

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
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MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	PC
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
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SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
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WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 13, 2012

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 220—The Voter Identification Act
(Elections Act Amended)**

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Because I believe it's never too late to introduce a good bill, I move, seconded by the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), that Bill 220, The Voter Identification Act (Elections Act Amended) bill, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: I am pleased to introduce The Voter Identification Act on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

This bill would establish standards for the type of identification required by voters prior to being able to cast a ballot. The requirements are similar to those already in place for federal elections. It would help to reduce the potential for voter fraud and is a reasonable measure in a society where identification is required for many basic activities in life.

Mr. Speaker, over the years, many men and women have made tremendous sacrifices to ensure that we have the privilege to vote, and this is a step towards ensuring that this privilege is not subject to abuse or manipulation. Thank you.

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

PETITIONS

**Personal Care Homes and Long-Term
Care—Steinbach**

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The city of Steinbach is one of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba and one of the largest cities in the province.

This growth has resulted in pressure on a number of important services, including personal care homes and long-term care space in the city.

Many long-time residents of the city of Steinbach have been forced to live out their final years outside of Steinbach because of the shortage of personal care homes and long-term care facilities.

Individuals who have lived in, worked in, and contributed to the city of Steinbach their entire lives should not be forced to spend their final years in a place far from friends and from family.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Health ensure additional personal care homes and long-term care spaces are made available in the city of Steinbach on a priority basis.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by P. Senkiw, J. Dueck, R. Bachinski and thousands of other Manitobans.

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

PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by A. Gordon, R. Smith, D. Martin and many, many other fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister charged with the administration of The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Act): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present the Crown Corporations Council annual report for the year 2011.

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 from Glenboro School 17 grade 6 students under the direction of Ms. Marilyn Cullen. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen).

And also in the public gallery where we have 100 grade 4 students from J. R. Walkof School under the direction of Ms. Ashley Penner. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Emergency Rooms Wait Times

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): So far in the course of this session of broken promises, we've seen the Premier break his promise to Manitobans on taxes. We've seen him break his promises to Manitoba seniors. We've seen the government break their promises to Manitoba

farmers. We saw yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the government break their promise to Manitoba families with respect to personal care home beds.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we have yet another broken promise to add to the list, and it's a broken promise to Winnipeg families regarding wait times at Winnipeg's emergency rooms.

I want to ask the Premier why he's broken his promise to Winnipeg families and allowed wait times at Winnipeg emergency rooms to go up rather than down, which is what he promised before the election.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as usual, a long preamble filled with spurious allegations by the Leader of the Opposition; nothing new there. We've seen that before.

But unfortunately the Leader of the Opposition wasn't available when we announced this morning that we are adding an additional 14 residences for family physicians in Manitoba to allow more doctors to be trained and be available in Manitoba and to provide front-line service and access to Manitobans, which will allow them to have service without going to emergency rooms.

He—I was present at a QuickCare clinic opened up in the North End of Winnipeg at what we used—what we know as the North End Y, the Win Gardner centre. And again, that was a service that's providing opportunities for Manitobans that need health care to have quick access to a nurse practitioner and the attendant staff surrounding that individual and avoid going to an emergency room.

And in addition, we saw an announcement this morning which sees a number of rapid-access training programs put in place for physicians so that somebody can have access to them within 48 hours.

All of these measures, Mr. Speaker, are measures that will reduce pressure on the ERs, will allow people to have access to a physician in a timely fashion in Manitoba.

Ambulance Services Patient Off-Load Wait Times

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): The problem is that the more announcements this Premier makes, the worse things seem to get. And that seems to be the challenge, whether it's on taxes, whether it's on health care, whether it's on public safety or any other area that this Premier makes announcements in.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that the numbers are very clear that ambulances are waiting longer to discharge patients in emergency rooms. This is putting pressure on emergency rooms. It's tying up ambulances that should be available to go out and help Winnipeggers in need.

* (13:40)

And, in fact, the numbers show that wait times have gone from an average of 66 minutes last year to an average of 71—over 71 minutes so far this year. Ambulances have been waiting over the past year for an average—or for a total of over four years of waiting when you put them all together, 4.2 years of waiting with all the ambulances combined over a 12-month period. The problem is getting worse. It's not getting better.

Why is it that everything this Premier touches goes downhill?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, not only does the member miss the \$1.2 billion in tax reductions that have been brought into Manitoba when he does his preamble to his statement, which is actually a question about health care, but he forgets the fact that when we increased the enrolment in medical school from 70 to 110 places, every member of the opposition voted against that. When we have more paramedics working in Manitoba than at any time in the history of the province, all of those additional paramedics that are being funded in our budget, they voted against that.

Mr. Speaker, we have renovated the ER rooms in Manitoba. We have reconfigured the salaries for ER physicians. We have put special people in place in the ER rooms to pay quick attention to people that come in there.

And not only that, we have taken a new direction in Manitoba, which is being copied and emulated across the country in various forms, with the QuickCare clinics which allow people to get attention for immediate needs in shopping centres, in places of convenience all around this province with nurse practitioners. And I remind the member opposite nurse practitioners were a rare and endangered species when they were in office. They are flourishing in Manitoba now.

Mr. McFadyen: The only thing that is endangered are those Winnipeggers who are waiting in ambulances to get access to emergency rooms in the city of Winnipeg.

If you look at the numbers, Mr. Speaker, the average wait has gone from 66 minutes last year up to 71 minutes and counting so far this year. The fact is that over that past year ambulances waited for a total of 36,847 hours waiting to discharge patients. It's equal to 1,535 days or over four years of waiting over a 12-month period just last year. And the problem is getting worse.

Mr. Speaker, over a year ago, on May the 4th, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) said in this House, and I quote: Working with our doctors and nurses and paramedics to reduce off-load times is, of course, a priority.

Why, Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Health claims it's a priority, 13 months later, do we find the problem getting worse?

Mr. Selinger: Again, Mr. Speaker, their solution to the problem is to dump and leave patients unattended at emergency rooms.

What's our solution? We have more firefighters that we funded in this budget, 20 more firefighters in the city of Winnipeg, that can play a first-responder role. We funded that in the budget; they voted against it. We funded more firefighter paramedics in the city of Brandon, four more, in this budget. We put it in the budget; they voted against it.

This morning, we announced additional training for nurse practitioners, additional training for family physicians. In our collective agreement with doctors, we now have over 380 doctors that are serving people with chronic illness paying—getting an incentive to provide extra attention to people with chronic illness so they don't have to go to an emergency room.

The measures we're taking are making a tangible difference in the health-care needs of Manitobans. We will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite will vote against the resources necessary and complain after the fact.

Ambulance Services Patient Off-Load Wait Times

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): What a load of excuses by this Premier. Things are getting worse, not better, under his watch.

Ambulance off-load times at Winnipeg ERs continue to get worse under this NDP government. According to the latest FIPPA, these are the worst the numbers have ever been, even after this government promised to fix them.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to explain: Why did she break her promise to fix this very, very serious problem? We get lots of spin out of her, but the mess is getting worse under her watch. Why hasn't she fixed it?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Again, I would say to the member opposite that her characterization of this issue is quite interesting. We know that under the Conservative watch, it was policy within their government to allow, across the system, routinely, every day, 28 patients to sit in the hallways across the hospitals in Winnipeg.

We know today this is not policy. We know that today when we measure in exactly the same way that was measured then that the numbers are zero or one or two. So the member suggests an item that is getting worse. We know that we've seen a dramatic improvement.

On the issue of EMS off-loads, we know that we've included innovations such as respiratory therapists in the ER. We know that we're working very closely between the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the WFPS. We are indeed making progress on this issue. There is more work to do, Mr. Speaker, but we're committed to do it.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, what unbelievable spin from this minister. The problem is getting worse, not better, despite her rhetoric.

In 2011, ambulances were stuck at the ERs trying to off-load patients for 37,000 hours. For just three months of this year, they have already been stuck at the ERs for almost 11,000 hours, and for these same three months, because ambulances were jammed up in the ERs, there were 22 hours when Winnipeg had absolutely no ambulance to respond to any calls.

So instead of the useless spin from this Minister of Health, can she tell everybody in Manitoba, and particularly in Winnipeg, why is this problem getting worse under her watch? How many people are being put at risk because there's no ambulances out there because they're jammed up in the ERs where she was supposed to fix the problem?

Ms. Oswald: Well, yes, and every day in this House the member across the way can stand up and name call and, you know, say, you know, generally speaking, cranky things.

But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, we're investing in more doctors, not less. We're investing

in more ambulances, not less. We're taking advice from experts in the field like Dr. Grierson, who's providing innovations and partnerships among our hospitals, like HSC, St. Boniface Hospital, and our paramedics to use respiratory therapists so that paramedics can get back on the road, to use nurse practitioners so that our paramedics can get back on the road, to share responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, in our emergency rooms, our medical professionals triage and take the patient that is in the most need first. We're not just going to use the Tory methodology of dump and run. We're going to ensure patients are supervised and we're going to make sure that that's done by—

Mr. Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Driedger: What a load of excuses from this Minister of Health. Things are getting worse under her watch and not better.

Mr. Speaker, the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service is now billing the WRHA for the government's abysmal failure to address this problem. Chief Brennan said that this was the only way to get this government's attention because they weren't listening. So since April of last year, taxpayers have had to shell out \$615,000 in fines for the WRHA to pay for these off-load delays.

So I want to ask this Minister of Health to explain to Manitoba taxpayers: Why are they being forced to pay for her broken promise to fix this very serious problem?

Ms. Oswald: I'll give the member the answer that I gave her last year when Chief Brennan used to be the chief. Try to keep up.

I'll let her know that, of course, it was the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority in partnership with the WFPS that said, let's try this innovation that they've used in BC to drive down off-load times. It was the WRHA themselves that came forward and said, let's use this methodology, we've seen good results from it.

They're continuing to work in partnership. They're not suggesting an old-fashioned model of scoop, run, and dump. These paramedics are highly trained professionals that will supervise the care of individuals who will be triaged by doctors and nurses. We want those off-load times to come down, but we're not living in the Stone Age, Mr. Speaker.

Harmonized Sales Tax Government Support

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): The NDP broke their election promise and brought in the highest tax increase since Howard Pawley raised the PST in 1987. This year, over \$184 million in new taxes on Manitobans and \$114 million in new fees, and those are the ones that we know about. They broadened the PST base, and now the Manitoba Federation of Labour has directed the NDP to raise the PST. Broken promises, flip-flop rhetoric, and only lip service to fiscal restraint.

What other tax increases can Manitobans expect over the next year?

*(13:50)

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans know that they can count on our government to deliver a balanced approach between expenditures and revenues.

They know they can count on us to raise the equivalency of one point—one percentage point, which we've done in this 2012 budget, Mr. Speaker, and have that revenue dedicated to the infrastructure of Manitoba, roads and bridges, so that people in the city of Brandon could participate in a growing Manitoba economy.

Mr. Helwer: Manitobans know they can count on this government to raise taxes; that much is true.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) is on record as saying that Manitoba will not implement a harmonized sales tax, or HST. They even promised that in writing during the last election campaign. I am hearing from groups in Manitoba that they are afraid this government is headed to imposing an HST on Manitobans.

There is transitional funding from the federal government that could be used to reduce the deficit so this NDP government could make it look like they're balanced at election time: more NDP games with federal money.

Does this NDP government plan to break another election promise and impose HST on Manitobans? Is this just another attempt to dig themselves out of their huge debt and deficit on the backs of Manitobans, everyday taxpaying Manitobans, and now, yet for more transfers from the rest of Canada?

Mr. Struthers: Mr.—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I want to draw to the attention of the honourable members to the public gallery where we have a lot of students from various schools across this province. And we're very happy to have them here with us today, but I'm sure we'd want them to have a very lasting and positive impression of their visit to the Legislature.

So I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members. Please keep the tone down a little bit, the volume down, so that the Speaker can hear in case there's a breach of the rule, but also give our guests the opportunity to hear the answers and the questions posed.

Mr. Struthers: And I think those same school students would be interested to know that the Conservative position, when it comes to broadening the PST, is to include school supplies—school supplies.

Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rich to hear members opposite, from their hypocritical perches over there, talking to us about the evils of the PST, about the evils of expanding the PST. Are they directed by the Prime Minister to ask this question in the House?

Mr. Speaker, not only school supplies, baby supplies. What kind of a government would expand the PST to include baby supplies and school supplies, kids' clothing? They have no room to lecture anybody on broadening the PST.

Mr. Helwer: Well, obviously the Finance Minister missed the question, so I'll simplify it here for him. You know, we know we can't trust anything this government says, so we'll slow it down a little bit here.

The Minister of Finance admits that he misleads the House when it's politically expedient and breaks his election promises when the unions tell him to raise taxes.

Does this NDP government plan to impose the HST on Manitobans?

Mr. Struthers: We have been very clear, over and over in this House, that we have committed to the people of Manitoba the equivalency of 1 per cent that is dedicated to infrastructure in Manitoba.

Maybe members opposite would like to come clean with Manitobans and admit that their platform is to expand the PST to include the same products as

the HST. That's their problem, Mr. Speaker. They can tell the people of Manitoba if they like.

I will remind members opposite that their position right now, what they did when they had the chance to do it, was that they included not only baby supplies and school supplies and kids' clothing, but safety clothing and footwear and equipment. Safety materials, not to mention feminine hygiene products, that members opposite decided they were going to expand. So they've got no credibility on this issue.

Bill 6 Lack of Consultations

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Manitoba's private health-care corporations were shocked to discover that Bill 6 would create new provisions that enhance bureaucratic control in key areas and threaten the ability of these private organizations to carry out their mission. These non-profit health care providers include faith-based and secular organizations with decades of goodwill, hard work and success in providing direct care to thousands of Manitobans every day.

The minister's unilateral changes threaten to undermine that goodwill and success record of these organizations by requiring RHA approval in the selection of their CEOs and restricting their ability to use their surplus funds. These groups could have provided the minister with information and advice, but they say there was no attempt by the minister to consult them on these changes.

