

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

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Daryl Reid  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
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SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Monday, June 17, 2013**

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

**Point of Order**

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for River Heights, on a point of order?

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** On a point of order.

**Mr. Speaker:** On a point of order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, and the point of order I'm raising is with respect to rule 2(2), recall of House, which states: If the government advises the Speaker that the public interest requires the House to meet at any other time because of an emergency or extraordinary circumstances, the Speaker must advise the members that the House is to meet at the time specified by the government. The House must begin to meet at the specified time.

The rules of this Legislature, including rule 2(2), which were agreed upon by all parties in 2002, included a sessional calendar and provision for emergency sitting if needed. They were created to make it easier for the people in Manitoba to participate in their government. As the government House leader at the time said, and I quote from Hansard, December 4, 2002: "Some of the important aspects of the rules changes included a greater respect for the public." He also said that the change speaks to the need for greater public accommodation.

I raise this point of order to ensure that we achieve what we aimed for in 2002: the greatest possible respect for the people of Manitoba, for we are their servants.

My concern is that the government has failed in calling this emergency session to begin today, that it has not been specific about the nature of the emergency or the extraordinary circumstances. This is very important because rule 2(2) is very specific in saying there must be an emergency or extraordinary circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot going on in the Legislature recently and not everything is an emergency. A session which is organized in emergency or extraordinary session is different from a regular session or an extension of a regular session, and this has been established in precedent and through past practice. While such precedent may not be a part of the rule specifically, precedent is a very important aspect of our parliamentary system.

Mr. Speaker, under the rules adopted on December 22nd, 2002, we've had the Legislature recalled only once for an emergency session, and that was on June 23rd, 2003. On that occasion, it was made very clear that the government had a requirement to make clear the reason for calling the emergency legislative session. The then-minister of Justice and attorney general said, and I quote from Hansard: "I am directed by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to inform you that he will not declare the causes of calling this Legislature until a Speaker has been elected in accordance with the law."

Now, Mr. Speaker, the circumstances of the present emergency sitting and the recalling of this Legislature are somewhat different from those which occurred on June 23rd, 2003, but aspects of what occurred for that day are certainly very relevant to today. Before the sitting on June 23rd, the government had clearly communicated to the Liberal caucus of the day and the Conservative caucus of the day the reasons for the emergency recall of the Legislature. It was specifically to deal with several items, one of which was an urgent debate on a matter of public importance on the bovine spongiform encephalitis situation, a very urgent, indeed, emergency matter at that time.

Furthermore, before that matter was dealt with, two speakers from the government side of the House and both opposition caucus House leaders had an opportunity to speak in the House directly—sorry,

that's both opposition caucus leaders, not House leaders, had an opportunity to speak in the House directly on the reasons for the recall of the Legislature. Because of the emergency or extraordinary nature of that sitting, there was a discussion among House leaders as to precisely what would be the essential components of the emergency sitting. And there was unanimous agreement among all parties to proceed with the emergency sitting, because all MLAs realized that there were, indeed, extraordinary circumstances on that occasion. Mr. Speaker, no such process has happened this time.

There are also considerable precedents going back many years for special or emergency sessions in the House of Commons in Ottawa. These have been called for outbreaks of war, exceptional economic conditions, the destruction of railway transportation facilities and severe international events and hostilities. They've been very specific, and the nature of the emergency to be dealt with has been clear.

Next, Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on what precedent has illustrated is not a specific, sufficient requirement for an emergency or extraordinary sitting of the Legislature.

First of all, the completion of the budget process, including the Estimates, concurrence and budget-related bills like The Appropriation Act, The Loan Act and The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act bill, are clearly not emergency matters. In 2003, these matters were completed in the September sitting and bills received royal assent on September 30th of that year. In 2007, these items were completed in a sitting which lasted through September, October and November of that year; it was not completed until November the 8th. So clearly the failure to complete the Estimates and a wide variety of other bills is not an emergency.

Next, I would like to review what has happened this year. Last week, on Tuesday, June 11th, I asked the Premier (Mr. Selinger), and I quote from Hansard: Which bills will he be designating as emergency bills to be completed—to be completed during the emergency session expected to start next week? The Premier replied, and I quote: "All of our bills are priority bills, Mr. Speaker." Clearly, in spite of what the Premier said on Tuesday last week, based on the precedent set in 2003 and 2007, not all bills can be considered emergency bills. Certainly, the majority of bills before this session could wait

until our regular sitting time in September to be debated and dealt with. In fact, one might argue that by precedent this could even be the case for all of the bills.

Because I was concerned last week about the nature of the emergency sitting and it didn't seem logical to me that everything is an emergency, I spoke again in question period the following day, Wednesday, June the 12th, saying, and I quote: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier said in terms of the emergency session that he was putting a priority on all of his bills. Quite frankly, this quote is misleading Manitobans to understand that the impending emergency session, after this Thursday, will continue as if it were just a regular session. The rules of the Legislature are clear that calling the House outside of the sessional calendar is for emergency or extraordinary circumstances to deal with emergency measures. When will the Premier tell Manitobans—and I asked which bills he considers emergency bills to be completed in the emergency session. And the Premier replied, and I quote: "All the bills we consider to be important, and the budget we consider to be important, Mr. Speaker." I note the Premier said and—what was important, not what was an emergency, and these are two very different words with different meanings; important and emergency are not the same.

\* (13:40)

I remained concerned that no specific reason, hence no direction for business, had been given for the emergency sitting. And so I asked last week once more, Mr. Speaker, and I quote: "I ask the Premier to be honest about this, acknowledge that we're going to be in an emergency session and tell us what emergency measures he's going to be dealing with." The Premier replied, and I quote: "We're very eager to carry on the work of the Legislature, both on the budget side and on the bill side."

Mr. Speaker, the remarks of the Premier in response to my questions can only be interpreted to indicate that the Premier was talking about carrying on the regular work of the Legislature rather than dealing with a specific emergency or extraordinary circumstance in this emergency sitting, which has been called starting today.

Mr. Speaker, there are two bills which in my view the government might suggest are emergency bills. And I would like to discuss these two bills as examples of why they should not be considered emergency bills.

The first of these is Bill 20, a bill which removes the requirement for a referendum before the PST is raised. This might be considered an emergency if the passage of Bill 20 was necessary before July 1 when the increase in PST comes into effect. The government itself has argued many times in the present legislative session that there is no legal or other requirement that Bill 20 be passed before July 1, however. Thus, the passage of Bill 20 is not an emergency, and it can be adequately addressed in September or even November, as previous bills have awaited passage in 2003 and 2007.

The second bill which might be considered an emergency is Bill 18, the bill which provides for measures to prevent bullying in schools. I believe the government may have even have indicated that it would like Bill 18 to be passed before school opens in the fall. This might be understandable, but what is not understandable, then, is why the spring session wasn't called earlier or the debate and passage of this bill was not made a priority during the regular spring session. Indeed, Bill 18 has only been presented for second reading debate on three occasions: December 6th last year, May the 6th and June 10th of this year. Even though I, like the Premier, consider this an important bill, his government's actions to date are not consistent with 'priorizing' this bill as an emergency bill. Thus, I must conclude from the government's own actions to date that they don't consider the passage of Bill 18—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the honourable member for River Heights, but I think he's getting into the debate of the substance of the matter, and I would ask him to provide some clarification to the Chair on what rules or procedures of the House might have been breached. I offer that as guidance to the honourable member for River Heights.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I am speaking specifically to rule 2(2), the recall of the House, which states that if the government advises the Speaker that the public interest requires the House to meet at any other time because of an emergency or extraordinary circumstances, the Speaker must advise the members that the House is to meet at the specified time. We are being recalled today under that clause, 2(2), as the government indicated last week. And, therefore, let me conclude my remarks specific to that issue, that the government, in using this clause, must demonstrate that there is indeed matters which are of an emergency nature or require extraordinary circumstances.

You know, there may be other matters that could be considered an emergency. You know, Kim Edwards is on a hunger strike in front of the Legislature. She's raised important issues with respect to Child and Family Services. The government has not shown to date an inclination to deal with these matters, let alone to treat them as emergency matters. The government needs to specify what matters are emergency matters.

Mr. Speaker, I am keen to get the business of the Legislature done. But in order to do so, the business of the Legislature—and to do it well—we have the rules of the Legislature to follow, including rule 2(2), a rule which was designed specifically to enable governments to deal with emergencies. Under rule 2(2), the sitting can only be called for emergency or extraordinary reasons and to date the government hasn't indicated what matters are emergency matters, and those that the government has mentioned to date, by precedent in this Chamber, are not matters which require an emergency or extraordinary sitting of the Legislature. The Legislature can work most efficiently and most effectively to address the emergency and extraordinary circumstances if the government makes very clear exactly what is the emergency so those of us in the opposition parties can help deal with this emergency.

As I've indicated, I'm concerned that proper procedure has not been followed with respect to rule 2(2), and if that proper procedure is not followed, we might set a precedent for the abuse or overuse of this rule in the future. There are various options that could be offered to correct the lack of proper procedure. The government could immediately indicate what this emergency sitting is about and define what is an emergency and what is not an emergency. Mr. Speaker, you could rule that because rule 2(2) has not been followed properly that this sitting cannot occur and the start of any emergency sitting will have to wait until proper procedure has been followed, or you could rule that the grounds put forward for this sitting don't represent an emergency and the government will have to wait until the normal sitting time in September.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to consider this point of order, this—and to rule that grounds for this emergency or extraordinary sitting have not been provided and that, therefore, recalling of the Legislature is not valid and should be revoked until such time as the government clarifies precisely what

is the emergency or extraordinary circumstances we are to be dealing with in this sitting. Thank you.

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** I thank the member for River Heights for his concerns.

And I do want to say, in my opinion, in my view, it is a bit of a misreading of the rule. The rule very clearly, in my mind, states that if the government advises the Speaker that the public interest requires the House to meet at any other time because of an emergency or extraordinary circumstances—and I think he's ignoring several parts of that.

One is the public interest requires it. I think there can be no doubt that the public interest does require for us to meet to deal with issues like the Estimates process, to bring that to a close. I think, currently, I think—believe the member is aware that the government expenditures are running on a special warrant that expires at the end of July, July 31st. Unless we deal with the Estimates or bring in an interim appropriations act, no spending can occur after—no spending will likely occur after July 31st. That could result in all business of the government, all the services provided by government, coming to a halt. Very clearly, the public interest would require that we meet and make sure that that doesn't happen.

There is, of course, the possibility that we could pass another special warrant. But generally in parliaments what is required is that there be legislative oversight of spending, and as long as there's a possibility to have that oversight, you want to ensure that there is that oversight. And so bringing the House back to duly deal with the Estimates process, make sure there's funding available for the programs and services that Manitobans require, certainly is in the public interest.

The other part of the rule, I would say, specifies extraordinary circumstances, and we can have lots of time, I suppose, to debate whose fault is whose in terms of how the session unfolds. The reality is that all of us as members of the Legislature bring a responsibility on how the Legislature functions. I have a responsibility as the House leader to put the business of the government in front of the House, but all members have a role to play in how slowly or quickly that business goes through the House.

The member opposite said that we only called Bill 18 three times. That is false. I called Bill 18—if you look back—it was on the agenda every day last

week. That the opposition decided that the other bills were more important to them to debate than Bill 18 is not something that I have any control over. But that bill has been called a number of times.

Clearly, I think the fact that we have not yet completed the business of Estimates, that we have not yet considered, I think, close to 95 per cent of the legislation that's on the books, that is clearly an extraordinary circumstance, Mr. Speaker. I can't recall another time that that has happened, and so I think that is out of the ordinary.

I don't have my—haven't developed my Hansard app yet for my smart phone, but I think if you look back, you will see that the House has been recalled in the recent past after the Throne Speech was introduced and the Throne Speech did not pass in the time allotted and so the House came back to consider that Throne Speech. I believe that was done when this rule came into effect.

\*(13:50)

When I look at this rule, I think this rule is in place for exactly this kind of situation. In our House, we have a situation where although there is a date by which the House rises there is no assurance to the government that the business that the government puts forward will be passed by that time. Without that assurance, the government needs a way to recall the House to ensure that the business of the government comes to a conclusion in some way. So I believe that that's what this rule is in place for.

Every Legislature that I'm aware of has some method to ensure that there's a balance between the right of the opposition to oppose—and to oppose vigorously and to hold the government to account—and the right of the government to get through the business of being government. We could not have a situation, I believe, where there was a date that the House is supposed to rise but no mechanism to ensure that the legislation brought forward or the Estimates process ever concludes. I think what that would result in, frankly, would be chaos, gridlock, and would not serve the public interest well.

So that is why we are back here today and here for the foreseeable future until we can get the business of Manitobans achieved. I believe you have duly and responsibly recalled the House because the government has advised you it is within the public interest, and I believe the situation over the last several weeks do indeed present us with some

extraordinary circumstances that warrant the House being recalled.

So I think on examination, Mr. Speaker, you will find that there is no point of order here.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** Just a few words of comments, not to unnecessarily delay question period, which I know everybody is looking forward to, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, welcome back on this first day of the extraordinary or exceptional session, however one wants to describe it. We certainly, as Progressive Conservatives, are happy to be here and happy to be here each and every day to defend Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

As we indicated early on in this session, we are going to do everything that we can to ensure that the PST increase from 7 to 8 per cent, Bill 20, does not pass quickly, does not pass easily. We made that promise to Manitobans and, unlike the government, we kept our promise, Mr. Speaker, and we're happy to be here to fight for Manitoba families.

I want to make a couple of comments about what the—both the Government House Leader and what the Leader of the Liberal Party said. First of all, when you look at precedent, there's no doubt that the 2003 precedent on BSE would clearly be an emergency situation. That was an extraordinary situation at the time, and if that is the bar, this certainly doesn't meet the bar. We have a situation here where why we're being called back is the government has failed to manage the House. The government has failed to properly manage this Legislature. Is it an emergency that they haven't been able to manage the Legislature? Well, I suppose you can determine that. It's certainly not extraordinary that they haven't been able to manage the Legislature, because we've seen that many, many times before, al—this is probably setting a new standard for mismanagement when it comes to the Legislature this particular session, Mr. Speaker.

But I do think that the most germane and important part of the comments from the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) was that this Legislature could have been called back much sooner this spring. We came back mid-April, and it's difficult, I think, for this government to justify and they can't justify that any bill that they have before the Legislature is an emergency when they themselves didn't decide it was important enough to come back here before

mid-April, Mr. Speaker. We waited patiently for the government to recall the Legislature in the spring. If any of the bills that they considered to be important were as important as they say, they would have called this House back much sooner than mid-April. So I think the difficult bar for them to pass will be, how can they declare that any of their legislation is an emergency when they themselves decided not to come back to work in this Chamber until mid-April?

So clearly they're trying to classify a tax increase as an emergency, the ability to take more money from Manitobans as an emergency. In fact, statistically, when I look at it, when bills were called in this Legislature over the session before the new session or the new sitting that we've started now, Mr. Speaker, 70 per cent of the times when the government called bills they prioritized Bill 20, the PST tax increase. Seventy per cent of the time when they had a choice to determine what was the most important to call, they called Bill 20, a PST tax increase. That speaks to the priorities of this government and whether or not it's an emergency to increase the taxes on Manitobans, whether or not it is an extraordinary situation where they need to increase the debt load on Manitoba families who are already struggling, who might have to choose between sports programs, vacations or whether or not they're able to put food on the table. I don't think it's an extraordinary situation to have to increase the taxes on Manitobans.

