

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
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
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
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 24, 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.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): 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 to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is signed by K. Tymko, J. Guiboche, N. Jack and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): 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.

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 S. Hatton, J. Loewen, J. Hall and many others.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Yes, good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. 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.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by D. Enns, H.D. Kehler, J. Giesbrecht and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, 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 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's signed by D. Patterson, C. Prince, W. Furga and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

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

Background to 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 amalgamation, local democratic representation will be drastically limited while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

Local governments are further concerned that amalgamations 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 reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

And this petition is signed by J. Bartkiw, D. Miller, L. Lepischak and many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, 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 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 L. Berry, D. Coleman, L. Yarycky and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. 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.

* (13:40)

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 while holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is submitted on behalf of M. Spletzer, J. Feist, R. Spletzer 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 S. King, V. Berube, M. Irvine and many, many other Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

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

And 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 amalgamation—or force, pardon me, municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

And this petition is signed by H. Trainor, M. Girdue, K. Budd and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Trunk Highways 16 and 5 North—Traffic Signals

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure

and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by L. Kirby, R. Kilbury, C. Anderson and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): 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 a 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 to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And this petition is signed by L. Posthumus, J. Bowers, D. Yustak and thousands of other 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 V. Hill, R. Breen, K. Pluckinsky 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. Stafford, A. Halconsser, C. Glourchi and 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 to raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is signed by S. Bart, L.C. Forsyth, L. Grant-Braybrook 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 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 urge 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 R. Zelkis, D. Scaletta, A. van de Viysel and many more.

* (13:50)

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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 announced 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 legal improvement—real improvements in cost savings.

(4) Local governments are further concerned that amalgamations 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 D. Thain, L. Fox, C. Fox and many, many more fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Law Reform Commission Forty-Second Annual Report for 2012-2013.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Innovation, Energy and Mines 2013-2014 Departmental Expenditure Estimates

Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, copies which have been distributed.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I'm pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Manitoba Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs 2013-2014 Departmental Expenditure.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none—

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 family members of the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), including his wife, Rajeshwari Jha, his daughter, Dr. Reena C. Jha, and his granddaughters, Chandini and Anjali, who are—

And also in the public gallery, we have with us today Jason, Victoria and Tommy Stefanson, who are the guests of the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

And perhaps in a few moments we'll have more guests, but on behalf of honourable members, we welcome all of you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Bill 20 Legality

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in clause 10(1) of the balanced budget law, it says clearly: the government shall not present to the Legislative Assembly a bill to increase the rate of any tax unless the government first puts the question of the advisability of proceeding with such a bill to the voters of Manitoba in a referendum and the majority of the persons who vote in the referendum authorize the government to proceed with the changes.

In spite of this, the government has in the same bill that it proposes to change this legislation introduced that bill and is clearly in violation of the legislation as a result.

In ignoring this Manitoba law which exists, which is real, which is on the books, is the Premier not concerned that he's creating the impression he's willing to put himself above the law of Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I take comfort from the statement of the Leader of the Opposition on October 16th, 1995, when he said, granted there are restrictions in this legislation the members have talked about that they suggest are unreasonable or that would handcuff future legislators. I do not believe that this is true, says the Leader of the Opposition. I believe the legislation can be by any subsequent legislator withdrawn or repealed. So I do not believe the hands-being-tied argument is one that has any validity at all.

Mr. Pallister: And I very much appreciate the Premier listening to my advice from those many years ago. Perhaps he would also consider that there are exceptions and that the speaker he quoted was quite right in pointing out that he has exceptions that he can follow if he wishes to change the bill.

Here are a couple of them. In 10(2), subsection 1 does not apply if federal taxation laws occur and it is necessary to maintain provincial revenue or if the bill is designed to restructure the tax burden and does not result in an increase in revenue. Of course, neither of these exceptions apply in this case.

And since the exceptions do not exist and the taxpayer protection act does exist, my question remains: Is the Premier willing to put himself above the laws of Manitoba simply to create an NDP slush fund and tax grab?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I do note that we have provided \$1.25 billion in tax relief to Manitobans during our time in office, including reducing all the personal income tax rates; including increasing the personal deductions, spousal deductions and dependants deductions; including getting rid of the education support levy worth about \$180 million; including increasing the property tax credit from \$250 to \$700. All of that tax relief has been there over the time we've been in office.

And I do again have to refer to the Leader of the Opposition. He says: I believe the legislation can be, by any subsequent Legislature, withdrawn or repealed, so I do not believe that the hands-being-tied argument is one that has any validity at all. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition in 1995, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pallister: Back to the future yet again, Mr. Speaker, but the reality is the Premier can't name a single government across Canada that has done less to take the boot off the back of taxpayers than that one.

There is no precedent for breaking Manitoba laws. This is a Manitoba-only law, and this government is trying to create a precedent now, but it's just using excuses and its ignorance of the law is no excuse. Now, taxation imposed illegally is a very dangerous precedent, and this government, we can be assured, will use this precedent to raise taxes in the future. If taxation without consent is not robbery, then any band of robbers only has to declare themselves a government and all the robberies are legalized.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the spenDP government, like all governments, derives its power from Manitobans and from taxpayers. By removing the right to vote on major taxes, does the Premier acknowledge that he has taken away the power from Manitobans and given it to himself?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we saw this weekend in another jurisdiction massive flood damage rolling across their communities.

In Manitoba, we had a flood this spring as well, and that flood occurred in the city of Winnipeg, but there was one big difference. We spent \$670 million to protect the city of Winnipeg, and now we propose to provide equivalent protection to the people around Lake Manitoba, Brandon, the Assiniboine valley, Lake St. Martin. We plan to rebuild the province so that Manitobans are safer, so they have roads, so they have bridges, so they have schools and personal care homes.

Mr. Speaker, it is because we respect the priorities of Manitobans, we are moving on the Building and Renewal Plan to build this province, keep people working, keep people safe and keep people employed.

PST Increase Impact on Small Business

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, talk is really cheap for this Premier. Today he issued a news release saying that small- and medium-sized businesses are the heart and soul of Manitoba's economy, and we absolutely believe that.

So I want to ask this Premier: Because Manitoba's small- and medium-sized businesses are the heart and soul, why is he punishing them by raising the PST?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to be at the First Peoples Economic Growth Fund five-year celebration today. Over

75 loans, nearly 500 jobs, \$55 million of leveraged economic investment in the province of Manitoba: that is a great story for a fund which is generating entrepreneurship, small- and medium-sized business, employing Aboriginal and First Nations people all across Manitoba. Forty per cent of the opportunities were in the north.

* (14:00)

And I remind the member opposite, she voted against a budget that increased the tax-free zone for Manitoba small businesses. It is the largest tax-free zone for small business in the country, \$425,000 and every year that we brought that tax-free threshold up higher and reduced the rates to zero the members opposite have voted against it, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this Premier just does not get it. He says one thing and then he does the other.

