

**First Session - Fortieth Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**Standing Committee**  
on  
**Public Accounts**

*Chairperson*  
*Mr. Reg Helwer*  
*Constituency of Brandon West*

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**Fortieth Legislature**

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**  
**THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**Wednesday, October 24, 2012**

**TIME – 2 p.m.**

**LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba**

**CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk)**

**ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6**

*Members of the Committee present:*

*Hon. Messrs. Gerrard, Struthers*

*Mr. Allum, Ms. Braun, Messrs. Cullen, Dewar, Mrs. Driedger, Messrs. Helwer, Jha, Pedersen, Whitehead*

**APPEARING:**

*Mr. Larry Maguire, MLA for Arthur-Virden  
Ms. Carol Bellringer, Auditor General*

**WITNESSES:**

*Hon. Gord Mackintosh, Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship*

*Mr. Fred Meier, Deputy Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship*

*Hon. Ron Lemieux, Minister of Local Government*

*Ms. Linda McFadyen, Deputy Minister of Local Government*

*Hon. Stan Struthers, Minister of Finance*

**MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:**

*Auditor General's Report–Performance Audits, dated December 2010*

*Chapter 1–Managing Climate Change*

*Auditor General's Report–Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated March 2011*

*Section 3–The Protection of Well Water Quality in Manitoba*

*Auditor General's Report–Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated January 2012*

*Section 2–Audit of the Department of Conservation's Management of the Environmental Livestock Program*

*Section 3–Audit of the Province's Management of Contaminated Sites and Landfills*

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Good afternoon.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts will please come to order.

This meeting has been called to consider the following: Chapter 1–Managing Climate Change of the Auditor General's Report–Performance Audits, dated December 2010; Section 3–The Protection of Well Water Quality in Manitoba of the Auditor General's Report–Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated March 2011; Section 2–Audit of the Department of Conservation's Management of the Environmental Livestock Program and Section 3–Audit of the Province's Management of Contaminated Sites and Landfills of the Auditor General's Report–Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated January 2012.

Are there any suggestions from the committee as to how long we should sit this afternoon?

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that we sit 'til 3:30 unless we are done before then, and if we're not done at 3:30, we review.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Agreement of the committee? [Agreed]

Thank you–[interjection]–a.m. or p.m.?

Also, are there any suggestions as to how we should consider these reports–the order that we spoke of in our closed session?

**Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere):** Mr. Chair, I think to follow the sequence that we agreed upon this afternoon, as printed.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

Okay, we will now proceed with Chapter 1–Managing Climate Change of the 2010 performance

audits report, and I'd like to call the Minister and Deputy Minister of Conservation to the table, and please introduce your staff.

Okay. Deputy Minister of Conservation, do you have a report that we could copy for the members? They have asked if we have copies for them so that they can follow it. Oh, good, thank—it's here.

All right, deputy minister, you can—*[interjection]*—you are—and can you introduce your staff, sir, please?

**Mr. Fred Meier (Deputy Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** Good afternoon and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Joining me today at the table is our director of climate change of the Climate Change branch, Neil Cunningham. And I'm also joined by the assistant deputy minister, Dan McInnis.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Good, thank you.

Does the Auditor General wish to make an opening statement?

**Ms. Carol Bellringer (Auditor General):** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. And I'm joined today by staff from my office: Sandra Cohen, the assistant auditor general responsible for value-for-money audits; and an extra is Larry Lewarton, a principal in her area; and Maria Capozzi is also at the back of the room, and she supports us with our Public Accounts Committee work.

When the report was discussed previously at the Public Accounts Committee on February 9th, 2011, I read a summary of our audit into the record. So I will simply repeat the key finding from that audit today, which was that while Manitoba's management of climate change was evolving, the 2008 action plan in place at the time our audit was not expected to achieve the target level of emissions for 2012 of 17.5 megatons, which was 6 per cent below the 1990-level target set in legislation. And, for the information of the members, a status update on the recommendations from this audit will be included in our next follow-up report that we will be issuing in January 2013.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you to the Auditor General.

Does the deputy minister wish to make an opening statement?

**Mr. Meier:** Yes, I do.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship appreciate the efforts of the offices of the Auditor General in providing recommendations and advice regarding Manitoba's provincial climate change initiative and activities. With 3.6 per cent of Canada's population, Manitoba contributes only 3 per cent to Canada's total emissions. Manitoba's first climate change plan was released in 2002, and this was followed in 2008 by Beyond Kyoto climate change plan, and the climate change act and emissions reduction act.

\* (14:10)

As noted in the auditor's report, Manitoba has responded positively to climate change by consulting stakeholders, creating a climate change action plan and setting a short-term target for reducing emissions that is consistent with Canada's original Kyoto commitment. As indicated in our earlier response to the OAG, all of the recommendations in the auditor's 2010 report have been accepted by the department and are in progress. With the 2008 climate plan implemented over 60 programs have been put in place, all of which have helped to achieve the initial target of stabilizing emissions in 2010 at the year 2000 levels.

To this end, in June of this year the government released TomorrowNow, Manitoba's comprehensive environmental strategy. With Manitoba's 2008 climate plan now in place, the government announced that a new provincial climate change plan will be developed with longer term GHG reduction targets. In addition, TomorrowNow notes that Manitoba will begin developing a provincial adaptation strategy that includes government and province-wide risk assessments. An interdepartmental co-ordinating committee is currently being formed to oversee this task.

The impacts of climate change are evident and adapting to these changes is of the utmost importance. The recommendations in the 2010 audit report are providing our department with a valuable reference point as we embark on developing a new climate plan for Manitoba. We acknowledge that achieving Manitoba's 2012 target is not possible without a more robust federal plan and co-ordinated approach among federal, provincial and territorial governments. Nevertheless, we will continue to make progress as a climate change and green energy leader. Manitoba climate change is a complex and evolving field of public policy.

I would like to thank the auditor for her recommendations. We have accepted these in full as they will help us to inform our continued work in this important area.

Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Now, before we get into questions I would like to remind members that questions of an administrative nature are to be placed to the deputy minister and that policy questions will not be entertained and are better left for another forum. However, if there is a question that borders on policy and the minister would like to answer that question, or the deputy minister wants to defer it to the minister to respond to, that is something that we would consider.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Can the deputy minister indicate, and I know he did mention it that Manitoba still was responsible for 3 per cent of Canada's emissions, we have not moved from that mark. Is that accurate in my understanding of what you said?

**Mr. Meier:** We still remain at 3 per cent of Canada's emissions.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And also in the auditor's report it said that most Manitoba emissions come from the agriculture and transportation sectors and it does indicate in her report that 2008 GHG emissions, and there were specific numbers by megatons and then percentages and, you know, agriculture being 35 per cent, transportation—33 per cent, and it went on to some other areas.

Have there been any changes since 2008 in those numbers? Any shift lower in one area and up higher, or anything else added into that information?

**Mr. Meier:** Transportation represents 35 per cent and agriculture, currently, in our last report from the federal government, represents 33.5 per cent emissions inside of Manitoba. I believe that they are relatively equivalent to where their numbers were previously. They may shift from year to year depending on the amount of acres that are seeded and other things such as that.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the deputy indicate—when we were looking at all of this before, Manitoba's emissions were 17.7 per cent higher in 2008 than they were in 1990. Have you tracked that and can you indicate what they are today?

**Mr. Meier:** The most accurate and probably best representation of where we are right now is our last climate change plan which was released earlier this year, and that's a report for 2010. That indicates that our emissions are 6 per cent below where they were in 2000.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And what would be the difference from 1990?

**Mr. Meier:** The information that we have from the *National Inventory Report* shows that from 1990 to 2010 emissions have increased 8.42 per cent.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Also in the auditor's report there was another chart that indicated a dozen major initiatives accounting for 80 per cent of planned greenhouse gas reductions.

And can the minister—or deputy minister indicate, there were expectations of reductions by 2012 in a number of areas. Can the deputy minister indicate if they are on target in meeting those targets?

**Mr. Meier:** There is an update that was released earlier this year on the progress and the expectations for 2012; 2012 numbers are not available until about April of 2013. And they are provided to us through the *National Inventory Report* from the federal government.

But there is an update on the 2011 and 2012 projected emissions reductions as a result of the projects that were listed in that report. So it is an updated amount from where the auditor's report was, and that's found on page 7 of the report that was released.

**Mrs. Driedger:** How accurate are your predictions when you look at your ability to make predictions in how you're going to decrease greenhouse gas emissions? How accurate are you when you're predicting, you know, several years down the road?

We certainly know that a certain target was set and then—quite impossible to meet that. So how accurate are your predictions?

**Mr. Meier:** The predictions—I can answer this as it relates to the specific projects that we had implemented as a result of that, and those predictions are based on the information that's provided at the time of the project beginning. For example, if you look at, you know, a biodiesel mandate and that, those expectations are on—projections are based on the amount of fuel that'll be used over a certain

period of time and how much biodiesel will be blended into that.

