewardship what this government's plan is to draw down Shoal lake before something serious happens. People deserve answers.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, Shoal lakes is a big issue and we have been working with the communities for a long time. We've announced compensation for producers, and we're talking to people about what would be a long-term solution. Putting more water into Lake Manitoba, which members opposite would be supporting, is simply not an option right now. We have water coming into Manitoba and we're working with the entire Assiniboine basin.

We're also working with the downstream communities who may be affected. *[interjection]* Mr. Speaker, I know it's question period; it's also answer period.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have a little decorum. Come on. Order.

Ms. Melnick: We're also working with downstream communities. We have an issue of a lot of water in the province of Manitoba. We don't want to rob Peter to pay Paul and flood out communities downstream, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, the Shoal lakes flooding has swamped thousands of acres of land, swamped roads and affected provision of emergency services. It's also affecting trade, school bus routes and the ability of local families to stay connected.

It's been a very long 10 years and this government has had many opportunities to fix the problem. The Shoal lakes are at risk of breaching. We must be ready to protect property and people. Lake Manitoba cannot handle any more water. This only leaves two options: have the water come down the Grassmere drain through West St. Paul or down the Sturgeon Creek or both. Concerns have been about—raised about both these options.

Mr. Speaker, it's been 10 years, and now it's the 11th hour. This government is going to be reacting when it should have been making plans years ago.

Again, I ask the Minister of Water Stewardship: What is her strategy to address this very serious situation, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Melnick: Well, the member answered his own question. He said that the options that he proposed has downstream negative effects, Mr. Speaker.

We are aware that there are upstream concerns and there are concerns within Shoal lakes and there are downstream concerns. We are not going to go against the wishes of entire communities, Mr. Speaker, during this high-water time. We're going to continue to work with them around solutions.

We have brought in the first-time-ever compensation package, the Shoal Lakes Agriculture Flooding Assistance Program, Mr. Speaker. We are making sure that producers are being compensated, livestock is being moved where appropriate, feed is being brought in where appropriate. We're working with the rural municipalities to come up with a comprehensive plan, municipalities right in the area of Shoal lakes as well as downstream.

But, again, putting more water into Lake Manitoba simply is not an option.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, 10 years this government sat and did nothing. Shame on them.

We warned this government about the rising Shoal lakes. They did nothing. Now we have a real mess. Everyone affected by the rising lakes deserves answers. It is not their fault.

Several weeks ago, I was copied on a letter to the Premier asking for answers and they have not even got a response. People need answers on compensation, buyouts, so they can make long-term plans. These families' homes and property are no less valuable than any other Manitoban. My heart goes out to them living in these conditions.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier: Will he ensure that all those affected by the rising Shoal lakes, whether they are producers or not, will be treated fairly. They have been through so much and they deserve answers and they deserve them today.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Just about two weeks ago, we announced a package for the people affected in the Shoal lakes. We announced support for them to get feed in cases where we can bring it in. We announced support to take livestock out where we could do it. We announced production support, and we recognized that the people around the Shoal lakes, the producers there for the last three and, in some cases, four years have had a very difficult time, and that's why we put this unprecedented package of support in place.

The member opposite knows that. If he has any specific problems with people not getting support, we'd be happy to address them with him.

But, for the first time ever, a government in Manitoba has recognized the challenges of the producers around the Shoal lakes and put an appropriate program in place to support them in their task and in their livelihoods. We will continue to support those people as we look for appropriate long-term solutions to relieve the pressure on the Shoal lakes. That's what we will do.

Shoal Lakes Flooding Long-Term Mitigation Strategies

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): It's reaction time in this House, it seems like.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011, the member from Thompson, who was the minister for Transportation and Government Services at the time, recognized there was a serious issue on Shoal lakes.

An Honourable Member: Two thousand and one.

Mr. Graydon: Two thousand and one, excuse me.

Upon questioning by Harry Enns, the MLA from Lakeside, the minister stated, and I quote: It is more difficult in the case of Shoal lakes because of the rising waters. What I can indicate to the member is that I've asked the department—and I will be continuing to pursue this over the next period of time—to look at the impact of this spring.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why he did not address the rising waters on Shoal lakes in the following years?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, we have been dealing with the people around Shoal lakes. We announced the Shoal Lakes Agricultural Flooding Assistance program which includes per-acre payments for lost income due to flooded hay and pasture land in 2010 and 2011: tame hay, \$50 an acre; native hay and open pasture, \$14.17 an acre; wooded pasture, \$2.98 an acre; leased Crown land, \$2 an acre.

We've announced financial assistance to move feed to livestock or livestock to feed due to flooding between April 2011 and March 2012. This includes feed and livestock.

We've announced emergency costs such as equipment rental, animal rescue, temporary pens and emergency feed will be covered.

We've offered a voluntary buyout program and an additional transition year of per-acre payments for 2012 if producers choose to sell their land to the Province.

We are caring for and working with all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, not just around the Shoal lakes but throughout this incredible province we call Manitoba.

Mr. Graydon: It seems like they're working at drowning people out.

Back in 2001, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) should've recognized what the outcome of doing nothing would be, but here we are, 10 years later, and the devastation is extensive.

It would appear that the minister's neglect of his responsibility was deliberate so as to systematically drive ranchers and farmers from the land at the same time as financially crippling the surrounding municipalities and businesses.

Mr. Speaker, why did the minister and his colleague, the Minister of Water Stewardship, choose to destroy the lives and the dreams of so many ranchers and farmers?

* (14:10)

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, unprecedented high waters throughout the province, one-in-300-year floods, the Shellmouth Dam being drawn down to an historic low, the Portage Diversion being built up to handle 35,000 cfs, Fairford running as high as it can go, high waters in Shoal lakes, unprecedented compensation, unprecedented support from a provincial government.

Why is it that members opposite are the only ones who have never said: How do we help?

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, we've always been there to help and that help was in 2001. The minister recognized that there was an issue and failed to address it. How can you help someone that won't help themselves?

Failing to plan is planning to fail, Mr. Speaker. This minister knew full well by his own admission 10 years ago that the water in the Shoal lakes was on—at unprecedented levels. He consciously chose not to address the issue and voted for 10 NDP budgets that helped destroy those ranchers, the farmers and the businesses, as well as the municipalities around Shoal lakes. He voted for a budget to tax food such as milk, eggs and chicken

fingers. He voted to destroy three generations—four generations of ranchers and farmers.

Mr. Speaker, why does this minister so despise agriculture, ranchers, farmers and rural Manitoba? What plan has the minister got to address the flooding on Shoal lakes?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we've heard very little from this member on this question until very recently.

Since 2007, \$26 million in support payments have been made available to the producers around the Shoal lakes, \$26 million since 2007. The member has missed that.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) has worked on that. The previous Minister of Agriculture has worked on that. The Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) has worked on that. The Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Ashton) has worked on that. The local MLA from the Interlake has been very diligent in bringing these concerns forward, and every single year we have found a way to provide support to those people.

And in our compensation program this spring, we've provided additional support. We haven't waited for the federal government to sign on to the details of that. We've gone ahead of the curve and provided additional support. We will continue to do that as we seek an appropriate long-term solution to relieve the pressure on the Shoal lakes.

Child Daycare Centres Decreased Funding (Headingley)

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard about this government spending about \$1.3 million of taxpayers' money on feel-good advertising to further their own election campaign, and about half of that was spent advertising to parents on how to be parents, Mr. Speaker.

At the same time the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) was spending money on virtual parenting, the Minister for Family Services was cutting funding to a daycare in Headingley by \$75,000, which is going to result in less spaces for children and parents, Mr. Speaker.

Why is this government spending money on virtual advertising, feel-good advertising for virtual parenting at the expense of real children and real parents in a real daycare centre?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): I hope the member opposite catches the news because this morning we were able—with the leadership of the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald)—to announce a new investment to make sure that youngest Manitobans have a greater access not only to state-of-the-art learning and curriculum for child care in Manitoba, but also have access to physical education, to information on how to use motor skills and, as well, expand the parent-child centres in Manitoba, an investment of \$440,000.

Now, that was just today, Mr. Speaker. Just a few weeks ago, we announced historic investments in child-care spaces, in funding more spaces.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'll just conclude by saying we've committed to adding 35 more child-care sites. I think we're up over 50 already, well ahead of our target.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, kids don't need this government to tell them how can they have fun.

Mr. Speaker, the municipality of Headingley has been a leader in funding a new daycare facility, having invested \$775,000 themselves in this project. The provincial daycare capital projects office said that the outlook for the project was excellent and recommended it to the minister. But the minister cut the funding by \$75,000.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Just for some information, the members behind you, the voices are carrying over your mike and it's very—and we're hearing their voices and not yours. So I'll give you the opportunity to put your question again. And I ask the co-operation of members, please, especially when the member has the floor, because it's not fair to ask a question and expect someone to answer if they can't hear, because I can't hear it from here, because the voices are deeper and they're over-carrying on your mike.

So let's have a little co-operation, please. Please put your question again.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, the municipality of Headingley has been a leader in funding for this new daycare facility, having invested over \$775,000 in the project themselves. The provincial daycare capital projects office said that the outlook for this project was excellent and recommended it to the minister. But the minister cut the funding by \$75,000.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time, the Minister for Family Services was spending \$250,000 on a Parents Zone website to promote his own political agenda. How can this NDP government spend a quarter of a million dollars on a website and, at the same time, cut real child-care spaces for real children in a real daycare centre?

Mr. Mackintosh: Actually, I didn't have to look too long in my notes, Mr. Speaker, to notice that Headingley child care is getting new investments as a result of commitments made in this year's budget. Perhaps the member doesn't know what's going on in the child-care centres in her constituency. I also note that Oak Bluff, indeed, has some unfunded spaces, which is why we're also funding spaces that are in place now but need additional funding.

So, Mr. Speaker, perhaps she would want to pay a visit to some of those child-care centres that are enjoying the benefit of today's NDP in Manitoba, but I know when it comes to Parents Zone, I think it's tremendously bold of the member to get up reminding Manitoba families about what Conservatives would do about help for families. Clearly, they would not—they would be cutting supports for families. We have to make sure that we continue to invest in families. They are the very fundamental unit of this great province. We're going to make sure it keeps—it stays that way.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the agenda of this NDP government is to spend taxpayers' money to further their own political agenda on the eve of an election. They support advertising and websites with no tangible outcome for parents and children and yet they cut funding for real spaces for real children in real daycares.

They spend millions on advertising and website. They spend billions—they are wasting billions on a west-side power line and they've even voted themselves an extra million dollars with a vote tax. And when it comes to \$75,000 for spaces in daycare, they axe it.

Why are they nickel-diming the kids and wining and dining themselves?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know Conservatives would like the world to stop, but, you know, we're hearing from parents that it's getting harder and harder to be a parent.

Mr. Speaker, we're hearing from Manitobans of how the—all the technology on the Internet, all of those websites really need to have a little

organization just to make sure they go to work for families, and that's why we're introducing new leading-edge technological approaches.

I know they want pamphlets on a rack. We've moved beyond the pamphlets on a rack. We're moving to the modern age. We're on the side of parents. Join us.

* (14:20)

Breast Cancer Mortality Rates

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, women in Manitoba may be shocked to learn that according to the 2011 Canadian cancer statistics, that Manitoba has the highest mortality rate for breast cancer in Canada, along with PEI and Newfoundland.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us why the rate of women dying of breast cancer is higher in Manitoba than in most other provinces in Canada?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very pleased to stand in the House today to speak of our investments in cancer, cancer treatment, cancer screening, cancer prevention. We know that we continue to expand our breast cancer screening initiatives because, as most members of this House would know, that early detection does, indeed, save lives.

Earlier this spring, of course, we announced funding for two additional mobile breast-screening vans, which were—are also more comfortable and convenient for women who will be receiving screening in over 80 communities now.

And we know that we have worked very hard to increase our target rates for screening, Mr. Speaker, meeting and exceeding those targets to ensure that we can detect breast cancer early and have the good folks at CancerCare Manitoba provide the best possible care for these women.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health seems to have missed the question. Manitoba has the highest mortality rate for breast cancer in Canada, along with PEI and Newfoundland.

In fact, Manitoba's breast cancer mortality rates are above the Canadian average. They're worse than British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Can—so can the Minister of Health tell us why has she been so focused on other things, like building RHA bureaucracies, instead of focusing on this very, very important issue to Manitoba women and dealing with the mortality rates so that we can see less breast cancer deaths in Manitoba.

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, in actual fact, our attention has been very clearly focused on working with the Canadian Cancer Society and working with CancerCare Manitoba in every area of the work on cancer from early detection to treatment to all of the efforts.

And what I can tell the House, in fact, is that since '99 cancer mortality rates in Manitoba have, in fact, decreased from 221 per 100,000 to 205 for men and from 158 per 100,000 to 154 for men. We know that between 1992 and 1999, Mr. Speaker, cancer mortality rates increased in Manitoba.

So we know that by adding additional screening, like we did with the mobile detection vans for breast cancer, like adding extra screening for colorectal cancer, first in Canada, that we're getting at the problem as early as possible to provide the best possible outcomes.