City Looks, a hair salon and spa, lost 35 per cent of their business this past year because this NDP government added PST to hair and salon services a year ago. Now they're going to be hit with another PST hike.

So I'd like to the Premier: After all that rhetoric, why is he so out of touch with how this PST hike is going to hurt small- and medium-sized businesses in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite would support us on bringing newcomers to Manitoba instead of putting a cap on it and saying nothing about it, we'd have even more small businesses flourishing in Manitoba. If the members opposite would support our skills agenda once—wants to create apprenticeships, journeypersons and small businesses in rural and northern Manitoba in the trades: plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, we'd have even some more—about more small businesses in Manitoba. And, if the members opposite would support the tax measures which create the largest tax-free zone in the country we'd have even some more, more small businesses flourishing in this province, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to supporting small business we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. We have one of the highest rates of employment among the working-age population and we have a thriving small- and medium-size business community, and we will keep it that way, especially when we build Manitoba Hydro.

Referendum Request

Mrs. Driedger: It's really hard to take this Premier seriously when he's part of an NDP government that lied to Manitobans in the last election.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

I think all honourable members are very clear on rules of the House with respect to references to other members of the Assembly and using unparliamentary language that is contained within our rules to define that individual.

So I'm cautioning the honourable member for Charleswood, when you're making references please do not point out to any individual of this Chamber and use unparliamentary language.

So I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members of the Assembly in that regard.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, before this NDP government causes any more harm to small businesses, they still have a chance to do the right thing. July 1st is not here yet.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Will he call a referendum on the PST, or has he already mailed out get-out-of-jail-free cards to all Manitoba businesses who he's going to force to break the law on July 1st?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, what we're going to do is proceed with flood protection for the people in western Manitoba, in the Interlake area and all around Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin, the Assiniboine valley, all the way through to Brandon, Manitoba. We will provide them the flood protection that they need to ensure that the events of 2011 do not dislocate 7,000 people in the future. That's what we'll do.

We will grow the Manitoba economy with our skills agenda, have a more skilled tradespeople that are able to take the jobs we need to do their construction work that will be occurring in Manitoba.

We will not cancel Hydro projects as the members opposite have talked about, and small businesses will be front and centre in providing those services as we build this province. Whether it's roads, whether it's hospitals, whether it's schools or whether it's Manitoba Hydro there will be role for small business in providing goods and services, human resource development. That's what we'll do for Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

PST Increase Request to Withdraw

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): One week from today this NDP government will force Manitobans to begin paying for an illegal PST hike, Mr. Speaker. This hike will have a negative impact on all Manitobans, including Manitobans in the city of Winnipeg.

And I'd like to ask the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) to do the right thing today and to call on this Minister of Finance to reverse his decision to raise this illegal PST hike, Mr. Speaker. Will she do that today?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, the revenue that is going to be supplied by the PST increase will go directly into infrastructure in Manitoba. It'll go directly into supporting schools. It'll go directly into supporting hospitals. It'll go directly into supporting and building roads and bridges, all necessary items to move our economy forward and put people to work.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses depend on a government to make good decisions to move the economy forward, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Mrs. Stefanson: And if the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) won't stand up for her constituents, I'm wondering if the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) will stand up for his constituents and call on this Minister of Finance to reverse his decision to raise this illegal PST hike for—in Manitoba.

Mr. Struthers: Well, the member for Tuxedo knows, because we've told her over and over in question period and in Estimates, Mr. Speaker, that the same process will be followed with this increase as it was followed when friends and relatives of hers were in government and brought forward the 1993 budget that expanded the PST to include kids clothing and baby supplies. In that time, the budget was delivered on the 6th of April, the taxes were raised on the 1st of May, and the enabling legislation received royal assent three months later on the 27th of July.

Mr. Speaker, she can talk about this being illegal if she likes, but she's wrong.

Mrs. Stefanson: And if the member for Kirkfield Park and the member for St. Norbert won't stand up for their constituents, I'm wondering if the member for Southdale (Ms. Selby) will stand up for her

constituents and call on her colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) to reverse his decision to raise the PST in Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): I would refer to rule 405 in Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, where it says that questions may be asked of private members only under strict limitations, and virtually the only question possible would refer to a committee of which the member is the Chairman or Chairperson. Rule 409 goes on to state that a question should fall within the administrative responsibility of the government or of the specific minister to whom it is addressed.

And, if you look in O'Brien and Bosc, in the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, on page 509, it states that, in summary, when recognized in question period, a member should ask a question that is within the administrative responsibility of the government or the individual minister addressed.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that asking questions of private members has long been recognized as out of order, that questions in question period should be put only to ministers of the Crown, and I would look forward to your ruling on that.

Mr. Speaker: Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on the same point of order.

Mr. Speaker, the questions that the member for Tuxedo posed were simply asking these various MLAs, and some of who are Cabinet ministers, to simply stand up for their constituents and pose their opinions. They got elected running—going door to door, saying they were going to do one thing and then they ultimately did the other. They went to Manitobans and they said they weren't going to increase taxes in the PST, and then they did something else. So I think all the member for Tuxedo is doing is asking those very same members, who went door to door prior to the election and making a promise to constituents, to stand up and to explain why they didn't keep their promise.

Now, I agree, if the members opposite don't want to stand up for their constituents, they don't have to. That doesn't reflect badly on us or the rules; it reflects badly on them. They should stand up for their constituents, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, I want to draw the attention of all honourable members, Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, section 405, and I want to indicate this to the House for your information: Questions may be asked of a private—of private members only under strict limitations. Virtually the only question possible would refer to a committee of which the member is a Chairman. A question asking, for example, if a member intended to introduce certain legislation, is out of order.

And there are other customs and practices that we have under parliamentary procedure in the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, section—for 2009, section 509: Questions are, although customarily addressed to specific ministers, are directed to the ministry as a whole, not to individual members of the Assembly, and it is the prerogative of the government to designate which minister responds to which questions, and the Speaker has no authority to compel a particular minister to respond.

* (14:10)

So, on that information that's referred to by these two sections of our rules that we follow on practices and procedures, I must respectfully rule that there is a point of order that has been raised by the honourable Government House Leader and that I'm asking for the co-operation of honourable members of the House, when you're asking questions, please address your questions to the specific minister responsible that is a part of the executive branch of government.

Mr. Goertzen: I challenge that ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: Ruling of the Speaker having been challenged, all those in favour of sustaining the ruling of the Chair will please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the ruling please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: Opinion of the Chair, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

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

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Order, please. Order, please. The one-hour allocation for the ringing of the division bells has expired. I'm instructing that they be turned off, and we'll now proceed to the vote.

The question before the House is: Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Caldwell, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Gerrard, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wiebe, Wight.

Nays

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Maguire, Mitchelson, Pallister, Pedersen, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Wishart.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 34, Nays 17.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair is accordingly sustained.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We will now continue with question period.