Why were these groups not consulted?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I'll reiterate what I said in committee the other night about the fact that I don't think anybody in this House would dispute the fact that our faith-based organizations are the foundation of health care in Manitoba, preceding medicare. They provide excellent care every day to the people of Manitoba, predominantly our seniors, Mr. Speaker, and it's for this very reason that back in 2001 we enshrined and entrenched in legislation the faith-based principles that we believe to be so important.

Bill 6 that we're discussing today is asking faith-based organizations to provide a little more transparency and accountability in terms of their finances, ensuring that all Manitobans can be clear on how public funds are being used. We are not taking away their ability to hire a CEO. We're not taking away their ability to use surpluses,

Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad to have the opportunity to clarify that.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, this week non-profit health-care stakeholder groups packed committee room to speak on Bill 6. They delivered the message that this bill threatens their ability to select and compensate their leaders and control their own operating surpluses. This government proposes to micromanage what senior employees are paid and they suggest to know better than the organizations themselves how to direct surplus funds. Has this minister developed a new and sudden distrust of these groups?

The minister talks about transparency, but these private health-care organizations are already transparent. They are accountable to government. They are accountable to their own boards, to their owners, to their supporters and their stakeholder groups.

Will the minister indicate to this House why she intends to interfere in the hiring of CEOs for non-profit health-care corporations?

Ms. Oswald: I thank the member for the question. It does, again, allow me to clarify for the member that, indeed, Bill 6 is providing provisions to provide more transparency on items like salaries, compensation, severance, so that people in the public can be fully aware, as they are with other health corporations, regional health authorities, about how these funds are going to be spent. This is what we are asking of our faith-based organizations. I believe they have good advice to give us, Mr. Speaker, and we welcome that advice.

But I also want to clarify fully and completely that we will not be interfering with their hiring process. We certainly are asking that compensation for individuals that are in CEO positions is fair and reasonable at a level that Manitobans would find to be acceptable, and again I remind the member we were the first ones to enshrine faith-based principles in law.

Mr. Friesen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the minister when she says there are currently constraints on the RHA's ability to issue directions to non-profit health-care corporations, but it's the changes in Bill 6 that lift these constraints and raise important questions like, will operating surpluses be clawed back? Will the corporation no longer be allowed to freely move its funds within its block grant? I suggest these organizations are in the best position to

meet their needs and respond to their challenges, to carry out their mission and direct their surpluses where they have the maximum benefit, not the RHAs.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue of respect: no consultation, interference with the hiring of CEOs, constraints on the use of surplus operating funds.

Will the minister remove from Bill 6 the provisions that concern non-profit health-care corporations and commit today to engage these groups in respectful consultation?

Ms. Oswald: Again, I thank the member for raising the question. I will suggest to him and recommend that he spend some time with the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger). She and I were having a good conversation yesterday during concurrence about a particular issue that has existed in Manitoba where we've seen some difficulties involving the use of funds and the transparency about those funds.

And I believe that we can agree that all Manitobans who are paying public funds for personal care homes have a right to expect that that information can be transparent and that it can be used—it will be applied fairly and reasonably in terms of salaries and severance. And I want to let the member know we have great respect, as I've said twice, for the faith-based organizations.

*(14:00)

And I would suggest today that it seems confusing to me that the member opposite would suggest that he thinks that public funds should be used by anyone in our organizations in health care and that it should be allowed to be kept secret.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Lake St. Martin Emergency Channel Effectiveness

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, last fall and through the winter, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his ministers repeatedly projected the Lake Manitoba levels would be down to 813 feet ASL by April 2012 thanks to the operations of the emergency outlet. However, good weather was as much responsible for the lake coming down as was the operation of the emergency channel.

Mr. Speaker, will the government apologize to the flood victims around the lake and admit that the channel is not removing water at the rate promised by his government?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is completely wrong, and again I'm very surprised that he would not recognize the fact that that outlet was built on time, actually under budget. It allowed the full operation, the full physical operation of the Fairford over the winter. I remind him that we also indicated that we did predict that spring in Manitoba would come eventually; there would be inflows that would occur at that particular point in time.

We also indicated that we were anticipating getting back within with the regulatory range later this year, and I'm pleased to inform the members of this House that not only has that outlet made a difference, Mr. Speaker, but we are on track currently to being back within the regulatory range of Lake Manitoba. That's a huge accomplishment for everybody that was involved building that channel.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, engineers now tell us that the impact on the new—of the new emergency channel resulted in a 1.4-foot drop in Lake Manitoba, yet the Premier suggests the reduction is three to three and a half feet. The reality is, even with the Lake St. Martin channel outflow from—it's barely keeping up to the inflow. Minister says believe the engineers. The engineers say it has in fact dropped 1.4 feet. The Premier says three to three and half feet, so I'll believe the engineers.

Mr. Speaker, why are the Premier and the minister putting misleading information on the record about how much the lake has come down?

Mr. Ashton: You know, Mr. Speaker, I know we have some eminent engineers in the House on the other side. Constantly in question period, in Estimates, they do question information. I know they feel they know better. Yesterday we heard the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) saying that there was an artificial flood in the Assiniboine and the Souris rivers, which is completely ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker, I provided this information to the member opposite, and I want to put on the record again that we did have relatively dry weather, indeed. We've said right from the start that that was certainly helpful in bringing the level of the lake down, but he is wrong and he's underestimating the impact of the outlet. And I point out that not only did we build it on time, but by the time the spring came, which is one of the times of the biggest threats in and around Lake Manitoba, we'd significantly reduced the lake level, and we're now on track to bringing it

back within regulatory range this year. That's a huge accomplishment for everybody involved building that channel.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, that's the very minister that has told me to listen to the engineers, and that's what I'm doing.

This week the wind-assisted waters of Lake Manitoba pushed inland again because the natural shoreline no longer exists. Several months of favourable weather have resulted in a three-foot reduction in the level of Lake Manitoba. Six months of operation on the highly touted new channel have resulted in a 1.4-foot drop.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit today that they have overestimated the effectiveness of the \$60-million Lake St. Martin emergency channel? Will he commit today to finishing the job by putting a second outlet into Lake Manitoba?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should reflect on one thing, and that is that there never was a artificial outlet out of Lake St. Martin until that outlet was built. And what the member is suggesting, by the way, once again shows the fact that he doesn't get the fact that if you don't solve the problem at Lake St. Martin by putting any additional water out of Lake Manitoba, you exacerbate the situation at Lake St. Martin.

What we did last year, and the member should know this, is we said we were going to work to benefit both Lake St. Martin and the First Nations community around Lake St. Martin and everybody around Lake Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

We did it with the outlet, and I don't know what it is about members opposite, but you know what? If there's one good news coming out of the flood, it's the success of the outlet out of Lake St. Martin. For once, I'd like to hear them say that on the record.

Seniors

Education Property Tax Credit Increase

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): This Friday, June 15th, is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and it's a good time to take stock of the promises that the NDP government has made to seniors.

September 18th, 2011, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) promised, and I quote, seniors will pay no school taxes on their property taxes. End quote. Seven months later, the Premier introduced a budget that hurts families, hurts seniors, hurts volunteers,

and it hurts those Manitobans who can least afford to pay more.

Will the Premier acknowledge he has gone back on the promises he made during the election just eight and a half months ago?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I'd like to inform the House of some of the steps we've taken to deal with seniors elder—and elder abuse: one, we now have a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week information line where people who are in crisis or need information can come to. And the members opposite all voted against that initiative.

We also have a contract with a seniors organization that goes throughout the province and holds workshops and discussions among all people in the community to inform them about this important issue, how to recognize it and how to take actions. Again, that was voted against by members opposite.

We also have specialists within the department that work with people. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that we have three safe suites that are operating where seniors can go when they need assistance and help. And you know, we put those measures in, and the members opposite voted against each and every one of those initiatives.

Mr. Ewasko: I was pretty sure I was pretty clear. I looked back over my question, and the minister didn't touch on it one bit. So I'm going to ask it in a little bit of a different way.

The fact is the minister broken his promise—the Premier broke his promise to seniors. It's in black and white in his budget. Seniors are still paying school taxes on their property tax bills.

Mr. Speaker, will this First Minister or minister or any other minister just admit they broke his promise—their promises and tell Manitoba seniors when they won't have to pay school taxes in their property tax bills?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind members opposite that they voted against Budget 2012, a budget that contained an increase of \$75 for the very seniors they just asked about, the very seniors, for a total this year of \$1,025.

That's a real benefit for the seniors the members opposite, including the member for Lac du Bonnet, purports to represent here today in this Legislature. If they had any credibility on this at all, the only way

they could have got that credibility is for actually voting for that measure that now they ask about here in the House. They've got no credibility on this one either.

Mr. Ewasko: The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the \$75 education tax–property tax incentive actually only amounts to \$1.6 million in savings to seniors, not the \$36 million that they promised in the–during the election.

Manitobans and seniors deserve to be told the truth. Instead of making it easier for seniors to afford their homes by eliminating education property taxes like they promised, this government makes it more expensive by increasing the taxes on property insurance.

When will the minister apologize for telling Manitobans one thing before the election and doing something completely different afterwards? Will the minister admit to breaking their promises to our elders, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Struthers: This is the Conservative Party who, all through the 1990s, increased local property taxes one year after the next, totally underfunded education and dumped that responsibility onto the municipalities and every school division in this province, Mr. Speaker. And who paid for that? The very seniors that these Conservatives today in the House purport to represent.

*(14:10)

I've already told the members opposite, reminded them, that they voted against a education property tax credit increase in Budget 2012. I want to remind them, as well, that they don't seem to be too concerned about the primary caregiver tax credit, which is also very much a benefit for the elders that people across the way pretend to support. We've raised by \$250 the basic personal exemption this year and for four years running for a real benefit for the seniors that we represent in this House. Mr. Speaker–

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

NRC Institute for Biodiagnostics Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, it's taken 20 years to build the institute of diagnostics on Ellice Avenue, an international leader in global research and diagnostic imaging and world-famous for its work on magnetic resonance. The team of

scientists is second to none. This has led to an extraordinary burst of new innovations and new companies.

The Conservatives have put an axe to this jewel in Manitoba. The scientific team is being dismembered, and yet the Premier has done little to stand up to this Conservative onslaught.

Why isn't the Premier standing up publicly for Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I want to thank the member from River Heights for the question because it makes the obvious point that the damage being done to the biodiagnostic research centre on Ellice Avenue is quite serious.

There is, as the member knows–and if he doesn't, I'll inform him now–there is active lobbying going on within the community. Government's supporting that, the business community's supporting that, the scientific community's supporting that.

We recognize the value of the biodiagnostic research centre. Some of the magnetic 'resonance'–resonance imaging that they've done has resulted in new products being developed in Manitoba, which are now sold all around the world under the name of IMRIS. It's a very important centre.

There is a widespread community effort going on to support the continuation of that effort. Our government's in discussions with federal ministers with respect to that. We expect to see some improvement in that decision which will allow for more possibilities to save that institution in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the institute of biodiagnostics is to magnetic resonance imaging in today's scientific and industrial advances what the Avro Arrow was to Canada in the 1950s. In the 1980s when the CF-18 contract was sent elsewhere, there was a huge outcry, yet today when an incredible team of scientists is split apart to be dispersed like Avro Arrow engineers around the world, there's virtual silence publicly from this Premier.

We have an amazing scientific team at the institute of biodiagnostics, a team which spawned the rapidly growing companies of IMRIS and Novadaq. Why has the Premier not been active, enlisting public support in an effort which is so important to the future science and economy of our province?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I appreciate the passion and [*inaudible*] the member for River Heights is showing on this matter.

We know that the federal government made a decision to shut that institution down; that's very unfortunate. There have been representations made to the federal government with respect to the value of that institution, the scientists there, and the scientific outcomes, which have generated the commercialization of MRI technology, which is now being used around the world in health facilities.

I could tell the member that our government is working very closely with members of the business community that are making these representations. We have some early indications there may be a softening of that position by the federal government to essentially shut that institution down.

I appreciate the member raising the question. We will continue to work on a constructive approach to ensure that institution plays a role in Manitoba. It would be helpful if the members of the opposition would also raise their voices on this matter. They claim to have a very close relationship with the federal members of Parliament. If they would exercise their influence on behalf of all Manitobans with the federal members of Parliament, we could even make more progress on that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Three years ago, Ian Smith, director general of the institute of biodiagnostic, received an Order of Canada. The federal minister, Tony Clement, said, Dr. Smith is an outstanding example of how a highly motivated scientist can move innovative research discoveries into the public realm for the good of all Canadians.

He continued, the Government of Canada is committed to supporting researchers and innovators like Dr. Smith who conduct world-class research, improve the lives of Canadians, and promote Canada's place in the world.

Today, the Clement-Harper government is dismembering the very institution, and the Premier isn't standing up publicly.

When will the Premier leave the public effort, which is so vital, to stand up to the Harper government against the dismembering of some of the most important science, research, and industrial development in our province?

Mr. Selinger: I see the member is expressing a great deal of passion about this issue.

The reality is Tony Clement is the chair of Treasury Board. If he feels, at the federal level—if he feels the biodiagnostic research centre is of such great value, he has the direct ability to do something about it. He has received—federal government has received representations from the community of Manitoba, including the government of Manitoba, about the value of that centre. We understand there's some reconsideration going on right now.

We would hope that the members of the opposition, who claim to be very closely associated with the federal Conservative government, would have raised their voices along with all the rest of the members of the community, the Manitoba Business Council, the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, members of the government, members of the scientific community. If we all join together, our chances of saving that centre in Manitoba would be dramatically increased.

We've looked for their leadership along with us on that matter, and I thank the member for River Heights for raising the issue once again.

Beverage Containers Recycling Program

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, there's certainly been some rather graphic questions asked this session, and the honourable member for River Heights is to be commended. He's certainly raised something that is just one of many areas which have been under attack recently, perhaps none more so than the environmental sector.