So I'm disappointed that the government has put themselves in this situation, disappointed that their priority is to take more money from Manitobans, but we are certainly willing to be here each and every day to fight for Manitobans.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable member for River Heights, I'd like to thank all honourable members for their advice on this point of order, and I have several comments that I'd like to share with the House.

First, in the rule book under which I'm obligated to enforce as the Speaker of the Assembly and also the presiding officer—and I'm going to put this on the record so—under—members understand very clearly what is in rule 2(2). It's under the title recall of the House, 2(2): If the government advises the Speaker that the public interest requires the House to meet at any other time because of an emergency or extraordinary circumstances, the Speaker must advise the House—the members of the House—that the

House is to meet at the time specified by the government. The House must begin to meet at the specified time.

Last week, I've received information from the government—I believe it was on June the 12th. And early on the morning of June 13th I've—I sent a member personally addressed to every member of this Assembly indicating that, pursuant to rule 2(2), the House is being recalled for Monday, June the 17th, 2013, at 1:30 p.m. The House will sit each day in accordance with the rules, orders and forms of proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. And I circulated that letter to every member of the Assembly.

Now, the honourable member for River Heights indicates that the—and I think he is—if I can paraphrase his comments relating to that there has been no emergency demonstrated in the Assembly here. The rules clearly indicate in 2(2) that it's an emergency or extraordinary circumstances. That is not to the Speaker to decide what are emergency or extraordinary circumstances. It is not my role to interpret what that means as specific to the rules.

If members wish to have some modification in the future to that specific rule, then that—I leave that to the House leaders and the various members of the Assembly to make that determination, but it's not my role to interpret what that means specifically. That is left to the government to determine what are considered to be emergency or extraordinary circumstances.

And I can indicate to the House that on December 10th, 2009, the Speaker, Honourable Speaker Hickes, indicated in the Fourth Session of the 39th Legislature just such a circumstance arose at that period of time under much the same case and that the House was recalled and that the Speaker at that time ruled that the member who rose on a point of order did not have a point of order because it was left to the government to determine what would constitute an emergency or extraordinary circumstances.

So with the greatest of respect, I must indicate to the House that, in my view, that rule 2(2) is left to the determination of the House and therefore the honourable member for River Heights does not have a point of order.

Now, proceed with the business of the House.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to petitions, I'm going to vary a little bit from our normal procedure while the students are with us here this afternoon.

We have from Daerwood School 41 grades 5 and 6 students under the direction of Terri Wiens. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

Now, move on with—

## PETITIONS

### Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Yes, good afternoon again, Mr. Speaker, and I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

\* (14:00)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by L. Froese, P.N. Froese, G. Friesen and many other Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation and will hurt Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is signed by Y. Luo, E. Taylor and L. McLaren and many, many more fine Manitobans.

#### **Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipality with fewer than 1,000 constituents.

The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of his decision prior to the Throne Speech announced on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation will be drastically limited while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including an absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reserve his decision—or reverse his decision to force amalgamation—or communities—or municipalities with fewer 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

This petition is signed by D. Cook, R. Barrett, G. Tibbatts and many, many more Manitobans.

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents.

The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation will be drastically limited while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including an absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and be led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

And this petition is signed by J. Wilson, C. Wilson, T. Wilson and many, many more fine Manitobans.

#### **Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of the democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And this is signed by B. Hunter, M. Boisjoli, L. Boisjoli and many others, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents.

(2) The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

(3) If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation will be drastically limited while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

(4) Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including an absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

(5) Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force

municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

This petition is signed by J. Lalonde, L. Blair, K. Holmes and many other fine Manitobans.

#### **Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Good afternoon. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government not to raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This is submitted on behalf of B. Motkaluk, E. Blahey, B. Noren and many other fine Manitobans.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by B. Barto, M. Clayton, M. Clayton and many, many other Manitobans.

#### **Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal**

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

And the background for this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents.

(2) The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

(3) If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation will be drastically limited while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

(4) Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including an absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

(5) Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force amalgamation—force—pardon me, Mr. Speaker—municipalities with fewer than a thousand constituents to amalgamate.

And this petition is signed by K. Hammond, B. Hammond, M. Vercaigne and many, many other Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

\* (14:10)

#### **Ring Dike Road—Ste. Rose du Lac**

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The Ring Dike Road is a well-used gravel municipal road that is used as a secondary road in and out of the community of Ste. Rose du Lac.

Given this heavy pattern of use, there is strong interest in the community in seeing the Ring Dike Road upgraded to a paved provincial road.

It would be most cost-effective to upgrade the Ring Dike Road to a provincial road at the same time that upgrades are being undertaken on the junction of PTH 68 and PTH No. 5.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider upgrading the Ring Dike Road at Ste. Rose du Lac into a provincial road, and (2) to request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider upgrading the Ring Dike Road at the same time that work is being done at the junction of PTH 68 and PTH 5.

This petition is signed by J.P. McLaughlin, L. Tardiff, K. Sigurdson and many, many other fine Manitobans.

#### **Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase in the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And this petition is signed by L. Pacheco, K. Murray, S. Poitras and many, many other fine Manitobans.

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

Signed by D. Yuskov, B. Gauthier and B. Yakel and many other Manitobans.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This is signed by C. Derksen, W. Grandmont, J. Goosen and many, many other Manitobans.

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is signed by A. Stuart, L. Stuart and S. Joynt and many more fine Manitobans.

#### **Municipal Amalgamations–Reversal**

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents.

(2) The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

(3) If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation would be drastically limited while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

(4) Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including an absence

of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

(5) Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

And this petition is signed by T. Hodgson, S. Hodgson, A. Hodgson and many, many others.

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner Annual Review for 2011.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any further tabling of reports?

**Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2013-2014 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today representatives from the ALS Society of Manitoba, who are the guests of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

And also seated in the public gallery, we have with us today the co-chair of the Rusalka Ukrainian Dance Ensemble, Hannia Tarasiuk, who are—who is the guest of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight).

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### MPI Rate Increase Impact on Manitobans

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, our congratulations to all the many participants and volunteers in this year's Manitoba Marathon, Mr. Speaker. It's a wonderful accomplishment and it takes tremendous discipline.

It takes a willingness to endure a lot of discomfort and pain.

And it's something that Manitobans have to do in some respects as well. Every Manitoban is running a marathon in a sense, trying to find money to retire on, trying to find the funds to pay down their mortgage or to save for a child's education, to pay off debts. Marathons are a challenge for all of us, Mr. Speaker.

And this government has made it more and more punitive for Manitobans, in the sense of the \$1,600 per household additional tax imposition over the last two budgets. They're creating a situation where Manitobans have to run uphill.

And adding insult to injury is now a proposed 2 per cent hike in the Autopac premium, when just two years ago this government issued a vote-buying rebate.

So I want to ask the Premier: Does he realize that his mismanagement is creating an even more challenging marathon for Manitobans every year?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, and I, too, want to congratulate all the people that participated in the marathon. We had three members of our caucus that ran either the half marathon or the full marathon, the members for Burrows, Minto and Wolseley. The member for Burrows was in at least the top 50.

**Some Honourable Members:** Point Douglas.

**Mr. Selinger:** Point Douglas—thank you—was at least in the top 50. And so they made an extraordinary effort, and many thousands of Manitobans ran in that race as well.

\* (14:20)

I will say this, that we have passed legislation and reported on it for the first year that our hydroelectricity rates, our home heating costs and our auto insurance costs will be the lowest in Canada, and we've had an independent accounting firm verify that and report it to the Legislature.

And I can confirm that in the first year of that commitment, Manitoba has had the lowest auto insurance rates, the lowest electricity rates and the lowest home heating rates, as a bundle.

And the member will know that for 14 of the last 15 years the auto insurance Crown corporation has either held the line or reduced rates. This has resulted in a total rate decrease of 17.8 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Pallister:** And it's the timing that's at issue here.

Speaking of times, I want to mention, because the Premier didn't, the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Chief), who ran a three-hour and 36-minute marathon, and congratulations to you. That's awesome—awesome.

You know, the issue here, in terms of this MPI rate hike, Mr. Speaker, goes beyond the alleged low returns of the Crown corp. It goes beyond the management issues around the Crown corp., and it speaks to the integrity of the government, a government that ran on not raising taxes and then proceeded to launch plans to double our hydro rates and increase home insurance rates by 7 per cent, proposing to do it by a beer and wine hike, 8 per cent tax on benefits if this bill goes ahead, not to mention this overall damage that's being done to Manitobans' household budgets through a PST hike. Now we have a 2 per cent hike in the MPI rates as well.

Would the government realize—did they realize when they cut the MPI rate in an election year that they were thinking not of Manitobans? Do they realize that they were thinking of themselves, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want other people to share the sheer cynicism we're hearing from the Leader of the Opposition.

The leader will know—the leader will know that auto insurance rates are set by an independent body called the Public Utilities Board. They review the financials of the Crown corporation and they determine what they consider to be a reasonable rate. And it was they who decided what the rates will be, as is in this application. This application will be—receive full due diligence from the Public Utilities Board as well as all the interveners who will have the right to make a full presentation, and then they will determine what the rate is.

But I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker. In the last election there was only one political party that argued that auto insurance should be privatized in Manitoba, and it was the members of the Progressive Conservative Party. They wanted to make auto insurance a private business again in Manitoba, which would guarantee the rates would go up dramatically, as we saw when they privatized the telephone system; rates went from the third lowest in the country to the third highest in the country.

By keeping it a Crown corporation, along with Manitoba Hydro, we have the lowest home heating, electricity costs and auto insurance costs in the country.

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

**Mr. Pallister:** And the highest taxes west of Québec.

You know, it's one—it's a pain for a Manitoban to get their car recalled, but it hurts even worse when it's your rebate that gets recalled, and that's what's happening here.

Now, last year, the government jacked up the fee, the \$35 registration charge, that went onto every Manitoban's car, and they were going to use it as a slush fund. They raised the taxes on gas, and that's going as an NDP slush fund. And we know now that they're trying to jack up the PST so it can go to an NDP slush fund.

Yet last year—or the election year, they proposed a rate hike—a rebate, I'm sorry—election year. This year they propose a rate hike. Even I get mixed up with this, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that the rebate's sole purpose was to buy votes in an election year.

So will the Premier admit that the rate hike this year is to create a slush fund so they can kick a rebate out next pre-election period?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, maintaining universal health care for all Manitobans as opposed to the two-tier system advocated by the Leader of the Opposition is not slush.

When we made cancer drugs available to all Manitobans in our budget, that was a commitment that we made after representations from the Canadian Cancer Society that people experiencing cancer were having trouble finding the resources to have to purchase the essential medications which will allow them to continue to be active members of the community and recover. That is not slush, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we have provided an increase to public schools, in contrast to members opposite when they were in government who slashed school funding and laid off over 700 teachers, that is not slush. That allows young people to get an education and training that will allow them to participate in the labour market.

When we announced \$250 million to protect the people in the Assiniboine valley, Lake Manitoba—

**Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please. The honourable First Minister's time has expired.

### **MPI Rate Increase Government Intent**

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Well, maybe the Premier's confused, but that shouldn't come as a surprise to us. I don't remember that any of those things are the responsibility of MPI. But, you know, Mr. Speaker, here we have another day, another tax hike from this desperate NDP government.

Last fall the Minister of Justice, now the minister of flip-flop, said there would be a sound business plan from MPI for the proposed infrastructure investment, and now he's listened to Manitoba and he's nixed that. So after losing \$48 million last year, we wonder if he has a sound business plan for MPI at all.

Mr. Speaker, how can the minister of flip-flop defend an 1.8 per cent tax grab from Manitobans when just a few months ago he was willing to spend MPI ratepayers' money on infrastructure?

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act):** It's a pleasure to stand and perhaps give the member for Brandon West just a little bit of perspective.

It is a fact—and I heard some of the members opposite calling facts are facts. Here is a fact they should chew on. For 14 of the last 15 years Manitoba Public Insurance has held the line or has reduced rates for auto insurance in the province of Manitoba. And it was since 15 years ago when the Leader of the Opposition wandered away to do something else, since that time rates have dropped 17.8 per cent on average.

And, Mr. Speaker, obviously people want auto insurance to be as cheap as possible. To put it in perspective for the member opposite, the increase is about \$1.50 per vehicle per month. Even if you have to fill a seven-car—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please. The honourable—order, please.

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, MPI made 30 per cent less on its investment last year when the TSX went up over 5 per cent. Now the minister of flip-flop wants Manitobans to pay for his mistakes with MPI. Manitobans can't afford to bail out this government any more.

Mr. Speaker, this minister can't make a profit in a bull market. Why should the PUB reward his mismanagement with a rate hike, another tax increase?

**Mr. Swan:** Let's continue to get just a little bit of perspective on this issue. Overall rates for Manitoba Public Insurance, rates decreased by 4 per cent in 2011. They decreased by a further 8 per cent in 2012 after the election, which I know the members opposite don't really want to talk about, and, indeed, they remained stable in 2013.

Mr. Speaker, we brought in legislation to make sure that Manitobans pay the lowest combined cost for public auto insurance, for home heating and for hydro in the entire country. That's exactly what we said we were going to do. That's exactly what we're doing.

The firm of Deloitte, which is not generally known for being New Democrat sympathizers, has once again confirmed that Manitobans pay the lowest auto insurance cost in the entire country, and that's going to continue, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Helwer:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP lied to Manitobans about tax increases, and now we can see that the minister of flip-flop is driving MPI toward another rate increase to pay for NDP mistakes.

Why should ratepayers be forced to pick up the tab for NDP mismanagement?

**Mr. Swan:** Let's have a bit more perspective.

This morning I was speaking to grade 9 students at General Wolfe, which is a school in my area in the West End of Winnipeg—and, you know, the average vehicle insurance premium in Manitoba is \$900. That's the case even if you've young drivers in your family like I will very soon; I know many other members on both sides of this House do. That same \$900 premium for a family with a young driver would be \$3,000 in Calgary with private insurance. That same cost, \$7,000 in the city of Toronto for a family with young drivers.

\* (14:30)

You know, Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite don't like public insurance. I know they come from this ideological position, they just cannot stand to see public insurance providing better value to Manitobans. I'm on the side of young families. I'm on the side—

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

### **New West Partnership Agreement Manitoba Participation**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, how about the family in Saskatchewan that's paying \$5,000 less in income taxes?

For years now, Mr. Speaker, we've been calling on this NDP government to join the New West Partnership. For years now, the NDP government has refused, forcing Manitoba to fall further behind our neighbours to the west.

The Premier has been at the Western Premiers' Conference for the last few days.

Mr. Speaker, I ask him: Why has he refused to put the New West Partnership on the map in these negotiations? Why has he refused to sign that New West Partnership, forcing Manitobans to fall further behind?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the government of Saskatchewan ranks Manitoba as one of the most affordable places to live in Canada.