The honourable member for Tuxedo has time left.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'd just like to ask the minister—member for Southdale (Ms. Selby) again: Has she stood up for her constituents and spoken to her colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), and asked him on behalf of her constituents to reverse his decision to make this illegal PST hike in Manitoba?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) seems to be awfully worried about who's standing up for what around here. Well, let me help her out. This side of the House and every member on this side of the House will stand up against her cuts to health care and education every day of the week. This side of the House and every member of this side of the House will stand up for the priorities of Manitobans, including investing in schools, investing in hospitals and investing in infrastructure. We know where we stand, but we sure know where you stand too.

Horse Racing Industry Funding

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, we are standing up with the taxpayers of Manitoba and we are voting against that NDP tax hike.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP clearly have no regard for the law. The Minister of Finance was caught red-handed with his hand in the cookie jar. He chose to ignore the law and withheld money—funding that was owing to the horse racing industry. As a result, Judge Dewar ordered the Minister of Finance to forward money to the industry. As the judge pointed out in his ruling, the minister's actions were, and I quote: contrary to the purpose of The Pari-Mutuel Levy Act as expressed in The Pari-Mutuel Levy Act as it now stands.

Why, Mr. Speaker, did the NDP choose to ignore this law?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): You know, it's a bit much for, you know, for the member opposite and members opposite who've been doing everything possible—and, yes, they may think they have a strategy to match the tactics. But they've been doing everything possible to prevent consideration of exactly the kind of legislation that's identified in the court case, Mr. Speaker, that's part of the normal budget procedures.

I want to point out again, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance gave notice in January to the Jockey Club of what was going to happen. It was outlined in the Budget Address, specifically, there would be amendments brought in to deal with it. The legislation was introduced. The budget is passed.

Mr. Speaker, what we've been doing has been very clear. Yes, there's going to be less money for horse racing. It will go to things like health care, but there will also be support for the horse racing

industry. So the member opposite doesn't even have a point.

Mr. Cullen: Well the judge says the NDP can't break the law, Mr. Speaker, and I will quote what the judge said in terms of the minister's actions. His—minister's actions is not consistent with the minister's obligations as they are now articulated under act. Those obligations may very well change once the act is amended, but until then the minister must act in accordance with the law as it now stands. In my respectful opinion, he has not done that.

Mr. Speaker, does the NDP believe that they have a law for them and a law for everyone else in Manitoba?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we have to take lectures from somebody last week that thought that Rob Ford was a paragon of virtue. I think we know what their idea of standards are.

And I want to stress again, Mr. Speaker, a member opposite—members opposite may not appreciate that, but when the budget was brought in we had a vote on the budget. The boat—the vote was passed. One of the provisions in the budget was exactly what is being brought in place through BITSA. It's not uncommon for the budget implementation act to be brought in and pass even on the last day of session.

You know, it's members opposite who've, on frivolous points of order, been trying to prevent us from getting to that legislation, which as the lawsuit identifies is the proper procedure. So, if anyone's responsible for this, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should look in the mirror—

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

Bill 47

Protection from Lawsuits

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Well, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the BITSA legislation.

The NDP are now proposing to tear up signed contracts. To protect themselves against lawsuits, they have added a provision in Bill 47. This could retroactively give the NDP a get-out-of-jail-free card.

Now, do the NDP think they are above the law, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that

we believe that you follow proper procedures: in this particular case, notice in January; in this particular case, a provision in the Budget Address, legislation through the budget implementation and taxation act.

In fact, I want to stress again, we're not cutting off all funding to the Jockey Club. There continues to be funding. In fact, the vast majority of the parimutuel levy will continue to go to the Jockey Club.

But we, unlike members opposite, actually believe there's a role for the harness racing industry. So the real question here, Mr. Speaker, is why won't that member stand up for the harness racing industry, an important part of rural Manitoba. Why does he insist on recycling day after day the same kind of failed questions that we've seen day after day? Why don't they listen to rural Manitoba?

Electronic Monitoring Bracelets Government Position

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I encourage the member opposite to stand up for Manitobans and fight against this PST increase.

Mr. Speaker, prior to the 2011 election the NDP government 'conpitted'—committed to expand the use of electronic monitoring bracelets for people convicted of sex offences, domestic assaults, as well as other dangerous criminals. Now we see that there are warnings out there for the public to be on the watch for a high-risk sex offender who has repeatedly breached his parole.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Minister of Justice ignored electronic monitoring bracelets as a tool to help protect the Manitoba public?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Indeed, different governments across the country have made very different choices when it comes to public safety. The member opposite should maybe know the government of Alberta in last budget has actually cut their electronic monitoring program.

* (15:20)

Unlike that, in Manitoba it continues; electronic monitoring is being used. We have committed to expanding the use of electronic monitoring and that's exactly what's going to happen.

Mr. Helwer: Well, it's an interesting—expansion's an interesting word, Mr. Speaker, because, actually, in 2012, only nine individuals had electronic

monitoring devices. If that's expansion, hmm, I'd like to see them expand the budget then, because that would be contracting, Mr. Speaker. But they don't quite understand that. This Premier's (Mr. Selinger) on record as saying, ankle bracelets can be a useful technology. Now, do we take his—him at his word?

Why is this Minister of Justice ignoring this tool to help protect the Manitoba public?

Mr. Swan: Well, just to make it clear, because I know the member wasn't listening, as the Progressive Conservative government in Alberta, which cancelled electronic monitoring—that's not what we're doing here in Manitoba, as we continue to expand. What is contracting, however, is the threat of auto theft. And I know the members opposite did absolutely nothing in the '90s when auto theft became an epidemic. It was this government working, not just for the Crown attorneys and probation officers, but with MPI and all the citizens of this province that took on auto theft. That's why auto theft is now down more than 80 per cent from where it was some seven or eight years ago. That's why auto theft is at its lowest point in more than 20 years, Mr. Speaker, because unlike the Tory government, that sits on its hands and does nothing, this government acts.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government broke their promise and lied to Manitobans and is planning to raise the PST. Should we be surprised that they have again broken another promise to monitor dangerous offenders with electronic monitoring devices? This government—this is the one we're talking about, not the one in Alberta.

Mr. Swan: Well, let's talk about the Progressive Conservatives here, who are the party of no solutions. This is an opposition which would cut \$550 million out of the provincial budget. You know, if you want to reduce breaches, you can just lay off probation officers for one day a week; they're called Filmon Fridays, and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pallister) was front and centre when that was done. They could take people off the streets, I suppose; with \$550 million, you could cut a few more police officers, maybe you could cut more probation workers, maybe cut some correctional guards. We chose a different path, Mr. Speaker. We're continuing to invest in public safety, that's why we're getting good results on auto theft; that's why we're building public safety across this province, because we are not going to make the ruthless and the reckless cuts the Leader of the

Opposition and every Progressive Conservative member would try to foist upon Manitobans.