So those forecasts are best on the—based on the best information we have available at the time. Obviously, when you implement such programs there's always changes after you implement them, and we will update those numbers and reports such as this as we proceed with the projects.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I'll just ask one more question and then turn it over to my colleagues, but in looking at another chart put out by the auditor, the original estimate is quite different from a revised estimate that the department came up with, and, you know, one particular area, for instance, was around the new vehicle fuel efficiency standard. And the original estimate was 118,000 tons, and then the revised had nil. And there were a number of other categories where the expectations were much higher, and in and about three areas the revised reduction estimate was nil.

Can the deputy explain why they ended up changing like that?

\* (14:20)

**Mr. Meier:** In regards to the specific example that you provided with the fuel efficiency standard, that was based on our expectation as to when the federal standard for emissions was going to be implemented, and that was deferred and set at a later date by the federal government.

As I mentioned earlier, when we do our projections we base them on the best information we have on hand at the time and that was the best information we had, that the standard was going to be implemented in time for us to expect those emission reductions. In that case it was delayed, and similar things happen in each one of the projects.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Just a final one then based on that, too, because geothermal really came up low in the revised estimate compared to the original. What accounted for geothermal uptake initiatives to be so off target?

**Mr. Meier:** As it relates to the information that I provided, as it relates to geothermal insulations, is the reason for the reduction is that there was a change in the methodology that was used to quantify the amounts, so was there a change in the methodology associated with that which ended up reducing it from where it was previously.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Let me start by complimenting the Auditor General on this look at how we were doing in terms of climate change because I thought that this report was particularly well done.

It's clearly an important area, as the talk that the minister and I were at last night by Robert Sandford emphasized, that there are real major concerns on the impact of climate change on Manitoba. So it is something that we need to be concerned about.

One of the areas, which as it has already been pointed out is a critical area is agriculture, and my question to the deputy minister: There are, as I understand it, primarily two components in agriculture. One is release of methane which comes primarily from livestock and the other is release of nitric oxide which comes primarily from fertilizer and other applications of—or various applications of fertilizer under a variety of circumstances in farm areas. I wonder if the deputy minister could break down the two components and clarify, because I think that this wasn't as clear to me as it might have been, the precise nature of the approach that's being taken with regard to the reduction of nitric oxide.

**Mr. Meier:** I'll probably start off by saying that my colleagues in agriculture are probably best to talk about the specific practices and exactly how the emissions come from it—from ag practices. But I can provide you with some information that we get through the national inventory report that helps break down the agriculture number better.

So agriculture represents 6.6 megatons inside of the province; 1.8 of that is related to livestock as it's indicated as fermentation; and then there's 2.1 per cent which is related to soil. So that breaks down those two numbers for you. So of the 6.6 megatons, one point is related to livestock and the other 2.1 is ag soils.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, but now 1.8 and 2.1 is still short of 6.6, so maybe you can clarify where the rest is coming from.

**Mr. Meier:** All right. Then I'll read off the numbers for you. Manure management, which is different than the fermentation process, is 346 or .346 if we're talking about megatons. And then there's field burning of ag residue which represents .13, I guess, if we're using the same scale.

**Mr. Gerrard:** You've got 1.8 and 2.1 which gets us to 3.9. You've added roughly 0.4 and 0.1 which is 0.5

which will get us up to about 4.4, so we're still about 2.2 megatons short.

**Mr. Meier:** It—yes, we're referencing numbers from the national inventory report, and it seems that they don't add up on our spreadsheet either, so we will endeavour to get that information back to the committee as a result of that.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Thank you very much, and I look forward to receiving that. And perhaps you could tell us to what extent the agriculture component has increased or decreased since 1990 or 2000, and, you know, how we're doing in terms of, you know, reducing agricultural greenhouse gases.

**Mr. Meier:** So the informations for agriculture, as we link them all together, shows that over the period of 1990 to 2010, the emissions have increased 30.69 per cent. Another reference point would be the period of time from 2000 to 2010, and over that period of time they've reduced by half a per cent.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, with that increase of 30 per cent from 1990 to 2010—or 30.69 per cent—that's quite a substantial increase, and it would seem to me that one of the things that needs to be managed better going forward is looking at how agricultural greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced. And I'd just give you an opportunity to, you know, tell us a little bit about—in terms of what your plans are to correct some of the problems in terms of where we're going, which has been an increase instead of a decrease.

\* (14:30)

**Mr. Meier:** Again, I'll start off by saying my colleagues in Agriculture would be best to talk about some of that, but some of the programs—and some of these are listed inside of the 2010 report that I've referenced earlier—but there is work on things such as the Manitoba sustainable ag program, which looks at—one of the items it looks at is targeting the application of fertilizer products so that we don't have that many escaping and contributing to climate change. The reduction in residue burning, the switch to biomass as a fuel, and the use of those in that process, organic farming, the reduction in tillage are all programs that MAFRI has worked with in the past, and I'm sure they can provide more programs than that.

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** I thank the Auditor General for the report as well.

This is to the deputy minister through you, Mr. Chair. The—generally speaking, when it comes to climate change, we think about two broad strategies. One deals with mitigation. The other deals with building active capacity, and you do refer to—or adaptive capacity, sorry—and you do refer to adaptive capacity in your opening remarks. Could you just tell us a little bit more about that side of the equation and what we can learn about building adaptive capacity going into the future?

**Mr. Meier:** The department has been focusing on adaptation work. In the recently released TomorrowNow document, it specifically identifies the development of a provincial adaptation plan as well as part of the path forward, and the department is actively working towards achieving the development of a plan—provincial plan for adaptation.

We have struck an interdepartmental adaptation working group amongst departments to work towards the development of the plan. This group is—has an oversight committee which is called the Interdepartmental Planning Board which is made up of deputy ministers from across government to provide direction on adaptation, and we've looked at a variety of adaptation measures across government, including improved flood protection, winter road networks, integrating watershed management planning, emergency preparedness and monitoring species at risk as well.

The department's also partnered with the federal government and other prairie provinces on the Prairie Regional Adaptation Collaborative, in which we supported research and work associated with adaptation planning to help prepare ourselves for the development of the plan as we move forward. We've also worked very closely with the international institute of sustainable development to facilitate the development of a tool called ADAPT, which stands for Adaptive Design and Assessment Policy Tool, and as I mentioned earlier, we've highlighted that as part of—or it's been highlighted as part of TomorrowNow-Manitoba's Green Plan as well.

**Mr. Allum:** That's very, very helpful.

This is more toward the Auditor General now. It was very—great reporting and good reading. Climate change, incredibly complex subject. How do you come up with the recommendations that you do, and what kind of expertise—and we talked about this a little bit earlier—do you rely on? And in the end of the day, what is the Auditor General driving at when

talking about climate change? Is it the science of climate change or is it something different than that?

**Ms. Bellringer:** This was a value-for-money audit so it—we used the methodology we use for all of our value-for-money audits, and I'd like to pass along any of the congratulatory comments to Sandra Cohen, who is the principal author and who did a fabulous job with this audit. We used the assistance of Johanne Gélinas, who was the former commissioner of the environment federally. She was at the time, though, a consultant with Deloitte and Touche, and she assisted us in some of the more technical matters. We don't comment on the technical side. We aren't getting into the science of it we're looking for the administration of the program, but it also helps to make sure that the language we're using—that we understand the language that the department is using and in turn that we're able to translate the majority of that into something that is meaningful in the report itself.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** And thank you as well for this report, Madam Auditor General.

To the deputy minister, my colleague earlier outlined the 3 per cent level of Manitoba's emissions in regards to Canada's total emissions and I just wanted to confirm that we're still in that neighbourhood and we've been there for some time. Is that correct? [*interjection*] I know that there was a—they were looking at a 6 per cent below 1990 level at one time you indicated today I believe, and I just wanted to reconfirm the number is at 8 per cent or eight-point-some per cent increase in GHS's since—between 1990 and 2010 I think you made some comment. I know it was in an answer in your opening comments.

**Mr. Meier:** According to the national inventory which we use as providing the numbers from 1990 to 2010 emissions have increased 8.42 per cent.

**Mr. Maguire:** You referred to and I agree—you referred in your comments to federal-provincial-territorial plans that would be required to reduce these and I think it comes to long-term planning because we've seen an '02 report, the '08 climate change report, we've got 2010 and '12 targets now, and I guess I'm looking at what you would be looking at as criteria from support as you indicated it would be required—support from the federal government in—and other provinces. I know that you may be referring to the fact that the federal support is needed by all provinces to move in those areas but what specifically would you be looking at and

recommending to them to—for advice in how to, you know, make it more accessible to reduce that number back down part of that 14 per cent difference that we were talking about back in 2002?

**Mr. Meier:** Many of the areas where emissions occur are areas—and I'll use one, for example, is transportation—so mobile, you know, large trucks and small passenger vehicles make up a significant portion of that. Emission standards for those types of vehicles are established at a national level so we look for the federal government to set those standards. It's very difficult for a province like Manitoba to establish an emission standard on a vehicle when they're manufactured for a national market.

The other thing we talk about is that the federal government has recently taken a different approach to climate change in achieving its climate change reduction targets, and it's taken a sector-by-sector approach which is based on regulations. And these are federal regulations that focus on things such as coal-fired electricity, for example, which is one that they've recently developed and moved forward on. And really what this is is a federal regulation to limit the amount of emissions from that sector, and they are taking this approach sector by sector. They're looking at oil and gas sector. They are also looking at fertilizer sector and all of those end up feeding into Manitoba's profile. So that type of federal leadership is what will really set the standards and allow Manitoba to develop a plan to achieve its targets.