And we have not heard very many questions from members opposite pertaining to the environment. It does happen to be the place where we all live.

And I'm wondering if our honourable Conservation Minister might care to take this opportunity to inform the House of some very important improvements being made in the area of waste reduction, which certainly demonstrates our government's ongoing commitment to areas which members opposite apparently aren't even aware of.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Well, yesterday I was—I had the pleasure of announcing, along with the Canadian Beverage Container Recycling Association, that there is a new recycling target for beverage containers now in Manitoba that's a reduction of 75 per cent by 2016. That's a very aggressive target.

And one important way that that can be met is by the leadership of people in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, by people in this building in government, and people of the City of Winnipeg, among other municipalities. I was very pleased that I was able to join Councillor Wyatt in announcing that the City and Province were going to aggressively expand the availability of recycling containers for beverage containers.

And for the Province, we think it's very important that we show leadership right—starting in this building, on the grounds, Memorial Park and, indeed, in all our parks in Manitoba. In the years ahead, we'll be targeting beverage containers for recycling to make it easy and convenient for all of us to make sure that Manitoba's recycling rate significantly improves.

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

* (14:20)

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

Order, please.

Following oral questions on May 28th, 2012, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mrs. Taillieu) raised a matter of privilege concerning a matter of privilege she had originally brought to the attention of the House on June 15th, 2011. The June 25th–June 15th, 2011, matter of privilege dealt with the fact that the annual report of the Children's Advocate had not been referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs within 60 days, as is required by legislation. The honourable Official Opposition House Leader noted that former Speaker Hickes had taken the June 15th, 2011, matter under advisement, but did not return to the House with a ruling. The honourable Official Opposition House Leader also noted that this incident had not been captured in the Speaker's rulings collection, although a point of order raised on June 2nd, 2011, regarding a different subject matter had been included in the Speaker's ruling collection, despite no formal ruling from the Speaker. She questioned why the matter of privilege incident had not been included in the rulings collection, while the point of order had been included. She also explored whether the fact that the matter of privilege ruling had not been included in the rulings collection breached her privileges as Official Opposition House Leader and, further, sought clarification to inquire whether a Speaker is

obligated to make a ruling after having taken an issue under advisement. She also noted that if a Speaker does not rule on the matter of privilege that is raised, how is the House to know whether the matter raised was or was not a prima facie case of privilege? I took the matter under advisement in order to consult with the procedural authorities.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity, and, second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House have been breached in order to warrant putting the matter to the House?

In terms of timeliness, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader noted that she had first raised the issue of the Children's Advocate report not being referred to the committee as required in June of 2011, and explained that the former Speaker had taken it under advisement and had not returned with a ruling. She did not indicate that she was raising the issue of the lack of a ruling at the earliest opportunity, but given that there are mitigating circumstances due to the original matter of privilege not being ruled on, I'm inclined to be lenient on the issue of timeliness in this unique situation.

Turning to the specific issue of whether or not the issue raised on May 29th, 2012, is indeed a prima facie case of privilege, I can respectfully advise the honourable Official Opposition House Leader that it is not. Joseph Maingot, in the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, states on page 14, in quotations: Allegations of breach of privilege by a member of the House that amount to complaints about procedures and practices in the House are by their very nature, matters of order. End of quotations. He also states, on page 223, of the same edition, in quotations: A breach of the standing orders or failure to follow a practice—an established practice would invoke a point of order rather than a question of privilege. End of quotations. In addition, Maingot further advises on page 224, of the same edition, that, in quotations: Parliamentary privilege is concerned with the special rights of members, not in their capacity as ministers or as party leaders, whips or parliamentary secretaries, but strictly in the capacity as members in their parliamentary work. Therefore, in quotations: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader cannot claim the protection of parliamentary privilege for the duties—for the performance of her duties as House leader, but only as an MLA. All three of the above

references from Joseph Maingot are supported by rulings from Speakers Rocan, Dacquay and Hickes.

Although it has been established that there is no prima facie case of privilege for the issues raised on May 28th, 2012, I will now delve into some of the specific questions raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mrs. Taillieu) in order to help answer some questions and, also, to provide clarity for the House.

First, there is the issue of the matter of privilege regarding the Children's Advocate report raised by the honourable Official Opposition Leader on June 15th, 2011, that Speaker Hickes took under advisement and did not return with a ruling. To provide clarity to the House, when a Speaker takes an issue under advisement and says, he or she will return, in quotations, "if necessary," end of quotations, or merely indicates that he or she is taking the matter under advisement, but does not state clearly on the record that he or she will return to the House with a ruling, it is up to the discretion of the Speaker to decide whether a ruling is an appropriate way of dealing with the situation. In the case of the June 15th, 2011 matter, Speaker Hickes stated on page 2,880 of *Hansard*, when taking the matter under advisement, in quotations: "I'm going to take this matter under advisement to allow the House leaders, hopefully, to get together and discuss this further and come up with a resolution that will—should be agreeable to the House. I'll give that first opportunity first for the House leaders to discuss it, so I'll be taking it under advisement at this moment." End of quotations. In these remarks, Speaker Hickes did say that he would be returning to the House with a ruling—pardon me, he did not say that he would be returning to the House with a ruling. It could be the case that he felt the matter was satisfactorily resolved when a committee meeting was soon called for the consideration of the Children's Advocate report, but it is not appropriate for me, as Speaker, to pass commentary on this or offer an opinion on whether or not a ruling should have been given by Speaker Hickes.

It would also not be appropriate for me to deliver a ruling on the matter of privilege raised on June 15th, 2011, as that was an issue that had been taken under advisement by former Speaker Hickes. All I can do is to offer to the House an observation in a general sense, without ruling on the specifics from last June. In previous situations where Speakers have been asked to rule or comment on the fact that laws

or statutory provisions have not been complied with, Speakers Rocan, Dacquay and Hickes all ruled that whether or not a law has been broken is something for the courts and not for the Speaker to decide. In addition, *Beauchesne* citation 31(10) advises that the failure of the government to comply with the law is not a matter for the Speaker, but shall be decided by the courts.

Also, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader questioned why the matter of privilege from June 15th, 2011, had not been included in the rulings collection, while a point of order from June 2nd, 2011, was included. I should inform the House that the rulings collection referred to is an internal reference document prepared by the staff of the Clerk's office to assist them with their procedural research duties and is not—is not—an official document of the House. As a courtesy, this document is also shared with the House leaders from both sides of the House in the hope that it may be of assistance to them. However, the sharing of the document does not mean that the House leaders have the prerogative to determine how the collection is prepared or depicted.

I am advised that on June 2nd, 2001, point of order had been included in the rulings collection, because in speaking to the point of order, Speaker Hickes had made a partial ruling on language and had then taken the point of order under advisement, while in the case of the June 15th, 2011, matter of privilege, no ruling had ever been made. Therefore, due to a lack of a ruling it was not included in the rulings collection.

For future reference, when members have concerns or questions about matters like this, I would invite them to speak with me in my office. I would always welcome such conversations with any member as it would allow me the—to investigate their concerns and to report back to them. I am confident that members do not wish to be construed as criticizing Assembly staff on the record, and I feel that my office would be a better place to have those conversations than on the floor of the Chamber.

I thank the House for listening to my observations here this afternoon.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Pembina Active Living 55+

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, staying active is one of the most important things

you can do to help ensure a happy, long life. It is increasingly important for a society, as people stay active as they aged, and it maintains overall health and improves recovery times after operations. The members of Pembina Active Living 55+ demonstrate that staying active can also be a fun way for people to get together, learn about each other and create community.

Mr. Speaker, PAL 55+ is formed around the mission to improve the quality of life for older adults. Its board executive president Bob Newman, Karen Moffatt, Ed Politzer and John Gribben, provide direction and leadership to the club's nearly 300 members. They have set out to encourage life-long learning among older adults and eliminate social isolation by promoting interaction. This helps build and strengthen a sense of community by bringing people together who share common beliefs and provide them with structure and resources to help navigate life as they age. There is no end to the ways that they encourage these connections.

*(14:30)

The many activities that are organized by PAL 55+ demonstrate just how seriously they take their mission. Just this spring they held their Zing into Spring tea and bake sale, and the Still Bloomin' Garden Club—both of which are designed to bring people in the community together to learn, share stories and have some fun.

This summer they will be holding a picnic, a 10-week drop-in work series, and participating in the second annual Memory Walk for Alzheimer's. This is in addition to many of the hobbies and exercise workshops that are held throughout the year. I have been consistently amazed by how involved PAL 55+ is in the community and how effective they are at bringing people together to stay active and connect within their own community. I go to their events whenever I can, but they're so active and have so many get-togethers that I can barely keep up.

Mr. Speaker, south Winnipeg is made richer by the community involvement the Pembina Active Living 55+. An organization—as an organization they hold up their values: togetherness and mutual understanding. They do this through encouraging older adults and everyone else to maintain active, healthy lifestyles. I applaud PAL 55+ and encourage all those older adults interested to join up, participate and stay active.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ayla and Van Hamilton

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): As the MLA for the Riding Mountain constituency, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to talk about a couple of constituents in Riding Mountain who have won Capturing Opportunities Awards.

Siblings Ayla and Van Hamilton of Russell received the Rural Youth Achievement Award. Ayla and Van found the helping—Kids Helping Kids organization, to reunite immigrant parents working in Russell with their children and families who they have had to leave behind when they moved to Manitoba. This year, Ayla and Van helped reunite nine children—have already begun to work to reunite nine children again next year. Young humanitarians like Ayla and Van are exactly what communities need. They are shining examples of the bright and talented youth who play an integral role—or part of Manitoba's future.

Mr. Speaker, Ayla and Van's actions to give back to their community of Russell show selflessness and compassion way beyond their years. I couldn't think of a more deserving pair of recipients for the Capturing Opportunities youth—Rural Youth Achievement Award.

Secondly, the Asessippi Parkland Economic Development Corporation has done tremendous work over the years to bring visitors to the Asessippi area and also promote the many wonderful things this area of Manitoba has to offer. This year, at the Capturing Opportunities Awards, Asessippi Parkland Economic Development Corporation received the Economic Development Innovation Award for community involvement by an organization or municipality. Asessippi Parkland EDC received the award for their achievements in maximizing regional resources through tax-sharing agreements. Asessippi Parkland development corporation is comprised of five rural municipalities in the surrounding areas, including the village of Binscarth, RM of Russell, town of Russell, RM of Shellmouth-Boulton and the RM of Silver Creek. They came together to help grow and strengthen new and existing businesses that contribute to the economic viability of the region. The Asessippi Parkland EDC has a vision for a new prairie economy. Their dedication and innovation—innovative ideas have helped bring new business spirit to the region and also makes the Asessippi Parkland EDC a unique place to settle down.

Mr. Speaker, once again, as the MLA for the Riding Mountain constituency, it gives me a great pleasure—gives me great pleasure to honour Van and Ayla Hamilton and the Asessippi Parkland EDC today in the House. Once again, congratulations to all of their recent achievements. I wish them the best of luck in their future endeavours and look forward to the new ideas from each of them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

International Trade with India

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Last week, our government received the consul general of India, Mrs. Preeti Saran. Mrs. Saran, a highly respected diplomat of the government of India, has over 30 years' experience in the Indian Foreign Service. A well-educated and trained professional, Mrs. Saran has been extensively involved in multilateral diplomatic work on the Indian peninsula and Southeast Asia, before taking her posting in Canada. It was her first visit to Winnipeg, and while visiting us she attended several productive meetings and her visit marked the excellent opportunity to extend our working relations and find common points of future projects between Manitoba and India.

India is a priority market for Manitoba. Manitoba Trade and Investment has dedicated staff for India and focus attention on this emerging market. Our government knows that the economic growth and social prosperity are linked to our ability to continue to engage effectively in the highly competitive international arena. Manitoba has a diversified economy and export base, and India represents an excellent and important international market for our province. Maintaining healthy relationships between our governments and businesses is vitally important for our future shared prosperity.

I must thank some of our senior and hard-working bureaucrats like Dr. Barry Todd, Mr. John Clarkson, and Ms. Diane Gray for their past work in building the healthy trade relations between Manitoba and India.

Promotion of trade, tourism and education exchanges are being updated with the advice of our newly formed council of international trade, co-chaired with Dave Angus, again, a competent executive and CEO of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, and minister of enterprise, trade and training, to reflect the rapid growth and increasing economic importance of BRIC nations and new

opportunities that are being opened up for Manitoba businesses. BRIC nations, of which India is a strong member, contain 40 per cent of the world's population and are among the fastest growing emerging economies, and poised to become the dominant economies of the world stage by 2050.

Projects like those represented by recently signed MOU with Crompton Greaves demonstrate the positive relationship between Manitoba and India business. Huge investments like these in the development of power transformer and energy technology will help the Manitoba economy for decades to come.

Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the consul general's visit to Manitoba, it is appropriate to consider the nature of our relationship. I'm happy to say that our relationship has grown stronger and it is from—stronger than ever. And I see our future to be far more beneficial in the long range for our province and our great country, Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bob Porth

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I rise today to congratulate Mr. Bob Porth for being presented the Lieutenant-Governor's award for historic preservation and promotion by the Honourable Philip Lee at Government House on May 10th, 2012.

This award recognizes a handful of individuals whose efforts have contributed to the appreciation of Manitoba's history in the province and beyond. The winners are selected annually in a competitive process administered by the Manitoba historic society.

Bob Porth was certainly a deserving recipient. His contributions to his community are too numerous to name. A resident of Whitemouth, Manitoba, Bob became involved with the Whitemouth museum in 1976, two years after its founding. Over the past 36 years, he's played a crucial role in many projects that have expanded the museum's operations, such as constructing a large wooden-frame artifacts building, a large steel machinery storage exhibition building, and a blacksmith shop. Under his leadership as president of the Whitemouth museum—has seen significant growth with approximately 450 people visiting each year.

Bob has taken on several milestone projects over the years, bringing them all to successful conclusions. He spent three years researching,

writing and editing a 256-page history book of the municipality of Whitemouth, *Trails to Rails to Highways*.