Food Bank Usage Government Policy

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, today Winnipeg Harvest issued their annual report card on goal 2020. The report card notes an increased need by families, in particular, for emergency food supplies. It also notes significant increases in the number of people needing to use food banks, as well as a significant decrease in the ability of food bank users to feed themselves.

Will a minister admit today that the policies of this government have forced more Manitobans to resort to using food banks?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): What I can tell the member opposite is that there are fewer people living in poverty today than that—what there was in 1999. There's a 'twih'—I know they don't like to hear it, and I also understand and respect that anyone living in poverty is too much. We have more work to do, but we are working to do it. We didn't do it like the members opposite, when they slashed—and I repeat—slashed welfare rates, took back the National Child Benefit. That's what they chose to do. What we are doing is we're building communities, supporting families by employment and education.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, the report card notes that food bank usage increased by 14 per cent in 2012. Progress clearly is not being made—21 per cent increase in 2010 and 18 per cent in 2009. It's quite clear that this government's policies are hurting Manitobans.

Will a minister admit that the policies of this government are forcing more Manitobans to the food banks?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell you, the government's policies, what we're doing is supporting families through education and employment and providing opportunities by increasing the rental supports for them as well as improving the quality of housing—affordable housing for them. We're working with all the community partners; we're making a difference.

We're not going back to the 1990s where they slashed welfare rates, where they took back the national child tax benefit. I'm telling you today, we

have put \$48 million back into the families by allowing them to keep the national child tax benefit.

By continuing to support healthy food initiatives through Neighbourhoods Alive! and the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, we're building more gardens and greenhouses that will support individuals.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, in a final supplementary.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, I seem to recall that this government did not increase it—the housing allowance in the last budget.

Mr. Speaker, the report card further notes that more than 3,000 people per month are requiring the services of Winnipeg Harvest for the first time. Of that, Mr. Speaker, 50 per cent of the clients are children.

What further evidence does this government need that its regressive tax policies, like increasing the PST, are hurting the bottom lines of Manitoba—Manitobans and forcing them to use food banks in ever-increasing numbers?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'll say it again; we are supporting and working with Manitoba families to help take people out of poverty. We're doing it through our policies around child care, around education, around employment, around affordable housing; not by slashing welfare rates, not by rolling back the national child-care tax benefit but by working with families, by providing them with opportunities.

And I might add, also, our increases to minimum wage have made a difference. And what have they done about that? Voted against it every time.

Food Bank Usage Reduction Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, for more than 13 years the NDP have been in power, and the number of people in Manitoba who are so poor that they need to use food banks has gone up and up and up and up.

In the most recent year, 2002, as announced today by Winnipeg Harvest, the increase in food-bank use was 14 per cent. This is following three years where the average increase was 12 per cent. The government can quote all the stats it wants on poverty, but food-bank use is one of the best measures of real poverty.

My question to the Premier: What specific measures is the Premier going to take to change direction and reverse the double-digit increases in food-bank use that we're seeing in Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, specific measures: We're going to create more jobs in partnership with Manitoba communities and businesses so that we'll keep one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada. We're going to have a skills agenda which will train another 75,000 Manitobans to take the skilled jobs which are available in the economy.

Specific measure No. 2: We're going to build Manitoba Hydro in the north which will create thousands of jobs for northern Manitobans and they'll have—and ensure they have first access at those jobs.

Measure No. 4: We're going to keep a single-tier universal health-care system so that all Manitobans have access to health care when they need it, not a two-tier system promised by the Leader of the Opposition.

Measure No. 4–5: We're going to invest in education including preschool, early childhood development and K-to-12 education, all of which the members opposite would cut.

Measure No. 6: We're going to increase the minimum wage, which the leader of the Liberals has consistently voted against, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr.—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, we've had 13 years and nine months of NDP government, a government which has orchestrated the largest increase in food-bank use and in real poverty of any province in Canada.

In today's report card on hunger in Manitoba, the wise people at Winnipeg Harvest, on the subject, financial government role, the NDP were given a rating of ND, which means not demonstrated. In other words, the NDP has not demonstrated it cares or is effective in 'deasing' poverty and food-bank use in Manitoba.

My question to the Premier: Will he change direction from what he's been doing in the last 13 years and show he can reduce food-bank use and real poverty in our province?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I want to continue to tell him some of the things we're going to do to alleviate poverty and create opportunity in Manitoba.

* (15:30)

We're going to add another 500 units of social housing in this province on top of the 1,500 that we've committed to and are already ahead of schedule on, when the members opposite stopped building social housing.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to increase the shelter benefit, a benefit which never existed when the members opposite were in office and which the member for River Heights ended when he ended the Canada assistance program which allowed social assistance rates to drop to the lowest level they've ever been across the country. We're going to increase them.

We're going to make available cancer-care drugs free for people that need it, so they can continue to work, live in their homes and support their families, Mr. Speaker.

And we will do more in daycare. Another 3,000 spots have been added to our system, and another 300 will be rolled out this year, Mr. Speaker.

Those are measures that will reduce poverty in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's rhetoric is divorced from the reality. When a government increases food bank use and real poverty in its province, as this government has done, it will increase sickness and illness among the poor. It will increase the infant mortality rate. It will reduce graduation rates among the poor. It will increase apprehensive—of children by Child and Family Services among poor families, and it will increase the number of people so desperate that they will end up in jail. All of these things, this government has done.

I ask the Premier: Will he accept the target proposed by Winnipeg Harvest to reduce food bank use and real poverty by 50 per cent, and if so, what measures will he take to ensure that the target is met?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, one of the additional measures we will take—and we have already put money into the fund; it's called the Nourishing Potential Fund. It's a \$5-million fund under the Winnipeg Foundation. We were one of the lead donors to that fund. That fund is working with neighbourhoods, parent groups, community

organizations all across Manitoba to 'enshoo'—ensure there is food security in their neighbourhoods. It can be community gardens. They can be breakfast programs. They can be lunch programs. It could be any measure which will reduce the need for additional resources in that community and help young children get fed. That is a very concrete measure.

The most important thing we can do for families is help them have secure housing and secure jobs and an opportunity to earn a decent wage so they can support their families. Only this government's prepared to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Economic Development Growth Fund First Nations People

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I'm still awaiting a good question from that side on jobs and the economy, but let me help them.

Small business creates 80 per cent of jobs in our community; it's a well-known fact. Now, today I understand that the Premier announced today celebrating a milestone in a program that helps Manitoba small businesses get started and grow. But I request my colleague and minister of enterprise, trade and training to elaborate—the House on the program that was announced today. Thank you.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): Well, Mr. Speaker, and, of course, the Premier was celebrating the fifth year of the First Nations economic development plan which has contributed greatly to the growth of small business enterprises in Manitoba for First Nations people.

But, of course, in Manitoba, we have a basket of supports and services, including tax cuts. We cut taxes; they cut goods—services, Mr. Speaker. We also cut red tape; they cut services. And we've seen over 106,000 small businesses in Manitoba and we cut from 8 per cent to zero per cent the small business tax. We cut the corporate capitals—corporate tax from 17 to 12 and a half per cent. And what do they do? They cut services.