Mortality increased in the '90s. It has decreased since we've been in office.

Mrs. Driedger: And according to the statistics, Manitoba still has one of the highest mortality rates in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, last week this government refused to pass my private member's bill to make accreditation of all mammography machines in Manitoba mandatory. In fact, during debate two Cabinet ministers stood and said that all mammography machines in Manitoba are already supposed to be accredited, but according to the Canadian Association of Radiologists, two machines have not been accredited for years.

So I'd like to ask a Minister of Health: If they were supposed to be accredited, why haven't they been?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, again, Mr. Speaker, and I can say to the member that with increased screening in Manitoba, with increased mammography machines, we know that we have to continue to work on the accreditation of these machines. All machines are in the process of being accredited. It is, indeed, my understanding that at present they are accredited. I may stand to be corrected, and I will commit to the

member to double-check that fact, but my information tells me that the machines are up to date and accredited.

But, most importantly, Mr. Speaker, what we want to do is to ensure that not only is accreditation occurring—or not only is mammography occurring in Manitoba, but we're actually working to take mammography outside of the Perimeter of Winnipeg, take it to more than 80 communities in Manitoba, get our screening rates up over 70 per cent which was our target, have early detection and assure that we can provide the best possible care to women in Manitoba who have been screened and that breast cancer has been detected.

Criminal Offenders Remand Custody Wait Times

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): While the—Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Justice claims that his NDP government has provided good justice and has made Manitoba safer in the last 12 years, he's sadly mistaken.

According to the May 2011 report from Statistics Canada, Manitoba has the highest proportion in Canada of people being put in jail but not actually sentenced. In 2009-2010, Mr. Speaker, only 28 per cent of all those in 'custoney'—custody were actually sentenced, with 72 per cent sitting in remand being only charged but not convicted and not sentenced.

When, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Justice lay out a plan to reduce the number of people waiting for the justice system to work and ensure Manitobans that those convicted of crimes are serving the sentences that they deserve?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, what a fascinating question coming from a Liberal, Mr. Speaker.

As I believe everybody is aware—[*interjection*] As I believe everybody should be aware, except perhaps the member for River Heights, the availability of two-for-one remand was an issue that was giving people a lack of confidence in the justice system. We're very pleased that because of the efforts of advocacy of the Manitoba government with other provinces, the federal government made the change to take away the two-for-one credit, which is actually resulting in cases moving through the system quicker and, in fact, is reducing the percentage of people on remand.

And it's interesting, just last week, of course, the member—or the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), he said that there wasn't any point in provincial governments going to Ottawa and advocating for changes. He said he'd only focus on things we have control over, which are provincial issues.

Of course, none of the opposition members, whatever party they may happen to be, believe that Manitoba has a role in advocating. I'm very glad to be part of a government that does that to make changes in Ottawa, to make things better for Manitobans.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the same report plainly says that in the last decade of NDP mismanagement, the number of people in remand status in Manitoba has grown by an astounding two and a half times. Not only is Manitoba the violent crime capital of Canada, it also holds the title of the highest proportion of its citizens in Canada who are in custody awaiting trials and sentences.

When will the Minister of Justice admit that his government has run down the province's justice system to the point that Manitobans are often waiting painfully long to see justice served?

Mr. Swan: If we followed the Liberal plan and didn't have more police officers, I guess there would be fewer people being arrested. If we followed the Conservative plan and recklessly cut \$500 million out of the budget and cut money to the Winnipeg Police Service and other municipalities and cities across Canada, there'd be fewer people being arrested.

I don't apologize, Mr. Speaker, for the fact that we support our communities. We support our police officers. That's why there's 261 more positions being funded today than there were in 1999. We support police. We want them out on the street keeping the rest of us safe. We support the work those women and men do.

I don't know why the member for River Heights opposes more police officers and votes against them. I don't know why the opposition Conservatives don't support more police officers and vote against them. We stand on the side of safety. We stand on the side of law enforcement in this province. It's a shame they don't, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, instead of trying to play politics, the Justice Minister should actually have a system which works.

Mr. Speaker, due to this government's inability to provide a functional justice system, Manitobans are suffering. Not only are they increasingly often victims of violent and horrific crimes like sexual assault, but thanks to the mismanagement of the NDP, they have to wait excruciatingly long times to see the perpetrators of these crimes punished.

Mr. Speaker, when will this Minister of Justice apologize for failing to provide swift justice for everyday Manitobans?

* (14:30)

Mr. Swan: Well, I think the question should be when will the member for River Heights apologize against voting every single one of the 58 new Crown attorneys that we've added since 1999? Will the member apologize for opposing 43 more Crown attorneys coming online by 2016?

And in case the member wasn't aware, yesterday, for the first time in Manitoba history, we now have a mental health court that's going to be established in the province of Manitoba. I was very pleased to stand with the chief judge of the Provincial Court of Manitoba as well as the executive director of the Canadian Mental Health Association as well as a psychiatrist from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority as we announced a new court which is going to work with individuals who have mental health issues who've committed non-violent crimes to divert them from the remand centre, to divert them from the criminal justice system where we believe that there can be an appropriate plan to get them the assistance they need so they don't reoffend, so we have safer communities. I hope the member might just support that one.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ruthe Penner

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, and I stand today to congratulate Ruthe Penner, a member of my constituency whose dedication to her profession and her community has made others stand up and take notice.

Ruthe Penner is the 2010 recipient of the Manitoba Real Estate Association's Distinguished Realtor Award. The award recognizes individuals who have given of themselves, not only to real estate, but to the community in which they live. Ms. Penner was presented with the award from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Ruthe Penner has been an active member of the real estate industry since 1987. Ruthe and her husband, Wayne Penner, are owners of REW Resources Incorporated, a specialized real estate and marketing consulting service.

Over the past 20 years, Ruthe Penner has helped countless businesses, families and individuals find homes, buildings and land in Winnipeg. She's been involved in the resale market, in project selling, in the new home market and condominium developments in the completion stages, and she has survived the ups and downs of the Winnipeg housing market.

She has served as a director on the board of the WinnipegREALTORS association since 1992. Ms. Penner has chaired many committees at the community board level and served as president of MREA in 2009 and president of the WinnipegREALTORS in 2005.

Ruthe Penner is a hard-working individual in and out of the real estate community. Currently, she serves on the board of governors for the MREA Shelter Foundation. For the third year in a row, she has played a leadership role in sponsoring the third annual garage sale on Henderson Highway for Osborne House.

Ruthe Penner has also worked with Habitat for Humanity on a number of Winnipeg building projects and has donated time and fees by selling IDEA House at the Winnipeg Home Expressions show with all proceeds going to support Habitat housing builds.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Ruthe Penner for her volunteer contributions to our community and to the larger Winnipeg real estate community. Her dedication has made a positive impression on those around her, and I ask all members of the Legislature to congratulate and thank Ruthe Penner. Thank you.

River East Neighbourhood Network

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the wonderful work of the River East Neighbourhood Network and the successful annual general meeting they held last night at Access River East.

It was great to see so many people from the community attend the AGM to learn more about the network's accomplishments this past year and to hear more about their exciting plans for the future. In particular, it provided RENN with a great

opportunity to showcase one of their newest programs, called CYCLE, which received over \$12,000 in support from Neighbourhoods Alive! This program teaches young people how to repair bikes while also encouraging active living.

The RENN Trail Committee also provided an update. The most recent highlight was a cycle celebration on the Northeast Pioneers Greenway this spring. The greenway, which has been open since September 2007, is an active transportation corridor. It currently connects to The Forks and will be linked to East St. Paul, Transcona Trails and the Trans Canada Trail in the coming years.

RENN has been proudly serving the Elmwood East and North Kildonan community since 1999. Its vision is for the residents in the northeast corner of Winnipeg to have the best quality of life possible. This means having residents who are engaged in activities and action in their community while also ensuring that everyone has access to the resources and the services that best meet their needs.

One of the ways RENN tries to realize its vision is by bringing together a variety of partners including residents, schools, businesses and different kinds of service providers who either live or work in the northeast corner of Winnipeg. Together, they work to help connect different stakeholders within the community in an effort to improve the lives of residents.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all members of the River East Neighbourhood Network on another successful annual general meeting. Their efforts continue to enhance the lives of all residents of North and East Kildonan and the surrounding neighbourhoods. May they successfully continue to meet the needs of those they serve in their community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

International Peace Gardens

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, the International Peace Gardens, a symbol of friendship between two nations, straddles the border of Manitoba and North Dakota.

Last summer, two major projects were completed at the International Peace Gardens and ceremonies took place on September 11th to celebrate their official opening.

The first ceremony to commemorate the 9th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States began at 11 a.m. A special service was held to unveil the Contemplative and Stroll Garden that surrounds the 9/11 Memorial Site, which consists of steel girders transported from the World Trade Center.

The memorial site is very significant in that it serves as a reminder of the tragic events of 9/11 and is the only such memorial outside of the actual locations of the terrorist attacks. Through the efforts of Manitoba and North Dakota Rotary Club members and firefighters, along with the work of the Peace Gardens personnel, a beautiful garden and storyboards have been installed at the site. The monument symbolizes the common interest in peace and security of Canadian and Americans and the mutual sacrifices of the men and women of both countries combatting terrorism far from home.

The second ceremony of the day celebrated the opening of the Interpretive Centre and Conservatory. The \$4.7-million, 17,600 square foot building includes a gift shop, the Border Cafe, space for interpretive displays and an exotic plant conservatory. The conservatory's main display is a diverse cacti collection, which is a beautiful array of 50 varieties of cacti, and there are more now, Mr. Speaker.

The project is intended to enhance the year-round potential of the International Peace Gardens for visitors. International Peace Gardens CEO, Doug Hevenor, is already envisioning the addition of cross-country ski rentals and an outdoor skating rink to boost winter tourism now that a year-round revenue has been built—or pardon me, a year-round venue has been built.

The new—next few years will be an exciting time for the International Peace Gardens. The conservatory is just the first phase of a three-part capital project. The second phase of the planned expansion is a Conflict Resolution Centre to be built mirroring the conservatory on the Canadian side of the border, while the third phase intends to establish accommodations within the garden.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the Peace Gardens board of directors and Mr. Hevenor for their vision and determination for the future development of the International Peace Gardens.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

School Capital Projects

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that has made education a priority and, to that end, has made significant capital investments across the province.

In just the last 14 months in my constituency of Concordia, this government has invested in projects at Elmwood High School, Kildonan East Collegiate, Hampstead School and George V School and will serve to increase our kids' physical health, social skills and competitive abilities for years to come.

With the help of \$100,000 from the Manitoba government, Elmwood High School officially opened the refurbished outdoor track and field this spring. Not only will this asset help the students and athletes at the school, but many other schools and members of the community will benefit from the new turf and environmentally conscious track made of asphalt mixed with crumb rubber from old recycled tires.

This government also recently contributed \$50,000 towards replacing the artificial turf at the East Side Eagles Football Club, which is used by many local teams, including the East Side—the Kildonan-East Rivers football team. This state-of-the-art field will help our athletes succeed and will serve our community for many years to come.

I was also proud to join with parents and educators at the groundbreaking of the new \$3.8-million gym construction project at École George V School. At another local school, Hampstead School, will begin shortly on a new play structure for the students there. This project will significantly enhance the education experience for the young students at these schools.

This government knows that quality education is worth every cent invested because we're talking about the future of our province. We invest among the highest amounts per pupil in Canada, and we've built 18 new schools, 13 replacement schools and done extensive renovations and additions to schools across Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, these kind of investments in education demonstrate to Manitoba families that we will do everything we can to support them.

Congratulations to everyone who was involved in realizing these projects. Your work benefits local families now and will for many generations to come.

* (14:40)

Rachel Swatek

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an exceptional young person who we have had the pleasure of working with in this Chamber since last year as a page of the Legislative Assembly.

Rachel Swatek is an outstanding and accomplished grade 12 student at Kelvin High School. She will be moving on to a promising post-secondary education career this fall. When Rachel isn't attending classes or working hard here at the Legislature, she selflessly volunteers her time with a number of community projects and groups aimed at bettering the world around her. Currently, she is the editor of her high school's newspaper, *The Kelvin Paperclip*, as well as the chair and interschool representative for the Winnipeg Foundation's youth and philanthropy committee.

Her passion for environmental and social issues is evident in her involvement with Kelvin's school-based Amnesty International group, Hopeful, Aware Students Taking Action, HASTA, as well as her role with the Manitoba Environmental Youth Network steering committee.

For the past 14 years, Rachel has been an avid lover of theatre and the arts. She has embraced that love as a student with the Manitoba Theatre for Young People and is also a part of their teenage Shakespeare Company. With MTYP, she also acts as the assistant director of the Junior Company and a teaching assistant during the summer months.

I want to congratulate Rachel on her accomplishments and hard work this year, and thank her for her service here in the Legislature. I wish her the very best of luck this fall, as Rachel begins classes at Carleton University in pursuit of a career in broadcast journalism.

Thank you, Rachel.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business. Would you call second readings of bills 44 and 51, please?