I can tell you is, actually, 40 years ago—it was 40 years ago that the first Western Premiers' Conference was held here in Manitoba by the premier of the day, Premier Ed Schreyer, with other premiers and northern territorial leaders of the day. And I can tell you the Western Premiers' Conference is the place where we make very significant policy recommendations to the—for the country, taking them to the Council of the Federation this summer.

We talked about a skilled workforce and the need to continue to invest in a skills agenda for young people, whether they live in rural or northern or urban Manitoba. They need that opportunity to get the skills they need for the growing economy we have in Manitoba, one of the best performing economies in Canada over the last five years.

And, indeed, the western economies generally have done very well, and we're collaborating together to even strengthen the ability of western Canada to contribute to the prosperity of the whole country.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I'm not surprised that Premier Wall is saying good things about Manitoba. This budget that they introduced, Mr. Speaker, is Saskatchewan's economic action plan.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba continues to fall further behind as a result of this government's refusal to join our neighbours in the New West Partnership. The

Premier's refusal to make this a priority in the discussions with the western—with our west—western neighbours shows that he is content to let Manitoba fall even further behind.

My question for the Premier is: Why is he content to let Manitoba fall further behind our western neighbours?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, we actually made very significant progress on issues of how to transmit energy to the west; how to make sure that we continue to have access to our energy markets in North America, including Minnesota and Wisconsin; how to move oil out of the—western Canada towards eastern Canada, where they are dependent on Venezuelan oil; how to help diesel communities become less reliant on diesel and look at alternative sources of clean energy; how to ramp up the skills agenda, as I said; how to have a lake-friendly accord to ensure that we stop our lakes from nutrifying in Manitoba; how to continue to further promote international trade in western Canada and, indeed, in the whole country.

The practical things we worked on today will make a big difference for all Manitobans, all western Canadians, and we believe as these policies get adopted by the Council of the Federation, they will indeed make a difference for all Canadians, Mr. Speaker.

### **PST Increase Request to Withdraw**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, rather than focus on ways to work with our neighbours, this NDP government has focused its energies in the last little while on how to gouge Manitobans to pay for their spending addiction.

Mr. Speaker, they have refused to join the New West Partnership, which would help our Province and save in some areas of procurement.

My question is: Will they do the right thing and reverse their decision, Mr. Speaker, to force an illegal PST hike on hard-working Manitobans?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the—Manitoba already co-operates with other western provinces on joint procurement; that is already being done. We co-operate on harmonizing our transportation regulations with Saskatchewan and Manitoba. We co-operate with Alberta on securities regulation.

And, as a matter of fact, we all recognize today that the PST in Manitoba remains the third lowest in Canada, and we were one of the few provinces that increased tax deductions for individuals, for spouses and for dependents and increased the amount of money we made available for seniors through the seniors' property tax credit. And we also continue to be acknowledged as the largest tax-free zone in the country for small business taxation: zero, Mr. Speaker.

That's the kind of progress we're making for all Manitobans, in co-operation with the western provinces.

### **Military Envoy Resignation**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday it was announced that Manitoba's 58th MLA was resigning from her post as the military envoy.

The Premier is committed to hiring one of his backbenchers to fill the post. Someone is going to benefit from the MLA patronage plan and taxpayer funded perks.

Mr. Speaker, is the member of Kirkfield Park the next, latest recipient of the MLA patriation plan?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, we've had a valuable relationship with the military of Manitoba. The member—the former member for St. James was a pioneer in that regard.

We've worked very closely with military families to make sure they're welcome in this province, that they have access to health-care services, services to support families, ensure—help with ensuring their children have access to recreation programming and labour market and training opportunities. We think that the military plays a very significant role in this province and we want them to know that they are always welcome here.

Many other Provinces now have picked up on this role and also have a liaison person with respect to the military.

But I can tell you, not only does the military play a presence in this province every single day, they played a very significant role in the 2011 flood when people came out of Shilo, worked with us all along the Assiniboine valley. And the great thing about that experience, Mr. Speaker, not only was the military involved, but Manitobans worked shoulder to shoulder with them to prevent damage all along the Assiniboine valley, and we had—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. First Minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Graydon:** Mr. Speaker, the nearly \$100,000 could be better spent elsewhere, yet the NDP have set up the MLA patronage plan and the race is on to see who will receive it. The Premier was not in favour of appointing a sitting MLA in the past, but now the patronage plan is in full effect.

Mr. Speaker, is the member of St. James the latest recipient of the MLA patronage plan?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, it is true we have made investments in supporting positive relationships and helping Manitoba military families feel welcome, put down roots in Manitoba, and many of them decided to make Manitoba their home.

People in St. James, people in Kirkfield Park have many military families in their presence; they tend to live in those communities. I myself remember growing up with many young military students in the school that I attended in St. James. And I can tell you these people have made a tremendous contribution, not only to Manitoba, not only to our country, but they have made a very valuable contribution around the world.

We value that relationship. We will continue to have a military envoy doing liaison work, helping them find practical resources so they can have a good quality of life in Manitoba. We value that relationship; we're prepared to make some investments in it. It's over 5,000 military personnel in Manitoba. It's a very large number of people working in this province.

I only wish the members opposite would support that, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Graydon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier did not have enough faith in his backbenchers before, but now he has to do something. The MLA patronage plan allows him to spend some more money and create an expensive position that the MLAs should be responsible for anyway. On this side of the House, we would take that responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, is the member of Brandon East the latest recipient of the MLA patronage plan?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, again, we think it's important to have resources available to support military families in Manitoba.

And I can tell you, when you visit places like Shilo, I've been in Shilo at some times when all the

soldiers were overseas in places like Afghanistan and the family were on their own. The remaining members of the family were on their own for many months by themselves.

And unlike days of the past, it's important to support those families. It's important to help those children do well in school. It's important to support the parents who remain in Manitoba to get counselling and other supports they may need and to be able to have relationships with the community, including access to labour markets, including access to health care and family services. We think those services are important because we think the military is important and we value their role in Manitoba.

\* (14:40)

### Legal Proceedings Total Costs

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods):** We may have to bring the military in to keep an eye on those ministers over there.

Mr. Speaker, last week I asked some very straightforward questions about how much the NDP have spent on lawyers in their battle against Assiniboia Downs. I would've thought at least one of the three ministers involved in the legal actions would have had the answer. Now that the ministers have had a few days to consider the issue, I'd like to ask my question again.

How much is the NDP legal bill to date in their battle against Assiniboia Downs?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very important to remember that we gave a lot of notice to the Manitoba Jockey Club that we were going to do what we said we were going to do. We put it in our—featured it prominently in the budget that we presented right here in this House. We followed through with that. The judge in the case that went to court said we could do that, so that's what we're doing.

We're going to take that \$5 million, whether the member for Spruce Woods likes this or not, Mr. Speaker. We're going to take that money from horse racing and gambling in Manitoba and we're going to redirect that \$5 million into health care. We'd much rather have the Manitoba priorities of hospitals over the Manitoba not-so-much a priority on horses.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems like a fairly simple question, but the NDP keeps skating around the issue.

Mr. Speaker, we know the NDP had 12 lawyers in court last Monday. We know they had five lawyers in court on Tuesday. I realize it might take some time for the NDP to do the math and add it all up, but surely one of the three ministers that are involved in this should have some idea what the bill is at.

Mr. Speaker, how much is the NDP legal bill to date?

**Mr. Struthers:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear and very up front for members opposite. We've been very clear with the Jockey Club. We've been very clear with the people of Manitoba. Our priority is to take the \$5 million—it's a reduction, that's true, it's a reduction—and redirect those funds to health care.

Mr. Speaker, we want the Manitoba Jockey Club and we want horse racing in Manitoba to survive. That's why we want it on a more sustainable footing on a go-forward basis. Private sec—private entities have stepped forward to work with the Jockey Club, most recently the Peguis First Nation. We think that that's a good thing. We welcome that. If they can work together with Peguis to offer horse racing on a—

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

**Mr. Cullen:** I think the minister is right. I believe that Manitobans have the right to know how much the NDP are spending to defend their position, especially if we as taxpayers are footing the bill. Mr. Speaker, let me try another angle on the question.

Mr. Speaker, will the NDP legal fees be more than the \$5 million the NDP expect to take from the VLT players at Assiniboia Downs?

**Mr. Struthers:** I don't understand why the member for Spruce Woods is so against investing in health care, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it's because—maybe he is simply following the lead of the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), who very clearly said that health care is not their priority because they would move away from an accessible system like we have, universal, to one that's private, for profit, two-tier.

That's not the priorities of Manitobans.

### Manitoba Hydro Bipole III UNESCO Requirements

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Well, Mr. Speaker, there'll be a lot more ill Manitobans after that answer.

Mr. Speaker, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee recently recommended a deferral of the Pimachiowin Aki nomination pending receipt of more information, an unusual request given the criteria provided before their UNESCO committee meets.

Accordingly, it has come to light that the connection of lands east of Lake Winnipeg may not be the best example of boreal ecological area, a UNESCO requirement as there are many such locations worldwide.

Did the NDP government not realize this requirement before they supported the UNESCO application? Mr. Speaker, why were they so negligent?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** Well, Mr. Speaker, surely there are some initiatives, some proposals to protect the environment that all Manitobans can join together on. Surely, Manitoba attaining a UNESCO World Heritage Site designation should, without question, rally all members of this House to its support. And that decision is now going—and the question comes now, just as that decision is being made by UNESCO, and we hope for a very positive outcome.

**Mr. Maguire:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the former president of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, Mr. Collinson—Mr. Jim Collinson, recently suggested this NDP government use the World Heritage designation, quote, to justify the bewildering beer parlour decision by the Manitoba government to reroute Bipole III down the west side. End quote.

Why, then, Mr. Speaker, is the east-side road not considered by the NDP to impact the UNESCO decision when UNESCO's own committee states, quote, none of the land use plans contained any strategies for mitigating the impacts of road construction? End quote.

Or was Mr. Collinson correct that moving Bipole III to the west side was just a plan to justify distracting Manitobans from—attention from the NDP's poor planning?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act):** Mr. Speaker, unlike members opposite, members on this side of the House believe the people in the north ought to have access to fresh food and fresh material on a regular, year-round basis.

And the road—the gravel road network that's being built on existing winter road sites that are rapidly depleting because of something the members opposite don't recognize, which is called climate change. Because of that, these roads that generally run east-west would be put up to provide services to people of that side of the province, because they—the people, who are mostly First Nations in that area of the province, require the same kind of goods, the same kind of services and the same kind of supports that people in southern Manitoba require.

And I'm sorry that members opposite do not understand that.

**Mr. Maguire:** Well, Mr. Speaker, small solace from a minister that doesn't know that oil comes from—doesn't come from mines.

When is the NDP government going to admit their UNESCO plan was flawed from the beginning and served as an excuse to put Bipole III down Manitoba's west side? The NDP spent \$14 million to justify their poor decision on Bipole III's location.

Every day, Manitobans see more examples of the NDP pickpocketing from their futures: more PST, higher taxes, higher auto insurance, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister admit the NDP has no consistent plans for Manitobans, including the UNESCO nomination for lands on Manitobans' east side?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, I guess we can ask the member, why is it that, just a little while ago, in regard to the bill that came before this House for the UNESCO World Heritage Site, he said, we support this bill going forward? He says, we support the initiative of the fund, and he says, I know there were concerns expressed around this bill in regards to what if UNESCO, for some reason, didn't provide us with a heritage site on the boreal forest, but it's very apparent that the funds would at least be used—at the very least be used to maintain culture and heritage opportunities in those areas.

So is it—there is a big flip-flop in the House, Mr. Speaker; it's from the member opposite who, just a little while ago, stood up and said, this UNESCO—

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

The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

### Committee Meetings Government Timeline

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, as MLAs, we are servants of the people and we need to organize our affairs to serve the public. This means organizing committee meetings to avoid the chaos that we've had too often in the past and to schedule people respectfully.

I ask the NDP House leader: What changes is she prepared to make to the organization of committee meetings to ensure all Manitobans are heard in a respectful and timely manner?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, and I am—I hope that this means the member for River Heights will join us at committees, that he's—actually does now want to be here. It's amazing progress in 40 minutes.

\* (14:50)

So—but I will say to him I have tried to be open to ideas for different ways to handle the House, and we have certainly put forward a offer that we would see committees only go 'til midnight for a set number of nights, that we would offer Saturday sittings, and if there're other ideas we're open to discuss that.

I would say that, in my view, the best way to have a discussion is to have a discussion of all the rules of the House; they all kind of function together, and I'm open to doing that with other House leaders.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I—with the NDP House leader, to get things better organized, we want to end the chaos that's been at the start of committees. The opposition parties want a realistic schedule for people who are presenting at our legislative committees. There needs to be more change than the NDP have indicated that they will accept so far. Surely it's time for better organized committee meetings in which people will know ahead of time which date and when they'll be presenting.

So I ask the NDP House leader: Will she prepare to schedule people coming to present to our committee meetings so they know precisely which day they're going to be presenting and what time, to end the chaotic situations that we've often had in the past?

**Ms. Howard:** I don't believe that—I wouldn't characterize our committee meetings as chaotic in the way that the member opposite has. I think that I've come to present to those committees, certainly before I was sitting as an MLA. As an MLA, I've sat

and listened at those committees, and sometimes in those committees we've had very good ideas come forward. As a minister, as a result of committee presentations, sometimes there's been amendments to bills or new bills that come forward that come from that discussion.

I will say to the member, again, I—my mind is open to how we have committees to function better in the House, but that will be part of a discussion of the overall rules of the House. I don't think it serves the House well to change the rules when people have already signed up for committee under one system to change the rules to another system. But—

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, you know, on this side, I am ready and I suspect the House leader for the Conservatives is ready for that discussion if you will put forward a proposal that's more adequate than what you've done so far. You know, we're servants of the public; we need to show Manitobans we can work together to make committees more convenient to the public.

The NDP chose not to listen to Manitobans in a referendum, so I now ask the NDP House leader: Will she choose to listen to the people now and schedule committee meetings where 25 to 30 Manitobans are invited and able to present each evening at committee?

**Ms. Howard:** I think, as I said before, we can have a discussion about the rules of the House. We will have that discussion about all the rules of the House, and I am open to doing that.

I am very pleased to hear that my colleague the member for River Heights now plans to stick around to have that discussion, because at the beginning of the session what we heard from—is that he doesn't even think we should be here in the first place, that the business of the House is not urgent enough for us to be here. But I am open to have that discussion with him.

I will reflect, for those that are interested, that in Manitoba we have a unique situation—us and Nova Scotia have this situation where anybody who wants to can come to committees. That may sometimes look chaotic, but it is a very open system, and it is a system that has evolved with all of the parties signing on to those rules of the House.

So we can have a discussion, but—

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

### Refugee Health Care Government Intent

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Today, over the noon hour, I was very pleased to join well over a hundred fellow concerned Manitobans, including doctors, nurses, medical students, refugees, settlement agencies and concerned citizens, at a rally as part of a national day of action protesting the federal government's cuts to refugee health care in this country.