So, clearly, our plan is working here in Manitoba to grow the economy, and we're looking forward to continue to build the economy and we know that we'll have 10,000 more jobs next year as a result of—

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

Keeyask Community Centre Program Update

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of the NDP member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), \$5 million was spent on a cultural centre for the TCN First Nation that was never built.

My question is to the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro, the NDP member for Kildonan: Does he call that accountability?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, not only do members opposite have a reputation for mean-spirited nine years of cuts, laying off nurses, not building hydro, closing hospitals, not doing capital, but they also have a reputation for not wanting to build the north and not wanting to work with First Nations people. In fact, we've had to pay a billion dollars in reparations for past developments.

Now we're trying to work with partnerships with First Nations, and members opposite, particularly the Tea Party member for St. Paul, attacks it at every single opportunity.

Mr. Schuler: Well, Mr. Speaker, it only gets worse under the leadership of the member for Kildonan. Not just did they fund \$5 million for a cultural centre that doesn't exist, then for two years he gave them operating money. That means operating money for gas and electricity and for staff for a cultural centre that doesn't exist. And then he funded them \$125,000 to buy furniture and equipment for a cultural centre that doesn't exist.

The families of TCN, the families who should've benefited from this, would like to know: Where's the cultural centre? Where's the operating money? And where's the furniture?

Mr. Chomiak: As I've indicated in past to the member, if he wants to come up and talk to the chief and council who are responsible, like a municipality, for those funds, I'm happy to do it. The member keeps talking about holding his hand; I—there's about a thousand other things I'd rather do than hold the member's hand, Mr. Speaker. And a member for the Tea Party can attack the partnerships; he can attack the council that we're working with who have the accountability for the funds, but he's not putting the future of the province forward.

They may not want to build hydro. They may want to cancel hospital building. They may not want

to build like we do, but at least they can respect the north and our attempt to build partnerships by working with First Nations to try to work together to extend and expand some of the wealth of this province to all the people of Manitoba, not just—

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

Municipal Amalgamation Government Relations

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): The member for Kildonan has spent most of his question period on his BlackBerry, Mr. Speaker. We have rules in this House. He's on his BlackBerry right now. He's putting it away. In this House we're not supposed to use electronics.

Now, if he was getting any answers for the questions, we might allow it, Mr. Speaker, but that clearly isn't happening because there aren't any answers coming.

Could you please caution him again that we're not supposed to use electronics during question period?

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Official Opposition House Leader, that is indeed one of our rules of the Chamber. During question period members are not permitted to use any electronic device. That includes cellphones, any personal communication device, laptops, et cetera. So, if there are members of this Assembly that are using their electronic devices, I'm encouraging them to put those electronic devices away during question period. Members know that we're permitted, after question period is concluded, that we're allowed to use our devices.

So I encourage all honourable members to please follow our rules.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Midland has the floor.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker.

The June District Meetings wrapped up last week in Manitoba. The Minister of Local Government chose once again not to listen to concerns raised with Bill 33 and forced amalgamations.

So my question is: Why did the minister not take the opportunity to at least start a meaningful dialogue and perhaps even explain his hidden agenda for all municipalities in Manitoba?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): We have a number of field consultants that are working with the municipalities that are under a population of 1,000. They've been working with them on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker. There's a template on how to conduct and do an amalgamation, so we provided a lot of assistance and staffing to help these municipalities. And, at the regional meetings, we heard many municipalities coming forward and telling us that they are engaged with their neighbours, wanting to move ahead with regard to amalgamations because they believe it's the right thing to do, to be able to move Manitoba forward in a way that'll be really positive for a lot of the stakeholders and ratepayers and taxpayers in their particular region.

Mr. Pedersen: So, once again, Mr. Speaker, the minister always likes to speak through spokespersons, and he's hired field consultants now to speak for him. The minister chose not to listen to the mayors and reeves at the June District Meetings, but before he ran out the side door, the very least the minister could've done is explain his overall master plan for all of Manitoba's municipal governments.

Which municipalities—Manitoba municipalities will now face the amalgamate-or-face-consequences message from this minister?

* (15:40)

Mr. Lemieux: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've asked municipalities to submit a plan by December, and we know that the municipalities will follow the legislation and do that.

Mr. Speaker, there was no running out the side door and back door. In fact, how would the member know? He wasn't even there.

You know, Mr. Speaker, you know, to be government, sometimes it's a matter of leading, and this government has taken a leadership role to work with municipalities, consult with them, dialogue with them. With all the regional meetings, with all the

municipalities—197 in this province—I have been there, working with them, standing side by side with them, listening to their concerns. And we will work with them until this is done.

Municipal Amalgamation Government Relations

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to bully the municipal officials and the residents. Surely, if this minister is going to threaten and bully municipalities with consequences, he will have given some thought to those consequences.

I ask the Minister of Local Government: What are the consequences he has planned?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, the only thing we agree on is the way we dress, and I don't mind the way the member dresses. It's a very nice jacket he has.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that the member opposite from Agassiz has to realize, as of June, there are many municipalities who have not submitted their audits. By not submitting your audits, you do not—and then you're not entitled to 'provi'—federal gas tax money. The point is they don't have the capacity. This is a clear example, one simple example, of where many municipalities are missing out. They're too small. They don't have the capacity to tap in the federal gas tax money.

We're trying to work with municipalities, Mr. Speaker, to bring them together, to build capacity for them, to enhance all their economic development opportunities they have. The member from Agassiz supports an old-fashioned—

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

Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Winnipeg Police Museum and Historical Society

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, Kirkfield Park is home to many hidden gems to discover, especially now that summer is finally upon us. From Cuthbert Grant's mill to the Historical Museum of St. James-Assiniboia, there's much history to discover in our community.

Today, I rise to recognize 25 years of one institution in particular. The Winnipeg Police Museum and Historical Society displays an incredible collection of historical Winnipeg police

force artifacts that dates all the way back to the force's beginnings in 1874.

The museum is located in the Winnipeg Police Training Academy on Allard. Visitors to the museum can take a journey through Winnipeg's unique history from the perspective of its police services. Life back in the day is illustrated through everything from early equipment, old photos, a jail cell built in 1911 and a restored 1925 patrol wagon. There is also memorabilia from the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike and a display on dangers faced by officers in the line of duty.

This museum is truly a treasure trove hidden right in our own backyard, Mr. Speaker. Historians, theatre groups and movie productions also use this little museum as a valuable resource for information and period pieces.

I am proud that the Police Museum has had a successful run in our community. I encourage anyone in our neighbourhood who has not yet had a chance to visit to drop by while it is still in our community. Next year, the Police Museum will be relocating to the new Winnipeg Police Service headquarters downtown.

I invite all members to join me in recognizing the Winnipeg Police Museum's contribution to our neighbourhood over the last quarter century. We wish you all the best in your next location.