SECOND READINGS

Bill 44—The Civil Service Superannuation and Related Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: Okay, second reading of Bill 44, The Civil Service Superannuation and Related Amendments Act.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 22, The Civil Service Superannuation and Related Amendments, be now read a second time and referred to a committee—[interjection] Did I say 42?

My—a correction, Mr. Speaker, if I made a mistake in the number, it is Bill 44, The Civil Service Superannuation and Related Amendments Act, to be read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor having been advised of the bill—has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, that Bill 44, The Civil Service Superannuation and Related Amendments Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of this bill, and the message has been tabled.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, The Civil Service Superannuation and Related Amendments bill is a bill that's important to the civil service and the work that has—work we have done is in partnership with the public service and employees, and through this bill we are looking to further strengthen and protect their retirement benefits. The changes that are being made will build our government's—on our efforts to protect these pensions by addressing the unfunded pension liability and fully funding the employer portion of the pension costs in all—for all current civil servants on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Speaker, this bill also addresses an important issue that has been raised by my colleague the MLA for St. James on the issue of reservists, and who give of their time to serve in the Armed Forces and, in this bill, will enable the continue—continuity of pension contributions for reservists while they are on periods of leave for service with the Canadian Armed Forces. And, as well, it enables the phased-in

retirement programs to be established by regulation, which will support workplace renewal and mentoring for allowing employees nearing retirement to work reduced hours and to—and continue pension contributions while collecting partial pension benefits.

This bill also addresses inconsistencies between the act and the amendments to The Pension Benefits Act that apply to the act and come into force on May 31st, 2010. It also allows employees' contribution rates to be set by regulation on the joint recommendation of the Employer Pension and the—Insurance Advisory Committee and the Superannuation Insurance Liaison Committee. Mr. Speaker, that is covered off in schedule A of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, there is also schedule B that is in this bill that puts in place the principles for joint management of the fund. But, having introduced this amendment, after discussion, we have made a decision in conjunction with the MGEU that there is—are some issues with schedule B, and as a result we will not be proceeding with schedule B. We have—as I said, there has been this joint—we have talked about the joint management of the Civil Service Superannuation Plan for—and this has been going on for a long time and it has been introduced at the request of the MGEU. It has been the subject of an MOU between the employees and the government since 2009. However, after I introduced the bill and discussions have—with the proponents of this, it appears that it is necessary to do further consultation and—on—with regards to the specifics of the joint management.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will proceed with schedule A, but schedule B, dealing with the joint management, will not be proceeded with in this piece of legislation. And as I said, that is as a result of the unions that are involved in this joint management having looked at the bill and having asked us to give them the time to have further consultation with regard to the specifics of joint management.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear schedule A addresses many of the issues and things that are need for the pensions that exist now in bringing it in line with changes have—that have been under The Pension Benefits Act. Schedule B, we will not proceed with because of a request that has come from the proponents that they require more time and must do further consultation with regard to the specifics of joint management.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 51—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2011

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard), that Bill 51, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2011, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor having been advised of the bill—has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister for Labour and Immigration, that Bill 51, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2011, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of this bill, and the message has been tabled.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act implements all of the measures that were announced in Budget 2011 and makes other amendments to tax and financial legislation.

* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker, this is the second year of Manitoba's five-year economic plan, and Budget 2011 has—has been designed not only to maintain front-line services for Manitoba families, but also to deliver significant tax savings for Manitobans, making one of the—Manitoba one of the most affordable places to live, to raise a family and to retire.

Mr. Speaker, the tax measures announced in the budget and implemented by this bill will include the corporate capital tax, which is to—an amendment to attract and encourage the expansion of small and innovative financial institutes. The Income Tax Act is amended to reduce personal income tax and amount to significant savings in the amount of \$61 million for Manitobans, and it reduces property tax. This bill also amends the basic personal exemption by an additional \$1,000 over four years, again, putting more money into Manitobans' pockets.

It also amends the spousal amount and the eligible dependent amount.

There's a new child tax and cultural tax credit that puts money into—more money into people's hands. Education property tax credit will increase from \$650 to \$700, Mr. Speaker, saving Manitoba homeowners an additional \$6 million. This bill increases the senior education property tax credit, the primary care tax credit, the fertility tax credit to help families that face the cost of fertility treatment is—has a greater credit.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at all these amendments—these changes, it, indeed, does put more money into the—Manitobans' hands. This bill makes several other amendments with regard to green tax credits, books tax credits, but one of the significant ones is The Municipal Revenue (Grants and Taxation) Act, which is amended to ensure that municipalities receive their grant of not less than one-seventh of the estimated retail sales tax revenue for the year. And this is something that the municipal bodies, like AMM, have been asking for. They've been asking for transparency; they've been asking for stable funding; and, through this bill, they've got it.

Mr. Speaker, there are also other amendments in this bill on the new employee share purchase tax credit to help with those people who want to take—get employee—purchase shares for—in their business. They, too, can get a tax credit, a non-refundable tax credit of 30 per cent. There are changes to the fuel tax credit.

As I said, in this bill, all of the steps that are needed, that are actions that have been taken in the budget, are covered off in this bill. I want to also say that the—in this bill, we introduce a new poverty reduction strategy act which is require—which requires the government to develop a strategy to promote the reduction of poverty and to—and increase the social inclusion, including programming that is targeted to groups more susceptible to poverty, but there is also accessibility for all of those that need it. This was—this came at the recommendation of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council—Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, this bill has a—delivers almost \$110 million dollars in new tax reductions, brings the total tax savings to Manitoba, since we took office, to \$1.3 billion. And I hope to see this bill passed quickly, and so that those savings can be passed on to Manitobans. Thank you.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on further House business. Would you resume second reading debate on Bill 46, 15, 24, 33, 45, 48, 47 and 49?

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we'll resume debate on second readings of Bill 46, 15, 24, 33, 45, 48, 47 and 49.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 46—The Save Lake Winnipeg Act

Mr. Speaker: Okay, I'm going to call resumed debate on Bill 46, The Save Lake Winnipeg Act, standing in name of the honourable member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Morris? *[Agreed]*

So it will remain standing. Do we have any speakers? No, okay.

Bill 15—The Firefighters and Paramedics Arbitration Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Now, we'll deal with Bill 15, The Firefighters and Paramedics Arbitration Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Morris?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No, it's been denied.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): The Firefighters and Paramedics Arbitration Amendment Act was brought out or tabled by the minister, and I'd like to make a few comments regarding this bill.

And it reflects back on the issues that took place in the year 2010 where the RM of Springfield fire department attempted to become the first in the province to have unionized volunteer firefighters,

and this raised a number of concerns such as potential for strikes and the cessation of service to border RMs.

The certification of the unionization of volunteer firefighters is before the Labour Board at this time, again since the RM of Springfield is appealing the original certification.

This bill attempts to pre-empt work stoppages by volunteer firefighters and bind them under the automatic arbitration requirement of full-time firefighters. The extension of the act to include part-time firefighters would mean that collective bargaining disputes would be settled by binding arbitration and work stoppages by part-time firefighters would no longer be permitted.

The current act only provides these stipulations for full-time firefighters. Winnipeg, Brandon, Portage la Prairie and Thompson are the only communities in the province that have full-time firefighters. This means that rural firefighters across the province are not covered by The Firefighters and Paramedics Arbitration Act.

The government was voted in by the unions, as we are all aware, and now they have introduced a bill supporting union interests with an upcoming election. And so it's interesting how they have proposed this bill at this point in time.

There are an estimated 1,200 career firefighters in Manitoba. However, there are nearly three times as many volunteer firefighters, 3,500 to be exact. Many rural communities rely on volunteers.

And I just want to speak on behalf of the constituency that I represent where, in fact, we do have career volunteer firefighters. They are out there helping their rural communities. I want to say thank you to them for the work that they continue to do for their communities. And I also want to say thank you to the many employers who allow the firefighters to go out whenever there is a call and, certainly, that is appreciated by all. And we want to continue to support them because we know the work that they do within the communities is a valuable service. And, so, again, we want to thank them for what they do and also, as I said, thank the employers for allowing the firefighters to leave at a moment's notice and to go out there and do their service for the communities.

The other thing I want to indicate is that in my community both the Winkler and Morden firefighters have brand-new facilities that, in fact, Winkler

opened up just a year ago, and, Morden, I believe, it is three years ago that they had their official opening.

And, again, these are certainly facilities that are used by the volunteers and they greatly appreciate the fact that the community has, in fact, given them a facility such as they have in order to—where they can meet and where they, in fact, congregate when they go out to fight the different fires.

So, thank you, again, to those people and for the work that they continue to do. Thank you.

*(15:00)

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 15, The Firefighters and Paramedics Arbitration Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 24—The Innovation Funding Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 24, The Innovation Funding Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon West.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): It's a pleasure to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 24.

I'd, first of all, like to thank the minister for their briefing that I had yesterday on Bill 24, The Innovation Funding Act, and most of the questions were answered that I had with respect to the bill. And I would like to also at this time just thank the minister's staff, Tim Smith, who informed me of some of the answers to the questions I had yesterday, which puts my mind a bit at ease with respect to the legislation. However, there's always questions as to the administration of any type of an act that's brought forward by the NDP.

The Innovation Funding Act is in essence a good act, Mr. Speaker. It develops an innovation fund of \$30 million over five years. The first year is \$4 million—slightly above \$4 million, and what it's attempting to do is to assist entrepreneurs in the province of Manitoba.

Now, there are quite a number of these programs already available, quite a substantial number of programs actually available to help young entrepreneurs in business, and it's the hope that some

of these existing programs will be consolidated and wrapped into this particular innovation fund.

Now the fund itself, as I was explained to yesterday, is not a loan to these businesses, Mr. Speaker. It is in fact a grant. It could be a grant that's forgivable. It could be a grant that's paid back, and there's some question as to how those arrangements are going to be made when the agreements are negotiated in the first place. There's a lot of flexibility built into the act, where, in fact, if an entrepreneur, a business person wants to develop a particular product, could be tech product, could be biotech, could be to do with energy, could to be—could do with any numbers of innovative types of industry and manufacturing here in the province of Manitoba, and when those individuals require some start-up assistance, or at least some assistance at the beginning of their whole process, then this grant would be made available to them.

I'm hopeful that the business plan itself is going to be well defined and well developed. I'm hopeful that when that business plan is presented to the minister, and the legislation does say, in fact, that the minister has the right to administer this particular granting process, that, in fact, it's going to be the right businesses that are chosen to go forward and be successful here in the province of Manitoba.

As a free enterpriser, I agree with the fact that we should be developing free enterprise here in the province, as opposed to just simply depending upon capital expenditures of provincial money. That's not the way that you build an economy. You build it through enterprise itself, free enterprise, and this legislation should assist those new innovative entrepreneurs going forward.

Now there are some concerns. There is an advisory board that's going to be struck, which is not a bad thing in itself. It's nice to have an advisory board to be able to assist in choosing the right projects to go forward. The minister is going to appoint that advisory board, that we do hope that the minister does appoint the people who, in fact, understand free enterprise as opposed to just have appointments there for the sake of appointments.

Mr. Speaker, the one question that I did have was who is going to have the final authority on approval of the particular grants, and I was told that it would, in fact, have to, under the act, go to Treasury Board to get the final approval, and that is a bit of a check and balance, albeit not a total check and balance. But it is a bit of a check and balance,

obviously, having these applications come forward and being chosen by the—ultimate authority coming from the Treasury Board for their approval.

I am still a little concerned with the criteria that's going to be set out, because some of the grants can and should be repaid. In fact, the act itself says that if the particular enterprise is extremely successful, then the monies could be paid back, the grants could be paid back, put back into the innovation fund and used to fund additional businesses, going forward, which makes a lot of sense. If, in fact, there's a quarter of a million or \$300,000 that's been given to an enterprise that's extremely successful, can generate that \$300,000, put back into the fund, then it assists many others that may well come forward with applications.

However, there's nothing concrete. There's nothing specific as to how, or if, or when those funds should be paid back. And I guess, as I was explaining to you yesterday, this would be on a case-by-case basis, but it would be nice to say that, under some sort of a benchmark, some sort of a level of success, that those funds, then, would be paid back to the fund. And I do hope that when the applications are brought forward that, in fact, that would be one of the conditions that are placed within the loans—or not the loan, the grant agreement, going forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, and, at first blush, the legislation is, in fact, only setting up an innovations fund of some \$30 million that, I'm told, is already budgeted; \$4 million for the coming year. And, I guess, as I repeat myself, two things: No. 1, is I do hope that there's some consolidation of the existing programs that are out there. You consolidate them and put them into this grants program. And the second thing is, is that when they make the grants available, that they do have some strict criteria as to a return of that grant's money to the Province if, in fact, the company can, over a period of time, justify that payback if they're so successful.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see nothing wrong with this particular piece of legislation. It's—it, in fact, is going forward. It does help the business community, the entrepreneurs here in the province of Manitoba, and all we would have to make sure is that it's administered in a proper fashion.