The other thing it does is it levels the playing field for industries across Canada, and that's something we hear from the other jurisdictions we work with is that we have to look at a level playing field for all of Canada to ensure that we're not, you know, we're not impacting one side versus the other. So that's why we talk about this national approach and the federal government's leadership on emissions reductions and reaching a target.

\* (14:40)

**Mr. Maguire:** I would also appreciate just an update on how you would be communicating these targets and the—well, first of all I guess before I get into the communication side of it—you were looking at—you've made a number of recommendations in different areas of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and it's been referred to the topic of science here, I guess, and by our colleagues here today in regards to what sciences are being used to make those determinations.

And is there a broad-brushed approach to criteria that our scientists can work towards in helping? And what's the federal management program that you were—just referred to? But are there parts of the studies that have been done in Manitoba that would allow our scientific community to know the targets that they could try to achieve here in the province that would benefit the rest of Canada as well, of course.

And I'm thinking one of the University of Manitoba agriculture departments has done some tremendous work in regards to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions just by looking at different feedstuffs in our livestock industry. And I could give some examples of that from previous experience, but I just wondered if you could fill us in on some of those kinds of departments that would be helping with this process.

**Mr. Meier:** We—when setting our targets and developing some of the policy work we do associated with climate change and setting targets and that, we work with a number of different groups that bring science and help validate the science that we're working on as well. Some of those groups I've referenced before: the International Institute of Sustainable Development; the Centre for Earth Observation Science out of the University of Manitoba, and I know the member had referenced that as well; the University of Manitoba—we've partnered with them in the past; the new Richardson centre for the environment—we've worked with them as well on developing some of this; Manitoba Hydro and some of their observation data as well and information such as that; as well as with Environment Canada from the federal government—to work with them and, you know, they provide us a lot of information based on the national inventory and reporting and help us ensure that, you know, some of the reporting and the numbers that we're providing are based on the international standards that they use to report on as well.

**Mr. Maguire:** And in the use of all of the science, is there an economic science—economic environment package that's put forward in regards to a determination of the impact on the province, both environmentally and economically, before they're acted upon?

**Mr. Meier:** Certainly, when we look at developing programs, economic modelling is part of that. Some examples of the support we received in this area is through the IISD, as well, for the modelling of

economic impacts. They've done some of that work for us as well. We work closely with Environment Canada, as well, on some of that economic modelling, and also with our Manitoba Bureau of Statistics to provide us some information on that as well.

**Mr. Maguire:** Yes, I know one of the programs, and I just—looking for a value here. It's just as an example: the Manitoba Organic Transition Program that we had in place, you know, provided a financial incentive to farmers and processors for development of products from that area. And I just wondered if the minister can give us an indication of how effective that program was and what the costs have been so far of their financial incentives. I should say that, not necessarily the costs, but the values.

**Mr. Meier:** I—again, my colleagues in MAFRI would be best to answer the questions around the values, expenses associated with that program.

I can point the member to the report on climate change and there is a—some description and results from 2010 of the program. I don't need to read them into the record, but they do provide some results of carbon—CO<sub>2</sub> reductions equivalent for that program as well.

**Mr. Maguire:** I just wanted to go back to the topic that I was starting on on communications earlier. These are all fine and dandy if—even if we were meeting the targets and that sort of thing. But I guess I'm looking at what kind of communications for the public do we use or have we used in regards to—has the government put forward a more broad-based program of communication so the public knows, you know, year to year, at least where we stand on being supportive of these changes?

**Mr. Meier:** There's a number of different ways that we communicate our climate change programs, everything from specific communications around individual programs, but probably the best description of that would be there is something called the greenregistry.org that we've developed inside of Manitoba three—through Green Manitoba which is a division of the department. And that includes all of our emissions profiles, updates on our different projects that we have, as well as calculator so individuals can use it for their own reductions and if they're interested in looking at how much a change in activity can reduce emissions.

I'd also indicate that, you know, reports such as the report in—the 2010 report on the status of climate

change is an indication of public reporting as it results on climate change, as well as, you know, communications such as TomorrowNow which is the green plan which identifies sort of the next steps and the future of where the focus will be. There's been public consultations on—there will be public consultations on mandatory reporting, for example, as well. So it's different communications like that that I would indicate to our—to the public.

**Mr. Maguire:** I see with interest that there's about 77 recommendations made in these areas and 60 programs, I believe, from your opening statement that have been put in place. To act on these programs, one of the ones that I'd just like a quick update on is the reduction of use of coal in the province of Manitoba. And I wondered if the minister could give us an update on what the tax levels will be and if it's the same on all types of coal or if it varies on different types of coal. And I take it that that was implemented last January 1st, and does he have forms available, that sort of thing, yet, for those who are still purchasing coal in the province and what procedures they'll be taking to implement that particular program?

\* (14:50)

**Mr. Meier:** The emissions' tax on coal is equivalent to \$10 per ton of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, so just depending on the type of coal, and I think the member's aware of that. Manitoba Finance's website has the information related to that. It came into force January 1, 2012, and the forms, the rates and all the other materials are available on Finance. It's important to note also that the funds collected will be going towards a biomass program to offset the conversion to biomass, which is the intent behind the program.

**Mr. Maguire:** Just a final question, then, on the projected—I guess, and I'm assuming that you've moved forward with some science-based material on this, so there will be a difference, then, between the greenhouse gas emissions from the coal and the greenhouse gas emissions from biomass produced, and I just wondered, in an equivalent basis, if you could tell me what kind of savings there would be in greenhouse gas emissions from the reduction of the coal and the use of the biomass.

**Mr. Meier:** Biomass is considered a carbon-neutral energy source through international standards. The reason for that is that carbon is absorbed by the plant when it's grown and it's converted through to energy through combustion; otherwise, it's released into the

atmosphere when the plant mass breaks down again. So it's resulted as a carbon neutral, so you can say that it's a zero energy for biomass versus whatever the coal—you know, type of coal they're using would be, so.

**Mr. Maguire:** So I guess the deputy is indicating to me that the emissions coming off of it, the smoke, the heat, the whatever off of the biomass being burnt is equivalent to what is saved by using it in the first place plus the fuel and processing to manage the biomass from raw material into a finished product.

**Mr. Meier:** You're referencing the carbon life cycle, I guess, or the energy life cycle of it, and there is work that's been done on those aspects as well, and we can provide those. I don't have those here right now, but there has been work done associated with the life cycle of it as well.

**Mr. Maguire:** If the deputy could make that available to me that would be fine. Thank you.

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods):** Mr. Chair, through you to the deputy minister, just for clarification here today, I know the current legislation, in terms of the Kyoto protocol in Manitoba references 1990. I just want to just set the record straight, and there was different numbers tossed around here earlier. The Auditor General's report indicated that from 1990 to 2008 emissions in Manitoba were 17.7 per cent higher, and you'd referenced 2010 numbers, and I think you went back to the year 2000.

Do you have the numbers from 1990, the baseline for Kyoto protocol, to the year 2010, and can you tell me what the increase was over that span?

**Mr. Meier:** The number that was referenced earlier for the change from 1990 to 2010 was 8.42 per cent and I believe that you're asking for the amount of megatons that represents as a baseline?

**Mr. Cullen:** No. If I can clarify, I'm looking for the percentage increase from the baseline of 1990 to the year 2010.

**Mr. Meier:** That number is 8.42 per cent.

**Mr. Cullen:** So there was a dramatic decrease then from 2008 'til 2010 in terms of emissions?

**Mr. Meier:** I don't have the year-over-year data. I do have some numbers that I can provide with you that are from some other dates, which I will. But I'll just explain it; that there was significant reductions from

about 2000 all the way down to 2010. For example, in the year 2000, it was 21 megatons emissions profile for the province, and then in 2010, in 10 years, it went to 19.8.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, unfortunately the Auditor General's report just goes up to the year 2008. But clearly, from 2005 to 2008, the graph is certainly going up. And, again, it goes back to the reference year of 1990, and the auditor's saying, as of 2008, the emissions were 17.7 per cent higher than in the year 1990. I'm just surprised that there would be that dramatic of a drop off from 2008 to 2010. The auditor's information says the emissions in 2008 were just about 22 megatons, and you're saying that two years later, the emissions were below 20 megatons.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I believe that Madam Auditor General has a response.

**Ms. Bellringer:** Not so much as a response as wondering if we're—if one of you is speaking to the—our figure four is talking about the emissions in 2008 versus 1990, which was the 17.6 per cent, and we also have a figure two which is talking about it on a per capita basis. So we're just wondering if we're getting per capita mixed up with the totals? Don't know the answer to that, just wondering if that's what the difference is.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, right. I was referencing not the per capita file. I'm not sure, maybe that the deputy was looking at the per capita.