I also have to take note that the member for Portage la Prairie and—formerly—and with the federal government, now the Opposition House Leader, has called for a two-care health-care system in Manitoba.

I would therefore have to ask our Minister of Health: What are the prospects for refugee health care and newcomer health care in Manitoba under that appalling circumstance?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** I want to pay tribute to those individuals that have been advocating on behalf of refugees that have come to Canada. We know that that group includes families, it includes religious organizations, physicians, nurses and generally concerned citizens who know, as we all should know, that when you make investments in good primary care, you can prevent more serious acute circumstances, which, by the way, Mr. Speaker, are so much more expensive and painful for families.

In Manitoba we've committed to cover the cuts that the federal government made to the refugee health program. We are, of course, going to send the federal Health Minister the bill in hopes that she will turn her eye to a more compassionate way of caring for our refugees. Two-tier health care—

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

### Keeyask Centre Project Update

**Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul):** In the TCN consolidated financial statements, \$125,000 was spent on furniture and equipment for the Keeyask Centre.

Can the NDP member for Kildonan tell us: Where is the furniture that was purchased, as the Keeyask Centre does not exist?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act):** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the leader of the Conservative Party let the leash off of the Tea Party member for St. Paul, because I was tired of those same old statements over and over and over again.

The member—I've offered to the member to come up and talk to the authority that's responsible for that, Mr. Speaker, that we'll phone that community. They have the responsibility for the funding and the operation of that; I do not have that responsibility. I don't have any of that responsibility, but I've had more responsibility over Mike Duffy's expenses than I have over that particular funding. I do not have—it's gone to the community. They have control and access to that.

If the member wants, if he's really that interested in that community, he ought to talk to that community and determine where and how that funding is used, because they have the responsibility—

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

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, \$125,000 of Hydro ratepayer money was spent on furniture for the Keeyask Centre, which doesn't exist. So who has the \$125,000 of furniture? Does Hydro have it? Does the minister have it?

Can the NDP member for Kildonan tell us: Who has \$125,000 worth of furniture?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I'm very, very proud of is that in the last eight years, Hydro has gone from the number of Aboriginal people hired at Hydro, 300 some-odd—300 employees to now tripled to close to a thousand employees are First Nations that are working at Manitoba Hydro.

For us in Manitoba, with the fastest growing demographic being our First Nations, one of our responsibilities is to work with First Nations to bring them up to the standard of living that we take for granted, Mr. Speaker. Part of our role is do—is to provide them with a job, provide them with the opportunities, provide them with the same kind of benefits that we in the south have.

That's why I'm so proud of Hydro. That's why I never want to see members opposite go into power and privatize Hydro like they did the telephone system and cut out northern Manitoba—

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

The honourable member for St. Paul, with a final supplementary.

**Mr. Schuler:** And, Mr. Speaker, all of those families would like some accountability of where the money went. That's all they're asking for. And on top of that, Hydro ratepayers deserve respect. The ratepayers are now paying 8 per cent more for their hydro this year and demand accountability for that increase.

When will the NDP member for Kildonan stand up and be accountable? Where is the \$125,000 worth of furniture? Why will the minister not be accountable and at least stand up for those families that he talks about but won't defend and won't stand up for?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the fact that we have the lowest hydroelectric rates in North America.

I find it quite tragic the members opposite want to stall Hydro in its tracks, not build Hydro, Mr. Speaker, when we have, as recently as today, the Premier of Saskatchewan—the Premier of Saskatchewan—saying that Saskatchewan wants to buy Manitoba's clean hydro. Minnesota wants to buy our clean hydro. Ontario wants to buy our clean hydro.

And we will have that resource developed not just for Manitobans to have the lowest rates in the country but to provide jobs for First Nations, to provide opportunities First Nations, Mr. Speaker, and not stop Hydro in its tracks and take away from Manitoba economy our future, our resource that we can divide and we can use for all Manitobans to have the lowest rates in the country now and into—

\* (15:00)

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

Time for oral questions has expired.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Ryan Sherbo

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is home to many talented young people, and they're important. They are our future. They're the future of our province, and through hard work and perseverance it's possible for any of them to become the leaders of

tomorrow. And I'd like to recognize our own Ryan Sherbo as one of those young people. As a grade 12 student at St. John's-Ravenscourt, Ryan's learned the art of debating and public speaking. And competing since he was in grade 7, Ryan's claimed this year's No. 1 spot in the National Public Speaking Championships right here in Manitoba.

From March 23rd to April 5th this year, Ryan, accompanied by schoolmate Peirce Dickson, had the chance to—also to attend the World Debating and Public Speaking Championships, this year hosted in Durban, South Africa. This is an annual international English language debating and public speaking competition for high school students who come from all over the globe. The diversity is far reaching. From places like Hong Kong and India—Ryan, they train you on how to endure heckling, don't they? That's good—and competitors from India and other countries such as Argentina, Germany and Israel, all students must interact and collaborate in competing in four different events: debate, impromptu speaking, persuasive or after-dinner speaking, and interpretive reading.

As if this wasn't impressive enough, this wasn't Ryan's first time participating in the international competition. Last year he had the opportunity to attend the Worlds in Brisbane, Australia, where he placed 11th, and he was third in last year's national championships here in Canada.

Ryan's a humble young man who recognizes that without the help from his school and its teachers his accomplishments might not have been possible. And, in fact, as we know here, SJR has an impressive record concerning their public speaking program. For almost 30 years, John Robinson, the teacher and coach in charge of this program, has led 14 individuals—14—right here from Manitoba to win the world championships. No other school in Canada or globally has that kind of impressive record.

Mr. Speaker, Ryan Sherbo's a prime example of these talented young people I referred to before that come from our province and live here, and I would invite everyone in this Chamber to join me in recognizing and congratulating this fine young man for his many accomplishments and wishing him well in all future endeavours. Congratulations.

### Rusalka 50th Anniversary

**Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows):** One of the reasons I love Manitoba is our remarkable ethnic diversity. When I think of Manitoba, colourful and lively

Ukrainian dancing comes to mind, perfectly exemplified by the Rusalka Ukrainian Dance Ensemble. Today I am excited to celebrate the 50th anniversary of this legendary cultural institution.

A rusalka is a mystical and graceful mermaid-like nymph. Drawing on Slavic folklore for inspiration, the late Peter Hladun assembled a troupe of talented and dedicated young dancers in 1962. Under his direction this homegrown dance company developed into one of the world's most electrifying Ukrainian folk ensembles. Its rich repertoire encompasses a range of regions, styles and moods fitting any occasion.

Rusalka dancers deserve acknowledgement for their high level of professionalism and dedication. Despite full-time studies and demanding professions, they commit to thousands of hours of rehearsal throughout the year in order to proudly showcase their cultural heritage. In distinctive red boots, floral wreaths and long ribbons of all colours, Rusalka has enchanted audiences on five continents, including royalty and heads of state.

Throughout 2013 Rusalka is celebrating its golden anniversary. Thank you to the alumni association for organizing all the special events. Highlights have included a gala dinner and last weekend's Taras Bulba night featuring local ethno rock band, Zrada.

In October festivities will conclude with a concert at the Centennial Concert Hall and next year the association will publish a retrospective book immortalizing Rusalka's first 50 years. I wish them the best of luck with this exciting legacy project.

Thank you to everyone at Rusalka for the stunning entertainment you have provided us over these last 50 years. Having taken your passionate love of Ukrainian-Canadian culture to the world stage, you are extraordinary ambassadors of this great province. In promoting cultural understanding and artistic perfection, you make us proud to be Manitoban. Here's to another 50 years.

Dyakuyu and thank you.

And I ask leave for—to table the current Rusalka members, please. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to allow the names to appear in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

#### *Rusalka Ukrainian Dance Ensemble Members*

*The Rusalka Board of Directors: Co-chair Hannia Tarasiuk, Co-chair Dr. Jerry Baluta, Treasurer Fred Mazepa, Technical Director Andrew Popiel, Dancer Chelsea Berezuk, Evelyn Derlago, Ryan Diduck, Ray Honeybun, Patrick Kuzyk, Anne Rusnak, Dr. Mark Semchyshyn, Wally Welechenko and Felicia Wiltshire*

*Ballet master: Jamie Vargas*

*Dancers: Daniel Anderson, Holly Anderson, Ivanka Babiak, Stefan Baluta, Markian Duplak, Kevin Groot, Devin Harding, Trevor Hemery, Valentyna Kabris, Orycia Karpa, Mikayla Knysh, Leanne Koroscil, Diane Kusko, Kathryn Kuzyk, Stacie Langner, Varya Lapteva, Brittany Lasko, Ivanna Lukie, Sofia Lukie, Lilya Medynska, Caitlin McQuarrie, Patricia Mitchler, Tonisha Privé, Simeon Rusnak, Luke Savard, Nina Semchyshyn, Morgan Shipley, Makar Storoschuk, Antin Stowell, Andriana Tarasiuk, Daria Tkaczyk, Stefan Tkaczyk, Dylan Turchyn, Katelyn Turchyn, Ivanka Waplak, Alanna Wilson, Julie Zabudny, Taras Zaporozan and Zane Zimmerman*

#### **Icelandic Independence**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, every year since 1944, June 17th has been used to mark Iceland's independence. The 17th was chosen to commemorate this important milestone because it was the birthday of Jon Sigurdsson, who, at the time, was Iceland's prominent leader in the Icelandic independence movement. Every year, the capital city, Reykjavik, is crowded with Icelandic citizens and tourists who partake in parades, dances, concerts and other performances and activities. Of course, the celebrations would not be complete without the infamous Fjallkonan, the woman of the mountain, who wears the national costume and recites a poem to the crowd. She represents the spirit and nature of Iceland and is a symbol of Iceland's independence. Once the ceremonies and activities are concluded in the capital, almost every other town and village in the country will also host their own local celebrations. In Manitoba, the August long weekend makes—marks a celebration of Icelanders who settled in Manitoba. The festival is known as Islendingadagurinn.

Mr. Speaker, this day holds a special place in the hearts of many Manitobans because Manitoba is home to what is known to be New Iceland. Land was allocated by the Canadian Government for an

Icelandic settlement located on the west shore of Lake Winnipeg. The first group of 235 settlers arrived in the Gimli area on October 21st, 1875, and for the next 22 years immigration was almost exclusively from Iceland.

Mr. Speaker, the Gimli of today has grown significantly to 5,845 residents in an important economic zone and essential provider of services for people in the area.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all the members of this Legislature to join me in celebrating Iceland's independence day and in recognizing the importance it may have for many New Icelanders and the strong links which exist between our province and this northern island nation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Flin Flon Artists**

**Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon):** Mr. Speaker, Flin Flon is a city that encourages creative expression and the arts. The city is filled with talented storytellers, whether they are actors, musicians, MLAs, writers or visual artists.

Today I would like to recognize some of those Flin Flon natives who are following their dreams in the arts. For Jared Abrahamson, this dream has led him to the big screen. Since moving to Vancouver in 2010 to pursue acting, Jared has earned roles in a number of films including Finding a Family, Possessing Piper Rose, Diary of a Wimpy Kid—and Dog Days, among others.

Darren Crone has a passion and skill for songwriting. Darren's song, Beautiful Crazy Life, which was formed by country musician Quentin Reddy, made it to the finals of the country musical television show Big in a Small Town. The song and accompanying video have made its way into the hearts of many throughout the country.

Mark Rowe has found success in many careers, from photography to painting, decorating and construction work. He has recently made a name for himself as a songwriter after winning the American Songwriter Lyric Contest for his poetic song, I Know How the World's Gonna End.

Dustin McKenzie's artistic skill is computer-generated imagery—CGI—animation. During his career with the Canadian company Nerd corporation entertainment, Dustin has worked in many TV and film series as an animator, animation supervisor, and has worked his way up to becoming a director.

Penny Gummerson, the scriptwriter for CBC's hit Arctic Air, is also a Flin Flon native. After penning her award-winning play Wawatay, which means northern lights in Cree, her storytelling skills have flourished and made Penny a successful television scriptwriter.

Mr. Speaker, successful people do not achieve in isolation, so it is an important—also note the incredible friends and families who have supported this group of talented people. These artists are a testament to the determination and integrity and aptitude for an entire community and are helping out Flin Flon—put Flin Flon on the map as a place of creative and artistic innovation.

Let's continue to make our city's talent in the arts known throughout North America.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

\* (15:10)

#### **ALS Awareness Month**

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** Mr. Speaker, June marks ALS Awareness Month. ALS is a rapid, fatal neuromuscular disease that affects the brain and leads to eventual paralysis and death. Approximately 3,000 Canadians and over 260 Manitobans are affected by this disease for there is no known cure.

The ALS Society of Manitoba offers several programs to support those living with ALS, their families and their caregivers. Executive Director Diana Rasmussen and her dedicated team of staff provide direct care, counselling, education, equipment, advocacy and information for clients and their families. They raise funds to support client services and ALS research. They also promote awareness, education and understanding of ALS to the general public, medical professionals and caregivers.

This June, people across Canada are participating in ALS Awareness Month. In Manitoba, the ALS Society held its Walk for ALS on June 1st. The event raised funds going towards research, as well as towards the ALS Society of Manitoba support program. The members for Kirkfield Park and Assiniboia attended the five-kilometre walk in Assiniboine Park, a beautiful family-friendly event that included music and face painting. It gave a lift of hope so needed by those living with ALS.

This week, the ALS Society of Manitoba and the Winnipeg Goldeyes are hosting ALS-Lou Gehrig's

Night at memory—in memory of the baseball player Lou Gehrig, whose name has become synonymous with ALS. Lou Gehrig's famous farewell speech will be read at centre field before the game and volunteers will be collecting donations to support the ALS Society of Manitoba's important work.

I encourage all honourable members and all Manitobans to help support people coping with ALS. Mr. Speaker, many of us don't realize how lucky we are to be in good health until we lose that privilege. I would like to commend the ALS Society of Manitoba for their mission of hope, to help our people every way they can and their dedication to those living with ALS.

Thank you for making moments matter.

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to calling grievances, I want to indicate for the House that I may have misspoke my House when I was making my ruling on the point of order at the start of today's proceedings. And because I haven't had a chance to review Hansard, I want to ensure that the record accurately reflects that it is up to the government to determine what emergency or extraordinary circumstances for the recalling of the House. I just want the record to reflect that.

Now, we'll call grievances. Any grievances? Seeing none—

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, would you please resolve into Committee of Supply.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

#### HEALTH

\*(15:20)

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

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

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** Mr. Chair, I have a couple questions here for the Minister of Health in regards to the Southern RHA.

I would like to know, what is the current doctor vacancy rate in the Southern RHA, and that would include, like, the temporarily closed—ERs that are temporarily closed. Now, what would it take for doctors to reopen the ERs that we presently have that are closed?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** I thank the member for the question.

I would have to have my officials seek the exact information that he's asking for, but I will endeavour to get that back to him as soon as possible.

More broadly speaking, and I know that the member is keenly interested in the reopening of the emergency room in Vita, but certainly he wants all facilities to be functioning on all cylinders, I can surmise. And I can tell him that, certainly, there have been a number of discussions between the regional health authority and the community, and a lot of work is going on to continue to recruit doctors to the Vita community as well as looking for what options may be available to have the emergency room functioning in ways that are innovative.