So, Mr. Speaker, thank you for that, and thank you to the minister, once again, for the briefing on the bill yesterday.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 24, The Innovation Funding Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 33—The Pension Benefits Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Now we'll deal with Bill 33, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House to let the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Morris?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No, it's been denied.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Well, Mr. Speaker, and I, too, want to put a few comments on the record regarding Bill 33, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, and I want to thank the minister for the briefing that we had three hours ago, two hours ago, whatever.

So I can appreciate some of the points that the minister is making here, as this bill amends The Pension Benefits Act to provide additional ways to enforce the act and to give clear legal authority respecting multijurisdictional pension plans. And the bill also contains minor amendments of a housekeeping nature.

Now, some of the questions that I did have, and they were answered by the minister at the briefing this morning, but one of those questions was whether it was now going to be mandatory that every employer would have an—would have a pension plan for their employees; and the answer that I was given was, no, they would not. This one is dealing specifically with those who already have pension plans. And they, of course, the legislation goes on to indicate that the superintendent is given additional order-making powers under the section 8 of the act. Orders made under that section that require money to be paid to a pension plan may be filed in the court and enforced as if they were a court judgment.

It goes on further to say that in—just in order to put a—some of the reference that the minister gave this morning, and the minister used the example of interjurisdictional pension transfers, that if you are

interested in Safeway, which is a multinational corporation but also in many provinces, there was to be a consistency throughout the provinces with regards to pensions and, certainly, that stands to reason as being a good direction that they should be going in, in this bill.

* (15:10)

So, by and large, the information that was given was something that was helpful in order to explain some of the questions that we had specific to this bill.

The other question I had was regarding the number of people who had asked for this to take place. There were some examples given of—where the enforcement needed to take place and they had not had the ability at that time to enforce the laws regarding pensions, which, again, stands to reason.

And the other part of the legislation as we have it here indicates that an employer could also be a director on a corporation who would be liable should the pensions not be paid when the business ceases to operate or if there is negligence in any one of those areas over the years.

So, again, I think, as all would indicate and would probably agree, that if, over the years, if you have been employed and you have paid into a pension plan, at the end of the day you want to have the ability to be able to access those funds and to be able to draw them and to be able to get your pension.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the minister for the briefing that we had on this bill, and I look forward to hearing if there are, in fact, if there will be any presenters at committee. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 33, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 45—The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2011

Mr. Speaker: Bill 45, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2011, standing in the name of the honourable member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

What is the will of the House? Is the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Morris?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No, that has been denied. The honourable member for Steinbach, to speak.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Yes, and good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Just a few comments regarding this particular piece of legislation.

This is generally a routine bill that comes forward at the end or near the end of a session, a legislative sitting, that corrects a number of minor problems that have been found over the course of the last year in different bills. Sometimes it's a wording correction. Sometimes there's a misspelling; that doesn't happen often, but it has been known to happen. Other times there needs to be a cross-reference change where a section has been changed in one particular act and it's referred to in another act; you'd then have to change that cross-reference. So this is not an unusual bill to come before the Legislature. Certainly, over a number of different years and different governments, we've seen this minor corrections act.

I know that there are a couple of more substantive issues in this particular version of the minor corrections and consequential amendments act dealing with the ability for individuals in certain professions to get leave—or adoptive leave. And I know that all of us, I think, as members in this House would support giving support to those who are adopting children either domestically or internationally. We know in Manitoba, and particularly I would—could speak from the experience in my own area, there are many individuals who adopt children both domestically and from international organizations. And they do it for a variety of different reasons. And it benefits not only those children, of course—and that's an obvious one, Mr. Speaker—but it certainly benefits the province of Manitoba as they become new citizens and they grow up and hopefully live here and raise a family of their own some day.

So that is the more substantive part of this bill. I look forward to discussing it with the minister in committee in a future day, in the not-too-distant future, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker. But I believe that the vast majority of changes within the bill are truly minor and are just there to ensure proper wording and proper cross-referencing. And to the extent that

there is something more consequential, we'll have that discussion in committee. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 45, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2011.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 48—The Planning and Land Dedication for School Sites Act (Various Acts Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Bill 48, The Planning and Land Dedication for School Sites Act (Various Acts Amended), standing in the name of the honourable member for Ste. Rose.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 48, The Planning and Land Dedication for School Sites Act (Various Acts Amended).

This bill essentially—and I do want to thank the minister for the briefing I received yesterday, along with the member from Turtle Mountain. We had a fairly thorough briefing on the bill, and this bill essentially changes two and—maybe and a third existing act, but, principally, the Charter of Winnipeg—The Winnipeg Charter and The Planning Act.

And I understand the intent of the bill. The intent of the bill is to clear up some of the needs for property for schools when there's new subdivision going on and there's going to be a necessity for a school in an area simply because of increased populations. And I agree with the need to set aside property in those cases.

I notice that the bill does state any subdivision that's over four sites would be subject to, basically, what's a 10 per cent fee, either put forward in land or payable in cash to the school division. That puts a cost on the other properties in the subdivision because the land developer isn't going to eat that cost. And so it essentially just pushes up the price of the other properties in the subdivision. And I would encourage the government to look at maybe some other mechanism. I agree that land has to be set aside for a school, but the mechanism may be—there may be better mechanisms for doing it.

They—in Winnipeg we do see subdivisions that are quite large—two, three hundred homes at one go—

and they do create pressures on schools. In rural Manitoba, it's quite a bit different. We have a community that will have maybe two schools, an elementary school and a high school. Some of them have elementary schools and their high school students are trucked to another community—or bused to another community, I shouldn't say trucked. And I don't think it's as essential in the rural areas to put an extra cost on those subdivision properties. I would suggest that, possibly, four sites in a subdivision is maybe too low a number. It possibly could be a little higher.

This bill essentially is—as the legislation goes ahead, it leaves a lot of room for regulations, and regulations are going to be put in place to put the intent of the bill into action. I'm always a little leery of bills where regulation is the main conveyor of what the government wants put forward. When it's legislation, we have the ability to debate it in this House; when it's regulation, it's passed without any public consultation. And so some of the interpretation gets lost in the midst of it.

Irregardless, I agree with the intent of the bill. I'll look forward to it going to committee and seeing what kind of feedback we get at committee. And, once again, I thank the minister for the briefing he gave us yesterday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 48, The Planning and Land Dedication for School Sites Act (Various Acts Amended).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 47—The Accessibility Advisory Council Act
and Amendments to
The Government Purchases Act**

Mr. Speaker: Bill 47, The Accessibility Advisory Council Act and Amendments to The Government Purchases Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for River East?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No, it's been denied.

* (15:20)

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It's a pleasure to put a few words on the record regarding this bill. And, obviously, the intention of the bill, I think, is important. All of us, I'm sure, have had comments from those in our communities who are living with disabilities about the difficulties sometimes in accessing different places and locations. And I think we've all, through those conversations, learned, and I know I have. I've met with groups in the community—the city of Steinbach and they come from really all over southeast Manitoba, who will tell me about some of the challenges that they have accessing public spaces and businesses, and it was a real eye-opener for me to learn about some of the difficulties and the challenges. There are some of us who can go about and sort of take things for granted in terms of how we access different places, and so I appreciate the discussions that I've had.

This bill is a good first step. I know that there have been some in the community who advocate—in the disability community who've been disappointed that there wasn't a more comprehensive plan. I think in some ways there was an expectation that during this session a more comprehensive plan would be coming forward from the government. They had reason to believe that, from what I understand of the discussions that I have had. And, of course, I mean, they're—they feel that this is a good thing. They don't think that this bill is a bad start. But I think that they had higher hopes, higher expectations of the government in terms of what would come forward in terms of legislation, that there might be something more robust, more specific, more defined and more concrete. And so that disappointment I'm sharing on their behalf to the government. I know—I'm sure the minister has heard that already. It won't be a surprise to her. But certainly that has been expressed.

But they have also said that this is something that's—while it might be tepid in a small step, it still is a step in the right direction, and so I look forward to the bill going to committee. I expect that we're going to have presenters coming from the community that advocates on behalf of the disabled in the province of Manitoba, and I think that they're going to do a better job than any of us could, in terms of bringing forward different ideas and different suggestions. And so, you know, I really look forward to hearing what they have to say, not just only on this bill but how we could make changes in the future, the sort of

things we can look forward to in the future, and I think all of us would learn by listening to those presenters and hearing the different things that they have to say.

So we look forward, Mr. Speaker, to the bill going to a committee, and to having a good number of presenters who want to give us input into the bill and how we can go forward and have stronger legislation, better legislation to ensure that there is accessibility in spaces here in Manitoba, and that that form of equality can come to the province of Manitoba, and we look forward to their input at committee.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 47, The Accessibility Advisory Council Act and Amendments to The Government Purchases Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 49—The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 49, The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Morris?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. It's been denied.

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 49, The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act—

An Honourable Member: Okay.

Mr. Speaker: Oh, we do have a speaker. Okay, I'll put the question later.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I sometimes fall behind the program a little bit and that seemed to happen and—

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Goertzen: I know; shocking to the House. I'll do my best to be more alert in the five days that we have, or maybe more, remaining in this particular session.

An Honourable Member: Twenty.

Mr. Goertzen: And the House leader for the government says there'll be 20 more days, and I look forward to spending those 20 days with her here in the House, and debating things in question period and in the Legislature.

This particular bill, as members will know, had some of its roots last session when members of the Progressive Conservative caucus brought forward the idea of eliminating welfare payments for those who have serious outstanding warrants. And for the information of members of the House, an individual might have a warrant for their arrest because they've—are suspected of a crime and have been charged with that crime, police are looking for them or perhaps they had a court order and they disobeyed that court order, broke a provision of the court order, and so a warrant was issued for their arrest. And quite often they are very serious situations.

We understand from the police that there are at least 15,000 outstanding warrants here in the province— well, in the city of Winnipeg, actually, and more in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

And we made the proposal through legislation that individuals who are not dealing with their outstanding warrants not be able to receive welfare. Now, members of the community and probably some members of this House probably asked the question last year, well, how is it that people with outstanding warrants are getting welfare? I mean, wouldn't the police then just simply go and pick them up if they're receiving these payments? But, of course, if there are 15,000 outstanding warrants in the city of Winnipeg alone, the fact is the police don't have the resources or the time to go after those particular warrants, Mr. Speaker.

And so those individuals are simply picking up their cheques, and we are paying them, as taxpayers, to avoid their duty to go and deal with their warrants. We as taxpayers are, in effect, giving them the resources to continue to avoid dealing with their

warrants. And so we raised this issue in the House through legislation to provide a mandatory provision where if somebody was getting welfare and they had an outstanding warrant, it would automatically cease the welfare payments until the warrants had been dealt with by the individual.

The government dismissed that. They said, absolutely not, it's a terrible idea. I don't remember all the quotes, but they're probably similar to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) who in the past have called those sort of things mean and mean-spirited in relation to the auto thieves who were getting funding from MPI. He said it would be a terrible thing to take away that funding to auto thieves, and then he reintroduced it himself.

And similar on this bill, we had members of the government say, well, no, no, we got to keep giving money to people with outstanding warrants, oh, sure, they're criminals, but they deserve to get taxpayer-funded money. And now, of course, here we are three months before an election, and there's been a bit of a conversion on the road to the election. These members realize, oh, we may not actually believe it in our heart that it's a good idea to do away with welfare payments of those who have outstanding warrants, but we think it'd be bad politically if we didn't. And so they decided to quickly bring in this bill.

And I have a prediction, you know. I trust—we'll see how Manitobans vote in October. Obviously, we always respect the outcome of elections, but if the government were to be fortunate enough to be re-elected, I suspect they would quickly reverse themselves and starting handing out these welfare payments again to these criminals with outstanding warrants. I suspect they would quickly reverse themselves and start giving MPI benefits to auto thieves again, because that's what they've been doing for 10 or 11 years. And they wanted to do that; they put it on the record that they think it's a good idea to give the money to criminals. And so I suspect if, you know, they were to be fortunate enough to be re-elected in government, we'd see this bill repealed, we'd see the MPI bill repealed, and they'd just open up the vaults again and start giving the money to the criminals. But we'll leave it to the judgment of Manitobans in October.

We are glad that we were able to get this bill brought forward. And, certainly, if we are fortunate to be elected government in October, not only will we maintain this, but we will enhance it and make it

stronger and keep it in place, unlike this NDP government who, I think, would repeal it and start giving money back to the criminals.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 49, The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

House Business

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on further House business.

Would you please canvass the House to see if there is agreement to transfer bills—Bill 26, The Université de Saint-Boniface Act, and Bill 42, The Caregiver Recognition Act, from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development to the Standing Committee on Human Resources for the June 9th meetings and that the following bills be transferred from the Standing Committee on Human Resources to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development for the June 9th committee meetings: Bill 23, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act; Bill 32, The Essential Services (Health Care) and Related Amendments Act; and Bill 34, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Presumption re OFC Personnel).