As the local historian in the area, Bob is the go-to person to contact when one is searching for long-lost ancestors that passed through the area over the years. He uses his many connections to gather relevant information for his clients, who are usually referred to him by the local RM office.

Bob's passion for history extends beyond his volunteering at the museum. He enjoys his own private collection of antiques at his residence, displayed in his basement and shop. Several of his items have been passed down to him by both family and community members.

I am delighted to congratulate Bob Porth on his significant achievement. His dedication to the town of Whitemouth and his home province—this has not gone unrecognized.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Child Welfare System

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak for a moment on a very critical issue in Manitoba, that being the state of the child welfare system and the atrociously high numbers of children in care at this moment.

Currently, in Manitoba, there are about 10,000 children in care; 75 to 80 per cent of these children are Aboriginal, mainly of First Nations status. The main reason these children are coming into care is because of neglect, neglect due to the issues of poverty, poor housing, lack of nutritious foods, high unemployment, addictions and challenges with achieving a healthy state of well-being.

* (14:40)

Today, the three grand chiefs of this province have issued a press release demanding the resignation of Manitoba's Children's Advocate. Simply means—simply, this means that our First Nations peoples in this province have lost complete confidence in the Children's Advocate's ability to advocate on behalf of children.

I agree and support the chiefs' demands, in that Ms. MacDonald has demonstrated her personal doubts about the value of the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry. I applaud the First Nations' leaders in this province for demanding a review of the current child

welfare system, as they believe the current CFS system has failed First Nation children and families.

It is time for the Province to review the current CFS structures and how the current system has deviated from the original intent and spirit of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Child Welfare Initiative. The Province, along with the grand chiefs and Manitoba Métis president signed an MAU–MOU in 2000 to restructure the system, to ensure Aboriginal children and all children are no longer ripped apart from their families and communities and lost into a myriad of mainstream government-controlled systems. As we see today, this is not happening. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) needs to act quickly to have a meeting with the grand chiefs and with David Chartrand.

Manitobans demand transparency and accountability of what's happening with the current state of child welfare. It is important that the Province, as soon as possible, release recommendations of section 4, child and family service reviews and child death reviews. This, indeed, is what was asked for in a *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial published today, which was commenting on the situation with Darlene MacDonald. The editorial said, if the office of the Children's Advocate is truly supportive of the public's right to know, it should ask the government to make section 4 reports public.

I am asking the government today to act as soon as possible to make section 4 reports public, as they were in the death of toddler Gage Guimond, to provide justice to all the children in Manitoba who are now in care or who have been in care of Child and Family Services.

Thank you.

House Business

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business.

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, in accordance with rule 78(4) and 78(4.1), I'm tabling the list of ministers to be considered in the concurrence process, Thursday, June 14th, 2012, with the understanding that the list of ministers is to be considered concurrently, and this list is in effect for Thursday. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that the list of ministers required for concurrence on June 14th has been tabled.

The honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Thank you—

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day—pardon me.

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, move into Committee of Supply to continue the concurrence process.

Mr. Speaker: Prior to resolving into the Committee of Supply, I neglected to ask the House if there were any grievances, so are there any grievances?

GRIEVANCES

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Mr. Speaker, when we look back at this session, I believe one of the days that will be remembered in history is the inappropriate and antidemocratic activity which led up to and included the events of April 19th.

Ben Rempel, an assistant deputy minister, sent emails out to many people in the civil service and outside in a carefully crafted effort to recruit civil servants to engage in political activity—a rally for political purposes at the Manitoba Legislature.

The rally occurred at the Legislature on April 19th. The non-partisan nature of the civil service in Manitoba is vital and essential as a part of our democratic process, not only here in Manitoba, but across Canada.

The separation between a non-partisan civil service and politically elected officials is a vital and essential part of our democratic tradition and the democratic process as we have it here in Manitoba and in Canada.

On April 19th of this year at the political rally in the Legislature and in the events leading up to this political rally, the very basic rules and procedures and traditions of our democratic society were broken. Indeed, I will say it stronger. The basic rules, procedures, and traditions of our democratic society were smashed and shattered.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious matter. During this legislative session, more details have emerged which only add to the severity of the concerns over this issue: a civil service which has deliberately acted in a partisan fashion.

Let me be clear. This is not about the merits of whether immigration settlement services should be delivered by the provincial or federal governments, or the merits or the lack of merits of these two options.

I prefer provincial delivery of immigration settlement services. And the—but the decision on which level of government delivers these services is clearly a political decision. The issue here, which I'm discussing now, is whether the civil service is and must be non-partisan, as we have it—come to expect it, and assure that it should be.

Sadly, on April 19th, during this session, members of the provincial civil service were recruited by a civil servant or civil servants, as the emails were circulated and recirculated, using government emails on government computers to engage in a political rally. This is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, an inquiry into what happened is needed. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) must have the ethics to call such an inquiry. I call on the Premier to behave in an ethical fashion and to call an inquiry into the events of April 19th, the political rally, and the actions which led up to these events, saving, preserving and enhancing, our democratic democracy demands and requires this inquiry.

I call on the Premier to acknowledge this and to call this inquiry.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to move into the Committee of Supply to continue the concurrence process.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, will you please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

Mr. Chairperson (Tom Nevakshonoff): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

The committee has before it consideration of the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

On June 12th, 2012, the Official Opposition House Leader (Mrs. Taillieu) tabled the following list of ministers of the Crown who may be called for concurrent questioning today in debate on the

concurrence motion: Labour and Family Services; Infrastructure and Transportation; Aboriginal and Northern Affairs; Conservation and Water Stewardship; Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. The Minister of Cultural, Heritage and Tourism (Mrs. Marcelino) will also be called for questioning today, carrying over from yesterday's list.

Floor is now open for questions.

* (14:50)

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I'm just looking at some numbers in regard to tourism, and I note that in 2009 the number of visitors to Manitoba, in regard to tourism, was 8.13 million with visitor spending of \$1.2 billion. But I also note that in Saskatchewan, our neighbouring province, the number of visitors was 8.9 million with \$1.63 billion spent.

So I'm wondering if the minister can indicate why it is that Manitoba is falling behind Saskatchewan in tourism.

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Thank you to the member for the question.

First, I would like to respond to yesterday's question about tourism visitation to Manitoba which—I didn't obtain the figures right away. But now I do have the figures. According to the latest Statistics Canada data from 2010—that's the latest, because last year's, or 2011, won't be available until January 2013—tourism in Manitoba visitation—tourist visitation in Manitoba totals close—or came close to 1.3 million visits from out of province, and that is up over 4 per cent from 2009. Also, for breakdown: the number of tourists coming from other Canadian provinces is in the number of 836,000; from the United States of America, approximately 370,000; and from overseas we had 66,000. And that was for 2010.

I would also want to add that Manitoba gets—or we get a bang for our tourism buck. Many Manitobans don't know our per capita return on tourism marketing dollars is among the highest in the country, while our spending on tourism marketing is among the lowest in Canada.

Mrs. Taillieu: The minister didn't answer the question. I'm wondering—I'll just try and pose it again. It seems that, you know, we're comparable provinces, we're neighbours, and yet the tourism in Saskatchewan seems to be much more—much higher with more visitors and more visitor spending than is

happening in Manitoba. So I'm curious to know why that would be?

Ms. Marcelino: I would like to mention that Manitobans understand the great tourism destination our province is. We all know that to be and these tourists coming from outside our borders, or visitors choosing to vacation here also appreciate that. And to ensure that this growing area of our economy continues to expand and prosper, our province created Travel Manitoba, an arm's-length agency, to take a lead role in tourism marketing, visitor information services, product development, research and public information. And our government—our department is very appreciative of the efforts and the accomplishments of Travel Manitoba.

They may not have a very big budget as other tourism agencies of other provinces enjoy, like Saskatchewan, but we're happy and we're proud of the accomplishments of Travel Manitoba, as far as bringing tourists to Manitoba are concerned.

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister indicate if there have been any funding cuts to any cultural events, fairs or festivals anywhere in Manitoba this year?

Ms. Marcelino: We have attempted to keep the budget as is, as much as possible, but we are finding it difficult to—not to—to proceed with no cuts whatsoever, so it's under consideration how much we will have to shave off of the grants to all agencies. But the amount is—would be very fair and reasonable.

Mrs. Taillieu: The minister has just told me that she is cutting some funding to some cultural events and fairs and festivals in the province.

I'm wondering who makes the decision on who gets cut, and maybe she can tell me what is going to be cut. Which fairs, festivals, or cultural events are not going to get the same funding or no funding?

Ms. Marcelino: If we will proceed with planned cuts, it would be across the board. We're trying to maintain as we speak, but if it comes to the point that we have to cut the funding to grants—or festivals and cultural organizations, everyone will receive cuts. But right now we are not in that situation yet, but certainly we are looking into that because of the financial situation we find ourselves in.

For over the years, we've hold onto our budget despite the financial downturn in 2008-2009. But in the interest of balancing the budget come 2014, we may have to go to that decision, but right now we

don't know yet the percentage. But if that does happen, all—it's across the board.

Mrs. Taillieu: Has the minister been asked to find some savings within her department, and what percentage has she been asked to find?

Ms. Marcelino: All departments are being asked to find savings, and for our department it's still being considered—or the department's still trying to figure out if it's possible to cut our budget in the range of \$2 million.

Mrs. Taillieu: I think cutting \$2 million out of cultural events and fairs and festivals around the province is going to be pretty significant for a lot of the organizations that put on these events. And certainly they will be looking, if it's traditionally been funded by the department, they'll be looking for those funding opportunities again.

I'm wondering if the minister has informed anyone of these cuts so that they will be aware that these could be coming from her.

Ms. Marcelino: Just as I have mentioned, it's still being discussed in the department. And if there would be a cut and if it's proceeding this year, definitely it will be communicated to everyone concerned. We're upright, forthright and honest and forthcoming in our dealings with everyone, and we won't be holding information.

Mrs. Taillieu: It just seems odd. You know, we've heard from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) what his approach was in cutting funding to RDCs. They relied on that funding, they were spending some of the money ahead of time, and then all of a sudden the rug was pulled out from under them, and without any information or any forewarning that was going to happen.

* (15:00)

So, when the minister says, oh, well, we'll let people know, I don't have much faith in that. I'm just now going to ask her, has anybody been denied funding to date?

Ms. Marcelino: Not to my knowledge. All of the fundings, early part of the year, have been given. And if there would be funding, if there would be grants, that will not be funded, it would have to be—there would have to be a very good reason.

As much as possible, we're trying to proceed with all of the festivals and provide grants to all of the institutions.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, that kind of sounds to me like first-come, first-served. I mean, as long you get your name in ahead of time, you might get the funding, but if you don't, you're out of luck near the end. Is that what the minister's saying?

Ms. Marcelino: Could you please repeat the question?

Mrs. Taillieu: Sure. Sounds to me like what the minister is saying is it's a first-come, first-served. So, if you get your application in while there's money available, you get it, and then if there's none left, you're out of luck. Is that what's going to happen?

Ms. Marcelino: That's never the policy in the department. All applications are treated and studied and evaluated based on their merits. Its—and all the dates for applications, the funding deadlines, are all known by agencies and festival organizers. So it's not a first-come, first-served basis.

Mrs. Taillieu: When you're considering the merits of funding cultural events, fairs, and festivals around Manitoba, what do you take into consideration when you consider the merits? Does it have anything to do with who holds that particular riding?

Ms. Marcelino: We're very fortunate or very proud of the many events and festivals happening in the province, and we have a very good relationship with all the proponents and we're happy with the results of all their efforts.

And arts and cultural activities we know are at the heart of Manitoba's communities, because they help bring communities to life and it adds to our quality of life—and we're very proud of that—and it brings Manitobans or all of us together. So we are very much appreciative of all their efforts, and they're being treated definitely with respect.

Mrs. Taillieu: You know, I really liked the answers better before the minister got the prepared notes sent in to her. They were much more forthcoming. She might want to consider—her answers, I seem, sounded better to me before she had the prepared statements, so I liked those better.

I'm wondering if the minister can tell me if the funding for the Manitoba Stampede and Morris Valley Ag Society will be in place this year and next.

Ms. Marcelino: I've been to the Manitoba Stampede once, and I'd like to be there again; I hope to be there this coming year as well. And it's a very important festival in our province, and I don't see any reason

why funding for that festival will even be considered to be not granted.

Mrs. Taillieu: I'd like a more definitive answer than I can't see why not. I don't really consider that an answer. I would like a 'definitive' answer—yes or no.

Ms. Marcelino: I will have to check my records. I don't have the list of the festivals for this year, and I could provide that to the member very soon.

Mrs. Taillieu: Did the minister just tell me she has a list of festivals and fairs and events that will be funded and then, I guess, not funded?

Ms. Marcelino: No. Our department has a list of festivals that have been ongoing and are funded in the past and again will be funded in the future. I just—you were asking specifically for one festival. I definitely can tell the member it's in the list of festivals to be funded because it has been in the past and I'm sure in the future a very valuable festival for the province.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I have a question with regard to libraries. Last AMM convention, the minister was asked a question with regard to funding for the operations of libraries and museums, and there was a concern raised that funding for rural libraries and museums, particularly operating grants, are a concern, and they were asked—they asked the minister if the Province would be making more money available. The minister at that time said she would take it under advisement.

So can the minister provide me with an update on that question that was presented to her and what the Province has done to address that?

Ms. Marcelino: And I thank the member for the question.

Our government invests over \$5.8 million annually to support local authorities to provide equitable access to millions of physical library holdings and endless electronic resources. As for additional fundings to the libraries in the province, in our meeting with AMM we have told them of the situation our government is facing, so right now there will be no additional grants over and above what the libraries are already receiving.

Mrs. Rowat: And, you know, that's extremely disappointing, especially when you look at the expenditure book, the supplement review, under public library services alone, under salaries, we see a \$49,000 increase in salaries and a flatline on grants and other expenditures.