Thank you.

Jack and Dora Penner

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, May 2nd, the Altona and District Chamber of Commerce celebrated their Citizens of the Year at an award banquet.

I was honoured to attend and celebrate the hard work and dedication of Jack and Dora Penner. Jack and Dora met very early in their lives, sharing a classroom when they attended grade 1, when Jack first fell in love. While Jack had the titles of office, first at his federal PC association president and as the MLA for Emerson, it was truly more than a one-person operation. People in the area know Jack and Dora as a collective force who have dedicated their lives to helping others, whether it be through curling bonspiels, fall suppers, volunteer organizations or community events.

Jack's love for politics was boosted by a trip to Steinbach, where he listened to John Diefenbaker. He was fascinated by Diefenbaker's speaking style,

his ability to be straightforward and blunt. Jack knew that he wanted to be like him someday, and when the local MLA retired, Jack threw his hat into the ring for the PC nomination.

Dora was right by his side, supporting him all the way and doing a lot of campaigning. By the end of the campaign, it wasn't Jack Penner running, it was Jack and Dora. Through all the tough decisions, though, whether it was in government or opposition, Dora was right by Jack's side. Dora always stayed up at-up to date on the latest news. She stayed out of the policy parts, on principle, as she just really enjoyed getting together with people.

Jack and Dora remained busy after his retirement from public life, with Jack performing as part of a local music group, amassing 146 shows in the year of 2012 alone. Dora remains active in the community, striving to replicate the community she sees in her local church.

Jack offered his advice to the current government, and I quote: Think very long and hard about the true needs of whom you serve. It doesn't matter what your political leanings are. That takes a tremendous amount of commitment to address the needs and not just the political needs.

Dora's advice was much simpler, and I quote: Use common sense, that would be my suggestion.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this House to join me in thanking Jack and Dora Penner on their lifetime of public service and congratulating them on being named the Citizens of the Year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Flin Flon Trout Festival

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, for 62 years, the Flin Flon Trout Festival has been an integral part of the lives of the people in our community. This year, from June 27th to July 1st, the residents of Flin Flon will gather to celebrate this festival for the 63rd time.

The Flin Flon Trout Festival epitomizes the spirit of fun and happiness. People from all walks of life join in on the many activities that the festival offers. From pancake breakfast to family dances to karaoke to cabaret to helicopter rides to the fish fry, there's definitely something for everyone to join.

My family, like many families in Flin Flon and the surrounding area, has been attending the Trout Festival for many years. In fact, two of my daughters

have participated in the Queen Mermaid contest, and my wife and I ran Phantom Lake day for a couple of years. This year, my granddaughter and I will be in the annual parade.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, this year also marks the 80th anniversary of Flin Flon. The City of Flin Flon was officially incorporated in 1933, after the discovery of copper, zinc and ore in the area. Rich in resources, known for its beautiful northern location, Flin Flon is still a prosperous mining centre and tourist destination for fishing and other outdoor activities.

To celebrate this important year, the city and the Trout Festival will host an 80th birthday party, which will include a free barbecue and entertainment at Pioneer Square on Friday, June 28th. The Trout Festival brings family and friends together. Many former residents choose to return to Flin Flon to join in the festivities and celebrate the summer and our lively community. Drawing nearly a thousand people every year, the Trout Festival reunites the community and helps to kick off summer.

I invite you all to come and see me in one of my many Hawaiian shirts. I'll be volunteering at the canoe races with my buddy, Rick Hall.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all the organizers, volunteers and citizens who make Trout Festival a success year after year. The Trout Festival's a great celebration in our community, and I'm expecting that this year's festival will be more fun than ever.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Wayne Anderson

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Wayne Anderson, who was the recipient of an honorary doctor of laws from the University of Manitoba on May 28th. During the 134th annual spring convocation, honorary degrees were bestowed upon individuals who have achieved pre-eminence in their respective numerous fields, including indigenous rights, business acumen, social justice, education, music and in space.

Mr. Anderson was born in Winnipeg and graduated from the University of Manitoba in 1963 with a bachelor of science in agriculture. As a student, he was a Bison hockey player and a member of the Delta Upsilon fraternity. Wayne exemplifies success as an entrepreneur and as a champion of the

university's vision and mission. He became president of the St. Boniface Pallet Company in 1993, an office he currently still holds. From 1993 to 2003 he served as vice-president of Hillside Farms Ltd. and as chairman of the Manitoba Horse Racing Commission. In 1996, he was elected to the University of Manitoba's board of governors and served many years, including four years as chair. As well as this recent honour, Mr. Anderson also received a Peter D. Curry Chancellor's award in recognition of his services in 2008.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of the House join me in congratulating Mr. Anderson for his most recent achievement, one that I am certain will be followed by more in the years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Old St. James Anglican Church

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): Mr. Speaker, the heritage buildings in our province stand as a beautiful testament to our unique history. One such building in the St. James community is the Old St. James Anglican Church, located across from Polo Park shopping centre. It is from this quaint little church that our community draws its name. The church is designated a provincial heritage site and is—and it is no small wonder. Erected in 1853, it is the oldest log church in western Canada still in regular use.

*(15:50)

Since being built, the Old St. James Anglican Church has borne witness to St. James's history. During the great flood of 1852, settlers camped on the site to escape the waters. The tower that once stood at the front of the church was used as a watchtower during the Riel rebellion of 1869-1870. This church served as the centre of daily parish life for many years and has seen baptisms, weddings and funerals in the community; 160 years after its construction, the Old St. James Anglican Church is still a wonderful community asset used in the summer for weddings, concerts and Sunday services. Their first service of the season was held this weekend, which I was delighted to attend.

It is essential that we preserve buildings like the Old St. James Anglican Church to help keep their historical legacy alive. The church still stands in St. James today thanks to the dedication and care of volunteers who have done a wonderful job of maintaining its integrity and its history. To help them in their efforts, the Manitoba government has

committed \$8,000 through the Community Places Program for repairs to the church's roof.

Mr. Speaker, we in Winnipeg are blessed to have many heritage buildings that remind us of the past yet continue to serve our communities in the present, remaining vital. I invite anyone taking a stroll through St. James this summer to stop and visit this beautiful piece of our collective history.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances? Seeing no grievances—

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Would you please resolve us into Committee of Supply, and I just want to remind the House, as per previous agreement, we'll be in Committee of Supply until 6 p.m. today.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, the Committee of Supply will be sitting until 6 p.m. this evening, and we'll now resolve into Committee of Supply as listed on today's Order Paper.

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

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

HEALTH

* (16:00)

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 last item, resolution 21.1 of the Estimates for the Department of Health.

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

Resolution 21.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,443,000 for Health, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Health.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Justice.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next department? Agreed?
[Agreed]

Thank you.

JUSTICE

Mr. Chairperson (Mohinder Saran): Order. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Justice.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do, Mr. Chairperson.