**Mr. Meier:** We're trying to establish the reason why the numbers are a bit different and one of the explanations—there's a few different explanations—one of the explanations is that Environment Canada does change the methodology from year to year. They will add certain things into the national inventory and then they will backcast those numbers back to 1990. As a result, that changes the baseline of where your starting point is. So they've done that from time to time, they've added—and so every year the baseline changes. The trends should be the same over that period of time, but, if we're using the absolute numbers, I think that's why sometimes you have, you know, the change in absolute numbers that causes a bit of confusion.

\* (15:00)

There were reductions in emissions from 2008 and on as a result of a number of different programs that were implemented inside of the province, as well as a general slowdown in, you know, the worldwide

economy. As a result, emissions have gone down over that period of time. So that's likely the reason why you're seeing those reductions.

**Mr. Cullen:** Appreciate the deputy's response there.

In terms of the legislation and the Kyoto commitment here and in reference to your opening comments, you'd set—talked about setting a short-term target. In your view, that short-term target then, was that the 6 per cent reduction by 2012? Is that the short-term target that you're referencing in your presentation?

**Mr. Meier:** There has been a change and I think it's also a recommendation from the auditor to look at longer term targets. Manitoba, and I believe Québec, are the only two jurisdictions with shorter term targets. Most of the other jurisdictions have moved to longer term targets for climate change, recognizing the importance of looking further out versus a shorter term target, and that's a reference to short versus longer term targets.

**Mr. Cullen:** That really gets into my next question here. You know, clearly we missed our short-term target, and I think what the auditor's report is trying to do is lay out, you know, the action plan that we've had in the past to get to that target.

You know, clearly, we've missed that target and the auditor's brought forward some issues regarding the action plan, and now, you know, you've talked about the TomorrowNow program. Is that the start of a whole new program?

**Mr. Meier:** When the audit was released we accepted all the recommendations. Some of the key recommendations were that we have to adjust our climate change plan to achieve the targets that we have set out in front of us. It's the department that is looking at changing the climate plan—the climate change plan—to address not only the recommendations, but the way things have changed on the landscape, as well, the role of the federal government and the approach—the regulatory approach—sector by sector, as well as a number of other things. So the TomorrowNow document indicates that government's going to create a new climate change plan, focus on some key aspects such as mandatory reporting which is also referenced in there, which provides us with a baseline of information understanding what Manitoba's profile is.

I've referenced several times a national inventory, and that's based on numbers that the

federal government sort of rolls up for a place like Manitoba. It doesn't have sufficient detail for us to really develop specific programs in some of those key sectors. So we need to know who the major emitters are inside of the province. That's part of the reason why we're moving towards a mandatory reporting—consultation on mandatory reporting. And then they'll—also the reference to adaptation, and I think that adaptation—and there was a reference here earlier today—really the focus on adaptation needs to be the key focus as well. Those are the true impacts that are happening inside of the province where planning needs to be focused as well. So that's going to be part of the climate plan as well.

**Mr. Cullen:** Clearly, the auditor has laid out a—quite a number of recommendations and, clearly, now the department looks like it's taking a different plan of attack, if you will.

How important are the recommendations that the auditor made? Are they going to be relevant to, you know, this new plan going forward? I'm just wondering, you know, how you can relate what the auditor is saying in terms of her recommendations and then your new plan going forward.

**Mr. Meier:** The recommendations that the auditor has made are valid. They've referenced things like longer targets, business as usual, economic impacts, many other ones that we've accepted and we will address as part of the climate plan—the climate change plan.

I think one of the key things is that it's not so much a full change in direction as it is taking, you know, an area that is constantly changing, not only from an international protocol perspective, but also on a national stage and then, even between different provinces, and changing that climate change plan so that we're adapting to some of the things that are happening out there as well and reflecting that.

So I wouldn't characterize it as much as a total change of plan. It's based on the recommendation that the Auditor General has provided as well as new information that's come to us as well.

**Mr. Cullen:** So I guess in summary you're saying we don't necessarily have a plan in place at this point in time, but it's—the plan is going to be evolving as we move forward.

**Mr. Meier:** We do have the 2008 plan, which is currently our climate change plan, the one the audit was based on. So it is still there. Most of those recommendations have now been implemented so

the time is right to, you know, redo that plan to develop a new fresh plan with some new ideas as well and a new approach moving forward.

**Mr. Gerrard:** In going from where we are now to where we need to be from the latest numbers that you have to get to 6 per cent below 1990, we're now 8.42 per cent above 1990. So what is the reduction that would be needed? I presume it would be on the order of six plus eight—14 per cent. But you may have a more precise figure.

**Mr. Meier:** Your math is good. It's 13.3 per cent would be the reduction that would be required.

**Mr. Gerrard:** In this Manitoba sustainable agricultural practices program, the expected reduction from this document I've got is .03 megatons or .036 megatons. Compared to the figure which you gave me for nitrous oxide which was 2.1 megatons, and I'm a little skeptical that you may actually be low on that because one of the other figures in this report that we were given, or that we were given in February of 2011, was that agricultural soils make up 62 per cent of the agricultural emissions which suggests that it may be higher than the 2.1 megatons. But, regardless, if it was 2.1 megatons and your plan is—to reduce it by .036 megatons that's only like 2 per cent reduction and, clearly, it would seem to me that if you're going to be able to address this problem of the 30 per cent growth in agricultural emissions that the plan moving forward is going to have to be more aggressive in terms of the approach to nitrous oxide reduction. I wonder whether you'd comment.

**Mr. Meier:** As we said, you know, we do have to update the Manitoba climate change plan and it's something that we're working on very much right now.

The one program that you identify is a program that's identified some reductions for ag soils. We know there's more to be done in those areas as well, and Manitoba Agriculture is working towards that. The approach previously when Kyoto was first put down as a target was that that reduction would be shared equally across all of the different areas and spread out equally. We now know that we have to have a much more focused effort as we get better information coming in such as the information on soils and the major emitters that I've talked about before. So the approach that we're looking at now is one that's—it's very focused on certain sectors and certain areas for reductions. Ag soils is an area that I

know that Manitoba Agriculture is very much focused on for targetting reductions as well.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The plan moving forward will focus on areas like nitrous oxide from agricultural soils. Is that what you're saying?

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Meier:** I think that's one area that there obviously will be focus on. There will be other areas as the profile becomes clearer for Manitoba that we will focus on as well and that's based on, you know, some of the sciences talked about earlier, the mandatory reporting that was talked about earlier as well, and really refining our plan moving forward.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, just one last question which is a follow up and that is you're talking about mandatory reporting, but I'm not sure how you're going to mandatory report on the nitrous oxide from soils. You're not going to ask individual farmers I presume, to report.

**Mr. Meier:** I use that as an example, as an area how we can refine the areas of focus as well. So it's not to be meant as mandatory reporting of soils. No.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I think in one of your answers, Mr. Deputy Minister, you were talking about an interdepartmental planning board that's now in place. Am I correct on that?

**Mr. Meier:** The Interdepartmental Planning Board is a board that's been established for some time, and it's a board comprised of deputy ministers that looks at cross-departmental issues. It's comprised of deputies from Local Government, and Manitoba Agriculture, and many others as well.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So is there a separate budget for this or are the deputy ministers just coming in under the department budgets to be on this committee?

**Mr. Meier:** It's part of the role of deputy ministers that are part of the IPB to bring forward matters of interest that are sort of cross-departmental, things such as climate change and a number of other items as well that are discussed.

**Mr. Pedersen:** The Auditor General referenced that this was a value-for-money audit, and so when you're developing criteria for these numerous programs that you've mentioned and you're setting long-term goals and short-term goals, what criteria does the department use then to determine the value for money being spent on these programs?

**Mr. Meier:** I believe there are certain sections of the audit that were actually pertaining to the Treasury Board Secretariat as well that were recommendations that were provided, and I think they were specific to this area. There have been programs that have been implemented by the secretariat that are based on a budgeting for outcomes. So it's very much based on a value based on the amount of emissions reductions, and I know there were several projects that were funded that related to how much emissions were going to be reduced by the required funding required for those projects. So there were criteria that were established for that.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So—I understand the goals. You want to reduce emissions and there's a cost versus benefit analysis versus results. So what do you use—how do we know what is reported, or where do we find the reports on that, the amount of money spent on the program versus the benefits in reductions of greenhouse gasses? How do we find this?

**Mr. Meier:** The 2010 plan indicates the programs that the Province currently has in place that helped it achieve its 2010 target. The public accounts would have the funding associated with the various different departments and programs under those—under that plan.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So—maybe I'll ask the same question of the auditor then. How do we know—how do we find this out whether this money being spent on programs for greenhouse gas emission, lowering greenhouse gas emissions—how do we know that we're getting value for money spent?

**Ms. Bellringer:** The—let me back up, just for a sec. The exact question you're asking, I'd say, is closest to our recommendation 15, and the answer at the time of our audit was you couldn't get that information and it wasn't easily mapped. I mean, yes, it's true that any funding associated with any of the decisions is then incorporated within the Estimates documents, and you do vote them through the Estimates process. But we wanted that to be more explicitly linked to the individual decisions that were being made, and that should be reported that way, and that's what we have recommended.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So going back to deputy minister, is that process now in place? From recommendation 15?