We know that we have seen, through the Council of the Federation's subcommittee on health innovation—the working group—some models coming out of Nova Scotia called collaborative emergency centres, CECs, as they have been known in the media, that are being led by other professionals. In Nova Scotia, for example, they are led by paramedics and have been extremely successful in providing an increased level of care for members of communities as opposed to—as a result of physician shortage having an emergency room closed outright. Now, there have been some discussions with the community about becoming a pilot test site as an interim measure for such a model. We know that we want to pilot this model here in Manitoba. Saskatchewan has expressed an interest also, as have a number of jurisdictions as a result of our discussions at the Health Innovation Working Group.

So whether or not Vita will be a great candidate for that particular model, you know, with a view to, you know, augmenting service and, indeed, fully restoring emergency room service is still very much preliminary and under discussion. But we know that the community of Vita has expressed a keen interest and enthusiasm and openness to looking at in what

ways we might be able to augment service in what has been, you know, a rather difficult to recruit into area, as is the case across Canada, of course, in the case of rural and northern environments.

I can also inform the member specifically concerning Vita, that the regional health authority has been very aggressive and imaginative in securing—well, the puck isn't in the net yet, but I feel very hopeful—a brand new nurse practitioner for the community which will also provide even more care. Now, as I say, there isn't a signature on the dotted line as of yet, but the regional health authority and the person in question are in very positive talks about this as well.

So, in summary, I would say to the member that we need to ensure, for a fully functioning emergency room, that there is a complement of physician services and complement of physicians for on call that allows for that emergency room to function 24-7, and certainly that is our goal in partnership with the region. But I also want him to know that the community itself and the region have been working very collaboratively and co-operatively to look at how we can build the human infrastructure to have the kind of care there that the community members want. There's a lot of work going on. I know the member cares about this and I want to assure him that the work will not stop until we can get to a place where these services are where they need to be.

On the broader question about vacancies; I'll have my staff check with the region and report back to the member.

**Mr. Smook:** Since you're going to be doing a little bit of research, would it be possible to get like, say four years ago, what the number of doctors—total number of doctors would've been in the Southern RHA? Like I know there's been an amalgamation, but I guess you can combine the two of them. Like—and compared to today, are we that many doctors short in the whole area? If you're doing any research I'd appreciate that, and also if the minister could explain a little bit—or elaborate a little bit more on the CEC. You know, what exactly it entails?

**Ms. Oswald:** Certainly I can have my staff work on providing some information for the member about communities in the Southern region.

What I can say generally though is that we have worked very hard on doctor recruitment and retention, and we have been able to see a net increase every year since being in office, since '99. And

overall, an increase of doctors over 500 across Manitoba, over a 100 of which are in rural Manitoba, and we know in a number of the major centres across rural Manitoba we've seen substantial increases in the number of doctors from smaller community to smaller community. We know that doctors may ebb and flow depending on their circumstances. Our decision to really work hard to augment incentives for doctors to practise in rural and northern Manitoba does show that we are bearing fruit in that regard. The rural and northern residency program has been an area at the Faculty of Medicine that has been very enthusiastically subscribed to. I believe it's been full—oversubscribed each year that it has been available. I may stand to be corrected on that but I believe that's true.

I can also say that our decision to provide augmented incentives, not just to physicians that are—or students that are studying in their third and in their fourth year, but also extending those incentives to first- and second-year medical students has helped us in this regard, and, of course, our most recent decision, just a couple of years ago, to in earnest, offer free medical school for those individuals that are willing to commit to serve in underserved communities is also most definitely bearing fruit.

\* (15:30)

We are seeing the retention of our students from medical school increase each year, which we view as a good thing, of course. But I will concede to the member that when we find ourselves in a situation like we see in Vita, where we don't have the complement of doctors that we wish to have, then, of course, we know that we have to continue to work hard.

And, certainly, as stated in—certainly, we have stated before that we don't want to make the decision that other jurisdictions have made. Those, perhaps, with a single-minded focus on efficiency, looking at cost and looking at how truly challenging it is to recruit into smaller environments. Those jurisdictions have decided to close rural hospitals outright, and I know that citizens of our province and representatives from the AMM, and, indeed, representatives from your caucus, have been very clear about the fact that having a strong health-care facility is important to the town as a whole. And we take that to heart.

So we're going to continue to work at that. The member asked me about providing some historical information about vacancies in the region, and we

can work to do that. Frankly, I thought I had it at my fingertips and don't seem to, but I will get it for him.

Also, I can say to the member that, again, the Health Innovation Working Group, that is to say, the health ministers across Canada, being led by two of our premiers, Premiers Wall and Ghiz, have explored a number of models that have shown to be very successful in different environments across the nation.

I know that Manitoba has put forward some ideas, as have other jurisdictions. And one coming out of Nova Scotia was the collaborative emergency centre, which is a paramedic-led health care environment to serve in emergency situations.

And, indeed, it's a model that we are looking closely at to see if it could work in a Manitoba context, which is admittedly quite different from the Nova Scotia context in a number of ways. I know that the premier of—or the Province of Saskatchewan is also looking very closely at the model, and we're learning from these projects elsewhere to see what kinds of innovations can provide the kind of care that people want to have in urgent and emergency situations and what can work with the workforce that we have developing here in Manitoba.

So this is something that we're looking at right now. And, again, we haven't signed anything in ink just yet, but we are, you know, looking and working with the community to see if there would be an interest for an innovative model that might augment services to the community that are existing there presently.

**Mr. Smook:** Question: You had mentioned, like, helping students out that are willing to practise in rural areas, and you also mentioned nurse practitioners. Is the help available just for physicians, or is there any incentive for, say, nurse practitioners or assistant physicians, or—what is the program involving that?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, I thank the member for the question. Our commitment a couple of years ago specifically was for doctors. We, during the election, made a commitment to offer a free tuition-type model for nurse practitioners as well, and that model is being worked up with our department. So we are looking at the different ways that we can provide opportunities for smaller rural communities to ensure that they have a chance to have the benefit of services from a variety of members of our workforce.

There's also something that has been in existence, I believe, since '99 or shortly thereafter—in its current form, that is—called the nursing recruitment and retention fund, which can help nurses relocate and perhaps receive augmented training so that they can serve communities that may or may not have that capacity existing. So we are looking at ways of broadening the support that we offer to different members of our workforce to try to enhance their ability to work in environments that haven't seen those professionals before, as a rule.

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** I was just going to thank the minister for the answers.

If the minister had answers that were able to be supplied at this time pertaining to questions that were posed in previous sessions of the Estimates, I would invite her to table that information at this time.

**Ms. Oswald:** I can follow up on with the member regarding a question that he asked me during our discussion of STARS, the—I believe it was the last time we met.

I can confirm for the member that in the first year the actual amount fundraised by STARS was \$177,000. Certainly, as stated, it's a modest amount compared to a \$2-million target that was set. We certainly did hope that there could be more that would come in from the fundraising efforts, but our focus with STARS, of course, was getting the program up and running, ensuring that our system was prepared to receive the STARS helicopter whenever it was needed and to ensure that they were functioning in a seamless manner across Manitoba.

Again, I believe it was the member that made mention of the STARS fundraising brochure that he had received for their lottery. So, indeed, I don't have to explain to him the aggressive efforts that are going on now for STARS to meet, and we would even be delighted to have them exceed their fundraising target of \$2 million. We have confidence that they will be able to do this, as evidenced by the work that they have done in other jurisdictions.

And, once again, you know, 557 missions flown, 357 patient transports later, we commend them for the work that they are endeavoring to do. We wish them well and we certainly look forward to them meeting their \$2-million fundraising target.

**Mr. Friesen:** I thank the minister for supplying that information. I hadn't intended to dwell here, but I thank her for submitting that number. I can imagine the minister is very disappointed to learn that the

amount fundraised by STARS is so much less than the targeted amount, not even one tenth of what it was intended to get to.

And I guess I would ask the minister, based on this very disappointing information, while she says she has hope that STARS can still meet its obligation in fundraising for this coming year, does she actually have an expectation that STARS can, indeed, do so?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, I do.

**Mr. Friesen:** And I would ask the minister, on what is that expectation founded?

**Ms. Oswald:** I am basing it on, really, the evidence that the member himself has put on the record, and that is the fact that STARS is taking a much more aggressive approach. They are, indeed, more established now. Manitobans, aside from those that had the great benefit of receiving their services during the floods of '09 and 2011, didn't know very much about STARS. In fact, the vast majority would never have heard of them. There had been no helicopter ambulance service available in the province of Manitoba historically, but there has been much more education and awareness particularly in our rural communities to understand what it is that STARS can and will do.

STARS themselves has endeavored in—to secure some corporate sponsors, has put out this lottery. They are working very, very aggressively, and the fact of the matter is they've made a commitment to us. They weren't able to reach that commitment in the first year, but it's not my inclination to hold this against them, as it were. They're doing lots of outreach in communities and they have been very successful in other provinces with their fundraising and there is no reason to believe that they won't be able to meet that target.

\* (15:40)

So I have faith in them. I hope the member will join me in encouraging them to meet that goal. I know that they can become as much a part of the Manitoba landscape as they have in the other provinces in which they have functioned, and I have no reason to believe otherwise.

**Mr. Friesen:** I may have neglected to ask—and I will, of course, be going back to the Estimates from Thursday's session. So if this is a repeat I beg forgiveness, but I wanted to ask whether—because the minister has consented that the size of the contract with STARS has indeed increased.

We last week established that the new amount for STARS is somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$12 million or \$12.8 million. So then, is there a resulting increase in the amount of STARS fundraising target to account for that additional money? Somewhere in the neighbourhood of—would there be an increase of another \$250,000 that the minister would want to see STARS fundraise to account for the increase in the scope of operations that the minister has in contract with STARS?

**Ms. Oswald:** I just wanted to let the member know that our target last year and our target this year and for the foreseeable future will indeed be \$2 million for fundraising. But as I said to the member that should STARS indeed exceed \$2 million as part of their fundraising efforts, which is conceivable [*interjection*—it seems to me the dark cloud across from me thinks not—but, indeed, if they do, as they've done in other jurisdictions—[*interjection*—no, I was talking about him—then, in fact, they may in fact exceed that, that those monies, indeed, do stay in Manitoba, as has been reflected in the past.

So, again, at least this side of the House will continue to encourage STARS to work on their fundraising campaign and secure their corporate donors, and we wish them the best.

**Mr. Friesen:** Yes, the member's optimism is noted, but, of course, I know that she must share that tremendous disappointment to see a \$2-million fundraised target come in at \$177,000. So we certainly wish STARS all the best as they fundraise, and we'll all try to do our part and buy those calendars and do what we can to support that colossal effort to raise that money.

I have a question pertaining to something we discussed just before the close of Estimates on the day—I guess, on our last day when we met in Estimates. I had just been in the context of asking a question about the interchangeability formulary. In particular, I was referring to the Manitoba drug benefits and interchangeable formulary bulletin archive, referring to the fact that Manitoba seems to have one of longest wait periods for drugs to get into Pharmacare of any Canadian jurisdiction.

I was wondering if the minister could comment on why it is that we find, if I simply do a little bit of comparison, in 2011 there was only one bulletin update in Manitoba, at the same time in Saskatchewan there were four, and in Nova Scotia there were three. In 2012, there were three bulletin

updates plus one amendment in Manitoba. But in Saskatchewan there were eight.

I know the minister understands that is very, very important to continue to approve drugs for Manitoba; when we approve generics it brings the cost down, when we approve brand name products it makes new products available for Manitobans. We understand that these products have already been approved for use in Canada.

So I—what I want to ask the minister: Why would Manitoba still continue to lag behind other jurisdictions in terms of putting every effort into getting drugs approved and the bulletins updated on a timely basis? And if I could add one other it would be, will this trend change in the future, will—is she committing to have more bulletin archives published?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and I would say to the member that indeed there was only one bulletin in 2011. There were some processes we were going through in terms of implementing utilization management agreements or contracts, if you will, for lack of a better term.

We agree that more frequent bulletins are appropriate and the department has, in fact, agreed to, with our drug manufacturers, to commit to bulletins coming out quarterly if not more frequently, but certainly quarterly. We did see three bulletins posted last year. We've done two already this year; I signed another this morning which will come into effect in 30 days.

We know that when there's a new brand name drug that isn't available in any way we move as quickly as we can. We know when it's a generic alternative we want to ensure it is available quickly. But we also want to ensure that we are getting competitive pricing, which isn't always—it doesn't always evolve in the same way for a province the size of Manitoba compared to, say, Ontario.

There were times in the past when former health critics would demand a drug be listed to a—present company excluded—would demand that we added a generic drug to the formulary.

For example, there was a drug called Ramipril, for example. If we had listed it when the opposition members were demanding it would have, in fact, been cheaper than the brand name drug that the members were citing. But we continued to negotiate and got an even better deal for Manitobans. Our work that is being done on pricing policies are

ensuring that we're getting competitive drug prices much sooner.

Certainly, we have seen over time that members opposite have tried to demand that we list something immediately, whether it's advocacy that's coming from an individual patient or advocacy that's coming from a pharmaceutical company.

There was a drug, I think, back in '07 called Altace I believe is the pronunciation, that members opposite were in a hue and cry that we list immediately. If we had done it when the members opposite demanded that we did it, it would have been a \$1 million per year extra price tag. And that's just for one drug.

So we really need to work hard to strike that balance between getting new drugs listed as swiftly as possible. And I agree; one bulletin in a year is not where we want to be; quarterly bulletins at minimum better, more predictable. And in partnership with the Manitoba Society of Pharmacists we know that we work very hard to ensure that they are ready when new bulletins come. We have a 30-day notice period that we give to pharmacies so they can prepare. Other jurisdictions sometimes don't do this and this causes significant problems in terms of pharmacies being able to deliver on what it is that the government has listed.

So we really work hard to strike a balance to ensure that our workforce can react to what's being listed and to ensure that we are as aggressively as possible negotiating the best price for Manitobans so that we don't take the first price that's offered to us.

So I hear what the members saying but I would argue that those negotiations are critically important in saving resources that enable us to list even more drugs as we go forward.

**Mr. Friesen:** Understanding that, we have an opportunity subsequently to revisit some of these themes and discuss again at concurrence, I would be willing to proceed to the consideration of the Estimates at this time.

\* (15:50)

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

I will now call:

Resolution 21.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$78,347,000 for Health, Provincial Policy and Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 21.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,395,000 for Health, Health Workforce, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 21.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$45,833,000 for Health, Public Health and Primary Health Care, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 21.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$25,966,000 for Health, Regional Policy and Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 21.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,491,000 for Health, Office of the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 21.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,884,623,000 for Health, Health Services Insurance Fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 21.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$166,974,000 for Health, Capital Funding, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 21.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,706,000 for Health, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 21.10: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$1,711,000 for Health, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

***Resolution agreed to.***

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

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

The floor is open for questions. Seeing no questions—oh.

**Mr. Friesen:** I would move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen),

THAT line item 21.1.(a) the minister's salary, be reduced to \$1.08.