* (15:30)

Mr. Speaker: Okay, is there agreement of the House to transfer bills, Bill 26, The Université de Saint-Boniface Act, Bill 42, The Caregiver Recognition Act, from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development to the Standing Committee on Human Resources for the June 9th meetings; and that the following bills be transferred from the Standing Committee on Human Resources to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development for the June 9th committee meeting: Bill 23, the employment standards code; Bill 32, The Essential Services (Health Care) and Related Amendments Act; Bill 34, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Presumption re OFC Personnel)? *[Agreed]*

The honourable Government House Leader, on further House business.

Ms. Howard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce, in addition to the bills previously referred, that the following bills will also be considered at the June 9th, 2011 meeting of the Standing Committee on Human Resources: Bill 15, The Firefighters and Paramedics Arbitration Amendment Act; Bill 24, The Innovation Funding Act; and Bill 33, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, it's been announced, in addition to the bills previously referred, that the following bills will also be considered at the June 9th, 2011 meeting of the Standing Committee on Human Resources: Bill 15, The Firefighters and Paramedics Arbitration Amendment Act; Bill 24, The Innovation Funding Act; Bill 33, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act.

That's for the information of all members.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you'd canvass the House to see if there's leave to relinquish the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) from the concurrence today.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to relinquish the Minister of Justice and Attorney General for concurrence for today only? *[Agreed]*

The honourable Government House Leader, on further House business.

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

We're prepared to move into committee of concurrence and we can start with those ministers that are prepared or we could take a brief recess to make sure all the ministers called are prepared. I'd leave it to the will of the House on that. *[interjection]* We're ready to move into Committee of Supply.

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

Ms. Howard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, would you resolve us into Committee of Supply?

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the House will resolve into Committee of Supply.

Madam Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

The committee has before it for consideration the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

The Official Opposition House Leader (Mrs. Taillieu) previously tabled, on May 25th, the following list of ministers who may be called for questioning and debate on concurrence motion: the honourable First Minister (Mr. Selinger), the Minister for Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) and the Minister for Health (Ms. Oswald). The ministers are to be questioned concurrently. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Madam Chairperson, my question is for the First Minister. In this afternoon's question period and previous, I was requested if I had any particular individuals that had problems with claims or was not quite clear on what they—whether they were covered or not, to bring them forward, and I did send that forward to a number of the residents affected, around the Shoal lake in particular. It was a south-end Shoal lake homeowners' group and they did write the First Minister, which I was copied on. And their questions are quite clear.

Will there be a buyout or a compensation package for the non-farm residents located in and around the Shoal lake area?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): And that question is one that's under consideration. As I've said earlier today, where the buyout will be considered is where, for example, it's impossible for somebody to rebuild because of the physical characteristics of the property. I mean, it may be too much water, it's been washed out, et cetera, or whether it makes sense to buy somebody out because it's more cost effective for the taxpayer to buy them out, versus rebuilding them if their property's been damaged. And that's what I said with respect to Lake Manitoba.

With respect to people in the Shoal lakes area, I—the same kinds of considerations would be considered for people that would be eligible for disaster financial assistance. If the—if it's impossible to repair their place because of the physical characteristics they're going through, like they're

flooded or under permanent water, then we'd have to consider a buyout.

Mr. Eichler: Several families had to be evacuated over the last number of weeks, and the backlog, as the First Minister well knows, is—they've been told four to six months. You know, that's a substantial amount of time and the concern is that, you know, what do they do in the meantime? Is there any way that we might be able to speed that up? Will there be a process put in place that we might be able to move those applications forward in a more timely manner, rather than wait four to six months for a response?

Mr. Selinger: And what kind of applications are we talking about? For what kind of assistance?

Mr. Eichler: This is for either a buyout or moving their buildings. I guess that was another part of the application, where the buildings would be moved off that property onto a new location. Again, it's either a buyout or a move-the-buildings type thing or maybe a combination.

Again, they—because of the situation with a number of the residents located, you know, around the Shoal lake area, is the fact that they're already inside the lake, so they either have to float the building out or they have to wait till freeze-up or something, but they still need to make the necessary measures to make those decisions. So the sooner that's made, the sooner they can move on with their life.

Mr. Selinger: Can the member tell me how many people we're talking about here?

Mr. Eichler: I know that the MAFRI does have the statistics and rather than be wrong I would just refer the First Minister to the MAFRI office. I do understand they did meet with them last week, and I give them full marks for that. It's just that these people just don't know what to do any more. They have spent, literally, thousands and thousands of dollars out of their own pocket to try and protect their property, and now they're to the point where they don't know whether to spend any more money and rent more equipment or—even if they will be compensated, or if they try to get somebody in and try to move the buildings out. And those are the types of questions that's being asked.

* (15:40)

Mr. Selinger: We'll have to follow up with MAFRI to see how fast they can respond. I'm glad to hear that they've met with them already, and I'm sure it's a

question of whether—how quickly they can get in to assess their situation. But I'll ask—I'll undertake to ask where MAFRI's at on that—on those specific circumstances.

Mr. Eichler: On—still staying on the Shoal lakes—and I know the First Minister's had several meetings and briefings with the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick)—and with the Shoal lakes, it's not a matter of if, it's just a matter of when the Shoal lake will breach.

And we know that last Tuesday, during—the great winds that came to this province pushed the water over what we call the Fire Line Road in that area; it's a road known as Road 85. It did swamp several farmers' field and floated the bales of hay off into the ditch. That water made its way down through the grass—or, yes, through the Sturgeon Creek. Right now, there's a beaver dam that's holding back the lake that's come—the water that's coming out of the Shoal lake. If that beaver dam decides to breach, which comes in west of Highway 518, that water's going to come awful quickly into Sturgeon Creek.

So I just would like to ask the First Minister what steps he's taken to protect those along the Sturgeon Creek area. And I guess the second part of the question would be—the other option, of course, is sure not one that anybody's in favour of and that's at Grassmere, with making that, you know, the outlet of choice to drain the Shoal lake. But it's to the point where some decisions are going to have to be made very, very quickly.

So we have two situations: one, the Sturgeon Creek that could be breached at any moment, you know, so I'm concerned about those residents and those farmers that are in harm's way, and the second would be the Grassmere drain which would end up through West St. Paul.

Mr. Selinger: I mean, the Water Stewardship officials are assessing this situation about what's going on in that area. We do know that the Shoal lakes has risen and we do know that there is the potential for a natural overflow into both of those watersheds, and they're assessing what can be done to manage that. And I think the challenge is to try to maintain control of the water as much as possible wherever it goes. So I know that they're taking a look at what the options are there.

Mr. Eichler: I know we have to make the right decisions, and I know that you have some great staff

that will be providing information to the First Minister and, of course, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) as well.

I would just, you know, suggest that, you know, the sooner that we get the information out to those concerned, and especially the RMs and residents in harm way, that we do that as fairly quickly as we can so that not only the farmers can prepare for the extra water that's going to be coming, those residents and communities that'll be affected as a result of the water that would come quite quickly.

So, having said that, I would like to move on to the Twin Beach area. And, again, I know the First Minister was out there last week and I know a number of residents were very pleased, very happy, and, of course, the RMs were very pleased and very happy that he was out. But I guess there's a lot of things that has to be established on cottages and permanent residence that have to be moved.

The first one would be, a number of residents already have moved their cottage or residence back and they've had to move hydro lines in order to get that done. So, to move a hydro line, it's about 10,000 bucks; I know from personal experience moving one. So out of the compensation package, would this be over and above the \$90,000 or the \$222,000 if, in fact, those costs exceeded the \$90,000 or the 222?

Mr. Selinger: Again, the program has got certain parameters on it. They will—are you asking whether the—if it goes over that because of the hydro costs?

Mr. Eichler: That is correct.

Mr. Selinger: We'll give some consideration to that, if it's a prohibitive factor. Yes.

Mr. Eichler: I guess the other question would be, property owners that's been evacuated or had to leave their property—again, through no fault of their own—and they can't get in there. The penalties that's going to be put on them as far as taxes, have—has there been any talks or consideration with the RM far as compensation for taxes for those residents that are affected, in particular, around the Twin Beach area?

Because I know the—and I know the First Minister knows this—the RM of St. Laurent has a very low tax base. The cottages and permanent residences make up about 80 per cent of the tax base for that particular municipality. So it's, again, going to be, you know, a double hit for that particular municipality far as tax base is concerned because a

number of those residents won't be able to or not—won't be able to, or be expected to pay taxes on property they can't use. So will there be any compensation for the municipality and those residents affected by overland flooding?

Mr. Selinger: Again, we've made a commitment to do an advance of \$100,000 to cover off disaster financial assistance expenses. In the case of taxes, we have to see what the real issue is. I mean, that's something that we'll have to deal with. We do want the municipalities to continue to be able to function and offer services to people in the area.

Mr. Eichler: Yes, I'm quite clear on the \$100,000 advance. In fact, I think it was—it's already been done. I think it was, you know, I'm not 100 per cent sure, but I understand there has been the advance made. I think it was actually a half a million. That's not the concern. The concern is that those property bills that are coming out for those residents that have been affected by the flood, will they be expected to go ahead and continue to pay tax on property they can't use, to the municipality?

Mr. Selinger: Again, the property tax bill is for the whole year, and that's something that would have to be considered, but normally people are expected to pay their property taxes. And then we have to take a look at how we can help the municipality to maintain services.

Mr. Eichler: On the appeal mechanism, I know there was one set up for the Shoal lakes so that an adjudicator could be appointed to look at a particular situation. Will the same apply for those in Twin Beach, Delta Beach, Lundar Beach? I would just like clarification on that as well?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, there will be an appeal person for all of those areas.

Mr. Eichler: In regards to repairs, and I know that the department's been out looking at a number of individual buildings, and those that have been either totally demolished, or some may be in need of repair, what is the process that's expected to be followed as far as getting repairs done? Do they have a criteria that's outlined? Or is there a contact number? What is the process for those properties that are damaged? What are the—what does the landowner or the homeowner do to get that ball moving?

Mr. Selinger: Well, the municipalities are their point of contact through the emergency operations committees. And what I've heard the municipalities

saying is, is that if you do incur any expenses, keep your receipts so you can make a claim on to them.

Mr. Eichler: On the buyout, coming back to that again. I know that the predicted level and, again, its predicted level to be at 816.5, where the lake should peak at. Is there going to be any requirements made as far as levels, whether it be 818 or 820, established, so that those residents will ensure to be protected before they are allowed to either rebuild or make the decision to take a buyout?

Mr. Selinger: Again, as I was explaining to the member, each individual case will be assessed on whether it's impossible to rebuild or restore, given the specific circumstances of the physical asset—attributes of the property, or whether it's impractical to restore from a financial perspective. It might make more sense, in some cases, to allow for a buyout, because the cost of rebuilding or restoring might be prohibitive. So it will be on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Eichler: Under the \$225,000 and \$90,000 that's been used, the compensation package that—where people's been evacuated, where they've been receiving weekly stipends or resident—places to stay, you know, that's again a fair amount of money, is that included in the \$222,000 or \$90,000, or is that over and above the compensation dollars?

Mr. Selinger: Could the member just repeat that?

* (15:50)

Mr. Eichler: Those residents that have been evacuated, will the compensation that they've already received for relocation into a hotel or food, will that be deducted off the \$222,000 or the \$90,000, irrespectively?

Mr. Selinger: Well, I'll have to check the facts on that, but the assistance for people that relocated is under the disaster financial assistance program. They get a certain daily amount to maintain themselves, and then the additional compensation we've offered is with respect to mitigation and restoration of properties.

So they're different things. The DFA should cover their daily living expenses.

Mr. Eichler: Because of the size of the flood on Lake Manitoba, in particular, and, you know, the farmers are involved in a whole host of different walks of life, whether it be the fishermen or the farmers or just the landowners. A lot of those, through no fault of their own, have either had to up and move out because of the high waters.

When do we anticipate most of those applications will be looked at? Do we have a timeline in mind that we can have some type of a specific dollar amount or payout when these people might be able to receive that compensation?

Mr. Selinger: Again, the officials are working through this rapidly as we—as you know. We've set up a unit with Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation, and, for instance, I was glad the member indicated that they'd met with them already over in the Shoal lakes area. But they're working at this full time, and I'm sure that they will—I don't have a specific timeline right now, but they're going to get to it as quickly as they can.

Mr. Eichler: One final question and that has to do with—in the flood of 1997, the government of the day put in a JERI program to cover business loss, and as we all can well imagine, the financial impact this is going to have on those business affected around the Shoal lakes and those communities, also those surrounded by Lake Manitoba—is this something that the government is looking at as far as compensation for those businesses who have lost revenue, again, through no fault of their own?

Mr. Selinger: The member—I just direct the member back to our announcement of our compensation program. We do have an economic recovery program that is available for communities to apply for. It can be Chambers of Commerce, or specific groups can apply for up to a hundred thousand dollars to mount an economic recovery program in their area, and that would be similar to the JERI program.

Mr. Eichler: Now, one question for the Minister of Water Stewardship, and that has to do with, coming back to the Shoal lake, on the drain options that would occur. With the talks that are going on currently with possible breach, whether it be through Grassmere or Sturgeon Creek, what steps are being taken to notify farmers and residents on regards of what the next steps may be so that they're prepared?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, it would be an overflow; it wouldn't be a breach, which would be a different action.