**Mr. Meier:** We've accepted all the recommendations that the Auditor General has put forward, and the department, as part of its new plan and as part of a

new process moving forward, will adopt those recommendations.

**Mr. Pedersen:** It's easy to accept—is it in place? And will—when will it be in place, if it's not in place now?

**Mr. Meier:** The current 2008 plan is the plan that was audited. It currently is the plan that we have in place right now; it has not changed from when the audit was provided to us. There is a commitment, as I referenced earlier, to develop a new plan, and it will be considered as a part of that development.

**Mr. Pedersen:** And when will that new plan be available?

**Mr. Meier:** They're—the first steps of developing the new plan are focused on consultations around mandatory reporting, as indicated in there, which is the foundation—the gathering of the profile first. Now, out of that will flow the specific plan. I don't have a timeline on that. It's based on gathering that baseline information first.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So I have one other question, just totally unrelated to this, to—much to your relief. In the 2010 Public Accounts—excuse me—December 2010, there was a section on climate friendly woodlot program, from where I see in another graph that there was going to be a reduction of 261,000 tons through a Climate Friendly Woodlot Practices program for agricultural producers. Can you give me an update on that?

**Mr. Meier:** The update—thank you, Mr. Chairman—the update that I can provide is—inside of the 2010 report there's a climate friendly farm woodlot practices report, and that's 209 kilotons sequestered over 4,314 acres.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Chairman, is it my understanding—is my understanding correct that that program has now been cancelled?

**Mr. Meier:** That's a program that doesn't fall under the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship, so we would have to consult with Manitoba Agriculture on the current progress of that.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the deputy tell me how many climate change plans have there been in the last 10 years?

**Mr. Meier:** I'm learning something new all the time in this portfolio. Apparently there was one in 2002, and then there was a 2008 plan, which is the current plan that we reference.

\* (15:20)

**Mrs. Driedger:** So then I understand there are two.

Can the deputy tell me, what was the point then of the document that he indicated in his opening remarks that was issued in June of this year, TomorrowNow, and it's a comprehensive environmental plan. And I haven't—I have to say, without that being my portfolio, I haven't read that.

Was—that was, then, not a climate change plan? We've only had the two. Am I correct?

**Mr. Meier:** TomorrowNow is a broader environment—strategic environment plan. You can think of it as a green plan. It covers everything from climate change to water, terrestrial wildlife, parks, many different things. So it's broader than just climate change and shouldn't be seen as a replacement of our current climate change plan.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the deputy tell me how many targets you have had then in the last 10 years? I know there was the one set through legislation. Is that still currently a target or have other targets been set for a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions?

**Mr. Meier:** The targets in the current legislation are the only targets that have been set.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Okay, then, am I to understand then that we're not meeting our target?

**Mr. Meier:** We've—there's several different targets, and the last target that we had to report on was the one for 2010. So the emissions in 2010 needed to be below the levels in year 2000; that target was met. The target for 2012, we won't have the numbers from Environment Canada until the first quarter of 2013, at which point in time the report is due at the end of 2013, to report on the 2012 target.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And the—do I understand correctly that there was a target set in legislation that indicated that the target was to be 6 per cent below the 1999 level? Am I understanding that correctly?

**Mr. Meier:** I think you referenced 1999. It's 1990, 6 per cent below 1990. That's—the legislation currently reflects that, yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** So that's a consistent target that you're still aiming for? Is that correct?

**Mr. Meier:** That's the current target that we have inside of legislation. But, as I mentioned earlier, there are many different factors that have changed on the landscape. We talk about the federal piece which is a piece that is very large. Their change and approach, for a sector-to-sector approach, has

obviously impacted the way the Province can develop its plans as well. But the current target is the target that we have, yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And I understand from reading somewhere that the expectation was to get to that target by December of this year.

Am I accurate in understanding that?

**Mr. Meier:** The requirement for reporting is for that period of time, which is the end of 2012, but we won't know that until we have the emissions profile from the federal government through the NIR report, which happens later in 2012–2013, pardon me, the beginning of 2013.

**Mrs. Driedger:** But it wasn't reporting. I understand that the legislation was to actually reach a decrease of 17.5 megatons by December 2012, and then you'd report on that after.

Is that what you're saying? Like, you're still aiming for that target? Am I accurate in reading that correctly?

**Mr. Meier:** That is the existing target that we have and the reporting period that you talk about is correct. You report on it after you get the information in.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And reaching that target or aiming for that target is being committed to the Kyoto target. Is that accurate? Like, I understand that, when that was set, it was set based on being committed to the Kyoto target. So if you're not even close to reaching that target, then you're not getting anywhere close to reaching the Kyoto target either. Is that what that means?

**Mr. Meier:** The target of 6 per cent below 1990 was based on the Kyoto Protocol of the time. Subnational governments, such as the Province of Manitoba, were not committed to Kyoto. Kyoto was an international agreement where national governments would have to sign on to.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Any further questions?

Seeing no further questions, does the committee agree that we have completed consideration of Chapter 1—Managing Climate Change of the Auditor General's Report—Performance Audits, dated December 2010?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**An Honourable Member:** Agreed.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Hearing no, that report is not completed for consideration so remains—we'll consider it, I guess, at a further future date.

So we'll now deal with Section 3—The Protection of Well Water Quality in Manitoba of the 2011 follow-up report.

Does the Auditor General wish to make an opening statement?

Before you start, Madam Auditor General, it is almost 3:30 and that was the date set—or the time set for completion. What is the will of the committee?

**Ms. Braun:** Mr. Chair, I would suggest that we sit until 4 o'clock, and if we haven't completed at that time we review the situation.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Agreed? [*Agreed*]

**Ms. Bellringer:** I'll make some comments that follow all three of the follow-up reports because they're interconnected.

Our follow-up reports are issued in January of each year. We request a status update from management and then we conduct review procedures to assess the plausibility of the statuses provided. And while we don't reperform the audit procedures, we do obtain supporting documentation to verify that our concerns have been addressed before agreeing that a recommendation has been implemented or resolved. And the—in the follow-up report, when we do say that it has been implemented and resolved, that's after we've had further discussions with the department.

In the past, we waited for three years after the issuance of an audit report before requesting the status update and we then continued to obtain a status update for an audit report until such time as every recommendation was implemented. That was the process we followed for The Protection of Well Water Quality in Manitoba audit report. The original audit report was issued in November 2005 and we followed it up in 2009, 2010, and 2011.

Now, last year we decided that the progress made to address our recommendations and the scrutiny of our reports by the Public Accounts Committee warranted a change in our approach, and actually I'll save the rest of the comments 'til we're looking at the other two reports because those are on the new basis, which is slightly different from the basis of the follow-up report that I just described which does cover the report you're about to discuss.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you, Madam Auditor General.

Does the deputy minister wish to make an opening statement? I see you have new staff at the table [*inaudible*]

**Mr. Meier:** I'd like to introduce Dwight Williamson, who is the assistant deputy minister of the Water Stewardship division of Conservation and Water Stewardship, who is joining me today.

I do have some opening comments. I believe that copies are being passed around right now.

So good afternoon. I'd like to provide you with a few brief introductory remarks concerning the department's progress towards implementing recommendations from the office of the Auditor General's report on the protection of well water quality in Manitoba, which was released in 2005.

As you may know, about 25 per cent of Manitobans, or more than 300,000 people, rely on well water for drinking and household uses. While well owners are responsible for their own wells, the department plays a strong role enabling and supporting the protection of our valuable groundwater resources.

The Auditor General provided the department with 41 recommendations. Most were very significant, requiring, for example, new resources, new legislation, development of new policies and procedures, and shifts in major programming priorities over the long term.

Of the 41 recommendations, the department had fully implemented 13 by 2008 and had fully implemented an additional six by 2009 and fully implemented an additional five by 2010. As documented in the OAG's follow-up report issued in March 2011, the report that you have before you today for consideration, the Auditor General agreed with the department—agreed the department had, by June 2010, fully implemented or resolved 24 of the 41 recommendations and agreed that the department had work under way on the remaining 17. Of the remaining 17, the department believes that it has fully implemented another six at the present time and that by the end of this fiscal year—that is March 31st, 2013—we will have fully implemented an additional four.

Significant work is under way on the remaining seven recommendations, and all are directly reliant upon developing regulations under the newly passed

Groundwater and Water Well Act, an act given royal assent on June 14th, 2012.

\* (15:30)

Much work has been completed on these new regulations which will include new standards for well construction, new standards for sealing abandoned wells, new approaches for certifying well drillers operating in Manitoba, new standards for wells serving the geothermal heating and cooling sector, plus others. Once completed, the department will undertake consultations with the well-drilling sector that envisions the new regulations to be in place sometime in 2013. Once in place, the remaining outstanding seven recommendations will have been fully implemented.