**Mr. Chairperson:** It has been moved by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler,

THAT the line item 21.1.(a), minister's salary, be reduced to \$1.08.

The motion is in order.

Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

**Mr. Friesen:** I just would like to say that it seems appropriate that the minister's salary would be reduced to \$1.08 seeing as how this government has raised the PST to 8 per cent for all Manitobans. We feel like it's a symbolic gesture that would underscore in the minds and hearts of all Manitobans how it is that that 8 per cent PST in this province will have a considerable effect on them, one that they will have to bear in mind throughout the year and ongoing, and this way it would also help the minister to concentrate and to keep in mind that 8 per cent number in her own mind going forward.

**Ms. Oswald:** I just want to take the opportunity in the moments that are afforded to me here to pay my heartfelt gratitude and thanks to the members of my department. Certainly, they work really diligently each and every day and every single year during the Estimates process, but for reasons completely out of their control this has been a more challenging year without a doubt.

And I am a great lover of democracy, and so I in no way would cast dispersions on the tactics of members opposite or the rules that exist at the Manitoba Legislature that afford members of the opposition to use them to their fullest extent.

But I do want to acknowledge that this has been very, very challenging for the deputy minister and for the associate deputy minister and assistant deputy minister. They have incredibly challenging jobs, being asked to do as much as humanly possible to find every resource that we can to redirect into front-line care and the uncertainty, I suppose, of this process has meant incredible sacrifices on their part.

I would say in some respects members of the Legislative Assembly, elected officials, certainly do sign up for this. But our deeply respected civil servants in so many ways do not, and so I want to take an opportunity to say that I hold you, Milton Sussman and Karen Herd and Bernadette Preun, in the highest of esteem. You are individuals without peer in my view and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your many, many efforts on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** We would echo some of the comments of the minister in terms of thanking her staff and all of the staff in the various departments in government, those who are, whether they're DMs, ADMs or those working throughout the civil service, we agree that many of them work long hours under difficult circumstances at times.

In this particular case we have a situation where it's the government themselves that have put—to the extent that there are individuals within the building or within departments in this building who are having a difficult time because of the delay that's happened as a result of the government's desire to raise the PST from 7 to 8 per cent.

It's the government itself that has put them and everyone in this situation. All of this, of course, could be cleared up very quickly if the government either backed off of their increase—desire to increase the PST from 7 to 8 per cent or call a referendum. We'd be satisfied with either, so the government holds the power on this situation.

\* (16:00)

So they are really the makers of their own demise in terms of challenges and problems that might be happening with the government, and we would encourage them to go back to their Cabinet and to their colleagues to reconsider their decisions both to raise the PST and to do so without a referendum.

Of course, we know that the next—the rise date on this session is December 9th, I believe, it's the

first Thursday of December, so we have lots of time yet to debate issues until the House is scheduled to rise early in December.

But, of course, the government might change their mind before that. And we would encourage the minister, if she has such heartfelt feelings for those within the department and concern, that she decides to go back to her Cabinet colleagues and her friends in the caucus to change their minds in increasing the PST. And then I think things might move quite hastily here at the Legislature.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is the committee ready for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Shall the motion pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Again, is the committee ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Shall the motion pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

#### Voice Vote

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Chairperson:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Goertzen:** A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Chairperson:** A formal vote having been requested by—is there any other member? A formal vote has been requested by two members.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now recess to allow this matter to be reported and for members to proceed to the Chamber for the vote.

If the bells continue past 5 p.m., this section will be considered to have risen for the day.

## FINANCE

\* (15:20)

**The Acting Chairperson (Matt Wiebe):** Will the Committee of Supply please to come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the last item, resolution 7.1 of the Estimates for the Department of Finance.

Are there any questions? Seeing none, I will now put the question:

RESOLVED that there be granted Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,822,000 for Finance, Corporate Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

### *Resolution agreed to.*

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Finance.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Civil Service Commission.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of these Estimates?

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

## CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

**Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer):** Continuing on with our exciting afternoon—thanks to the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe)—and continuing with our Committee of Supply, considerations for the Civil Service Commission.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank you for that.

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

**Mr. Chairperson:** Does anyone from the official opposition have an opening statement?

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Just a few comments that I would like to make in terms of our civil service here in the province, and wanting to just indicate that, you know, on behalf of our caucus, I just want to extend a sincere appreciation for the type of work that we see here in the province. I think we've got a civil service that is underestimated in terms of its level to create new ideas and to roll them out. I'm very impressed with the type of ideas that

come out of this province, and I think we're very underestimated here.

You know, I've spent some time in other portfolios, looking at what is happening in other provinces, and in many cases, Manitoba's a leader in a number of different departments. And I sometimes think we don't broadcast well enough what some of those great programs are, that originate here, out of the civil service.

And I've had an opportunity to get to know a number of people that work in different departments, and I just want to say that, you know, there's a lot of very impressive things happening in this province, and I just want to acknowledge that, and to thank all of them for the dedication that they put into their jobs, and the work that they try so hard to accomplish on behalf of Manitobans, and just want to say thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the official opposition member for those opening remarks.

At this time, we'll invite the minister's staff to come join us at the head table, and perhaps once they're settled, the honourable minister will be kind enough to introduce them to the committee members.

**Mr. Struthers:** Mr. Chairperson, I am joined at the table by Ms. Debra Woodgate, she's the commissioner for the civil service here in Manitoba, and Ms. Nancy Carroll, assistant deputy minister, Human Resource Operations.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you very much, minister, and welcome, staff.

A quick question for the committee: Do you wish to proceed through these Estimates globally?

**Mrs. Driedger:** Yes, I think that would probably make it more efficient.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Honourable Minister, is that acceptable?

**Mr. Struthers:** That's fine by me.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The—therefore, the Estimates process for the Civil Service Commission, consideration thereof, will proceed globally.

Floor is open for questions.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Chair, in the departmental expenditure Estimates on page 7, it indicates that under the Civil Service Commission, under executive support, there was an increase of 4.7 per cent.

Can the minister give some indication as to where that extra—where those extra resources went?

\* (15:30)

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, the increase can be tied to the general salary increases. It was a 2.75 per cent increase that was paid out to civil servants in Manitoba, that's salaries and benefits. There was some dollars dedicated to reclassifications within the civil service, merit increases which are reflective of, I think, the kind words that the member for Charleswood said earlier.

We do have a civil service that is very professional. We do have a civil service that is—it generates good ideas, and that is correct. We have a civil service that puts in long hours working on behalf of the people of Manitoba and, you know, especially in years when—I'll never forget the amount of work that civil service throughout—civil servants throughout the civil service put in in response to the 2011 flood. So many civil servants went over and above to help people who were victims of that flood, and we've done it over and over and over again in Manitoba, civil servants stepping up, going over and above the call of duty to serve Manitobans whether that be in extraordinary circumstances like a flood or whether that be in their day-to-day work that they do on behalf of Manitobans.

So it was partly collective agreements that we honoured that worked towards this kind of an increase. There was a long service step. I think it's important to make sure you reward those who have provided long service to the people of Manitoba. As I've said, the generally—general salary increase, there were benefit and pension costs that worked in towards that number as well. So that's where the increase comes from.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And if I look on page 21, under executive support I am seeing four FTEs, and from last year to this year, within those four positions, am I understanding this accurately, that they as a group received an increase of \$17,000?

**Mr. Struthers:** That would be correct; \$9,000 of the 17 was one position of those four that was reclassified according to a work schedule, and the remainder of that amount, the other \$8,000, would have been normal collective agreement kind of benefits that were accrued to the—in those FTEs.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And back to page 7, can the minister indicate the reasons for the drop under internship, equity and employment development?

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, that wasn't a reduction within the civil service, within this department. We—what we have been doing is working with individual departments with those internships. Departments have found ways to pick up those costs. The—we find that we can realize some savings doing that and we can protect the programs and utilize the people in those positions more efficiently by doing that.

You know, we've all—all departments, including the Civil Service Commission, have been looking for ways to operate more efficiently. We've had some discussion about that in the Finance Estimates. The Civil Service Commission is doing its part to operate as efficiently as it possibly can. We think that we've been able to do that in conjunction with other departments that we may be able to work with, with these internships.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And under the Employee Assistance Program, can the minister explain the change represented by 3.6 per cent?

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, that—right. On page 37, the member for Charleswood will see a line of the—on that table that shows recoverable from other appropriations. That is—that's money that we recover from departments and other agencies that we provide services for.

\* (15:40)

So what we've been able to do is actually provide these services and realize more, in terms of revenue, from other agencies—agencies such as the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, Assiniboine Community College, Brandon University, the Communities Economic Development Fund, Food Development Centre, Industrial Technology Centre, Manitoba Gaming Control Commission, Manitoba Ag Services Corporation, Manitoba Housing Authority, Red River College, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the University College of the North, these kinds of agencies that we work with that we recover money from for the services that we provide. So that shows the—that improvement in that chart—in that table that the member for Charleswood has asked about.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Just so I understand this, can the minister explain the services that the government would then provide as—or through this Employee Assistance Program where then they recoup the money? What exactly happens?

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, the EAP is a counselling service. It's a confidential counselling service that we

provide. Employees may have situations that they need to work through and they need some help to work through these whether they're at work or outside of work.

It's a—I do hear a lot of—I think, a lot of good feedback in terms of the work provided through the EAP, Employment Assistance Program. It works best when people know it's out there, when people know it exists, and they know how to access the Employee Assistance Program. The groups who I just read through, the people we work with on this program, I think, can attest to the effectiveness of the EAP.

I can certainly speak highly, given feedback that I've had from people who have accessed the service, and, as I said in my previous answer, we recover money to pay for these services from these agencies.

Yes, and I should add, too, that this is a service that's provided free within government, and for agencies outside we do recover money from them.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I note on the org chart under the Civil Service Commission Board that Shirley Delaquis is the chair. Can the minister indicate how long she's served as chair?

**Mr. Struthers:** Ms. Delaquis has been a very fine board member since January of 2005, and she's been a very fine chairperson since November of 2006.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I would like to thank the minister for that. I certainly know Shirley from her time as the president of the Nurses Union back in my nursing days, so hadn't seen the name pop up for a while. So thank you.

In looking back at an annual report and looking at competition statistics, can the minister just explain—under the—you know, the category of competition statistics, there is a section on appointments, internal and external. So I guess my question first would be, you know, in people getting jobs within the civil service, obviously, then, some are through competition and some are then through appointments. Is there a breakdown of that, or how does it actually work?

**Mr. Struthers:** What I can do immediately is, while the officials are looking for some—for kind of part B of the question that the member for Charleswood asked—part A dealt with the competitions and some of the totals in terms of the competitions that we've had.

The most up-to-date numbers are available for the year 2011-2012. There were 1,500 competitions in that fiscal year. We received applications both internally and externally, 7,513 internal folks applied for those competitions, and of them, 936 were hired, were appointed.

So I think part B had to do with direct appointments. I would—I—let's leave it at that and see if the member for Charleswood has any other questions on that.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And that would have been where I was going next, is how many people end up in the civil service with direct appointments and not having to go through competition?

*Mr. Matt Wiebe, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, the first thing I need to say is that the vast, vast majority of the appointments that we make are through competition. The appointments that we make directly are internal. They could come about for such reasons as a term or a casual position comes open and we directly appoint somebody into that. That person may have been groomed for that particular spot or there could've been a succession plan put in place from before that that employee was working towards so they would be directly appointed into that position.

We do—we direct the appointer interns who have been working in this—in our system into positions that they have obviously been grooming for. If there is an acting status position that comes open in the department, that is a direct appointment. Those are the vast majority of the kind of situations where we directly appoint somebody into a position.

I don't know if we have—would've ever—it's very, very rarely, if ever, appointed somebody externally into a position. The—nearly—I would think nearly a hundred per cent are internal—directly appointed by internal processes through the kind of things that I've just described. Departments can't do that unilaterally anyway. They have to get approval for that, approval through the Civil Service Commission, and all of that is subject to audits that occur within the civil service.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate that when their political staff—and there have been a number over the years that have worked for NDP Cabinet ministers. When they move into the civil service as a number of them have done, do they have to apply and go through a competition or are they just placed

somewhere within the civil service without competition?

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, certainly, those would be positions that would be competed for. Those are positions that come available in the civil service that if it's a political staff sees advertised would put their name in for and compete with anybody else who wants to—internally or externally wants to compete for those positions. Those are certainly the ones that I'm aware of that have come—that do come up from time to time.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Thank you.

The—with the baby boomers, the number of baby boomers that there are out, you know, out in the world and certainly within our civil service, can the minister indicate or verify for me—in doing some number crunching ourselves, we are finding that recent projections show that about 23 per cent of civil servants will be eligible to retire within five years and that that number will grow to 39.5 per cent within 10 years. Are those accurate projections from his understanding?

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, that's something—what the member for Charleswood has in mind is something that is a lot of concern for not just people who make decisions within the civil service, but, as she would know, in the nursing world and the teaching world, and, you know, that concern goes across all kinds of sectors in society.

I, being a boomer myself—although, I was told the other day that the CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired People had—I had to get that out, thanks—had referred to people who were born in 1959, like I was, and later as zoomers rather than boomers. And I didn't even know that term existed, Mr. Chairperson, but I guess it's a boomer with zip is what they defined folks like me like.

And what we're finding is that people in the civil service who are getting to that retirement age still have some zip to them, and they keep hanging in there. They keep working, and I appreciate that because if they all just wrote their letters on one day we'd be scrambling, really, to fill a lot of positions. Maybe they all have kids that are going to college and university, and they need to continue to work to put their family, you know, through their education.

For whatever reason, we're having civil servants that are not retiring as early as they could, and they're

staying in their positions longer. That presents some real opportunities for us. As we make decisions in the civil service, we can take that information that they've gained, the networks that they've gained, the knowledge they've gained through the years, and we can, through good succession planning, have that kind of expertise transferred to the decision makers in the departments in the civil service and not lose that corporate knowledge, if you will.

\* (16:00)

So we see many of the percentages that the member for Charleswood is talking about. I think, you know, I can quote her some exact numbers, but I think she's in the ballpark. I think she knows that this is something that the civil service, amongst other sectors, are facing. We're putting strategies in place to make sure that we have people in key positions to be able to continue the kind of top-notch service that our civil servants give to the people of Manitoba.

I want to—I'll quote a couple of numbers for the member for Charleswood. As at March 31st, 2012, the average age of all civil servants was 45.2 years, and that of senior managers was 52.2 years.

Recent projections show that 23 per cent of civil servants will be eligible to retire within five years. This grows over the course of the next number of years, but we—I want to assure people that folks in the civil service have been working to make sure that through succession planning, through supports for people in the civil service, through the kind of networking opportunities that are organized, we work with people to make sure that they're successful in the civil service; we work with people to make sure that they impart their knowledge and expertise before they move on to the next phase of their lives.