And we're working with rural municipalities. There are local EMOs in each municipality. So we are keeping them posted on all of the actions that are happening, whether it be looking at the Shoal lakes rising, whether it be the package that the Premier

announced a couple of weeks ago. So we work through local EMOs, through local RMs.

Mr. Eichler: The reason I used breach, just to be clear for the minister, if the Beaver Dam breaks, that's a breach. If it runs overland and goes down through Grassmere, then it's not. So there will be two different situations, for sure: if, in fact, the Beaver Dam does let go, that'll be a breach; if it goes down the Grassmere, it'll be overland flooding. So there will be two different situations, for sure. I'm hoping neither one happens, but it's a possibility.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): My question to the First Minister—it doesn't involve quite as serious the line of questions as my honourable colleague from Lakeside, but still very important, an issue that in light of all the other important issues that have been raised over the last weeks and months in regards to flooding and the seriousness of the lives and homes and property at stake, but still one that should be raised, and I'd like to raise this with the First Minister.

And it's come to my attention, not just from individuals who've been put in this predicament but also from retailers as well, and it has to do with bedbugs and the purchasing of new mattresses. There's something called—and the Premier will know—a 90-day guarantee in which, if you don't like the purchase that you've made, you can have it returned. Either you can purchase a new one or simply have it returned.

There is also a policy in place in Manitoba where, if you purchase a mattress, you can have the old one picked up and they'll deliver the new one, put it in place, and take the old one away.

And I know, first-hand, from some individuals who've gone to pick up some of these mattresses and had a look at them and indicated that there was not a chance that they were going to pick up the mattresses because they had bedbugs in them.

Where the problem is, that if these mattresses do enter the truck, you have a truck with new mattresses and you're putting old mattresses in with the new ones. And there is a possibility that the new ones get infected and unsuspecting individuals will receive these mattresses affected with bedbugs. They'll have no idea that they're coming into the house thinking they've bought some new product. And the problem with that is, and where I think there's probably a role for government here, is that if you just end the practice—what do people do with their mattresses,

because you can't put a king-sized mattress out with your local bag of garbage because garbage collection is not able to pick them up. And, in the meantime, people are buying new mattresses and, keeping in mind, you know, they are called bedbugs and that's where they harbour. Something has to be done.

And I was wondering if the Premier could indicate to this House, is this something that has come to his attention and where is the government on this particular issue?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, I'm in close consultation with the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) on this, who more sees to the details of the program. But he informs me that there are materials that allow the older mattresses to be covered and protected from contaminating other materials, or other beds, for that matter, when they're transported, and that then they're disposed of in a place that doesn't have them anywhere near new materials.

Mr. Schuler: I'm not too sure industry is aware of these materials. What kind of materials would those be, and are those materials that the department is providing to industry that goes into these homes and picks them up?

Mr. Selinger: Again, after close consultation with the Minister of Healthy Living, he informs me that this information is on the website and that property owners have been using—taking advantage of this information and using these covers to protect contaminated mattresses.

Mr. Schuler: One of the other difficulties is that individuals are entering these homes and could potentially carry them. I guess the concern is that if you did ever get an outbreak in a warehouse, you could actually spread the bed bag—the bedbugs very quickly into the general—unsuspecting general population. Because, I mean, that's where they're warehoused and if you've got three or four hundred mattresses in there, the spread could be very quickly.

I will endeavour to see what is available on the website. I have to say to the Premier, there wasn't really that much which I could see there.

Is the government going to look at some kind of a policy whereby bedbugs not be allowed to be placed into trucks with new product? And that's the concern that I think most people have, is that, something is placed into a vehicle with new product and the spread just takes place.

So I don't know if the Premier has given that much thought, but I look forward to his comments.

Mr. Selinger: Well, the member will know that I've been working on a variety of other high-profile issues. He acknowledged that in his preamble.

The Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) informs me the website's there. You can find it under the Healthy Living Ministry. And there is an advisory group of citizens and landlords and other people involved in the bedbug issue that are there to offer advice. But—and I would encourage the member to have further conversation with the Minister of Healthy Living, if he wishes, to follow up on any specific details.

* (16:00)

Mr. Schuler: And, you know, we'll close on this. Perhaps the minister responsible, then, could send this concern to the committee, and perhaps they could consult with some of the industry and see, you know, what kind of response there is from them, what kind of concerns there are. Because I do know they've gone into homes where I don't even think the workers would have been comfortable putting a cover on a mattress and taking it; they were in that kind of shape. And perhaps there should be a suspension of the 90-day guarantee in picking up of old mattresses with the same vehicle where new mattresses are delivered. But, you know, that's probably best done in consultation between government, the committee that's been established and industry.

So I leave the Premier and the minister with those last few comments.

Mr. Selinger: I think we've answered all the questions, and he knows where he can go to get follow-up.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Chairperson, my question is to the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick). The issue here, and she is aware of it, I have talked to her about it, but I'm just wondering what the latest is. The issue is a town of Morden lift station, on the east border of town, currently collects stormwater runoff from the town. And this runoff is then pumped in from the lift station to an existing drain. The drain eventually flows across private land, and the landowners have complained to Water Stewardship that the excess water is negatively affecting their land.

This has been taking place for about 10 years, and they do not—the Town of Morden does not have

a permit to have the water run across the private landowners'—to—across their property. They do have a permit to run it directly to the Dead Horse Creek. And so, as I indicated before, and to the minister, that this has taken place for many years. The landowners have gotten together, they have gone to the Town of Morden, appealed to them to redirect the water and to, in fact, utilize a permit that they have been granted.

To this day, the Town of Morden has not done that. In fact, the Town of Morden has indicated, well, you could sue us. That is not the direction that the landowners want to go. So I'm just wondering if the minister could give me an update as to what has taken place on this file.

Ms. Melnick: Yes, I think we spoke last week about this, and I have, in fact, asked the department for an update.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, and I guess what I would continue to say is that unless the minister is going to give a directive from what I have been given to understand that this will again be lagging, and this will be—the Town of Morden is in no hurry to redirect the water for the permit that they have. The other concern that I have is, is that should this be a private landowner who is in violation of water drainage, as is the Town of Morden, they, of course, would be getting the legal consequences from the ministry.

So I would encourage the minister to very, very seriously look at this issue to make sure that, in fact, the Town of Morden does exercise the rights of the permit that they do have, and insist that they make changes to what they are doing at the present time.

Ms. Melnick: Yes, I have asked the department to look into it, and I'm—I understand the member's concerns.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Madam Chairperson, and I do have a question, and I think it may be up to the First Minister (Mr. Selinger) to answer.

And I just hope that the First Minister, certainly the Minister of Water Stewardship, Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers), should be aware of the significant high water issues we have in western Manitoba. And it's playing a significant role, in terms of producers being able to seed their crops. And, in fact, leading the—reading the MAFRI crop report, we're probably in—10 to 20 per cent of the crop is in, in southwestern Manitoba, so it's a pretty significant issue. And, with the rain over the last few days, it

looks like we're not going to get much more crop in there, according to Manitoba Crop Insurance seeding deadlines.

And I'm wondering if the First Minister, the Minister of Agriculture, has—have any discussions about any additional support, over and above the funding, that might be currently available through Manitoba Crop Insurance?

Mr. Selinger: The Manitoba Crop Insurance program has the emergency—or the excess moisture insurance component to it. We've made it permanent, and that is available to people. There's an additional top-up insurance of an extra \$15 an acre, up to \$65 an acre. I'm informed it's available at a very reasonable cost. Many producers have taken that out, so that will be there for them, as long as they signed up for the insurance program.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, the First Minister should be aware that there obviously is some implications with the premium under that particular program. If producers have had a previous experience with flooding and excess moisture claims, their premium can be fairly substantial if they want to increase their funding per acre. And, of course, as the First Minister would know, it's \$50 an acre up to a maximum of \$65 an acre. And in other years we have had top-ups of \$30 an acre, and I'm wondering if there's any consideration of that.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, we are definitely in discussions with the federal government and the AgriRecovery program, which is what the member refers to. On the additional \$30 an acre, that was a program cost-shared between the federal government and the Province on a 60-40 basis. And we've already initiated discussions on their interest in doing that again.

Mr. Cullen: Does the Premier (Mr. Selinger) have any idea of when an announcement might be forthcoming on that?

Mr. Selinger: Well, as I've said, that we're in discussions with the federal government on it, yet I'm not aware of them having committed to it and agreed to an announcement at this stage of the game.

Mr. Cullen: I have a specific request in regard to Spruce Woods Provincial Park. As the Premier may know, the main campground was flooded this year. I know I have a correspondence from the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) back in early April that the dikes were going to be built to meet the predicted upper-decile levels similar to what was being done in

Brandon. Unfortunately, there was two breaches of those particular dikes, and those dikes were set up on provincial road No. 5. As a result, there's still water in the provincial park, and I understand there's still some water going over provincial road No. 5.

And I'm just looking for a commitment from the Premier that, you know, the work will be done on the lower campground, the main campground, to get that campground up and running again, hopefully, for this season.

Mr. Selinger: I have to confess, I didn't quite hear the question at the end of the statement.

Mr. Cullen: Okay, it's a two-part question. One will be a commitment on behalf of the government to, once the water does recede, that there will be cleanup and hopefully get that campground opened for this season, if at all possible. The second issue, related to the campground, of course, is also No. 5 Highway, a provincial trunk highway which has been closed all spring. And, again, I'm looking for a commitment that, as soon as possible, the government will commit to repair that particular highway and have it open as soon as possible.

Mr. Selinger: I'd love to answer that question, but even more interested in answering the question is the Minister of Conservation. So, with the permission of the member, the Minister of Conservation's here and he'd like to answer it directly.

Madam Chairperson: Just for the information of all members, those ministers who are called for concurrence can be the ministers that answer in concurrence. If the minister is not called for concurrence, he cannot be addressing questions.

Mr. Selinger: Okay.

Mr. Eichler: I believe if you have leave of the House, that can happen.

Madam Chairperson: In regards to the member for Lakeside's request, we would have to go back to the House first to do that, and then come back into concurrence.

Is that the wish of the House to dissolve the—the committee to resolve back into the House?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Chairperson: No, I do not see that.

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

Regrettably, the House rules don't allow us the flexibility of injecting the minister directly into the discussion, but he has informed me that, yes, they do plan, as soon as the water's out of there, to clean it up—obviously, that would be a priority, but there is still water in there—and, of course, repair the road as soon as it's practical to do that.

*(16:10)

Mr. Cullen: And I want to also talk a little bit about the Pelican Lake and Rock Lake areas of the province, and Rock Lake, in particular, has seen, I would say, ongoing historic levels in Rock Lake over each of the last few years, and the situation seems to be getting worse as we go forward. Two things are happening: one, the water levels are increasing; and two, the levels are staying high for a considerable period of time into the spring and summer. And it's causing, obviously, damage to cottages and residents along Rock Lake, and it's also causing substantial erosion of property along Rock Lake.

And I know I've brought the departments up to speed in terms of the issues there that the people are having around the lake, but, really, the issue hasn't been addressed. And there is a provincial road at the bottom of Rock Lake that many residents feel is holding the water back and not allowing the water to escape Rock Lake and, they feel, exacerbating the problem at Rock Lake.

And I would just like a commitment from the Premier that, you know, those departments will have a look at this particular issue on Rock Lake to address it for all the residents of Rock Lake.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, the departments will take a look at it. I'm informed that they're aware of it and they are taking a serious look at the situation there.

Mr. Cullen: In addition to that, you know, we have a diversion that's operating at the bottom of Pelican Lake and a lot of that water is diverted down the Pembina system into Rock Lake, and some of the residents there feel that there's implications for that diversion that's being operated by the departments there. In fact, that water is staying in Rock Lake and keeping the level of Rock Lake higher than necessary.

And I know the Premier has made indications that other areas of the province are going to be covered financially because of the man-made operations, and there's questions coming out of Rock Lake. Will similar support be available for both the residents, businesses that are there and the cottages

along Rock Lake to look at the special circumstances that they're being faced with?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, as I said in my previous question, we will—the department is looking at Rock Lake and we will take a look at it and see what the circumstances are and whether there's extraordinary requirements that need to be addressed there.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I have a few questions with regard to flooding in the southwestern area of the province, in the Minnedosa constituency, to be specific.

The community of Souris is facing significant challenges and have been for the last nine weeks, and I'd just like to ask the Premier if he could provide me with some assurance that the work being done with regard to their waste-water treatment facility would be considered as allowable under the DFA claims. I believe that there's some discussion with regard to the costing being between 250 to 300 thousand, and if he could just give me some background on what he understands would be an allowable expense under that.

Mr. Selinger: Without having all the details, my—I do believe that DFA covers those types of infrastructure, but I'm going to have to get a specific response to her on that specific situation.

Mrs. Rowat: I believe that the town has been talking to the Manitoba Water Services Board and they're looking at providing some supports with regard to technical supports on that. The community is looking at purchasing items such as manholes, shut-off valves, piping, et cetera, and if they do order them before the review is done, they would qualify under the \$100,000 advance? Is that—am I—the community would just like clarification on that.