When the new groundwater bill was introduced in the Manitoba Legislature on the 15th of May of this year, Minister Mackintosh announced an eight-point groundwater protection strategy. Those eight points are: strong new legislation to govern the well drilling and sealing and to formalize aquifer management planning, including the new Groundwater and Water Well Act that received royal assent; new educational materials for well owners that will be developed in partnership with stakeholders; education materials will support the new regulatory requirements that wells be properly maintained, helping to avoid contamination issues that can occur at poorly maintained wells; development of a modernized groundwater and well database, including Web-accessible information to provide improved and more accessible information to well owners, drillers and sealers; improved mapping of groundwater to ensure the availability of updated maps such as overburden thickness, water quality and flowing well areas; new oversight and support to small semi-public water system owners, including those that use groundwater as a water source; improved pattern surveillance and investigation of well water quality contamination events with the potential to affect private wells; increased technical support for compliance with The Drinking Water Safety Act for public and semi-public systems, including those that use groundwater as a water source; new water advisory guidelines, including thresholds for issuing and ending advisories for small communities served by individual wells.

I would note that since 2005 the department has significantly increased its resources and built

capacity and expertise in a number of key areas identified by the office of the Auditor General.

The staff complement in the Office of Drinking Water has been increased from 18 full-time positions in '05 to 28 at the present time, including the following new functions: laboratory and special contracts co-ordinator; private well education and outreach co-ordinator; drinking water information co-ordinator.

Within the groundwater management section the department created and filled the position of a well drilling liaison officer. This officer has been in place since March 2006 and works closely with the well-drilling sector to ensure the compliance with existing standards and to assist in resolving problems as they arise.

The department has taken seriously the 41 recommendations the office of the Auditor General related to the protection of well-water quality in Manitoba, has implemented most of the recommendations and fully intends to have the remaining recommendations implemented in 2013 once regulations are in place under the groundwater and well water–water well act.

With this, I conclude my remarks and would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have.

Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Minister.

Are there any questions for the deputy minister?

**Mr. Gerrard:** You know, we have one groundwater in this province, in a sense, and I'm just wondering, given that I've been recently dealing with people in the community of Little Saskatchewan which is a First Nations community, just to what extent they are included in the approach that's being followed in the new act and the regulations.

**Mr. Meier:** As with many other pieces of provincial legislation, they don't directly apply to federal lands such as Indian reservations as was referenced. However, the standards that we put in place for our well drillers are standards that they need to adhere to inside of Manitoba. So even though they don't need to have that certification to drill a well on federal lands they still have to meet those standards to operate outside of that. So by developing those types of standards and regulations that require, you know, proper well development and proper well drilling and sealing and all the standards where contamination

can occur, those result in, you know, our drillers and our industry being better prepared and certified to do operations even on federal lands.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Just wondering when the regulation—when do you expect the regulations to be finalized and come into force?

**Mr. Meier:** We are currently developing those regulations. We will consult with the industry and more broadly as well. Our expectation is that they will be in place in 2013.

**Mr. Maguire:** Just had a question in regards to the drilling processes. They were done before in public and semi-public systems, and the new legislation, I understand, has been extended to individuals, private individuals, as well. Is that the case, and will that be a part of those regulations?

**Mr. Meier:** There may be a bit of confusion with The Drinking Water Safety Act, which is also referenced in here, which refers to semi-public and public and private systems in it.

The new well water act, which addresses the development and drilling of wells, will apply to private as well as semi-public and public systems as well. So those standards will apply to all. It did—the previous legislation actually did also apply to all well development previously.

**Mr. Maguire:** The—just as well, when we're looking at the bacteriological water testing subsidy program, I just wondered if the minister can—or deputy, pardon me—can just outline to us how effective it's been, and what types of programming they've had put in place through that program.

**Mr. Meier:** The intent of the program that was referenced is for private well owners to test their wells for any types of contamination, and that's the reason why we have the water subsidy program for testing those. The intent, then, is that if you provide the subsidy, you get the information as well. So the Province uses that to increase the amount of samples it can get. We continue to look at ways of trying to get as many samples tested as possible and look at any new programs or development of new programs associated with that as well, to increase the amount of testing that occurs out there.

**Mr. Cullen:** One of the recommendations from the auditor's report—and it's a work in progress—it's recommendation 36, that the department develop a multi-year, comprehensive inspection plan. I'm wondering if you're in a position to make any

comments in terms of what that inspection plan might look like, if you've gone that far in terms of planning for that particular recommendation.

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Meier:** In fact, this is one of the recommendations that we believe is in place now and we'll be working with the Auditor General's office to indicate that in the next report. So the department has developed a comprehensive well inspection program that is documented in policy and procedures, as was recommended, and it's in a document entitled comprehensive well inspection program. The procedure was finalized, actually, just this month, October 2012, and the inspection—this document has been shared with the well drillers as well, as part of our communications plan.

**Mr. Cullen:** So the department themselves will be doing inspections on these wells, or will you involve local conservation districts as part of your plan to do the inspections on these wells?

**Mr. Meier:** The responsibility for inspecting is that that is the responsibility of the department. Although we do work very closely with conservation districts on our sampling program to help encourage that we get more samples back again, but as it relates to specific inspections in the inspection program, that is something that's charged to the department to undertake.

**Mr. Cullen:** Does your plan lay out a priority list in terms of inspections? And I guess what comes to mind is we have a lot of boil-water advisories across the province in a lot of communities. Are those types of communities going to be 'prioritized' or what—how is your plan laid out in terms of a priority in terms of inspections?

**Mr. Meier:** The current procedure document that we have does envision that we would put priorities on specific areas associated with risks or other priorities we may put in place as well.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Any further questions?

Seeing no further questions, does the committee agree that we have completed consideration of Section 3—The Protection of Well Water Quality in Manitoba of the Auditor General's Report—Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated March 2011? *[Agreed]*

Next we will deal with section 2 of the 2012 follow-up report.

Does the Auditor General wish to make an opening statement?

**Ms. Bellringer:** So, just carrying on from what I had described around that particular follow-up report, last year we decided that the progress made to address our recommendations and the scrutiny of our reports by the Public Accounts Committee warranted a change in our approach.

As a result, in our January 2012 follow-up report we included status updates for all reported issues prior to June 2011. So, in other words, within one year rather than waiting three years, and the intention is to only request status updates three times. Now we are—our plan is and we're already well under way to complete that 2013–January 2013 report. We're no longer planning to provide updates for those recommendations listed in the 2011 follow-up report, and that includes the well water quality audit report.

We aren't planning to provide you with another update on that, given the amount of time that's passed since the original report was issued. I'd point out to the members that the Department of Finance also has a follow-up process, and it's not just our office. We're looking at it for the purposes of providing a public report and for your use. But the Department of Finance also has a follow-up process, and they're looking at what departments are doing. So internally, they've got some assurance that there is progress being made. So I would—I'm just pointing that out for your information.

So the other two reports on today's schedule, the Department of Conservation's Management of Environmental Livestock Program and the Province's Management of Contaminated Sites and Landfills, are both included in that January 2012 follow-up report for the first time, and we will be providing you with another update on both of those reports in January 2013.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

Does the deputy minister wish to make an opening statement and introduce any staff he'll be bringing to the table, please?

Thank you, Deputy Minister.

**Mr. Meier:** I'm joined at the table by the manager of the Environmental Livestock program, Jen Webb, who is here with me today, and I do have some opening remarks and they're much shorter than the last ones.

I'd like to begin by thanking Ms. Bellringer and the office of the Auditor General for their balanced review of the department's Management Environmental Livestock Program. The helpful observations and recommendations of the audit report have assisted Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship in improving the administration and delivery of these important environmental programs.

My predecessor, Don Cook, former deputy minister of Conservation, addressed the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in regard to this audit report on May 13th, 2009. Mr. Cook spoke specifically about the department's progress in addressing these OAG recommendations and responded to a number of questions from the committee. I will take this opportunity to briefly recap our progress on this.

Conservation and Water Stewardship is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation pursuant to The Environment Act. Our program delivery includes oversight of livestock mortality management as well as storage and application of manure to agricultural lands. OAG recommendations for the management of livestock included improved policy and procedures to guide program management, including inspection of manure storage facilities during the following construction, as well as monitoring the manure application. Many of these recommendations are consistent with current policy and procedures. The improvements have focused on enhanced information management and better communication, and I'm pleased to report that most of these recommendations have been implemented and that significant progress has been made on the remainder.

The department has also included recommendations from the report in the 2009 amendment to Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation. The amendment addressed concerns regarding winter storage of manure by expanding the ban on winter application of manure to all operations, including those under 300 animal units, and by prescribing minimum storage capacity requirements.

Other changes of interest not specifically related to the regulation include improvements to the technical review committee process and merging of the departments of Water Stewardship and Conservation. The review process has been changed

to provide more information for municipal governments and the public to consider when large livestock operations are proposed. A technical review officer represents the department on the committee and engages additional staff, including the Water Stewardship division in the review. The officer is available to attend municipal meetings and to speak on behalf of the department.

In conclusion, I'd like to, again, thank the OAG for the review, for the opportunity to provide a brief recap of the significant progress the government has made in response, and I'm available to answer any questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Minister.

Are there any questions of the deputy minister?

**Mr. Gerrard:** My question here is that in this report, which was January 2012, as of that point there were 25 of the recommendations which had been implemented or resolved, one in which there's no action required, one—two which were—there's no intention to implement. But there's 12 which are still outstanding and which are listed here as work in progress. Can you give us an update on those 12 and what progress has been made?