I'm pleased to introduce the 2013-2014 budgetary Estimates for Manitoba Justice. This year we will continue our investments in a justice system that's responsive to Manitobans with a focus on key priorities, including safer communities, offender accountability and strengthening the effectiveness of the justice system.

Over the past year a tremendous amount of effort has been dedicated to not only maintaining but improving the justice system through innovative means. The department's innovation branch has taken a lead role in advancing a number of projects with the support and commitment of various stakeholders. I want to allocate most of my opening comments to discuss these innovative measures.

One of the first projects facilitated by the innovation team involves streamlining the process by which criminal trials are co-ordinated on the day of trial. These changes have accelerated the start times of criminal trials and resulted in more trial time overall being available to the resolution of criminal matters and bringing those found guilty to justice. The idea for this project 'init'-originated with the judiciary. It is a great example of how the innovation team can support the court and other stakeholders in working collaboratively to improve the administration of justice.

The department is also actively pursuing increased use of electronic documents in the court system. This will make the justice system, as a whole, more effective as police, courts and prosecutions can spend less time managing paper and more time moving cases through the system using the technologies that are best suited to expediting that work. In support of this long-term initiative, I

was pleased to introduce amendments last November to The Provincial Court Act that will allow for electronic signatures to be used for court documents.

A project has been initiated to explore the possibility of generating court orders and other documents either directly in or immediately outside Manitoba's criminal courts. This will streamline the administration of justice, reduce the possibility of errors, and reduce the time that people, both victims and accused, have to wait before receiving the documentation that sets out a judge's decision and, in the case of convicted persons, the obligations that bind them.

At a higher level, the department continues to work on improving the co-ordination possible among its various independent information systems. This will further improve the efficient administration of justice as participants have ready access to all the information needed for good decisions. This includes improved high-level management information for the creation of evidence-based policy.

The department is vigorously pursuing the increased use of video conferencing technology to maximize court time, reduce time cost and safety risks associated with the transportation of inmates. The first upgrades have focused on enhancement in the video court capacity between The Pas Correctional Centre and the Thompson courthouse. This link has received priority treatment because it represents some of the greatest opportunity for efficiencies. Although the project is in its early days, we're very optimistic there will be significant savings. The department plans to move ahead to make use of this technology between all provincial correctional centres and court locations.

In pursuing expanded use of video court, the department has also identified other possible efficiencies from video conferencing technology. In the past year, secured computers have been installed in five of Manitoba's correctional centres to enable lawyers to video conference with their clients in custody conveniently and securely from the comfort of their own office or even their own home. It is anticipated that the service will reduce the number of court appearances needed to resolve cases as lawyers will have better access to their clients in-between appearances. The department is also looking at using video technology to connect interviews with persons in custody for release planning and to discuss probation services.

Last December I announced a review of circuit court locations. This ongoing review, in which the department works with the court and uses concrete performance data to make evidence-based decisions, will enable the court system to maximize its resources to provide justice most effectively across the entire province.

I'd like to briefly comment on the core priority of offender accountability. Manitoba continues to modernize the infrastructure of its correctional system. In January, I was pleased to announce that a site has been selected for a new correctional centre to replace the Dauphin Correctional Centre. The current jail in Dauphin was built nearly a century ago. The new building will provide enhanced space for offender programming and, as was the case with the new Women's Correctional Centre, this new facility will offer a better and safer environment for corrections officers to do their work and for inmates to serve some time.

Safer communities is the ultimate priority to the department supported by the ones I've already spoken to. This priority is shared by government as a whole. Supporting effective police service is a key strategy in support of safer communities. Since 1999, this government has provided funding for 290 additional police resources across the province enhancing public safety for all Manitobans.

In 2012-13, the Manitoba Police Commission, or MPC, met its legislative obligation of creating a code of ethical conduct and a policy and procedure manual for municipal police boards. A two-day training session hosted by the MPC in Winnipeg for all police board members took place in mid-February. The MPC continues to provide support to the police boards as they establish themselves and navigate their start-up.

Implementation of the third phase of The Police Services Act is well under way with work on the establishment of a new civilian-led independent investigation unit. Once operational, the new unit will strengthen independent oversight and improve the transparency of investigations of major incidents and criminal allegations involving police officers.

Manitoba also continues to support safer communities by strengthening the Prosecution Service. The department's budget adds 16 new staff years to the Manitoba Prosecution Service, a total comprised of 11 more prosecutors and five more support staff. This is a key step in meeting our

government's commitment at 82 new staff to prosecutions by 2016.

Manitoba is also taking steps to ensure that criminals cannot avoid justice and cannot profit from their crimes. This past year is the first full year of operation of Manitoba's Integrated Warrant Apprehension Unit. This unit targets persons wanted for serious offences or who pose a serious public safety risk. In its first year and a half of operations, over 1,100 arrests have been made by this unit.

The department's Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit has been very active in pursuing court applications against property believed to be instruments or proceeds of unlawful activity. Since it started in 2009, the unit has filed numerous statements of claim or applications against property believed to be instruments or proceeds of unlawful activity. The program continues to be tremendously successful with file referrals from the police more than doubling from last year.

*(16:10)

In June 2012, The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act was amended to allow for administrative forfeiture in specific circumstances. This amendment has allowed the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to build on its success. In 2012-13 over \$2 million in property was forfeited which has contributed to the total of \$4.8 million forfeited since 2010. This success has allowed the Province to compensate specific victims of unlawful activity by returning over \$170,000 to them so that they were not victimized twice. Mr. Chairperson, \$110,000 was provided for grants from the Victims Assistance Fund in support of services to families of missing and murdered women and for province-wide initiatives for victims of crime.

Previous to this fiscal year, over \$750,000 was committed to law enforcement agencies across the province for equipment and training to enhance their ability to keep our streets safer.

Law enforcement agencies were recently invited to submit applications for funding in the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund, and I certainly look forward to heading across the province to redirect proceeds of crime to initiatives that will make our community safer for Manitoba families.

Manitoba continues to make communities safer via the tools created by The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act and The Fortified Buildings Act. These acts established a national precedent

in reclaiming the safety and security of neighbourhoods, one that has been copied in many other Canadian provinces. To date, the Public Safety Investigations unit has used these tools to close over 640 unlawful operations such as drug houses, brothels and booze cans, and conducted more than 70 inspections of fortified buildings resulting in voluntary removal of the fortifications.

Addressing the important issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls continues to be an important objective. We continue support for the Manitoba integrated task force on missing women including Project Devote. We recognize the police can often benefit from a variety of tools to help locate missing persons more quickly. In October 2012 the department and partnering law enforcement agencies announced that Facebook would be added as a method of public broadcast in AMBER Alert situations for faster notification of missing children. On May 29 of this year, The Missing Persons Act came into force to give police timely access to the kind of information needed to solve cases involving missing persons.