We have—the other thing I would add, is that in 2012-13 we had 566 retired from the civil service; that's a 4.3 per cent retirement rate. That's on par with the year before, and I think probably suggests that the work that we're doing in terms of succession planning is valuable and needs to continue, and we need to always understand what the demographics are projecting down the road so that we can ensure that citizens of Manitoba, Manitoba families, can count on those services being offered through the civil service.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I just realized, as the minister started talking, that that's where my numbers came from, was his actual own report. I thought we were too close and I read my notes a little bit more fully to

look at that and, indeed, when you take that 23 per cent that can retire within five years, that's 3,500 people could leave, or be eligible, at least. And then when you look at within the next 10 years, it's growing to 39.5 per cent; that's 6,000 people. So there certainly needs to be incredible succession planning.

But just to look at this a little bit differently, too, if I recall, the commitment of the government was to—and the minister could correct me, but it was to eliminate 600 jobs in three years. Is my memory serving me accurately?

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, that's correct, 600 positions over the next three years. We can do that—as she can see through the numbers that she's put on the table, we can do that and we're not going to be issuing pink slips and firing people. That's through attrition, that's through not filling the positions when they come available.

We've taken a 2 to 3 kind of a ratio; if you have three positions that come open, we'll fill two of them. And eventually make sure that we—well, eventually, three years, hit the targets that we said we would hit.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Is there a certain vacancy rate that is being maintained across government by directive?

**Mr. Struthers:** We don't have a central number that's administered out of the Civil Service Commission. Each department is responsible for that. Each department understands what its priorities are, it knows what its commitments are. It then makes a determination of the people that it needs in order to fulfill that.

So the departments are responsible for that. That's not done through these folks, here, at the Civil Service Commission.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. As you can hear, a formal vote has been requested in another section of the Committee of Supply. I am therefore recessing this section of the Committee of Supply in order for members to proceed to the Chamber for a formal vote.

Two things you should know: if the bells continue past 5 p.m., this section will be considered to have risen for the day; secondly, if we do come back to the room before 5 o'clock, the minister will have the floor to complete his answer.

Okay? Thank you.

## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Chairperson (Tom Nevakshonoff):** Order. This section of the Committee of Supply will continue consideration of the Estimates for Executive Council. Would the Premier's staff and opposition staff please enter the Chamber.

As previously agreed, questioning will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** My question to the Premier concerns rapid transit. As the Premier knows, the—what's called phase two of the—what's really the first leg of rapid transit—which goes to the University of Manitoba—off-street rapid transit, that is—appears right now to be at a bit of an impasse and the clock is ticking.

What is the Premier doing to address the current impasse?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Just before I—well, short answer is is we've made available one-third of the resources and we've committed to that for a couple of years now. So we've also financed some of the work that was done on picking the route and we continue to be open to discussing with the City how to advance phase 2. But I do want to make the point that, you know, we've been talking about rapid transit in Manitoba since basically Steve Juba talked about his scheme for improving transportation. This is the first time that we've brought in a rapid transit scheme, the first phase, during the life of this government.

So it's an important departure. It's an important improvement and we also know that that whole corridor out to the University of Manitoba can have up to 20 to 25,000 students on a regular basis going out there. And with the new stadium that can attract up to 33,000 people to go to an event there, maybe, perhaps, even higher in some circumstances, that rapid transit it's making more and more sense. And so, I think, people and the public is starting to be aware of the need for it and we're interested in finding a way to move forward on it.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, rapid transit has made sense for the last couple of decades, but there's not been a movement that there should have been. Let me go further, there still seems to be an impasse in terms of the funding.

Is it true that the Premier wants to use the Building Canada Fund and the mayor wants to use a public-private partnership, and that there's an argument over this as Bartley Kives has suggested in the Free Press?

**Mr. Selinger:** I think what's fair to say is that we would like to see a good business case for whichever method the City would like to pursue.

**Mr. Gerrard:** So is, in the Premier's mind, is that what the problem is, is that the City has not presented a business case to the Province?

**Mr. Selinger:** That's part of it. We'd like to have a respectful discussion and a business case that supports the best method of financing it and moving forward on it, yes.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I would ask the Premier: Are there other critical ingredients which are vital in terms of being able to move this forward?

**Mr. Selinger:** Just, could I get some clarification what the question was again, please?

**Mr. Gerrard:** You know, I mean, the Premier has said there needs to be a business case before he's ready to ensure that this goes ahead.

But I would ask the Premier: Is that the only thing which is missing is a business case or are there other ingredients which are critical?

**Mr. Selinger:** Well, as I said in my previous question, we'd like to have a respectful discussion about the best way to advance rapid transit. A business case, financing methods, timelines, priority areas, all of these things are, I think, would be helpful. We're certainly—remain available to have discussions with them both at the technical level and the ministerial level, and we'd like to be able to move forward with everybody having had the chance to have input into the best way to do that.

The Building Canada Fund is one potential source of revenue. The PPP fund of the federal government's another source of revenue. I do note with the PPP fund that there's a cap at 25 per cent of what their contribution is under that fund, which implies the remaining 37 and a half per cent has to be financed elsewhere.

**Mr. Gerrard:** You know, there is, from what I've heard, a suggestion that the Premier wants the City to borrow the money that the Province will be providing in order to get this started.

Is that true and is that an issue? Why is the Province not ready to, you know, provide the money as it's needed instead of—borrow the money itself as opposed to having the City borrow the money?

**Mr. Selinger:** Normally, big capital projects have an element of borrowed money as part of the financing arrangements for it. In the first leg of rapid transit the City borrowed the money and we covered half the cost of amortization and interest.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Let me move to a secondary of the combined sewers. This is clearly a major issue. It's vital that the sewage system is separated so they're no longer the combined sewers and a lot of overflow sewage going straight into the rivers.

It's my understanding that the licence to do the combined sewers is still not yet completed. I'd like the Premier to confirm this and also to indicate how long the government will give the City to complete the combined sewer separation so that they're separated.

**Mr. Selinger:** Yes, I just want to clarify under the PPP funds, if it's 25 per cent by the federal government, 75 per cent would have to be financed by other parties.

On the combined sewer thing, I'd have to get him specific information. I encourage him, if he has a specific question about timelines on that and licensing, he can approach the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) on that, and the minister of water—Conservation and Water Stewardship as well, in terms of licensing. Either of those ministers would have more specific information through their Estimates, but if he wants me to get that information, I'd be happy to get it for him.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, I will certainly ask those ministers in due course, but I thought that, you know, since this was a high priority, that the Premier might, you know, have his finger on this and might know, you know, what kind of timeline the City's expected to complete sewage—combined sewer separation in. And—but I will ask him one specific additional question, and that is what will the provincial financial contribution to—be to separating the combined sewage so we no longer have the sewage overflow directly into the rivers?

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, we give very generous grants to the City of Winnipeg, including capital grants. For example, they went up 12 per cent this year. We've had dialogue with them with respect to by—the sewage treatment components of treating sewage in

Winnipeg, and we've funded one third of that for the south-end plant, for example, and the West End plant, and we've made that available for the North End plant.

On sewage separation, again, I'd have to get him specific information about the long-term plan for that. I mean, it's the City's long-term plan, and if he wants to know the licensing timelines on that or licensing requirements, I'm pretty sure that the Department of Water Stewardship and Conservation would have more information, or even the Department of Local Government.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Just one quick question on this follow up. It's my understanding that the licence, when it is provided, will stipulate the timeline, whether it's five years, 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40 years or what have you.

And wonder whether the Premier's had any discussion in terms of the length of time that there would be mandated under the licence to complete the combined sewer separation?

**Mr. Selinger:** That discussion is occurring at the level of officials with respect to the City and the Province in terms of technical matters related to that. It—I've not had a discussion at my level about that.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Let me move to the North End sewage treatment plant. This has been considerably delayed from the date when it was originally conceived to be completed. You know, there seems to be a bit of a—an impasse at the moment. What action is the government taking and what date will it be completed by?

**Mr. Selinger:** Now, on the North End sewage treatment plant, he needs to know that there's \$8 million in Budget 2013 for operating Winnipeg's wastewater treatment facilities, and the Province has provided over \$50 million in our one third commitment upgrading the city's sewage treatment plants.

The West End plant has been completed. Upgrades to the south and North End plant will result in the largest single-source reduction of nutrients entering our Lake Winnipeg, and the south-end plant is moving forward. The North End plant will be—I believe there's a specific timeline there, with a couple of years' flexibility on that. I think we're looking at 2016 to 2018 window. I think that's what the City's proposing at this stage of the game.

\* (15:30)

**Mr. Gerrard:** And what action will the Premier take if it's not completed by 2018? Of course, he may not be Premier at that point, but what is he telling the City at this point?

**Mr. Selinger:** I'm expecting it to be completed, and if it's not, I'm sure that at least one of us will be here to follow up on it.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Well, I will do my best to be here and follow up.

Centreport: There's been a recent announcement of access to water from the Assiniboine River. The current status, as I understand it, is there's about 20,000 acres at Centreport, that 200 acres now have services which are wells and septic fields.

When will the treatment plant, which takes the water from the Assiniboine River, be completed and be able to provide water for Centreport?

**Mr. Selinger:** I think we're early in the feasibility stage of looking at that, now, along with the other municipalities in that area. I think there's up to seven municipalities that have an interest in that water treatment facility, and I'd have to check and see what kind of timeline they're looking at for that. But I think there's an interest on moving on that pretty expeditiously.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I, as a Winnipegger and a Manitoban, am very concerned about, you know, the fact that it's not moving, and until that moves, it would appear that a lot of the potential development at Centreport really can't move ahead. So, you know, it's a little unsettling not to have a precise timeline.

I would ask: What dollars is the Province contributing?

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, we're looking at whether this project is being—an eligible one under the Building Canada Fund, which would suggest one-third, one-third, one-third dollars from federal, provincial and municipal sources.

**Mr. Gerrard:** And, you know, if it were under the Building Canada Fund, which, at the earliest, would provide dollars, as I understand it, next year, or it could be the year after, what's the timeline for completion? Is there any guesstimate at this point?

**Mr. Selinger:** I do believe that the Building Canada Fund was supposed to be formalized for 2014. By making this decision now, they can do all the preliminary work to have it ready to go. There's lots

of engineering work that has to be done and work to work through planning authorities, environmental reviews, et cetera. But I don't have a firm date that's been provided by the people working on the project at the technical level. But we can pursue that.

But, again, I think everybody is, for the reasons stated by the member for River Heights, interested in advancing this project, as well as the sewer hookup with the city of Winnipeg. The sewer is one component; the City's prepared to provide that. And then the water treatment facility is one that's looked—being looked at in co-operation with municipalities in that area.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I wonder if the Premier can indicate what this project would require in terms of environmental licensing, Clean Environment Commission review, et cetera?

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, I'd have to—you know, we get advice from our officials on how this project would be classified, what level, and what level of review is required. But it will be classified appropriately, given its size and impact, and then the appropriate level of review would be—would ensue.

**Mr. Gerrard:** One of the concerns about taking water from the Assiniboine has been the concern that sometimes in August there's extremely low levels of water in the Assiniboine River, and so I would ask: You know, what, you know, contingency, or what approach is being taken to deal with those years when there's hardly any water at all in August in the Assiniboine River?

**Mr. Selinger:** That'll be part of the technical work done by the engineers and experts looking at this project, about how they can ensure the resource is available, as needed, as part of the design of the project.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Let me move on to the Convention Centre, which has been announced to be moving forward. Can the Premier give—provide an update on what's happening right now and when the new Convention Centre, expanded Convention Centre, would be completed?

**Mr. Selinger:** Yes, I—this is a project that the lead is the city on. We're funding a portion of it. It's been announced, it's moving forward and I believe that they're looking at a completion window of 2016. I'd have to confirm that, but I believe that's the time frame that they're looking at.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Now—I mean—move on to the Experimental Lakes Area, and the Premier has indicated that he and his government are ready to contribute something from the Province to enable the International Institute for Sustainable Development to move forward in becoming the—responsible for managing the Experimental Lakes Area.

I would ask the Premier: What's the status of that?

**Mr. Selinger:** Yes, there is ongoing discussions. We've certainly had bilaterals with Ontario to say we'd be willing to co-operate to find a solution. We—already a significant funder of the International Institute for Sustainable Development. The federal government apparently has provided a framework agreement to the International Institute for Sustainable Development. I'm not sure that's been made available to all the parties yet. I don't believe it is, but we're looking for a way to work with both the federal and Ontario government and the international institute to find a way to keep the experimental lakes research ongoing because it has made a big difference, a big, positive difference on issues like acid rain, nutrification, et cetera.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Can the Premier indicate what might be the timeline for finalizing that framework agreement so that the International Institute for Sustainable Development could formally take over the ELA or managing it?

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, that is primarily a discussion between the federal government and the international institute because the federal government is currently responsible for ELA, both the funding of it and the long-term liability that it may ensue from any of the research that's gone over there, but they're the ones that will be playing a large role on that and then what the arrangements are. But we're—as I've said, we're willing to be part of the solution at a time when governments are both stressed, in terms of their finances, but at the same time recognizing that there's some very important research going on here which could mitigate significant damage to some of the freshwater lakes we have in this world. There are many in Manitoba but there's many all across the country and indeed the world that experimental lake research has contributed to.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, the Premier indicated that the Province is already a significant funder of the Experimental Lakes Area. I had, you know, since—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order. The honourable First Minister, on a point of information.

**Mr. Selinger:** Yes, a point of information.

I was indicating we're a significant funder of the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Correction. The Province is already a significant funder of the International Institute for Sustainable Development, but I would hazard a guess that those funds are already being used for other projects. And if the International Institute for Sustainable Development is really going to take over this huge additional responsibility, that it's likely to need additional resources. Is the Premier ready to put some additional resources on top of what's already been—being provided?

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, that's part of the discussions. I do note, however, that in the money we allocate to the institute of sustainable development there's discretionary money for priorities that will have a direct benefit to the province of Manitoba.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Now, on the National Research Council institute of biodiagnostics, I know that the Premier had been working on a long-run solution to the situation of the—unfortunate situation of the federal government bowing out of its responsibility in terminating the institute of biodiagnostics. Can the Premier provide an update with regard to this?

**Mr. Selinger:** I think there was a submission made by several interested parties in Manitoba including—led by business people. I don't know that the federal government was interested in that specific proposal. I think there are other proposals being pursued by some First Nations and one of our universities to look at acquiring that site, but I don't have any particular inside information with—of what's—as to the respect of the status of those negotiations.

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Gerrard:** I mean, what I understand the Premier to say is that the original plans or concepts of—for what the institute of biodiagnostics might become if not worked out, and that the status is somewhat in limbo, although there's some discussions continuing. Is that correct?

**Mr. Selinger:** I think—my understanding is is the federal government is no longer willing to fund the institute of biodiagnostics, period.

But the issue is, what's going to happen with—in its present form—I think, some of these researchers—

and, again, I can't speak for the federal government on this about what their long-term intentions are, but I believe they want to sell the building, and that if there's going to be any continuing role for the institute of biodiagnostics, it would be in another facility in a down-sized way. So I think there's already been some layoffs there and some scientists have had to redeploy themselves to other lines of work or other employment elsewhere within Canada or elsewhere. But I do believe they have an interest in shutting down the building, in terms of its current functions, and looking at ways to dispose of that building. And I think that that building issue is one that may be under discussion with some First Nations and at least one of our post-secondary institutions.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, I think it is most unfortunate that the institute of biodiagnostics is being terminated in this way, and that, you know, at this point it—there's nothing very concrete in terms of being able to look at what the future holds in this area.