So what I'm seeing here is the minister actually did take under advisement more money being available, but she missed the point. The point was the money was being identified as needed within operating grants across the province.

So I'm extremely disappointed. It's consistent with this government that salaries, be they managers, professional, technical, or administrative support, have actually increased, receiving dollars, but museums and libraries within the province are flatlined. So I'm very disappointed in that.

Ms. Marcelino: I respect the member's sentiment, and we have honestly communicated with AMM and also in our meetings with staff of libraries—rural area libraries.

We have communicated to them that in this situation that we're facing now, we are constrained to have their funding at the same level as the previous years, but we're hopeful that when things are improved there will be some movement, some development towards their funding.

Mrs. Taillieu: In regard to the Manitoba Film Classification Board, and I know that this is a board that does classify movies and videos that come into the province, but I'm just going to ask in regard to things like video games and movies, that now that the technology—our world is much different now and people have apps for everything, they can download things from the Internet.

*(15:10)

So I'm just wondering, I notice that inspections, for example, have gone down, as have inspections for video games because there's less video games out there for rent because people just get them from the Internet, and, as well, I mean, you know, you can get movies from the Internet.

So I'm just wondering what the current role of the Manitoba Film Classification Board is today.

Ms. Marcelino: Right now the department is trying to assess the situation. We're cognizant of the changes in the way people watch movies or the way people buy movies. They could obtain that online. So there will be a conversation happening specifically on this particular department.

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister indicate how many board members there are on the Manitoba Film Classification Board, and how often they would meet?

Ms. Marcelino: I couldn't see my notes right now, but I'm going from memory. I think there are about 19 members of this classification board.

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister indicate what they are paid for their role?

Ms. Marcelino: I'm not aware of the amount off the top of my head now, and I could provide the member with the figures shortly.

Mrs. Taillieu: I would, in fact, like to know the figures as to the number of board appointments and, certainly, what the remuneration for that board would be. So I'll look forward to that from the minister.

I also want to just ask a couple more questions. I did get the annual report from the Manitoba Ombudsman for the Ombudsman's act; the public interest disclosure; and freedom of information protection of privacy and personal health act.

I just want to ask the minister, these new glossy publications, can she indicate how much these cost to produce?

Ms. Marcelino: I wouldn't have the figures with me. I will endeavour to find it out for the member.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, if the minister could provide the cost, the number that were printed, the person who—or the company that printed them and the distribution list, I would appreciate that.

Ms. Marcelino: We'll certainly provide the member. And I have an answer for the member for Manitoba Film Classification Board figures for board members, fees is \$60,000.

Mr. Chairperson: Just before I recognize the member for Morris, could I ask the members of the House to keep it down a little bit. It's starting to get loud in here. We have loges if they choose to use it.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, thank you for that, Mr. Chair; I was having difficulty.

And I did want to ask the minister to repeat the answer as to the amount. I think she said \$60,000. I'd asked her to confirm that, and if that is the total, the total per year, or the total per month, or what is it?

Ms. Marcelino: My apologies, it's—should be—what is this? First, there are 16 members appointed by order-in-council, and the figure would be—oh, how is this—six—is this 600,000—60—600,000.

Mrs. Taillieu: I just have to confirm that number: \$600,000 for 16 board members.

Ms. Marcelino: I'll provide you with the final number, but I think it's \$60,000.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, I would like that in writing from the minister: The number of board members, the number of times they meet annually and what they are paid annually.

Ms. Marcelino: Yes, I will repeat for the member: There are 16 members of the classification board and they meet three times a year. As for the annual remuneration, it will be provided to the member shortly.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): And to the Minister of Agriculture: Growing Forward 2 is in negotiations right now between the provinces and the federal government. Is the April, 2013 implementation date still standing?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): April of 2013 is the proposed turnover of Growing Forward 2. That's correct.

Mr. Pedersen: And will this be another five-year agreement?

Mr. Kostyshyn: That is correct.

Mr. Pedersen: So, in terms of negotiations and a timetable, what is being proposed in terms—when will the final positions—are they due, as the provinces negotiate with the federal government?

I know there's a 2013 implementation date, but when does—and I'm using Manitoba as the example—when do you have to have your positions in to these negotiations in order to have them on the table?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you for that question. Basically, we're in continuing consultation with the federal counterparts and, tentatively, there has been a date set in Yellowknife where all the Ag ministers and territorial ministers will meet, along with Minister Ritz and staff, to have a tentative plan to have the final document in place.

As we get into the final stages of discussion, there are a number of circumstances that are resurfacing, so I would have to be very honest with the member opposite that discussions are very fruitful and, I guess, the wishes of the federal Minister Ritz is to have the document officially, supposedly, completed by September, but I can't foresee, and I can't make a promise, that all the Ag ministers and Minister Ritz will be on the same page.

So I would anticipate there'll be some strong discussions as we move forward.

* (15:20)

Mr. Pedersen: So, Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, you said there was some issues that have recently come forward or have come back. Can you give me an example of some of those issues that are, that you see as, significant stumbling blocks to getting negotiations completed?

Mr. Kostyshyn: As we use Growing Forward 1 for an example, and I think the wishes as we move into growing No. 2—Growing Forward 2, pardon me, is that, you know, we—I think the wishes are to explore in co-operation. If I can use, for an example, one of the components is the export markets and how we as not only as individual provinces, but how do we work together as Canada and territorial, to work together as a united force, to provide an economic spinoff for the country of Canada but the individual provinces. And we move forward in identifying our various commodities so that we can work forward to a benefit for all concerned in Canada and the provinces.

Mr. Pedersen: So can the minister outline—obviously, some of Manitoba's objectives and goals and desired outcomes would be different from other provinces—what is Manitoba—what are some of the examples of Manitoba's strategic objectives or your desired outcomes? Can you outline what some of your goals are out of this new program?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you for that question.

Yes, I think—to the member opposite, I think we're—we'll be on the same page on this one, is that insurance programs such as crop insurance definitely has proven its valueness to the grain sector and the forage sector or, basically, anybody that uses crop insurance.

So that, to me, is the first thing that I consider being a very key component. As we're well aware, is the—Manitoba has probably, and is, without a doubt, the highest intake of using crop insurance of any other province or any other territory as far as ag. And I think where we've set the model, we've set the footprint to other provinces of how well we delivered it.

So I would—to answer the question brought forward, I would suggest that the crop insurance definitely is the No. 1 priority as we move forward in the agriculture industry.

Mr. Pedersen: So where would livestock insurance fit in this?

Mr. Kostyshyn: As the member opposite is probably well aware, there's been a pilot project that's been in place in Alberta, and I guess it's had a rational reason why it's a pilot project.

I think it needs—I think the discussion that was discussed as my deputy minister and I talked about it, there's certain things that we need to critique. We've—I've had some discussions with the Manitoba cattle producers as far as cattle insurance. You know, we don't know where it's going to go. I guess, living in a perfect world, maybe that would be some of the wishes, but I kind of sense that there's—there are some obstacles in the system that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Pedersen: So does Manitoba have any specific suggestions how to make this a national program, or are you just sitting back and waiting to see what happens?

Mr. Kostyshyn: To the member opposite, no, we're not sitting. As you can imagine, Blaine, we're working very hard.

Mr. Chairperson: Order. Order.

The—we're not to refer to each other by our first names, but by our constituencies and ministerial titles.

Mr. Kostyshyn: My apologies to the member opposite. I—

An Honourable Member: I've been called worse.

Mr. Kostyshyn: My apologies to the member opposite. I just—I guess you have maybe called worse, and I will respect the same rebuttal to a point. My apologies.

No, we're—[interjection] Thank you, Stu. I know, sorry about that.

I want to refer back to the question that has been brought forward. We've been in—we've been working awful hard on this, and as the member opposite brings it forward, the cattle industry has gone through a lot and I think we, as our government, are focusing really hard to somewhat bring forward some alternative plan to make the cattle industry bankable, affordable, because we've lost a lot of individuals basically because of the BSE.

So, in answering your question, we've been in discussions with the Manitoba Cattle Producers.

We've talked to other agencies that may have alternative ideas. So I guess to answer your question, opposite member, is we're not sitting around. We are working forward to provide options and ideas and suggestions with the cattle industry and other commodity groups as well.

Mr. Pedersen: So that's two examples or two priorities. Are there any other priorities that your government has in terms Manitoba needs that would fit into the new GF2?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I guess if we were to build a model and it's a model that in consultation with other Ag ministers, you know, processing a finished product—you know, like we're quite fortunate to have the hog industry and we're able to export to international markets, and I would refer to another commodity, Can-Oat in Portage la Prairie. I think we in the agriculture industry feel that there is—if we can create the incentive to provide economic spinoffs in our Agriculture Department, specifically if we grow the raw product in the province of Manitoba, the additional recipe in that would be is that we proceed with a processing innovation idea of suggestions of how we can improve the economy through secondary industry within the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Pedersen: So how do you grow a hog processing industry in Manitoba with a hog moratorium?

Mr. Kostyshyn: We—thank you—we provide an environmental plan, and I want to remind the member opposite, I think save Lake Winnipeg was part of your wishes as well, so I think once the wishes are met, then I think the opportunity for moratorium will be considered.

Mr. Pedersen: I'm speechless. I'm asking if the—and the hog industry has been very proactive environmentally, you have hog—assistance for the hog industry for handling the by-products from the barns and yet here you're telling me that they're—you can't—we won't be able to grow this industry because it's going to affect Lake Winnipeg. Is that your position?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I'd be somewhat reserved in saying that we're not growing the industry. We are providing, in partnership with the federal government, provincial government, towards addressing the lagoons and the concentration of the phosphorus and some nitrogen. We have an understanding with the hog industry that the monitoring will be addressed, and once the addressed

issues can be, I think—the fact that we move forward in the hog industry is there. We know that there is issues such as potential labour shortages that might be somewhat difficult to address at the hog processing plant, and there might be a number of reasons what that's—may occur. But I want to assure the member opposite that the present scenario, as far as the hog industry goes, has made a very positive move to the international markets. And we, as the Province, will endorse that, whether it's in HyLife or Maple Leaf or the rendering plant that—that's going to be developed in Winnipeg shortly.

* (15:30)

Mr. Pedersen: Part of growing any of the agriculture industry, and you talked about further processing, whether that's livestock, hog, beef, other livestock or the grains industry, is based upon having—as you said yourself, based on having raw product, and part of that is AgriStability, and that's the support for income losses.

What is the government's position in—and I'm talking about a Growing Forward 2 negotiations, where is this government in terms of support levels within AgriStability?

Mr. Kostyshyn: The government's position is to provide insurable production insurance, such as crop insurance. As the member opposite is probably well aware of other insurance programs as far as ag invest, ag stability and a number of other components. And those are—as you could anticipate, as other provinces indicated, is under discussion. At this point in time, I feel—as Ag Minister, I do feel that we need to have an insurance-based program, such as crop insurance, in place in event of disastrous years.

Mr. Pedersen: I would remind the minister that AgriInsurance is the crop insurance side of it. I am not asking about AgriInsurance or crop insurance. What I'm asking about is AgriStability. There are levels right now in—within the AgriStability which require input from the Manitoba government, the Canadian government, federal government and producers. Where does the Manitoba government—where is their support, or where do they see their support base in AgriStability? Is it going to go up? Is it going to go down? We have a lot of—input costs have gone up, whether it's land; whether it's crop input prices; livestock input prices, that AgriStability has not worked very well in some—certainly in some sectors, primarily the beef. What is this government—when you're doing your negotiations, what kind of changes are you looking for to make these

programs—AgriStability only, not crop insurance—in AgriStability, what are you looking to change in there?

Mr. Kostyshyn: As I said, those are under discussion right now with the federal agri minister and other ag—provincial Ag ministers and territory ministers. Yes, there is ag insurance and there's ag invest, which are a secondary component similar to ag stability. I think, in fairness to the member opposite, it's a basely—a sit-down discussion regarding the whole package that was previously in Growing Forward 1. And it's up for discussion with other ministers in the province and Mr. Ritz.

Mr. Pedersen: So there is funding by the Province in the BRMs, business risk management suite, and there is provincial money that's in there. Where is the Province in terms—will they keep the same amount of money in there, budgeted in there, going forward? You're looking at a five-year program; it's a five-year commitment. What is the Province's commitment? Will they keep the funds the same? Will they increase them as the—in order to make these programs work, or is—what is the funding level foreseen from—by the Province?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you for that question, member opposite.

As we set our budgets—and as you may be well aware is that we've set our budget for 2011 and '12, okay, or '12 and '13, pardon me. If there's going to be any particular changes, there would be a noticeable time allowed for do the proposed budget requirement for the upcoming changes.

So, to answer your question, to the member opposite, we do—we will budget accordingly as a decision is made as we move forward in growing No. 2.

Mr. Pedersen: So I'm not understanding here. Are you making this decision on a yearly basis? You're entering in a five-year agreement, and yet you're telling me, if I understand correct, that you're going to make yearly decisions on this. So does this mean that you will commit X number of dollars into Growing Forward and, then, if it costs more you're going to peel it out of the rest of the department?

Mr. Kostyshyn: We will maintain the present budget as we move forward to the ag stability or ag invest. We don't foresee—or don't have any indication that there may changes. We don't know. As I want to refer back to the member opposite, when you're in

negotiations, I think the member opposite has to be somewhat realistic and accept the fact that until we get into the final stages of a discussion—and there's—they'll be ample time to budget accordingly—then we'll address it at that point in time. That's my answer.

Mr. Pedersen: It's always been my experience that it's—negotiations are a lot more successful when you come from a position of strength, and I'm not hearing a lot of strength here. I'm hearing that you're going to go along with the flow, and that's somewhat concerning because we have issues here in Manitoba which may not be the same in other provinces and certainly that's a concern to me.

And I'm still going to go back to AgriStability, because we have—and I'm going to talk about the crop side of it. You have higher inputs. You have a very strong cash market right now on the grain industry and I am somewhat concerned that, looking down the road three to four or five years if and when the commodity prices do drop, that you will have not kept up those support levels within AgriStability.