Mr. Selinger: Assuming that it's coverable under DFA, they'd be eligible for the advance like every other community.

Mrs. Rowat: I am also going to be asking a few questions with regard to young cattle farmers in my constituency, just in the RM of Glenwood. They have in their backyard pretty much 10 feet of water in some places, and within that scheme of things, they're also having that type of water depth in their pastures.

So, I haven't heard much from the minister with—or the Premier with regard to feed programs and pasture support for the southwestern part of the province, and I'm just wanting to know if the

minister has any updates—or the Premier has any updates on program support for producers along that area of the province. We're finding that there's sloughs that are 500 acres are now 3,000 acres, so obviously there's a significant challenge facing them.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, these types of concerns I think would be best covered by this AgriRecovery program we're discussing with the federal government on the 60-40 basis to provide these kinds of supports to people in that area and generally where they're affected by these types of circumstances across the province.

Mrs. Rowat: These families have been facing this for nine weeks now and I guess I'm stressing the significance of the stress level that these families are facing. So we hear that there are other programs being announced in other areas of the province. These families have been facing this for nine weeks.

So I'm just wanting to get some type of assurance that this is going to be coming in short order, because I believe that these families have had more than their share and really would like to see some leadership from the government on potential supports for them.

Mr. Selinger: Again, we've—we just have initiated discussion with the federal government under AgriRecovery—oh, several weeks back—and, you know, as you know the federal government went through a recent election. The same minister of Agriculture has been confirmed. So I think he's very aware of the circumstance because we did a similar program with him last year and we look forward to them participating in a program with us again this year.

But I do take the member's point that it's—these people are looking for some greater certainty and we will try to get that as soon as we can.

Mrs. Rowat: Great, thank you for that comment and that statement, Mr. Premier. I just want to let you know that, you know, the decisions are being made every day, every hour, by these individuals. They have to purchase feed, they have to move their cattle, and the sooner that there can be some assurances that would be great.

With regard to the additional water that has arrived in the constituency, the rain over the last few days and significant rains last night, I'm hearing from rural communities, and the community of Whitewater, for example, who repaired most of their roads, and when they contacted EMO were told they

weren't sure whether they would be able to cover the washouts that have occurred with the recent rains.

Can I get some assurances from this Premier, from this government, that that is not the case, that there will be consideration given to recent washouts. If you've got a municipality that has declared a disaster, resolution that they will still be considered under DFA.

Mr. Selinger: I'm not aware of any reason why they shouldn't be considered under DFA. Do you have a specific—is there been some specific information given to you?

Mrs. Rowat: The community or the municipality of Whitewater contacted EMO on Tuesday of last week, and they were told that they weren't sure that there would be any disaster financial assistance to cover the flooding due to the rainfall, and the municipality has indicated that, you know, obviously they're on an ongoing basis of fixing and repairing and rebuilding roads.

So they were very concerned that this was the message that they were getting from EMO, that there was no assurances that there would be coverage. So I'm wanting just something from the minister—or from the Premier to assure me that that is not the case, that this is an ongoing flood matter and that these municipalities can be told that they can, you know, continue to do the work that they're doing without worries.

Mr. Selinger: It's my understanding that road work is eligible under DFA, and if it's been washed out, it should be classified as a DFA eligible expense, but we'll check on if there's any specific issues at stake here in the area. You've given me the proper information I take it on—in *Hansard* here today, so we can refer to EMO for a specific response.

*(16:20)

But road work, under normal circumstances of DFA, is coverable and eligible for the kinds of repairs that you're talking about. It sounds like they may have done repair work once already. Is that the case? And so this is the second time and they're concerned that they won't get covered the second time?

Well, it seems to me if another significant rain event occurs and they're washed out again, why would that be any different than the first time? I know it's frustrating for everybody, but, again, I'll check on the specifics to see if there's any specific

barriers that I'm not aware of, but it sounds like the same situation has repeated itself and so should be treated in a similar fashion.

Mrs. Rowat: And thank you for that, Mr. Premier, because that's not the only municipality. I believe the RM of Elton had 25 washouts. All were repaired, and then, with the rain last Tuesday, every single one of those repairs were washed out again. So that's a significant loss to that municipality.

One further question: With regard to fruit growers and tree farmers, nurseries, I know that they don't have any type of crop insurance. I'd just like to ask the Premier if he has given consideration to those producers?

One, in particular, in my riding is commercial. They have 20 acres, and they will not be producing a crop this year and were told, over the next two years, would not be receiving any types of product from that commercial operation. So if the Premier can just give me an update on discussions or any discussions that have been made with regard to those types of producers.

Mr. Selinger: It sounds to me like these particular growers do not have insurance. Is that correct? *[interjection]* In the absence of insurance, that obviously makes it a more difficult situation, and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) informs me that they are following up with those specific growers to see whether there's any possibility of giving them some assistance under the AgriStability program, but it still requires investigation.

Mrs. Rowat: Thank you. This is just a quick question for the Minister of Health, if she would just be able to give me an update on her department's discussions on the potential implementation and mandating of a province-wide universal newborn hearing screening program.

I know that I'd introduced a bill earlier in session, and we've had some discussions, and I'm just wanting to know if the minister could provide me with an update. She had indicated her department was working on this, and I'd just like an update, please.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Yes, as the member and I have discussed in the past, there is a lot of work going on across regional health authorities on implementing newborn screening of a variety of types, and hearing is among them. As I said to the member, we do have regional health authorities now that are performing universal

newborn hearing screening, and there are plans and resources being developed, resources of the human kind, resources of the technological kind, to expand newborn hearing screening.

Certainly, it is our goal to have this happen across Manitoba, as evidenced by the incremental development of that plan, and so that work is ongoing, as is work on screening in other realms. We know that we're going to see screening—universal screening for cystic fibrosis come online as early as this summer. We know that the acquisition of more technology to perform other kinds of testing is adding to the cadre of screening that is happening at birth.

So, again, I want to assure the member that certainly we share her view that universal newborn hearing screening is very, very important, and we know that our regional health authorities are continuing to work very diligently to develop their programs and their resources so that we can get to a place where all babies in Manitoba are screened for hearing at birth.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I'd like to go back to a question I was asking the Minister of Health earlier today about mammography machines and whether they are accredited.

Now, according to the Canadian Association of Radiologists mammography accreditation team, who I was speaking with last week—and I have been in touch with them, actually, over the last few years—and, in discussion with them, they have indicated to me that there are two machines in Manitoba that are not accredited. In question period today, the Minister of Health indicated that they were accredited. Has she been able to find out whether—like, since question period, whether or not her statement was accurate or not?

Ms. Oswald: Madam Chairperson, and the member is aware, of course, that we do have 18 units in Manitoba. And, of course, the requirement that those machines are accredited exists under MANQAP, the Manitoba Quality Assurance Program. And these machines do, as she has said, need to be accredited by the Canadian Association of Radiologists.

Just to clarify, I said in question period today that we know that all machines are required to be accredited and it was my understanding that they were all accredited. But, in question period, I committed to the member to double-check that fact,

to be assure—assured, as it was my understanding they were all accredited.

I can confirm for the member that there are two machines at present that are in the—pardon me, there are three machines at present that are in the process. So their accreditation is in flight right now. And so they will be accredited. But, to clarify, there would be three machines that are being accredited and the rest in Manitoba, I am informed, as recently as after question period today, are accredited. So they are done or in flight as we speak. And, as I said in question period, it was my understanding from the department that all were accredited as that was the information that I had. But upon—and I said I would clarify. I have done that and, indeed, three are being accredited right now, going through a process.

Mrs. Driedger: So basically then, there are three machines at this moment that are not accredited but are undergoing the process. Is that accurate?

Ms. Oswald: I suppose. Or there are three machines that are half accredited or two-thirds accredited, going through a process. There's been no indication through this process of review that there are problems with these machines. Of course, if we did find anything, there would be immediate reparations made or those machines would be taken out of circulation. But, certainly, as I said, it was my understanding that all machines were accredited. We do know that three of them are in process right now and under review.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, the actual fact is that two of those machines have not been accredited for at least two years and they have not been under any process for accreditation. So, in fact, the one at St. Boniface Hospital and the one at the Breast Health Centre have not been accredited for a couple of years.

Actually—and it was only recently that I found out about the Health Sciences one and I guess it lost its accreditation. And, you know, during debate, we're finding out that it appears to now be getting 'accredited'—getting its accreditation back.

But if we have three machines that are basically being accredited, that, in fact, means that they are not accredited at this moment. And two of them have not been accredited for a couple of years at least, perhaps, going back to—like, I don't know even how far back it goes. But one of them chose not to be accredited and let the accreditation lapse. The other one, for whatever reason, didn't want to go through accreditation.

So we've done our homework on this. And I have been speaking to the Canadian Association of Radiologists. So, in fact, we've had two machines that have not been accredited for a number of years.

If, in fact, what the minister is saying is true, that they are supposed to be accredited, can she then indicate why they haven't been accredited for several years?

* (16:30)

Ms. Oswald: Again, it is a requirement with MANQAP that the machines are accredited. And, again, I would want to come back to the member to substantiate if, indeed, it has been a couple of years and, indeed, to substantiate if a machine had lost its accreditation. I'm not saying that the member is not presenting factual information; I am saying that that is not the information that I have. And so, you know, it would not be out of the realm of possibility that the member is hearing some information that, upon review and the acquisition of historical information, proves itself not to be entirely accurate. And so I'm just cautioning the member that we will do our review based on her statements, as we always do, and substantiate, in fact, whether or not a machine lost its accreditation, whether anybody was out of the schedule of accreditation processes, and we will report back to the member on that.

It is my information, and I am informed by professionals in the department, that the mammography machines are up to date with their accreditation or in flight with their accreditation as we speak. I'm sure that the member, you know, would agree that it is of no interest and no benefit to anyone in Manitoba to have a machine that is charged with the task of doing very important detection of cancer to not be functioning properly.

There would be no benefit and no reason to not be up to date with accreditation, according to the rules of MANQAP, which is why I will commit to the member to review the information that she is presenting, based on conversations that she has had, but I can report to her today that, indeed, this accreditation is required, it must be done in a timely way, and that the three machines that are currently under review shall be looked at rigorously as are all the machines that are reviewed because there's absolutely no benefit or no interest in having machinery that is not performing in tip-top shape in order to detect cancer appropriately.

Mrs. Driedger: A couple of pieces of information for the minister. This issue first was brought to my attention by a *Globe and Mail* article in April of 2009, and it indicated that there were about 150 hospitals and clinics across Canada that were not accredited, and so we started to do our homework and we talked to the Canadian Association of Radiologists.

All the minister has to do is go onto their website, and they list all of the machines in Canada that are accredited, and by elimination you'll see that the two machines in Winnipeg are not on that list, and we've downloaded that list a number of times over the years since 2009, and so we know that for at least two years that those two machines were not accredited. So it does become a little bit troubling when the minister is saying that they're supposed to be accredited and yet they haven't been.

So I would urge the minister to find out what's happened here because it shouldn't be just, you know, if somebody doesn't feel like having their machine accredited because it's too much paperwork. That shouldn't be part of the issue. If she needs some phone numbers of the Canadian Association of Radiologists, I can provide her with those as well and the people from the mammography accreditation team because I've been speaking with all of them. So I appreciate her, you know, willingness to have a better look at this because certainly for two years, there were two machines in the St. Boniface area that have not been accredited.

On another question related to home care, I wonder if the minister can tell us about the cutbacks that are going on in home care right now because I am hearing from a number of people, and I trust that the minister is also hearing from a number of people, whether they are clients of home care or whether they are home care providers. There is a huge concern out there about what people are talking and referring to as home care cutbacks, and, you know, I've got many, many examples of respite care that has been cut back: A legally blind woman who lost her escort to a doctor's appointment, a client who was denied housekeeping services for, you know, for some reason, and the list goes on and on.

And there are very serious concerns, especially to—about bath times and that all the time allotments for patients have all been cut back, and specifically bath times, which could take far longer than what I'm hearing is 25 minutes. So, 25 minutes to prepare the bathroom, the client, bathe the client, thoroughly

rinse off and dry, apply creams and powders, clean up the work area, all without making the client feel rushed. They're telling me that that period for a bath time has been cut by half, and they're not sure how they can even provide that kind of service to a client.

So there are some huge concerns being raised. I trust the minister's office is hearing the same.

So can she tell us more about what she is doing in terms of the changes that are being made in home care and whether or not these services are being cut back as dramatically as home care workers and clients are telling us they are?

Ms. Oswald: Just, again, to go back to the issue of accreditation, I appreciate, you know, the member's methodology in, you know, looking for machines and using the process of elimination and figuring out the machines and that they're on the website for two years, and this does make an assumption that the website is correct and accurate. And so, you know, I will endeavour to check that information as well.

The bottom line is, as I said before, the accreditation for the mammography machines is required. It's required to be done in a timely fashion. I appreciate her offer of giving me phone numbers. I've got connections; you know, I can likely find these people as well.