Let me move on to this February. The Premier was on a trade mission to India, I understand. Would the Premier indicate who were the people on that trade mission? Were there any MLAs and who they were and who were the other people?

**Mr. Selinger:** It was a business delegation with the Manitoba Business Council, so there were a variety of business people on the trip, some government officials, for sure, who are involved in trade relationships, some of our post-secondary institutions and our K to 12 institutions were there, MLA for Maples was there, MLA for Concordia was there. You know, it was about 35 people in total.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, I would ask the Premier: In terms of the expenses for the MLAs for The Maples and Concordia, were those paid out of their MLA allowances, or were there special, you know, contributions from somewhere else in the government to help with the expenses?

**Mr. Selinger:** I'd have to check, but I believe they were paid out of their MLA allowances.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, can the Premier indicate what specific business deals were concluded or completed?

**Mr. Selinger:** We made releases on them—press releases on them—I could pull them up for the member—but we saw some arrangements made with Westeel-Rosco to open up an office in, I believe, Mumbai. We saw a travel company from India

announce it's opening up an outlet for travel to India in Winnipeg. We saw some arrangements made with post-secondary institutions and our community colleges. Several deals were signed in that regard. There were some relationships set up between innovation incubators there and our innovation organizations in Manitoba. There were meetings with chief ministers over there and we looked at some follow-up trade back here to Canada. And there was interest in food security, as well, over there, and some of the methods that we have here in Canada for increasing food security. So there were a number of relationships that were fostered over there during that time, as part of a long-term relationship building with that part of the world. So, we—as the member knows, we have many members that have moved to Manitoba from India, some—lots from the province or is it—yes, province or states—*[interjection]*—state of Gujarat, some from the state of Punjab, other states as well.

So, you know, we have a lot of connections there with some of the people that have come to live in Manitoba. And it's a rapidly growing economy with a young population, and they're very interested in Canadian education; they're very interested in Canadian technology across a wide number of fields, from materials to healthy foods, to nutraceuticals, to food security, to, oh, just professions. Just a great deal of interest, and so we see the opportunity for a long-term relationship there that can grow trade between the two jurisdictions.

**Mr. Gerrard:** You know, with regard to Lake Winnipeg, we have discussed a little bit the situation of the combined sewers and the North End treatment plant, which are important to be resolved.

One of the areas, which pretty clearly important, is investments in water retention to hold back water, and not just in drainage, which would increase the runoff and increase the amount of phosphorus going into Lake Winnipeg.

So I—what specific investments is the government planning this year with regard to water retention?

**Mr. Selinger:** The member was asking a question about water storage and—of terms of water and not going into Lake Winnipeg?

**Mr. Gerrard:** You know, as I think the Premier is probably well aware, very careful research led by Greg McCullough and others has demonstrated very clearly that one of the major reasons that we've got

high phosphorus levels going into Lake Winnipeg is that when you have water coming off the land faster, it carries higher levels of phosphorus. And that one of the activities that needs to be improved is the investments in water retention, to hold back water so the water doesn't come off the land as fast and so that there is less phosphorus coming into Lake Winnipeg.

I just asked, you know, what investments is the Premier and his government making this year in that area?

**Mr. Selinger:** Well, the number of ideas in place there—of course, one of the groups that's led on this kind of advocacy for greater water retention is Ducks Unlimited. We've put in place a riparian tax credit for several years, alternative land use strategies that include ideas to retain water. We did a project with the institute of sustainable development on the use of cattails and growing cattails and harvesting them, as a natural method for trapping and removing phosphorus from the lake.

And the member's right, there's always pressure for increased drainage, but it's not necessarily the case that all the drainage has to go into Lake Winnipeg. It could go into on-land storage facilities, for example, or be moved in such a way that it doesn't impact communities or agriculture or even roadways, but not necessarily wind up in the lake.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The government, in 2011, established a target which had been 10 per cent and moved it up to a 50 per cent reduction in the amount of phosphorus going into Lake Winnipeg. But to date, there's not been a plan presented to achieve this target, and so, I would ask the Premier, you know, where things stand in terms of moving this target forward and being able to achieve the needed phosphorus reduction of 50 per cent.

**Mr. Selinger:** There has been considerable effort gone into a global plan, as well as specific measures being taken. For example, controlling the winter spreading of manure, toughening standards on septic fields, requirements for the City of Winnipeg in terms of nutrient removal from sewage treatment processes in the city, discussions with other jurisdictions about nutrient loads into the Red River Valley, for example, and into the Red River.

\* (15:50)

The minister recently talked about a lake-friendly accord where provinces would work together on identifying how to keep their lakes healthy. That was part of the language that grew out

of the Western Premiers' Conference this morning. I raised the issue of a lake-friendly accord with my colleagues in western Canada and they're very interested in pursuing that. They saw the value in that and this would be a way not only to share best practices on nutrient management or keeping our lakes clean, but how we can work together to achieve that not just for Lake Winnipeg, but for other lakes as well.

So there's a lot going on there, and the minister identified that there's up to a billion dollars of various forms of leverage investments that are going to have an impact on Lake Winnipeg. Some of it will be through Building Canada Fund. Some of it will be through funding sewer and water treatment facilities. Some of it will be through regulatory measures. Some of it will be through research and development on Lake Winnipeg, and I know the minister is preparing more information on that that we can make available through the Estimates or even sooner than that.

**Mr. Gerrard:** What plans is the government taken to measure the phosphorus going into Lake Winnipeg so they know when the target is achieved?

**Mr. Selinger:** There are measurements that are being performed; there is variability on an annual basis depending on the amount of runoff, the wetness, the dryness, floods, et cetera. So I believe that they've been collecting data for a couple of decades now, but there's year-to-year variations. Some of that data indicated that the phosphorus levels were increasing and now we're looking for some medium- to long-term trend that we can manage that downward.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Would the Premier—when he's saying that the evidence is that it's been increasing, say that, I mean, that's been over the course of the life of this NDP government. Is that right?

**Mr. Selinger:** Prior to us becoming government there was starting to be an increase. There have been some increases during our time in government even with additional measures taken. What's not entirely clear is whether in the absence of those measures there would—it's likely the case that in the absence of those measures that phosphorus or nutrient loading would have increased even more.

But, for example, in a flood year you have a lot of water that flows out of the landscape into lakes like Lake Winnipeg, and that year tends to be a year where more nutrients and phosphorus wind up in a

lake. You can have a year, a dry year when, in fact, there's less flows into the lakes and so there's less phosphorus and nutrients coming off the land that goes into the lake. So there is year-to-year variability that—which hinges upon the weather conditions, and then there's all those things we can do to better manage point specific and non-point specific sources of phosphorus and nutrients going into the lake both inside of Manitoba and outside of Manitoba.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, at the recent western Premiers' meeting, I gather there was some discussion of immigration and the need to increase, not decrease, immigration levels.

Can the Premier provide some details on what was proposed and what is coming out of the Premier's meeting, western Premiers' meeting in that respect?

**Mr. Selinger:** I thank the member for the question.

And we did discuss the skilled workforce and one of the areas under that was immigration, and when we talked about immigration we all believed that, first of all, the cap should be lifted on the amount of people we can bring to respective provinces. We also think the system needs to be more flexible to help us develop a skilled workforce. We are interested in new models for economic immigration, but we wanted to emphasize that the existing provincial and territorial nominee programs continue to be essential tools to help meet economic and labour market needs.

Immigration is an area of provincial jurisdiction; it's also an area of federal jurisdiction. So we believe there's—important for collaboration on how we move forward on this to increase overall immigration levels—we all agreed on that—to provide a greater role for provinces and territories in the selection of immigrants and the settlement of immigrants, to ensure provincial and territorial nominee programs are not negatively affected by the implementation of what's called the expression of interest model.

We want to make sure that we don't shift people away from the Provincial Nominee Program. We want to have a streamlined visa processing system that is client-focused and ensures Canada's competitive in the global market for talent and tourism, and we also want to ensure timely and reliable access to temporary foreign workers to fill legitimate labour and skills market and skill shortage. But we also want there to be a recognition that provincial and territorial nominee programs

provide an effective path for temporary foreign workers to become Canadian citizens, and we've had great success with that here in Manitoba.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Let me move into the issue of having about 2,000 people still evacuated from their homes, many from Lake St. Martin, Little Saskatchewan, Dauphin River. There have been, in recent weeks, some discussions about Lake St. Martin and Little Saskatchewan, but very little in the news about Dauphin River, and my understanding is that most people in Dauphin River, I think, are still not able to go back home.

Can the Premier provide an update on what's happening in Dauphin River?

**Mr. Selinger:** First of all, we continue to find ways to support fishing up there with support programs. We also are looking at whether we're working with the community to identify long-term location for housing to ensure that people are on higher ground there. But we are working closely with Dauphin River to resolve any remaining people that are not yet back home, and we'd like to—we're also working with the federal government on that. It's federal government, provincial government, as well as the First Nation itself.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Now, I understand that there has been some progress in terms of Lake St. Martin.

Can the Premier provide an update on the status there?

**Mr. Selinger:** Yes. This area is the one that has the most number of people that have not been able to return home yet. We have, we believe, an understanding that—of the area that they're looking at for permanent homes and expansion of their existing community. It includes some Crown land; it includes some land that has been acquired from private interests up there, and by getting a site identified we can now go forward with planning for the site in terms of infrastructure, layout, planning and putting in place resources to allow people to have homes to move home to.

**Mr. Gerrard:** It's my understanding that there still has to be a community referendum—is that right—to approve the site?

**Mr. Selinger:** Yes, I believe that is the case.

**Mr. Gerrard:** And in terms of a timeline for Lake St. Martin, what is the process and the timeline, if you understand it?

**Mr. Selinger:** I think the member would agree with me, we'd like to get people home as soon as possible, but I don't have a specific date in front of me about the referendum and then the work that goes on after that, but we'd like to be able to move on that as quickly as possible in collaboration with the First Nation and the federal government, because there's several elements to making—providing a solution and working on a solution in collaboration with the First Nation that will allow us to avoid this circumstance ever happening again. So it requires some new infrastructure, some new layouts for the community, some significant investments, some infrastructure and layout, utilities, et cetera, but also new homes as well.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Can the Premier provide an update of the status of the situation in Little Saskatchewan?

**Mr. Selinger:** We'd have to get him information on that, on the specifics of that, but I do believe there has been some of the ready-to-move homes made available to that community, which can be located there in a timely fashion and allow some folks to get back home.

**Mr. Gerrard:** And perhaps I can ask the Premier what other communities where there's still evacuees and where there's still work in progress? What other communities—are there still evacuees from and there is still some work in progress to get people back to their homes?

\* (16:00) Gerrard

**Mr. Selinger:** I do believe there are some people that still have not returned home in Peguis as well. So there's work to be done there, and that flooding situation is not unique to 2011. There's been flooding for about three or four years out there. So I think there's some long-term solutions that have to be in place to get people home in Peguis as well.

**Mr. Gerrard:** And speaking of Peguis, I would ask the Premier, what's the status of the flood prevention efforts? Because there have been many years of flooding on Peguis and, clearly, it's a major priority.

**Mr. Selinger:** Well, as the member knows, one of the problems with the existing disaster financial assistance agreement is it only allows people to restore property to what it was before the flood occurred. So in the case of Peguis, that has resulted in restoring it into circumstances that would flood again, and one of the reasons we kept talking about a disaster mitigation program is there are times you have to put additional structures and infrastructure in

place that will allow the community to have greater ability to be flooded and to be dislocated. So the existing DFA guidelines didn't provide for that. You have to make some additional investments. We have been able to—we did some 100 per cent provincially funded programs to allow for that.

The federal government agreed to some disaster mitigation on a 50-50 basis. So there has been some progress in recognizing that an investment in mitigation can save you having to go back and do the same DFA-type programming on a regular basis.

**Mr. Gerrard:** One of the ongoing issues with the First Nations communities has been the situation with Jordan's Principle. I know the province had a memorandum with the federal government. Can the Premier provide an update on what's happening and where we are at the moment?

**Mr. Selinger:** If he wants a specific update on that, I'd have to take that as notice and get him information on that. It is an important principle to ensure that when a child or a—is in need of care, health care, or, indeed, even a family member is in need of health care, that jurisdictional disputes do not get in the way of providing that care on a timely basis to meet the priority needs of the person needing that care.

So we've advocated that we're willing to support that principle, but if the member's asking for a specific update on that, I'd have to undertake to get that for him or he could pursue it with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) through Health Estimates.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Okay, yes, I just would confirm that it's the Minister of Health who has the lead on Jordan's Principle and then ask a question with regard to access to clean running water. It's my understanding that there's still more than a thousand homes in northern Manitoba which don't yet have access to clean running water and I'd like to know what the Premier's plans are in terms of addressing that issue.

**Mr. Selinger:** We've consistently supported movement on that. I understand that there's in the order of 220 homes that are—have been or are in the process of being provided with clean water and sewage facilities in these remote communities. I'd have to find out the number of homes remaining to be looked after. We'll get that for him, but it is moving forward.

We continually raise that and discuss that with the federal government. We've been able to do—we've been willing to do some work on the training side, contingent upon the federal government making capital available to do some of the infrastructure improvements. But we're looking for continuous gains in this area so that everybody can have access to clean water and sewage in their homes.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I notice that at the—about the time of the NDP convention, the Premier made a statement that he would relook at the issue of increasing the shelter rates as the Make Poverty History and 140 or more other groups have asked for to 75 per cent of the—of market rates. Can the Premier provide an update on the status of where that is?

**Mr. Selinger:** It's contained within the new budget which is not yet passed, but the reality is is we did make a commitment to \$20 a month. We had a three-pronged commitment around stabilizing housing and affordability for low-income Manitobans. One was further improvements to rent regulation to protect renters from precipitous and sudden increases in rent or unnecessarily—unnecessary increases in rent, so rent regulation reform is going forward.

Secondly, to provide the \$20 a month in the RentAid benefit or shelter benefit and, thirdly, a commitment to building more social housing units in Manitoba, which would allow for more availability of social housing to people, where within social housing the rent is geared to income, and I think it maxes out at about 28, 29 per cent.

### Report

**Mr. Mohinder Saran (Chairperson of the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 254):** Mr. Chairperson, in the section of Committee of Supply meeting in room 254, considering the Estimates of the Department of Health, the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) moved the following motion:

THAT line item 21.1.(a), minister's salary, be reduced to \$1.08.

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

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

*All sections in Chamber for recorded vote.*

**Recorded Vote**

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order. The one hour provided for the ringing of the division bells has expired. I am therefore directing that the division bells be turned off and the House proceed to a vote—[interjection]—and the committee proceed to a vote.

In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 254, considering the Estimates of the Department of Health, the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) moved the following motion:

THAT line item 21.1(a), minister's salary, be reduced to \$1.08.

This motion was defeated on a voice vote and subsequently two members requested a recorded vote on this matter.

The question before the committee, then, is the motion moved by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

*A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 18, Nays 31.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The motion is accordingly defeated.

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

Call in the Speaker.

**IN SESSION**

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 17, 2013

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