**Mr. Meier:** Just using the general numbers between the time June 11th and then October 2012, the work in progress has moved from 12 to five, another seven have been implemented or resolved over that period of time.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Can you tell us which five are still outstanding?

**Mr. Meier:** Number 21, 35, 36, 37 and 38 remain outstanding.

**An Honourable Member:** Thank you.

**Mr. Meier:** You're welcome.

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Chairperson:** Any further questions of the deputy minister?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Just to the Auditor General: Do I understand correctly that your latest report will come out in January 2013? And so when will we—I guess that's up to the committee, is it, to decide when that will be? Any ideas when that would come forward?

**Mr. Chairperson:** I believe we'll have to discuss that in the—

**Floor Comment:** Steering committee.

**Mr. Chairperson:** –steering committee, that's the word, thank you, to determine when we're going to see that, but I can ask the Auditor General if she has any comments.

**Ms. Bellringer:** And this is a bit of a procedural matter, so we'll—we will distribute regardless of whether or not you're in session. And the report will only be available to the committee once you've been in session, so it's officially tabled.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Any further questions of the deputy minister in this report?

Seeing no further questions, does the committee agree that we have completed consideration of Section 2—Audit of the Department of Conservation's Management of the Environmental Livestock Program of the Auditor General's Report—Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated January 2012? *[Agreed]*

All right. We will now deal with section 3 of the 2012 follow-up report.

Since this area has recommendations to different ministries, does this committee wish to hear an opening statement from each deputy minister first, and then ask questions you may have to that particular department before we move on to the next one? *[Agreed]*

Okay, so we will deal with the Department of Conservation first, if you have an opening statement on this one.

**Mr. Meier:** I'd like to begin by again thanking Ms. Bellringer and the office of the Auditor General for their continued assistance in working with our department on the recommendations of the government's oversight of contaminated sites and landfills. The recommendations of the audit report have assisted Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship in improving the delivery of these important environmental programs.

I had previously addressed the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in regard to this audit report in May 2010. At that time I spoke specifically about sections 4 and 5 of the audit report that dealt with Conservation and Water Stewardship's oversight of contaminated sites and landfills. I highlighted the department's progress in addressing these OAG recommendations and responded to a number of questions from the committee. At the end of May 2010 session, the Public Accounts Committee passed the report. I will take this

opportunity to briefly recap our progress on these two sections.

Related to section 4, contaminated sites, the audit report reviewed the department's monitoring procedures to ensure compliance with environmental legislation by government entities, municipalities and industry. Conservation and Water Stewardship is responsible for the administration and enforcement of The Contaminated Sites Remediation Act. Our program delivery includes oversight of the identification assessment and remediation of sites by those responsible for any environmental impacts.

Since 2007 the department has implemented or resolved the majority of the OAG recommendations for the management of contaminated sites. Of the recommendations that were identified as work in progress, as of June 30th, 2011, most have since been implemented through the establishment of working groups to guide policy and procedure development, information management and the enhanced communication. Of significant note, the department has also enacted the amendments to The Contaminated Sites Remediation Act in May 2012 that will 'strengthen' the investigation and management of sites that could affect human health and safety. Due to the department's actions since 2010, I am pleased to report that most of these recommendations have been implemented and that significant progress has been made on the remainder.

Section 5, landfills: section 5 of the audit report reviewed Conservation's procedures for the management of landfills to ensure compliance with legislation by landfill owners and operators. In response to the OAG recommendations, an internal review of the waste disposal grounds regulation has now been completed. The department has initiated consultation on the regulation with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and the Manitoba Environmental Industries Association, and consultations will continue through the fall.

I am pleased to announce that as of October 22, our department has a new solid waste co-ordinator who will lead the department's review and updating the current policies and procedures. This position will also lead the development of amendments to the waste disposal grounds regulation. In addition, a working group has been established with emphasis being placed on the review and update of the operating permits for waste disposal grounds and transfer stations.

In conclusion, I'd like to again thank the OAG for the review and for the opportunity to provide a brief recap of the significant progress the government has made in response.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Minister. Can you introduce the staff that has joined you at the table here.

**Mr. Meier:** I'm joined by Dean Kasur, who is the manager of the Environment section.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All right. So we will proceed with questions for the Department of Conservation first and then we'll move on to the Department of Local Government, if that's okay. Any questions of this section?

**Mr. Gerrard:** Just—I note that there were, as of the January 2012 update, there were still many, many recommendations which were in progress. There were 42. Can—is it possible to give us an update on how many of those 42 have now been implemented and how many are still outstanding?

**Mr. Meier:** Yes. The number has been reduced from 42 to 34. Eight have been implemented or resolved since that period of time.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Mr. Gerrard. Can you speak into the mike, please, sir.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Which ones have been resolved?

**Mr. Meier:** The numbers are 19, 20, 24, 31, 33, 34, 35 and 39.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Prior to continuing, we're almost at 4 o'clock. What is the will of the committee?

**Ms. Braun:** Mr. Chair, I think—I would say 4:30, until the completion of this section.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is that acceptable? *[Agreed]* Thank you. All right. Any further questions?

**Mr. Gerrard:** I just wanted to say thank you, that's all.

**Mr. Maguire:** I just noted, Mr. Deputy Minister, in your opening remarks that you have the new solid waste co-ordinator in place. Can you provide us with the name of that person?

**Mr. Meier:** Mr. Chairman, a very new employee as of Monday, Ashley Keep.

**Mr. Maguire:** So I'm assuming then that the report won't be ready very soon. So follow up to that is can the minister indicate—or deputy minister, indicate just what the time frame would be for the department's

review in updating these current policies and procedures that he's outlined in his comments and provide us with a time frame for that management program?

**Mr. Meier:** The new co-ordinator position relates to the landfill section of the recommendation. Prior to even the co-ordinator beginning in her new role, we have implemented a number of different processes, and they are actually currently in the process of consulting with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities as well as other stakeholders on the development of a new set of regulations. So our anticipation is that sometime in 2013, we'd be looking at these regulatory changes.

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Maguire:** So the changes will be implemented after the report's out, obviously, and if you're going to implement them in 2013, would we see the report in the spring?

**Mr. Meier:** The regulatory changes would be done in 2013. Policies and procedures that are associated with those and how to implement them follow right after that.

I think that you're referencing the next auditor's report and when the update will be on the implementation of the recommendations.

**Mr. Maguire:** No, not so much. I was—you indicated that you had a new solid waste co-ordinator in place that'll lead the department through review, and so I look forward to the Auditor General's report in the spring as well—or in January here—but the review that this new co-ordinator will be doing of contaminated sites, and I'm assuming—and that sort of thing—in Manitoba, just wonder when that review would be available.

**Mr. Meier:** The work that the co-ordinator is going to be undertaking is related to the landfill recommendations. So we have a—it's an individual that's going to be looking after the landfills and regulatory drafting and consultations associated with those changes.

There isn't anticipated to be a report that's developed as part of that. The public consultations on regulatory development will be what we're discussing with the various stakeholders, the municipalities and others.

**Mr. Maguire:** Can the deputy indicate to us how many contaminated sites they have in Manitoba presently?

**Mr. Meier:** There are six contaminated sites in Manitoba, but it's important to provide a bit of context around contaminated sites, that those are ones that pose a threat to human health and the environment.

There are 2,200 impacted sites as well that we monitor inside of the province, and those are ones that are above a specific guideline that may pose threats to the environment. And the recent changes, regulatory changes, that we've implemented have also addressed the impacted sites—pardon me—the legislative changes we've recently adopted have changed the accounting around impacted sites as well.

**Mr. Maguire:** Yes, certainly that legislation just came through this summer, and appreciate your comments on that. Thank you.

**Mr. Allum:** I also wanted to ask the deputy about the impacted sites as well.

All of us have brownfields, well, many of us have brownfields in our constituencies that can be turned into green fields and put back to productive use. So I wondered if you could just put on the record the kind of amendments that came through in the new legislation that would help to strengthen the investigation and management of those sites.

**Mr. Meier:** The changes were based on the recommendations by the Auditor General as it related to impacted sites. The changes, in short, are that sites that are above a specific standard of being impacted must now be reported, then they are designated by the Province under its program. A remediation plan must be submitted by the responsible party for cleanup before they can be undesignated or taken off the list as well. So it's a program that treats the impacted sites much more like the contaminated sites.

**Mr. Cullen:** The auditor provided a new recommendation here, and it has to do with the 17 previous recommendations. And the auditor wanted to make sure that the Province had assigned responsibility for monitoring the implementation of those 17 previous recommendations. Have you taken steps to monitor those recommendations?

**Mr. Meier:** I believe, as was mentioned earlier, there are several departments that were charged with the responsibility of this specific audit, and those will be addressed by the other deputies that will be speaking as well. And there is—there's something to report on those as well.

**Mr. Cullen:** So I guess the question is, is there a tracking mechanism to address and monitor those 17 specific recommendations?

**Mr. Meier:** As I mentioned before, I believe the others that are going to speak after me have a specific answer to that, but—and, in short, just to let you know, yes, I believe there's a plan to address those 17 recommendations.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Just one quick question, Mr. Chairman. The new solid waste co-ordinator, does that person also bring in recommendations on hazardous waste disposal sites?