And does the minister acknowledge that this could be a problem going down the road?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I thank the opposite member for his previous comments before we got into this, and I'd like to remind the member opposite, this is truly a partnership.

And I'm sure the member opposite can really justify decisions that have been made by the federal department, as we're facing today. And if we move forward, as far as answering your question, I want to remind the member opposite, the federal government is a 60 per cent contributor to that pot of money. So I would be kind of questioning—the question is that is the federal government maybe not part of the decision making? Which way were we going to focus towards the payouts for the next five years, as well, is my question to the member opposite.

Mr. Pedersen: Well, the reason that you're in negotiations with the federal government and your other provinces is to come up with a program that will work and not penalize Manitoba. So don't worry about what the federal government's bringing to the table; it's what Manitoba's bringing to the table that really concerns us here in Manitoba.

Now, there are other programs within the business risk management suite, which we call—or actually they're the non-BRMs, I should correct myself.

Food safety and quality, any particular issues in there that the minister sees would—that Manitoba has particular concerns about or issues that they take into these negotiations?

* (15:40)

Mr. Kostyshyn: Yes, I just want to make it understood is that as we talked with the federal government and the minister, there are wishes that he wishes to oblige by, from his treasury department, and I have wishes from our department. But at the end of the day, I think we move forward on the wishes of the federal government and minister, if he chooses not to move forward.

So that's part of the negotiations. But as we all experienced in the last year here, negotiations is somewhat limited. So point of clarification on that. There is negotiations, but it has its limitations as well. So I just wanted to make a clarification on that topic.

The fact, as far as the food safety component goes, yes, there will be additional expenditures that the provincial governments will be faced, as we move into food inspection agencies, Canadian food inspection agencies, yes.

Mr. Pedersen: So, as you're doing these negotiations, you've got an end date here or you hope to have this agreement in place by April 2013. You're in negotiations with a lot of different areas in BRMs, non-BRMs.

Where does the minister see agriculture in Manitoba in the next five years, because that's the period that we're talking about? Where does the minister want to see Manitoba plate—Manitoba Agriculture, agriculture in Manitoba placed in the next five years?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you for that question, member opposite. And I guess that's a fairly straightforward question. I guess if I had control of Mother Nature and I had control of commodity prices, that's—I would love to see good prices. And I would love to see a perfect—and I want to see growth in the province of Manitoba in agriculture, without a doubt, okay.

There is no better way, as far as what the province of Manitoba—what agriculture provides to the economy of the province of Manitoba. So, yes, my wishes would be, I hope Mother Nature co-operates with us and the commodity prices stay well. We also develop markets of processing food,

the raw product as I mentioned earlier. And the incentive is through Growing Forward, is to provide an appetite, explore alternative markets, ideas and suggestions that we reinforce the raw food that we produce here, that we can develop more businesses and provide more economic spinoff in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Pedersen: So how do you do that?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I guess you go to church every Sunday and, hopefully, Mother Nature behaves with us. But I—but what we have to do, and as I said to the member opposite, we have to provide programs that have a bankable insurance [*inaudible*] and such as crop insurance definitely has that.

We also have to provide incentives, okay, towards development, such as research, that we've had in the province here, right, towards food development. We've got the Portage development centre, the Food Development Centre in Portage. Here's a perfect example.

We need to encourage the people to use the Food Development Centre to develop ideas, to develop niche markets, to develop food processing in the province of Manitoba. There's a number of factions, and that is part of the reasons why we get together and have fruitful discussions with other Ag departments, other Ag provinces. But we also have to share resources with the federal government to develop innovative ideas and 'possbly' provide additional financial support to address the appetite to develop niche markets and food processing, as one of many examples, in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Pedersen: So how do you enable the agriculture producers of Manitoba to grow those raw materials in order to have them for further processing? What tools are you going to give agriculture producers so that they can, in fact, produce those products, whether they're consumed in the province, whether they're exported, or whether they are further processed and then used in the province or export? What tools do you give the agriculture community to enable them to achieve that?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you for that question member opposite.

As you're well aware, we do have MAFRI staff that have plans, business plans development, and a lot of these plans are in partnership with the federal government. There is entrepreneurship programs and plans in place that, I think, that we will provide communication with a rural—

The days of the people coming to the GO centres or the MAFRI centres—we will provide incentives. And, then, I'm sure if we checked the website, not only provincial websites, we can check federal websites, there is the encouragement to provide business loan programs or business developments all together.

And let me repeat myself. The food processing is one example of many to the member opposite, and that's why we have to start with the food development centres. And I might be just one of many examples that could be used forward.

But I would suggest, to answer the question, there are business loans and I'm—our MAFRI staff are—and will provide all the necessary information to move forward as far as a program.

Mr. Pedersen: Can the minister give the committee an update on what's happening with Glanbia at the flax plant that burned there in the Russell area. Can the minister give us an update as to what is happening?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I'd love to give an update on that.

Just to the audience, as we all know, on March the 13th, 2012, the fire destroyed the Glanbia facility in the RM of Silver Creek. It was shortly after that I had the pleasure to meet with majority of the RMs, the local RMs and the Glanbia staff in Angusville on March the 26th.

And, then, on March the 28th we met with Gerry O'Dea in Brandon, the Glanbia president, and at that time we had a very fruitful discussion. Deputy minister was with me and I—and the—I guess I would title the individual that works for Glanbia, his first name is Matt, was present as well. And as we talked about the tax benefits, the various programs that we have as far as the Manitoba government, not only through MAFRI but through trade and various other components, we laid the cards out as far as we want them to stay in the province of Manitoba; we will work with them.

We have constant consultation with them. As a matter of fact, it was about a week ago I spoke with the Reeve Fred Dunn and Matt Healy, regarding the—about the plant, and we're looking for an update.

And I wanted to ensure Matt that the Manitoba government, Ag, will welcome a number of ideas and suggestions they may have, and he was very grateful for the discussion we had about that.

And in all honesty to the member opposite, he had no complaints whatsoever of how our staff in the Russell area or our staff in the province of man—MAFRI staff, have done an excellent job, and he says the board has made decisions to hire a consultant to exercise opportunities of measuring and weighing the benefits in various locations.

* (15:50)

So with that being said—I want to repeat myself here, is that we, as the government, have said to them, the door is wide open; please come back to us, we're not—we're ready to sit down and have serious negotiations with you regarding that circumstance, and that's the last we heard mat—Matthew did so much as say to me that he will get back to us, or the plant president said he'll get back to us before—the sense I got, before a firm decision has been made.

Mrs. Rowat: I appreciate the question put forward by my colleague from Midland. This is a very significant issue, and we really want to ensure that this government is aware of what's happening with that plant. There are—there were 75 employees; a number of them have received notice because of the timelines that the company is working within to make a decision, and I know that the company—if they do decide to rebuild, it's going to take a bit of time, probably about 18 months. So, I really want the minister to put on the record that they are working aggressively to keep the plant here. If there are other jurisdictions aggressively working at luring Glanbia to their state or another province—and I believe it would be a huge loss, not only for the Parkland area, but it would also be a huge loss to—for Manitoba to lose this industry.

Can the minister indicate to me if he's had discussions with the Minister for MIT with regard to some of the infrastructure challenges that that plant is dealing with, including Highway 45 and highways—provincial highways that are now under the jurisdiction of MIT instead of the municipality of Silver Creek? Have there been some discussions and some positive outcomes with regard to those two issues?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you for that question, member opposite, and yes, I have asked the minister from MIT to get a budgetary figure of, you know, the proposal as far as, I guess, RTACing the highway to accommodate the loads. The figure that was thrown at me was around \$45 million to accommodate the request of the infrastructure to get it to the main trunk highway.

But I think I have to be somewhat straightforward with the member opposite, is that—I think there's a number of other components that the industry itself is looking at—not only highway infrastructure, there are alternative, other components in the business plan as we move forward, okay.

And I do want to agree with the member opposite that there—the—it's not only a number of other things—the highways is a big one, but there's a number of other components that play into that as well.

But I want to assure the member opposite that we are working very diligently towards that, but I also have the impression that there is a tax-sharing agreement—a supposed tax-sharing agreement with all surrounding municipalities regarding those issues. So I understand that there is a fruitful discussion taking place in the vicinity.

But, at the end of the day, I think the member opposite has to understand is that the \$45 million may be—is a large component of it, and it may not be. And I think that's why we continue to talk with Glanbia on that and we've got some very appropriate staff that are dealing with them on that basis.

But I do want to ensure the member opposite that we realize how important this industry is in a small town; we truly do. But I think at this point in time they have to—Glanbia themselves, as a company, have to understand the fact that the fire insurance—you know, there's probably some fire insurance disbenefits if they don't relocate in that particular site. But it—in the big picture, it's a business decision.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I have a couple of questions for the minister in regards to the Shoal lakes. And during the buyout process and the time of which the Shoal lakes rose, there was some interim finances for those producers that were for feed assistance, and that was referred over to the department of Emergency Measures and 40 per cent of that money came from the Province.

Could the minister tell this House whether or not the 60 per cent federal dollars are going to be flowing at a later date, or is it only the 40 per cent that they're going to receive from the Province?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you for that question. To the member opposite, I don't have that updated information in front of me, but I'd gladly provide that

information to you. Just bring it forward, and I'll gladly fulfill the question.

Mr. Eichler: In regards to the upgrades, the lagoons, for the dairy industry, a number of the smaller producers are finding the guidelines and the time in order to get those into place just not acceptable far as the finances and based on their business return.

Could the minister update for the House what the government's plans are for those smaller producers?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you for that question.

As the—I think the member opposite referred to the dairy industry. And as we all know, they—it's basically a partnership between the federal and provincial government as far as dollars being allocated to improving the lagoon system and updating them. The dairy industry is a component of the programs.

We've had a large uptake of applications towards that particular project, but we do have a limited amount of dollars. So we are in the process right now of identifying the top priority projects, you know, that need to be addressed at this point in time. The wish is, of myself, as Ag Minister, that we continue to address all that.

But also, as the member opposite probably is well aware of, we as the provincial government have increased the incentive towards of the landowner's contribution. I believe it was at 50 per cent and forgive me if I'm out by a few percentage. We've increased that to 75 per cent, I believe. So 75 per cent being covered by the governments and 25 per cent by the producer.

Mr. Eichler: Could the minister, Mr. Chair, tell the House if those producers do not meet the deadline requirement, will they be granted an extension because of the lack of funding that the minister just talked about? Will those that don't qualify or receive compensation to upgrade the lagoons, will those producers, then, be granted an extension until such time there would be money made available to them?

* (16:00)

Mr. Kostyshyn: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, yes, there is a timeline of continuing on. The deadline is—will extend—there is no deadline so to speak. There is a deadline this year for total applications, but there is another year to follow, as far as fulfilling the applications.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Chair, and I have a few questions for the Minister of Family Services.

Just following up on questions that I did ask yesterday in the House, when I was asking for more public accountability and more information around recommendations that were provided by the Children's Advocate, and I'm wondering if the minister can explain to me the difference between why recommendations were released. Maybe, first of all, who authorized the release of the recommendations in the Gage Guimond report, and why, subsequently, recommendations around this latest case can't be released? What's the difference between the two?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Mr. Chair, I think, as the member opposite knows, I wasn't the minister at the time of the release of information on the case that she's talking about. I'll certainly go back and ask what the process was for that.

On the case that she's been referencing in the House, I can let her know generally what the substance of the recommendations have been that the Children's Advocate made. They were recommendations with respect to policy, with respect to supervision, with respect to staffing, with respect to establishing written protocols with out-of-province agencies to ensure that information was being shared. Some of those recommendations have been completed. Some of them are in process. There is a plan to complete those recommendations.

I think I did undertake yesterday—and my plan will be to sit down and talk with the Children's Advocate about a process to make recommendations from special investigation reviews public in a way that doesn't compromise the confidentiality of the children involved, or sometimes those reviews happen before the criminal process is concluded so we also want to make sure that we're not doing anything that could interrupt or prejudice a criminal case.

So I'll be having those discussions with her and then I think we can put in place a process where there's a more regular way to make public the recommendations and for people to get information on what's being done on the recommendations.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank the minister for that because that is one of the most open statements that I've heard from a minister of Family Services in this

government, and I would hope that she would follow through.

I guess the question for me, then, because I do know when the minister talked to the media after the charges were laid in this case, she talked in general about some of the recommendations that were in the report. So I guess I would ask, then, because the minister has read the report, has seen it, were there recommendations around case planning and, you know, sort of proper assessment of this child in care? Were there recommendations that said that there were some shortcomings in a case plan or is she satisfied that there was a full case plan done and that that case plan was followed?

Ms. Howard: I think, you know, I would have to go back and refresh my memory and take another look at it. I don't recall the recommendations being specific to case planning. My recollection is that they were more specific in terms of some staffing issues that needed to be addressed. I think making sure that the supervision policies were clear and making sure that there was ongoing training and that there was a protocol in place to facilitate the exchange of information between agencies from different provinces, but, you know, I can try to go back and refresh my memory.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And there have been several reviews and the Child Advocate has got caught up, which I commend her for, on reviewing the deaths that she had—she was required to review under the legislation. And I know the minister has received the reports and has indicated, you know, on the record, that she has read them all.

I guess, one of the key recommendations, obviously, and something that the Child Advocate's office has alluded to in the past and continues to talk about is case planning. And that is insuring that from day one there is a plan for that—a long term plan for the child that—any child that comes into care and that that is followed through on, and if there is to be a transition or a move from one place to another, that there is a transition plan that is followed.

So I would ask the minister whether she's—because she's read several of the reports, is there a recurring theme that case plans were in place, or that that is a recommendation that still needs to be addressed?