And, certainly, we are going to, as we always do with the member, we're going to investigate her claims. It—I have to say on the record that there have occasions in the past where issues have been raised and, upon investigation, have not borne out to be as presented. And, you know, one might be discouraged by, you know, having to check in again and again and again with items presented as fact that turned out not to be thus, but I am committed to look into the issues as raised by the member because, as I said before, I believe that there wouldn't be one member of this House that wouldn't want every type of diagnostic machinery to be functioning as it's supposed to function. That's why we've required accreditation for these machines all along.

Further, moving on to the issue of home care, again, the member raises a specific case. In fact, she cites that she's got a couple of specific cases. Of course, as always, I welcome more information about those cases, but I can certainly say that we're not cutting back on home care. On the contrary, we're expanding hours this year and we're expanding hours in the future.

We made a very significant long-term care announcement in February concerning capital builds, but to add additional home care into environments, you know, where this is appropriate, not only caring for the individual but expanding roles in order to ensure that partners of people requiring home care are captured in the care. You know, what I mean by that is if a home care worker was going into a home and preparing a meal for an individual, it's logical and, indeed, reasonable to assume that, you know, for an elderly couple, that that home care worker could prepare a meal for the partners and, you know, expand the nature of that kind of service in order to provide respite for the spouse, perhaps, that is dwelling in the home but is not necessarily needing home care at that time.

*(16:40)

So we're expanding the time, we're expanding the nature of the kind of care, as in the example that I gave earlier, and we're also working to expand how the jobs are created. We know we've heard from home care workers that their EFTs—or the nature of how their jobs were posted in the morning and then nothing in the middle of the day and then something in the latter part of the evening was very challenging. We've heard from regional health authorities that these kinds of roles are more challenging to recruit into, and so augmenting the EFT in order to be able to recruit more aggressively is something we've been working very hard on with our regional health authorities. These all represent increases to the care.

Now, I'm not going to suggest to the member that the individual cases she's raising may have no validity, and, certainly, we would wish to investigate any of the cases that she wishes to bring forward. We do get some calls in our office concerning home care and questions about how much home care one is entitled to, how they might be able to expand the level of care that they're getting or the hours of care, and we work very hard in partnership with the regional health authority to respond to those requests. And so it would be no different if the member has word from individuals that are experiencing challenges with the amount of time that might be provided for bathing or other issues. We would be very happy to address those cases as we always wish to do when the member brings them forward.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I have questions for the First Minister.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, I wonder if we could just have a brief recess to make sure that minister is prepared for the question.

Mr. Graydon: Madam Chair, and I thank the First Minister for rushing back. I want to question him just briefly on one of the comments that he made from—in an answer to a question from my colleague from Turtle Mountain, and it was to do with the per acre top-up from AgriRecovery. Has that been set at \$30, or is it as what the agricultural producers—KAP producers have asked for, \$50. Is it a set price that you are negotiating now?

Mr. Selinger: These are the points under discussion with the federal government. It was \$30 last year, and this is being discussed with the federal government about what all parties think is reasonable.

Mr. Graydon: Well, I thank the First Minister for that. Then, what he is saying is that there isn't a number that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) has picked at this point for AgriRecovery top-up?

Mr. Selinger: It's under discussion and negotiation with the federal government.

Mr. Graydon: Could the First Minister give us an update on the biodiesel industry in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Could the member be more specific about what he's—the information he's seeking?

Mr. Graydon: Can the First Minister tell us how many litres are being produced right now, and if the two companies that are producing them are in good financial health?

Mr. Selinger: I would have to get—take that question as notice and get specific information for him on matters of that detail.

Mr. Graydon: Is the First Minister aware of any one of the two companies being in financial difficulty?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I'd have to get an update from our department that's in charge of that program to see where that's specifically at.

Mr. Graydon: Is there—how many litres are being imported into Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I'd have to get that information from the department in charge of that program. I don't know if the member had the chance to discuss this during Estimates with the minister for energy,

mines and innovation because that's the minister that's in charge of that specific program.

Mr. Graydon: The answer to the question by the First Minister is, no, I didn't have that opportunity.

And, secondly, I would like to know then, is—Manitoba Hydro is a user, I understand, of biodiesel; do they import theirs or do they buy it from local production?

Mr. Selinger: I'll undertake to get that information for the member.

Mr. Graydon: In regards to Manitoba Housing, Mr. Minister, there's a number of chronic vacancies throughout the province. There's a number of places that haven't been inhabited for 15, 20 years. There is a cost to maintaining these different units, and I'm wondering if the First Minister can tell me if there's—if there is any move afoot to dispose of units that aren't being used and are in disrepair.

Mr. Selinger: I am aware that the Housing officials are looking at a—units, including units that have been not used because—for a variety of reasons. Sometimes units haven't been used because they're no longer in demand because of their size and configuration; for example, bachelor units. But, I'm also aware that the department has been using some resources to repair and convert these units in a—in such a way that they're more suitably available to the public, and there's greater demand for them. If the member has a specific units somewhere that he's concerned about, we can find out about that for them. But they are looking at their total inventory and how to make the best use of it, and put it back to the purpose of serving the public for housing.

Mr. Graydon: I certainly commend the minister for that, looking at ways of making them more favourable for renting. However, there are some that have not been used for many, many years. They haven't been occupied, and they're actually not being kept up in the state that they should be. They're deteriorating badly, and I can be more specific. I actually have pictures here if the minister would like to see them after, where the roofs have—the roofs are in terrible shape, they're now leaking.

These properties, the grasses are all mowed, the Hydro meter is turning, so there is a cost every day that's going on, and I think that they either dispose of them or upgrade them, one or the other. So, if the minister is—has that on his plate and willing to look at that, going forward, I appreciate that.

I'd like to ask the minister what his long-term vision for agriculture in Manitoba is.

Mr. Selinger: Just before I get to that broader question, I would like to say that if the member has some units that he's aware of, that seem to be underutilized, and if he'd let me know, or we will find out what the plans are for those units and see what—because I know they are looking at a broad variety of units and how to get better use out of them. So, if he has a specific question—I'm assuming it's some units in his constituency that maybe get underutilized. Perhaps he could let me know, and we'll find out from the department what their plans are.

On the broader question and what our vision for agriculture is, is that our broad vision for agriculture is, is that it continue to be a value-added industry, and that we see agriculture as a great source of future value in Manitoba, an economic benefit in Manitoba. Even though we're in some very difficult times this year with the excess moisture in many parts of the province, which is having an impact on seeding, over the medium term to long term we see a phenomenal potential in Manitoba because of the—we have so many producers that are very innovative in the crops they're planting and the diversity that they're looking at and the niche markets they're developing.

* (16:50)

And the member will know we've made very significant investments in the Food Development Centre at Portage la Prairie, with additional millions of dollars in investment there to support the work they're doing to help producers take products that they're growing and add value to them and develop marketable products with it. And, also, we doing work with the Richardson Nutraceutical Centre on the things they could do with food to add—to use food as a source of health, healthiness for people. And that also ties into the St. Boniface Hospital. There's a nice cluster of activity there between the Food Development Centre, Richardson's and the St. Boniface Hospital to take a look at how foods can increase the health of Manitobans and be more innovative in the—in their consumption to add value to the quality of people's lives, not only here but to develop products for export and that could be taken up elsewhere in the world.

The member will also know that just a couple of weeks ago—I think it was even last week—we announced a major reprofiling of our innovation

programs in Manitoba where we have a single window.

And we've looked at the different stages in the innovation process and we've allocated \$30 million over five years to a innovation process number of steps, and each step along the way, from the concept or the idea to the final commercialization of the product, there is support available through the Department of Innovation, Energy and Mines, in partnership with departments like MAFRI, to help people move through every step of the innovation process with additional support and resources for research, for product development, for commercialization, for marketing. They can get resources to help move an idea from the concept stage to a product stage in the marketplace.

And so this is an attempt to not only add value in terms of innovation in agriculture but other sectors as well as in Manitoba. So I do see agriculture playing a really strong role in the future of the province economically and in terms of innovation for the future.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I'd like to just put a few questions to the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick), and the first one would be in regards to the number of water control works. I've had the opportunity of requesting these through freedom of information back in early March, and we're three months later and we haven't had a reply. And so I just wondered if the minister could tell me how many water control works and drainage licence applications that she has in the department that are waiting to be processed.

Ms. Melnick: I don't have that number. I'll have to undertake to get it for the member.

Mr. Maguire: Well, that's unfortunate. I just about feel like staying here until we get it because, I mean, it's been three months, I mean, and we've requested this. I asked for it in Estimates. They said something about 4,000 that had been done, but, I mean, that's a pretty simple number that when you've got as many drainage licences as there are in the province. Can the minister not give me at least a ballpark, within a thousand, of the number of water control works and drainage licence applications that are waiting to be processed by her department?

Ms. Melnick: I've undertaken to get the information for the member.

Mr. Maguire: I wasn't able to hear the minister's reply.

Ms. Melnick: Yes, I've undertaken to get that information for the member.

Mr. Maguire: Can she give me a date? Will she have that information tomorrow sometime?

Ms. Melnick: We'll get it as soon as possible.

Mr. Maguire: Will I get it before the—can I have that information before the session ends, Madam Chairperson?

Ms. Melnick: Yes, I'll certainly try to get it for you as soon as I can.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister give me a date as to when she could give that information available to me?

Ms. Melnick: I've undertaken to get it as soon as possible, so as soon as we have it, I'll bring it to you.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chairperson, I just find that unconscionable. I mean, we've got people all over this province that have applied for permits from her department and she can't—and she got a whole department and this is one of the major issues that they deal with and the minister has had three months to reply to our freedom of information requests, and she still can't give us a date as to when she's going to be able to give us a number, which she did off the top of her head back in Estimates a few years ago.

So I just find it a, basically, slap in the face to the people out there in the country that have applied and made these applications, under her rules, trying to deal with the situations that she's put them in. And they are complying with the regulations that are there today, Madam Chairperson, and we concur that they should. All I'm asking, on their behalf, is how many are still out there outstanding, and I sure—certainly would appreciate it if the minister could find it in her department. Just ask one question of them in the morning and perhaps supply that to me by 5 o'clock tomorrow.

Would the minister be able to do that?

Ms. Melnick: Well, we have been fighting major high water levels throughout the province of Manitoba. We have been working very hard with communities as they have come under threat from high waters. We have also been—as I told the member, four years ago we issued 250 licences; this year, we're over 4,000 already. So rather than counting what's outstanding, we're actually doing the work of fighting the flood throughout the province of

Manitoba, as well as working with producers on their requests.

And it's nice to hear that the member from Arthur-Virden agrees that the rules and regulations we've put in place around the drainage licensing are good rules. It's the first time I've heard a member from the other side of the House agree that the water resource officers are playing a very important role in the control of surface water in the province of Manitoba. They usually refer to them as the water police.

It's important also to note that our department has worked very hard on the incredible upswing in the number of licences that have been requested over the last several years, Madam Chairperson. So we're working on getting the licences out the door, but our first priority is fighting the high waters that are affecting many, many Manitobans throughout this province.

Madam Chairperson: Just prior to recognizing the honourable member for Arthur-Virden, I just want to remind all honourable members that there is loges. If they wish to have a private conversation, please take advantage of those.

Mr. Maguire: Just—the minister in '07 put the Lake Manitoba Stewardship Board in place, and I wonder if she could just provide me with a current status of it and what type of work it's currently involved in in regards to that particular board in the light of this year's flooding. How's the minister see the board being involved in the flooding issue?

Ms. Melnick: The chair of the board is Dr. Gordon Goldsborough, who runs the Delta Marsh Station. He has been experiencing—he and his organization have been experiencing very high waters. In fact, they currently, I believe, are out of the station. They—I think this is the second evacuation that they've experienced this year.

We have been working with Dr. Goldsborough, both as an individual scientist focused on Lake Manitoba and on the chair of the Lake Manitoba water stewardship board. They are looking at water

quality issues. They are looking at quality issues around the Delta Marsh and how it is affected by fluctuating waters. Fluctuation of waters in a marsh situation can be very beneficial. So we'll also be working with him on the results of the high waters on Lake Manitoba and on Delta Marsh in the time to come.

So I'd like to thank and commend the members of the Lake Manitoba Stewardship Board for the good work that they've been doing. They are—I believe there are 11 individuals on that board. I don't have all of their names with me, but they've been working hard on an important water body which is experiencing a lot of stress this spring.

So I know that individuals in their communities are working to help with the issues that are arising and I want to thank them for that as well. The Lake Manitoba Stewardship Board has been a very positive board to be working with, and they have been working very, very hard and I'd like to thank Dr. Goldsborough for his leadership.

Madam Chairperson: Just prior to 5 p.m., will the opposition please indicate on the record whether questioning is completed for the ministers who were called for concurrence today or will questioning of these ministers continue the next time the committee meets to continue consideration of the concurrence motion.

The ministers called today were the honourable First Minister, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Water Stewardship.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Madam Chair, the three ministers today are still on notice.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much. The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The time now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 8, 2011

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