**Mr. Meier:** That's a different program under the Department of Conservation where we have hazardous wastes handled under a different division of the department.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Are there any further questions of the Department of Conservation at this time?

Perhaps thank you for your questions and—our your answers to our questions, and we'll allow the Minister of Local Government and his deputy minister to come to the table, but please wait around just in case the committee does have some other questions for you.

All right, with the assent of the committee here, we have an answer to Mr. Cullen's statement. The Deputy Minister of Finance is not here. I don't want to call him the acting deputy minister, so we'll call him the Deputy Minister of Finance can indeed answer your question, if we can—the—or the Minister of Finance, yes.

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** We—the—we have taken a look at the recommendation that came from the subsequent report from the Auditor General. They—the recommendations that the Province needs to co-ordinate itself, Finance is taking that on as the co-ordinating department. We'll have the—we'll have an implementation group on liabilities that we'll put forward that—we will act as the co-ordinator to make sure that this is done and honour the recommendation that came forward.

**Mr. Cullen:** Can I have a follow-up question, Mr. Chair?

**Mr. Chairperson:** I'll allow one, yes.

**Mr. Cullen:** I guess the question is going to be the reporting mechanism. You know, how is that going to work? Is the committee going to have the

opportunity to the information that, like, your committee's putting together?

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, we'll use this group to co-ordinate, and then we'll make sure that we abide by the regular process at this table to make sure that we report back on our progress towards implementing the recommendation that the Auditor General has come forward with. So we'll follow the normal process of reporting back to this group.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

So now we have the Department of Local Government, the minister and the deputy minister. Can you—welcome. Can you introduce any staff that you have with you, please?

**Ms. Linda McFadyen (Deputy Minister of Local Government):** I'm joined at the table by Laurie Davidson, who is the assistant deputy minister for Provincial-Municipal Support Services, and Matt Dryburgh, who is our director of Municipal Finance.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All right. And I understand you have an opening statement, so please proceed.

\*(16:10)

**Ms. McFadyen:** I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for the opportunity to provide another update on this report, which was issued by the Auditor General's office in October of 2007. The original report included—the original report included 77 recommendations, three of which were directed to the Department of Local Government. All three of the recommendations directed towards the Department of Local Government relate to municipal management and reporting of environmental liabilities for contaminated sites. These recommendations require that the department communicate to municipalities a requirement to report environmental liabilities including landfills, in audited financial statements, and that municipalities are to quantify and to report and disclose liabilities for landfill closure and post-closure costs.

As I previously reported in May 2010, the Department of Local Government supports the Auditor General's recommendations. Our department's plan to address the recommendations outlined in the Auditor General's report has been fully implemented. The plan outlined the steps and time frames necessary for municipalities to comply with PSAB general accounting rules for fiscal year 2009, and one of the major PSAB implementation issues

was the reporting requirements of environmental liabilities and landfills.

To address these issues, the department, in partnership with the municipal administrators, auditors and other stakeholders formed a working group to discuss the measurement, reporting and disclosure requirements for environmental liabilities and landfills under PSAB. Local government prepared a manual which was released in the spring of 2008. The release of this manual was supported with training sessions for municipal staff and auditors.

Since 2000—since January 1, 2009, municipalities in Manitoba have been required to report liabilities for landfill closure and post-closure in accordance with public sector accounting standards. I'm pleased to report that Manitoba's municipalities with landfills are now recording and disclosing liabilities for landfill closure and post-closure costs in their annual audited financial statements according to public sector accounting standards.

I would also note that it is the audit professional's responsibility to ensure that the municipal landfill liability is properly recorded and disclosed in the audited financial statements according public sector accounting standards.

In June 2010 the Public Sector Accounting Board approved new standards for the reporting of environmental liabilities for contaminated sites, which are reported separately from landfill liabilities. These new standards address the recognition criteria, measurement, and disclosure requirements for reporting liabilities associated with the remediation of contaminated sites that are either not in productive use or which resulted from environmental accidents or natural disasters. The new standard applies to all government organizations that follow public sector accounting standards, and it comes into effect at year's end beginning on or after April 1, 2014. For municipalities in Manitoba that would be the fiscal year ending in December 31, 2015.

The departments of Conservation, Local Government and Finance are currently reviewing what further actions may be taken to support municipalities for the management of their contaminated sites and the reporting of associated liabilities in accordance with the new public sector accounting standards which come into effect in 2015.

So, in conclusion, Local Government has informed all municipalities and their auditors how to

measure and disclose liabilities related to landfill closure and post-closure in their annual audited financial statements. Municipalities with landfills are now disclosing and recording liabilities for landfill closure and post-closure costs in their audited financial statements according to public sector accounting standards. Local Government and Conservation and Finance will continue to assess what can be done to assist municipalities in the management of their contaminated sites and the reporting of the liability according to public sector accounting standards in 2015.

Thank you very much. I can take some questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Are there any questions of the deputy minister?

All right. Seeing no further questions, does the committee agree that we have completed consideration of Section 3—Audit of the Province's Management of Contaminated Sites and Landfills of the Auditor General's Report—Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated January 2012? *[Agreed]*

That concludes the business before us. The hour being—sorry, Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Chair, if you could—I have a question or two if you would indulge the—a rookie member of the Public Accounts Committee.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Cullen:** Sure—I just noticed we have another meeting scheduled for November 21st, I believe.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Not yet scheduled; we have a tentative meeting.

**Mr. Cullen:** Okay, and I guess the question is we had sort of a tentative arrangement for matters under consideration and I understand maybe those matters have been changed. I'm wondering why the change in those matters under consideration.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We moved some reports from one month to the other, depending on what ministers and deputy ministers were available, and we're currently trying to evaluate when we'll be able to follow-up on some of those reports.

**Mr. Cullen:** Is there any other reason the—you know, those reports that were going to be under consideration have been postponed?

**Mr. Chairperson:** I guess we have to determine how we're going to deal with who will be able to speak to those reports, and that's availability of the staff and availability—whether we can call particular witnesses for those reports, which we don't currently have some of that availability. And that's a question we'll need to deal with, with House leaders, I believe, and the legislation. And we do have some discussions in the steering committee that will try to deal with that particular issue.

**Mr. Cullen:** Why—maybe a follow-up, being new to the committee and not familiar with the rules—in terms of calling witnesses, I guess, seems to be a bit of an issue and maybe the Auditor General maybe has a better understanding of the rules than certainly I would. What are the issues around—regard calling witnesses for some of the reports that we—you know, we had proposed to consider? I guess looking at some of the ones like rural municipalities and some of those reports, is there issues that we can't call witnesses for those specific reports?

**Mr. Chairperson:** Well, I'll ask the Auditor General if she wishes to comment, but then we'll have to refer everything, I believe, to the steering committee.

**Ms. Bellringer:** And I—and the committee has been discussing these—I mean, it's not—the steering committee may bring something forward to you, but it—from the discussions that the committee has had—and the orientation session we went through some of that as well. So it is correct.

The current rules say that you can call the deputy minister and the minister of any department. If we do an audit of an agency, board or commission, you can call the CEO, the chief executive officer of that agency, board or commission, if the Crown corporation is permanently referred to the Crown corporation committee and there's a short list of what that includes: Hydro, MPI, workers' comp—I'm not going to remember the whole list. Everyone else, you current—currently under your rules, you cannot call.

So you would have to either change the rules or get House approval to make an exception to the rules.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Mr. Cullen, is there anything? I think we've kind of discussed this. We need to put it in the steering—

**Mr. Cullen:** Sure, thanks, Mr. Chair, and I thank you for your indulgence in this matter. I appreciate it.

So in the case of rural municipalities, we have no way to have a witness from the rural municipality come in and answer questions at this point in time under our current rules.

**Mr. Chairperson:** That is correct.

On this topic, Mrs. Driedger, is—something else? Yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** On something else, Mr. Chair, if I may, just one question.

The last time I was on Public Accounts, and correct me if I'm wrong—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Does this need to be in—recorded in *Hansard*, or is it something we can discuss after?

**Mrs. Driedger:** Oh, it could be recorded. I'm just wondering, we used to have a calendar for the whole year, I thought, of all of our meetings, so the dates were predetermined a year in advance, including reports. And the last time I was on Public Accounts, which was only about a year and a bit—I don't see that we have that happening again and I'm wondering why.

**Mr. Chairperson:** This is something we are dealing with in the steering committee, and over the next month I hope we will be able to come to terms with the next year. It—I think it was very well laid out over the past year, and we did, I think, remarkably well for a committee of this type to—*[interjection]*—11 meetings, yes. So we will be working on that. Thank you.

And I—now that most of the staff has gone, I had wished to thank the ministers, the deputy ministers and all their staff for their preparation, but they are gone—and the Auditor General and their staff. I know it takes a great deal of preparation for this, so we really appreciate that and the Clerks as well.

So that concludes the business before us, and the hour being 4:20, what is the will of the committee?

**Some Honourable Members:** Committee rise.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

Oh, before we rise, it would be appreciated if members would leave behind any unused copies of reports so they may be collected and reused at the next meeting.

**COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 4:20 p.m.**

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