Ms. Howard: I think case planning is something that is being addressed. I know that one of the things that the Children's Advocate spoke about at the

committee that we just had was the amount of training that has been going on on this issue and others for social workers. So that's ongoing and I think it is being addressed. And I would also say that I think the, you know, strengthening the system is an ongoing mandate. But I think there is far more work being done on this issue and far more awareness of the need for it, but I wouldn't pretend that it's perfect every time.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But I'm just trying to get at, you know, that this is one of the first and foremost recommendations for any child. Any child that is as vulnerable as a child that needs to come into care under the protection of The Child and Family Services Act deserves to have a plan in place that ensures the safety and protection and the—and that the transition if they are to be moved is done in a way that, you know, the child—it become—is the first and foremost responsibility.

And it was a recurring theme back years ago when the recommendations from Gage Guimond were released publicly and they talked about case planning. And—so I guess I'm just wondering, I'm sure that the minister, having read all the reports and all of the recommendations, would know whether that is still a significant issue. In the deaths that did occur, was it clear to her that there were adequate case plans in place, or are we still seeing recommendations come from the Child Advocate's office that have concerns about case planning?

And I know there have been some improvements and maybe there are some children that haven't fallen through the cracks because case plans were in place, but I'm just wondering if that recurring theme is there in all of the child death reviews that have been done, or was case planning not an issue?

Ms. Howard: I know this is a question that the honourable member had asked, also, at the committee with the Children's Advocate about what's sort of been done to improve case planning. And she is correct; it has been something that has been recommended in the past. And I just would quote the Child Advocate's response to her question. She said, I think, given the training that social workers are receiving and the accountability by both the authorities and the CEOs of the agency, I do believe there is a real focus on face-to-face visits with children, with having a detailed case plan in place and outcomes for children. I think we're finally getting to a point, in a good place, where we see things stabilizing, and adequate training being given

to social workers and also, hopefully, a reduced case load.

* (16:10)

So I think there has been progress made on this issue. I think we will continue to make progress and I know the Children's Advocate will continue to help us to address that and, you know, I think that what the Children's Advocate noted was that there's been significant training, that there is significant awareness from the authorities' agencies of their accountability for the safety of those children and the importance of case planning in ensuring that. So I think it is improving and we're going to do our best to make sure that it continues to improve.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I'd just like to ask the minister about another external review that was ordered by the former minister into the circumstances that surrounded the—a six-year-old boy who was removed from foster care and returned to his mother; he was subsequently beaten. He is one child that did survive, luckily, because he was able to reach out for help, but it took four times of him pleading and going to neighbours and disclosing that was—had been abused before anyone really listened.

And so I'm wondering whether the minister can indicate whether that external review has been completed because it was ordered a considerable amount of time ago now—I can't remember the exact date—and whether she can share those recommendations. It wasn't a child death review; it was an external review, and I'm wondering if the recommendations from that report could be shared so there's some accountability for the whole situation surrounding this young boy.

Ms. Howard: I think the situation that the member is talking about—I remember when she raised this initially and it was very difficult to understand how a child could ask for help so many times and it not be given, and I think that's exactly why the minister, at the time, requested those reviews. I will check into the status of that review for her and, certainly, we'll take a look at it in the same context that we're going to look at a more regularized way of making recommendations public. So we'll also look at that in the same context.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank the minister for that response, and I just want to speak to some of the comments made in the Ombudsman's report around Child and Family Services and some of the confusion around the roles and the responsibilities of

the agencies, the authorities, versus the Child Protection branch; there seem to be some overlap, some duplication. I think there were some recommendations made by the Ombudsman and—to try to clarify the roles. I wonder if the minister could just comment on what has been done as a result of the Ombudsman's report.

Ms. Howard: I think—I'm not sure I'm thinking of the same report. Is it 2011 report that she's referring to?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It's a report from September 15th, 2008, to March 31st, 2011.

Ms. Howard: Yes, I think the issue that she's referring to is the issue whereby the Ombudsman has a responsibility to report on the status of recommendations that come from the Children's Advocate and the special investigation reviews and some of the issues, making sure that the Ombudsman has the adequate information from the agencies and the authorities and the children's protection branch, so that the Ombudsman can make an assessment of how those recommendations are being followed up.

Recommendations from the special investigation reviews can go to myriad agencies. They can go to child welfare agencies; they can go to authorities. I believe the Children's Advocate also has the power to make recommendations to external organizations as well as to the department, and all of those bodies have a responsibility to follow up on those recommendations but also to let the Ombudsman know that they are following up. And I think we are working and I think there has been considerable progress made with the children's protection branch and the agencies and authorities and other organizations, to understand how that should happen. So I do believe that that information is getting to the Ombudsman in a more timely process, but it is something we'll continue to work on.

There's lots of ways that the children's protection branch works with authorities. There's, of course, ongoing meetings with the director of the children's protection branch and with the COs of the authorities. The deputy minister also meets frequently with the COs of the authorities.

So we continue to work through this issue of making sure that information is getting to the Ombudsman so that the Ombudsman can do his job of tracking those recommendations. My understanding is that it has improved, and we'll continue to make sure that it does improve, because I

think that is a very important part of the accountability loop, that the Ombudsman can carry out his job of making sure that the recommendations that are made by the Children's Advocate are being acted upon by the agencies and organizations that receive those recommendations.

Mrs. Mitchelson: There's one recommendation, specifically, that—and I'll just read into the record what the Ombudsman said in the recommendations: As of the writing of this report, I am advised that the four authorities, in conjunction with the Child Protection branch, through the office of the Child and Family Services Standing Committee, are in the process of completing a protocol on the administrative requirements for completing multi-level recommendations.

And I guess the Ombudsman's office has been finding it very confusing to really track what recommendations have been implemented and what haven't as a result of this complexity of reporting.

Both the office of the Children's Advocate and my office have indicated an interest in seeing this protocol, once complete. It is hoped that this further clarifies and streamlines the process and respective roles of the Child Protection Branch and the Child and Family Services Division and the authorities following receipt of a—following receipt of special investigation reports.

So she recommends, and I quote, that this protocol be completed as soon as possible, but no later than December 31st, 2011.

So I guess I'd like to ask whether the minister has followed through on this recommendation and whether this protocol is in place today.

Ms. Howard: I know that the process of sharing information is much improved. I will go back and ascertain whether the protocol itself has been concluded and has been shared. It is also my plan to arrange a meeting with the Ombudsman to ask those questions, if he is getting the information that he requires to do his follow-up on those recommendations, to make sure that the process has been improved and to talk about what more we can do to make sure that that information is flowing to him in a timely way.

I want to know, I think, as much as anyone, that the recommendations that are made through the special investigation reports to authorities and agencies and to the department, to external organizations, are being followed up on.

So I—it's in everybody's interest that the Ombudsman can do his job, so I want to sit down with him and have that conversation and see what more we might be able to do to improve the flow of information to him.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And just a couple of other questions on—let me find my notes here on some different areas of the department.

One is on the disabilities legislation—accessibility legislation, and I know the minister has set up an advisory council. There was a paper sent out, and there's feedback that is required, I believe, by June the 16th, which is a deadline that's coming pretty close. And then, at that point in time, I think the minister's required to make the recommendations public.

Maybe she could just explain the process and the timelines after June 16th, once she receives recommendations.

*(16:20)

Ms. Howard: I don't have the act right in front of me, but my understanding is that by June 16th the council is supposed to provide me with a report with their recommendations. They've been working very hard to meet that timeline, I think, doing very good work. I am confident that they'll be able to meet that. And, then, I don't recall exactly how much time it is that I have the report before it must be made public, but I do think, then, there is a 45-day period that the public has to provide feedback on the recommendations of the report. So I would anticipate that that report would be made public very soon after I receive it, and then I think there's 45 days for people to provide comment.

Now, given the timing of everything, it may be challenging in the summertime for people to give their comments. So I—you know, I'm going to be flexible on that. I want to make sure that people feel they've had adequate time to provide feedback on the recommendations. So the goal for me of this legislation has always been to try to bring everybody together. I think, you know, I haven't run into anyone yet that thinks that more accessibility is a bad idea, and the council itself brings together people who are within the community of people with disabilities, people who are responsible for businesses, people who are responsible for municipalities. So I want us to continue moving forward together. So if the 45-day period presents a challenge for people, I'm certainly not going to close off discussion.

But I also know there are many in the community who are anxiously awaiting legislation, so we can't talk forever. Eventually we're going to have to move forward, but it's my intention to have it be as open and collegial as possible.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess I would just ask the minister, then, whether she anticipates that legislation will be introduced next spring—accessibility legislation?

Ms. Howard: Well, it's a bit hard for me to know until I see what is being recommended. I certainly wouldn't—I would hope that we can do it by next spring. I think it would, you know, starts to present challenges if we go much beyond that. I don't right now foresee a lot of barriers to that, but until I know what's being recommended and what might be in the legislation it's hard for me to know when it would be introduced. But, certainly, from what I know so far, I think spring would be a reasonable timeline.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And, just briefly on autism and the ABA program, I know that there was a Thrive! strategy introduced last year and the minister said that was just the beginning of the Province's autism strategy and would be guided by input from stakeholders and would work with the community to get feedback.

I wonder if the minister could share with me the feedback that's been received from the community about what needs to be improved.

Ms. Howard: Yes, well, as I understand it, I mean, I think some of the feedback that I have heard is always desire to make sure that there are adequate services available for children who have autism. I think the ABA program has been—is a very good program and, I think—as the member will remember from her time as minister, there is always more that could be done. But I think it is a good program. I know that they are working on ways to get more—to provide more service through that program to more kids. So we continue to work with St. Amant Centre and the Manitoba families affected by autism on that.

I think—you know, the other feedbacks that I've heard is the need for services for adults with autism, and that's something that we have to continue to work on and continue to develop. I think, you know—recently we had a visit in Manitoba from Temple Grandin, who, I know, provided a lot of inspiration and hope to a lot of families who have kids and whose kids are becoming adults with autism about the unlimited potential, really, for those children and

for those adults. But we also need to make sure we have in place the right service mix for them.

So I think, you know, the feedback that I have heard is the ABA program is good. It's very appreciated. I have talked to some parents who think that it's made a real difference in the lives of their kids. But there's always pressure for more services, for more kids, and we'll continue to look at ways of meeting that demand.

But, also, I think we want to help families use all of the resources that are available to them. We know that the education system is becoming much more aware of the challenges that kids have with autism. There are many supports made available through the school system, in terms of special education assistants.

I visited, took a tour of the Lord Roberts school a little while ago, which is an inclusive education model. And the things that they do for kids with autism there are just incredible. This one little guy showed me how he had—he called it his office. He had a little private area that he called his office. It had all his pictures of his favourite things, so that when he was having a difficult time concentrating, it was a place that he could go and focus and concentrate. And he had special education aides there and assistants to help him. And it was done in a way that he didn't feel non-included with the rest of the kids. It was done in a way to help him meet his needs.

So it's that kind of, I think, innovation that we also need to continue to work with teachers and educators on within the school system. We want these kids to be included in all aspects of life, and so we'll continue to work on services specific for kids and adults with autism. But we'll also work across government, to make sure that all those systems can support those families.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): My question is to the Minister of Sport. During the last provincial election the NDP government made a commitment, and in it they committed that they would help to build 13 new soccer fields across Winnipeg.

I was wondering if the minister could tell us how far that commitment is.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Sport): Yes, Mr. Chairperson, the member is quite right. We are dealing with that, and I think that the lead on that particular file has been the Minister responsible for Local Government.

So I think that he would be better suited to respond to the question posed by the member from St. Paul, and I know that he would give a more detailed answer to the question posed.

Mr. Schuler: And one of the other commitments that was made at that point in time was that one of the new indoor complexes would be in Winnipeg's North End, which would make the sport more accessible to inner-city kids.

Again, to the Minister of Sport, could he tell us is he aware of how long that might take before the indoor soccer complex would be built? Is it in discussion? Is it close to having shovels in the ground? Could he just give us an update?

Mr. Robinson: That very topic was, in fact, discussed this week, Mr. Chairperson, and it will be done in the next little while. I can't give the member for St. Paul a precise timeframe, but certainly on the agenda of this government, and we are committed to the promise that was made originally. And I know that this is a growing sport, as the member and I have previously discussed in the Estimates process. I remember about a year ago, we talked about this very issue. But this, indeed, is something that we're following up on, and we're committed to building that soccer stadium.

* (16:30)

While on the subject, Winnipeg is one of the six cities across Canada that will be hosting the 2015 Women's World Cup of soccer. And I know soccer fans are excited by this, because this will give them—give soccer fans and all of us, really, here in Manitoba, an opportunity to witness the highest level of women's soccer and the biggest single sport event in the world for the 2015 Women's World Cup. It's going to feature some 24 international teams playing in a 52-game tournament format. And this event promises to be a real boost for soccer in Canada, and, especially, for women's soccer. I am told many times by experts that soccer is among the fastest growing participation sports in Canada. It's estimated that about 48 per cent of all the participants playing soccer are also female. So we're very proud of this. And, particularly, bringing the national and international event to Manitoba brings a variety of benefits to our province, and these benefits range in anything from direct economic returns to tourism promotion in the global marketplace.

So, while I may be a little wordy in my response to the member's question, I thought I'd mention that

because the member and I did not have an opportunity to discuss these issues in the Estimates process in this session, but, certainly, I wanted to mention that.

On the other pieces of his initial question, we're committed, and we do have a time frame, but I believe I would leave that to my colleague, the Minister responsible for Local Government, to respond to that to give a more accurate response on the timeframe for the indoor soccer facility.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, and then one of these indoor complexes, actually, is used by one of the other fastest growing sports, and that's ultimate Frisbee, which I did a private member's statement on yesterday. Football uses it, as well, to start conditioning for the outdoor season, and it's used, generally, for conditioning for athletes because of the way that the artificial turf is put down. Also, the outdoor fields are used by lacrosse, they're used by field hockey, rugby, and the list goes on and on, and they're a good investment.

Having children involved in sport, I can tell the House that Monday was just a disaster for all sports in the province. And one of the reasons isn't just because it rains, it's because the natural fields are so wet that if you were to play, whether it's a baseball game on a baseball diamond or a soccer game or a football game or whatever sport, it would take almost no time and you would chew up a perfectly good field because the fields were just so wet.

Yet, the artificial turf fields, which the minister's government has committed to building 13 of them, they have great drainage and you don't have the same issues with them being chewed up by children playing sports. So, I mean, it just enhances the whole sports and brings down the number of games that have to be cancelled.

So, to the minister, I just want to point out to him that, you know, Manitobans heard this commitment, and there are many in and around the city who are very excited. Because of—if you read the press release, it says that the soccer fields will be built one in the north, one in the south, one in the east, and one in the west; that would be the outdoor ones. And at least one indoor soccer complex in the northwest quadrant of the province.

So I appreciate the minister's support on this one, and we look forward to hearing more about these projects continuing.

Unfortunately, there isn't the time and that's the nature of the process. I would have loved to have spent an afternoon talking to him about the various needs of all sports in Manitoba, but I appreciate even having a bit of his time to raise a few issues with him. And thank you for that.

Mr. Robinson: Let me thank the member for St. Paul, and I know that he and I share a common passion for many of these, he being a soccer dad, and many of the other sporting activities that we have here in Manitoba. Certainly, we're all proud of our athletes here in the province of Manitoba.

I recently attended an event that was put on by the Canadian Sport Centre called Lift Off to London 2012, and that was to honour and bring about awareness for all Manitobans who will be attending the 2012 Summer Olympics and Paralympic Games in Britain.

And we're still hopeful that athletes like Clara Hughes—and I know that the member for St. Paul will join me in wishing the best for Clara. She is an athlete that I truly admire—that she'll do well in her sport, returning to a sport that she began with, that being, of course, cycling, where her medal-winning Olympic career began. So—and after that, of course, she became a winter Olympian as a decorated Olympic speed skater. So we look forward to her success with the—with her making the Canadian Olympic team this year.

But I do want to thank the member for St. Paul for his comments and I look forward to working with him on his common issues that he and I share.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I'd like to ask a few questions of the Minister of Conservation, and I just like to begin with—there's a news conference today or a rally, I guess, if you can say, over at the zoo today in regards to Makoon, the orphan bear. And I wonder if the minister can provide me with an update on his status at this point—of the bear.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): My understanding, from wildlife officials in the department, is that the bear is at about 30 pounds and is, I understand, in a healthy condition, generally. So that was the information I had fairly recently.

Mr. Maguire: So is it still the department's intention to release the bear during the month of June here, or is it going to be a longer rehabilitation period for this bear cub?

Mr. Mackintosh: The Wildlife division advises that they're looking, really, at three areas: First is weight gain; second is a sense of—a sense that the animal is maturing in terms of foraging ability; and skittishness to humans. So I think there are—those criteria were key, as I understand it from officials, and so the assessment isn't based on any single criteria but rather a consideration, and this is based on a peer-reviewed literature in terms of what should be looked at when considering a bear cub's release from captivity.

Mr. Maguire: The minister has been relying then on, I'm assuming, department experts and maybe your other experts. Can he just indicate to me who the experts are that he has been consulting with or relying on for advice in regards to the developing of a management plan that would ensure that this little bear's greatest odds of survival, I guess?

Mr. Mackintosh: My understanding is the consideration of officials is when the cub is at a stage where the likelihood of survival in the wild is comparable to that of a bear of that age, generally, in the wild, whether orphaned or not. The director—the acting director of Wildlife is Jim Duncan and, of course, there are wildlife biologists that are staffing that department as there have been for many, many years.

In addition, the Wildlife division has consulted with international literature, peer-reviewed scientific literature and publications, and, as well, consulted with a number of experts, I understand, across North America, and, as well, has been working in a co-operative way with the director of the Assiniboine Park Zoo, Mr. Tim Sinclair-Smith, who, by the way, also has expertise. He is a trainer, and has lectured, and has run a refuge facility before he became the zoo director in Winnipeg, I understand.

* (16:40)

Mr. Maguire: Has the minister and his department explored all the options for having the bear permanently placed at the zoo, or has there been any further consideration of a permanent rehabilitation facility in Manitoba for bears?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, of course, the legislative regime in Manitoba is—has, as its objective, keeping the wild in wildlife, and it is, generally, the intention and objective to return wildlife to the natural environment, and that is the intention here. It is not the intention, from the outset, that we want animals

to come into captivity, by and large, and then remain there.

And, in terms of refuge facilities, we understand that there was some interest in an Ontario facility that had publicly called for consideration of having the bear go there. But, according to our wildlife officials, an extended stay in captivity there, beyond applying the criteria here, would not increase the chance of survival when the bear returns to the wild, but would increase the chances of both disease and habituation—becoming habituated to humans, and, indeed, that was a very important consideration.

And, indeed, much of the rehabilitation has been focused on guarding against the concern that the bear may become habituated to humans. And so I think we've got to reflect on what is one of the underlining principles of The Wildlife Act and its provisions, and that is to send signals and to put in place mechanisms so that there's not an interference with wildlife, because, then, it can result in wildlife that is used to humans and will approach humans. And often it's the wildlife, then, that suffers from that, but it's also sometimes the humans.

So it's always important, as part of your wildlife regime, I understand, and the science, to make all efforts, and this should cross all party lines, to attempt to reduce the interference with wildlife and to guard against animals becoming habituated to humans.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): My questions are also for the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship.

When we had Estimates, the financial statements for the Pimachiowin Aki Corporation were not available. They have recently been filed on The Winnipeg Foundation website.

And I would like to ask the minister, it would appear that a sum of \$571,475 was provided them from Conservation for their fundraising campaign that was known as The Land That Gives Life. Is that a correct figure?

Mr. Mackintosh: I do have some responses that have been drafted to some of the questions from Estimates, but I don't see that detail before me. So I can get that information to the member on a timely basis. But perhaps—and I don't know if the members want this, but I do have some information that has been compiled and double-checked by the department that I can put on the record now, and I have a document that I can file. I don't know if you

want me to do that now. I can do that, or if the members want we can provide it in writing in due course. But I did have, for example, the fire program contracts from last year that I can table, and I had moose management committee membership and improvements to Whiteshell, for example. So I can certainly run through that very quickly, but I'll—I know the time is restricted and I'll let the members provide some guidance to me on that.

Mr. Wishart: And, yes, it would be useful if the minister would table what he has for that. We're also looking for the information on how much funds were raised by this fundraising campaign, which we don't—isn't yet available on their website, but we hope that you might also have that number. And there is an additional amount supplied to the corporation from Manitoba Conservation in a different column that is also earmarked fundraising, and it is \$445,000, and there is very little explanation associated with that. So, if you can clear up which or if both of these amounts were given to the corporation to do the fundraising and how the programs differed. The one is specific to the TV campaign, but the other one does not specify what its purpose is.

Mr. Mackintosh: I'll put on the record the information that I do have from the department and then we can drill down if there's further information.

The government of Manitoba is meeting its commitment to contribute \$10 million to Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Fund to generate income to be used to protect, preserve and celebrate the natural features and the landscape of the area and to support programs and initiatives consistent with the management plan for the area. The corporation is leading a fundraising campaign known as The Campaign for The Land That Gives Life—and I recall we talked about this briefly in Estimates—and its continuing efforts to achieve its campaign goal, which is to raise \$10 million for a total endowment of \$20 million. It's our understanding that about 150 donors have contributed to the fund to date. Current sources of fund capital are \$35,000 from the private sector, a hundred thousand from MacArthur Foundation and 2.47 from—\$2.47 million from the government of Manitoba.

Now, the member was talking about these grants. I'm advised that the grants of \$565,000 and \$445,000 were made by the government of Manitoba to the corporation in '09 and '10-11 to support fund development activities and promote the project. So we'll drill down further, then, on the breakdown. The

government of Manitoba's support of the—of that fundraising campaign gives donors and prospects the confidence that all donations go directly to the fund capital and not to admin and advertising costs. Any future contributions made by Manitoba will depend, of course, on the province's financial situation year by year.

Mr. Wishart: Thank the minister for that, and we would really like to get to the bottom of these numbers. They don't seem to quite coalesce with what we had heard in Estimates.

This is a cost-shared venture, as well, and the province of Ontario which has a significant portion of the area in question also contributes. Would the minister have any information on how that funding arrangement works in relation to the area?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well I did, in my briefing, see that there was a contribution, a sizeable contribution from the Province of Ontario, so I can advise the member of that contribution and how that fits with the formula.

Mr. Wishart: Thank the minister for that.

It would appear from the information that is filed on the foundation's website that Ontario contributes about a hundred and fifty thousand a year, but when you look at the area in question they represent almost 40 per cent of the area, and it seems a little out of proportion compared to Manitoba's contribution.

* (16:50)

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, as a result of the question, we'll certainly look to see if there is a formula that's established based on land use, or whether there's a formula or expectation that's based on other objectives or measures or perhaps even fiscal capacity, and we'll let the member know the background to the basis of the relative funding of Manitoba and Ontario.

Mr. Wishart: And thank the minister, and I would assume, then, that the—now that the return is filed, that this will appear on their information website in the near future.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I can't attest to what'll be on their website, but we'll certainly get information independently, in any event.

Mr. Wishart: Moving on from that, I did want to touch briefly on what the current status was in terms of drainage licensing. A year ago, we had significant backlogs in the province, both new construction

licensing and so-called minor works, which is the maintenance programs. I just wondered what the status, in terms of dealing with that backlog, is.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, this area is a major issue of concern to me. I think that we have to very seriously rethink the drainage licensing regime that has developed in Manitoba over the years.

The challenge really comes from the fact that it is particularly during a flood year that most applications come in, and also, of course, when there's a need for timely processing and, generally, redeployment of necessary staff to fighting the flood and dealing with those critical issues and sometimes responding to complaints that have to be immediately addressed.

I think the serious question about the onus on RMs has begun to be addressed by a working group that has very successfully come back with a plan to enable a more efficient dealing with drainage licence applications from municipalities.

The next big challenge, however, is to really rethink how we are addressing these applications, because, clearly, as a beginner—and the member's not new to this file—you can't treat all applications the same; that would be inappropriate.

So what we're going to do is bring to bear a risk-based classification system. And, of course, the bigger the risk or the more significant the change in drainage, the more robust the licensing application process should be.

But, when it comes to simple matters of replacement, for example, of 18 inches with 18 inches, or whether it comes to cleanouts, clearly we need a very different regime there and start to focus our resources based on where the greatest risk is.

We also know that we have to pay greater attention to water quality, and we have to start looking more on a watershed basis, so we're going to realign this work and so, I can advise the House that there is a working group that has been put together, that, I think, is meeting any time now, involving conservation districts, the AMM and KAP to look with the department at how the drainage licensing can be better designed in this province.

I'm bound and determined to see an overhaul of this, and have the more effective processing come as a result. I'm really focusing on trying to get some conclusion to this one in the coming year and, you know, before the next rainy season—shall I say?—and

we're looking to see if we can do this within the existing legislative regime, and if not, we'll have to bring in amendments. But I think we can address all the needs better in a different way with a different methodology.

And I might add that when it comes to drainage licensing, we also have to think of retention. That has to be part and parcel of any consideration of changes to drainage licensing. And so this—those are—those have been my early observations, and the work that I've been involved with over the last short time. But stay tuned—I would say—on that. But I'm very heartened by the response by our partners in this one, and we will pay close attention to any advice that we receive about how we can do a better job in this regard.

Mr. Wishart: And thank the minister for his answer, and it—moving in that direction may well prove to yield a more focused process. The approach that we've had up until now was piled higher and deeper, you know, in terms of the application—first in, first out—and sometimes the piles were getting very long.

Moving back to my original question: Do you have an idea whether you made progress in the last year on the number of applications or not?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, as a result of the bundling exercise and the new partnership that we've developed with AMM, there certainly has been a very different approach to dealing with the applications. And so whereas at one time the applications would've been all considered as individual, now the RM can put in a bundle, and we'll be expanding that.

By the way, I also have had reports from the department that are encouraging in terms of their drilling down and dealing with applications, so I believe there is progress being made. But having said that, I still think that we have to just rethink the regime entirely and apply our resources in a way that makes better sense for farmers, municipalities, and for the environment.

Mr. Wishart: And thank the minister for the answer.

We did have some discussions about the spill that occurred in south Winnipeg waste-water treatment last fall that we heard so much about in the press. I wonder if the minister could provide us with an update as to whether they ever found the cause of the problem and whether there appears to be any long-term issues related to that spill.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, in terms of any statutory liability, that rests with Manitoba Justice and I'll leave that there. That's an independent system, of course.

I'm just going by memory here. I—if we didn't deal with this during Estimates, I can certainly get the information to you on the status of the review, because I know I have some notes on that. But I think it's safest for me just to double-check on that information and I can get that to the member very quickly. I believe that the department had prepared a response on that one for Estimates.

Mr. Wishart: Okay. In terms of where the different groups that have been instructed to review the flood from this last year, you had a sort of a kickoff, if I might call it that, with the water summit that was done this last fall.

Many people are wondering when—or what the conclusion of this process will look like. Will you have each of these committees report to the summit or a follow-up of the summit or is this all internal? Many people wonder, that participated in that, they're actually looking for a reporting process.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we think that it's important that there be continued engagement of all of our stakeholders on this one and that they get feedback in terms of what input was heard and then continue to be a part of the creation of the final strategy.

So I'll say, in addition, that I thought that the summit was very well designed and I think it was very useful and I think it's important, therefore, that all of those participants know that they're being heard.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): I would like to inform the House that we will be releasing the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship; Minister of Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard); minister of agricultural and rural initiatives; Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino); Minister responsible for Sport (Mr. Robinson).

We would like to recall for tomorrow the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton).

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the member for that.

Is it the will of the committee to call it 5 o'clock? There's 20 seconds left.

An Honourable Member: One more question.

Mr. Wishart: Well, we have 20 seconds left, so it'll have to be a short question.

Regarding—going back to the drainage issue, could the minister commit to give me a numbers update, because we certainly are wondering where exactly some of these people are in the process?

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

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 13, 2012

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