Unfortunately, domestic violence remains a pervasive problem. It impacts everyone it touches, including children, families, friends and communities. Manitoba's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee is working to identify trends and patterns of violence that might help to prevent future tragedies. This committee completed its first report in January of this year. At that time I was happy to report that the provincial government accepted all of the recommendations in the report which will assist in identifying factors and making changes that can save lives.

Drinking and driving is a threat to public safety that this government has been targetting for years and a front on which Manitoba is a strong leader nationally. I'm very proud of recent provincial action to require a mandatory period of ignition interlock for all convicted impaired drivers who wish to drive legally following their driver's licence suspension. This sends a strong message that impaired driving is not acceptable in Manitoba and provides a safeguard to prevent drivers who are coming off of a licence suspension for impaired driving from operating their vehicle with alcohol in their system.

I've also been in-pursuing enhanced partnerships in support of safer communities. In October at a meeting of federal, provincial and territorial justice ministers I called on the federal government to

increase support and funding for First Nations policing, drug treatment courts and Legal Aid. These are important contributors to the administration of justice in this province and to keeping our communities safe. Federal funding for these programs—a federal responsibility has been frozen in recent years and even threatened, and it is time for increased investments.

In closing, our department Estimates reflect a department that's innovate and continues to improve the administration of justice toward the vision of an efficient and effective justice system that promotes safer communities for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the Estimates process, and it is a useful process, certainly, and for me in Justice, new, although I did attend a few hours of the Justice last year and listened to what happened between the minister and the critic. And I will look forward to some good discussion and dialogue on the issues that impact Manitobans in this critical area of Manitoba.

You know, we all believe that justice is an issue that is important to Manitobans, and as politicians and policy makers we do hear much about the justice system both here in Manitoba and, of course, across the country. It is predominantly in the media and is something that we often read about: the not so good things that happen, but also the good things that can happen.

I want to thank the minister's staff, the deputy minister, assistant deputy minister and the directors, and all the staff of the department, who are tasked with a very tough role of answering the questions over the next few hours, as this particular new critic tries to figure out which direction he needs to go. And I sympathize a bit with the staff of the minister because it may not always be in the same direction, but we'll try to make it a little easier for them if we can.

It is my belief that we have a responsibility to raise issues that impact the justice system, and Manitobans' interactions with it, sometimes proposing alternatives, and other times, simply

bringing forward their concerns. And this is, indeed, what I do plan to do during this Estimate process, just as my colleagues have done so in the past.

We often hear of the failures of our system and this year has been no exception. I have listened intently to many of the minister's announcements, some of them seem to be re-announcements of previous projects, and others have some new aspect to them.

This year we hear of prison overcrowding and that is a consistent issue in our system. There seems to be little or no movement on thresholds for access to legal aid, and the minister did address that a little bit in his opening statement.

We continue to hear that, again, Manitoba is the violent crime capital of Canada, and it is a concern for most of Manitobans when we hear these types of statistics.

Now I know it is sometimes a difficult process to get new initiatives off the ground and I appreciate that there are many other partners involved: The City of Winnipeg and Mayor Sam Katz, who has been a strong proponent of a number of different initiatives on crime, and crime prevention is, indeed, one of those partners, as is the City of Brandon, and the RCMP.

I know that we often have differences of opinion but I know that myself and the minister, and I'm sure their department staff will do the best, and that is, indeed, my commitment, to do the best we can in this Estimates process.

Thank you, and with that, I believe we are prepared to proceed with questions.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now hear consideration of line item 4.1.(a) contained in resolution 4.1.

At this time we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce the staff in attendance.

Mr. Swan: Okay, what we'll do to keep things exciting this afternoon, I'll introduce the two gentlemen seated with me, and then as other people come up and join us as we move through

questioning, I'll give them their grand entrance when the time comes.

So, with me is Jeffrey Schnoor, who is the deputy minister, and David Quinn, who is the assistant deputy minister of administration, finance and innovation.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of the department chronologically or have a global discussion?

Mr. Helwer: Global, if that's acceptable.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

It is agreed, then, that questioning for the department will proceed in a global manner, with all the resolution to be passed once questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Helwer: Could the minister share with us a list of all political staff, including the names, positions and whether they are full-time FTEs or not?

Mr. Swan: Sure. There are three staff. The first is my special assistant, Matt Schaubroeck, who, like you, is enjoying his first full run through of Justice Estimates. My special adviser is Janis Bermel, and my executive assistant—the acting executive assistant right now at my constituency office on Sargent Avenue is Heather Laube.

* (16:20)

Mr. Helwer: And can you share with us a list, then, of all the staff in the minister's office and the deputy minister's office?

Mr. Swan: All right, in the—in my office, there are three, I think, staff: Heather Leclerc, Carol Watts and Eleni Dick, who just began work a couple of weeks ago. In the deputy minister's office, it's Kim Nicholson, Chantal Berard and Louise Wilkinson.

Mr. Helwer: So, if we were to look at the executive civil service in Justice between now and in, say, 1999, can you tell me what some of the changes are in terms of staffing, the number of associate assistant deputy ministers, directors, executive directors, that were present in '99, and where we are today?

Mr. Swan: Yes, listen, what we'll do is we're going to pull an old organizational chart from 1999 just to make sure that we put the right information on the record. The best recollection here is that the number

of assistant deputy ministers is the same as it was back in '99.

There's been a little bit of reformatting. There had formerly been an assistant deputy minister of Civil Justice. That position doesn't exist anymore. It—there used to be a former executive director of Administration and Finance. That is now an assistant deputy minister position; that's the position Mr. Brickwood fills. We also took the entire Innovation piece and put that on his desk, as well. But we will go back and we'll have a look at 1999 just to make sure that we get the right information out there.

Mr. Helwer: What is the number of staff currently employed by the Department of Justice?

Mr. Swan: Okay, well, there's a few different ways to count this. What I'll give you is the number of approved full-time equivalents. So, for example, if there's two part-time employees, 2.5s, that'd be two employees but it's one full-time position. Currently—

Mr. Chairperson: Order. Order, please.

A formal vote has been questioned—requested in another section of the Committee of Supply. I'm therefore recessing this section of the Committee of Supply in order for members to proceed to the Chamber for a formal vote.

The committee recessed at 4:27 p.m.

The committee resumed at 5:31 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: 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 Justice.

As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

Before we open the floor for questions, I would like to take a moment and remind all honourable members on both sides of the table to please address their questions through the Chair to avoid personalizing the debate. I respectfully ask for the co-operation of all honourable members in this matter.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Swan: I was in the middle of answering a question about FTEs, but, despite the fact there was a less than productive hour in the Chamber, the department actually did a bit of work, and I

understand they've been able to pull out a organizational chart from 1999. So I haven't had a chance to get briefed on it. If my friend can just bear with us for a minute, I think I can probably give an answer to his question from earlier this afternoon.

Okay, we—thankfully, we got it right the first time around. There was formerly an executive director of administration and finance who is now the assistant deputy minister of administration, finance and innovation. There was formerly an associate—the assistant deputy attorney general for Civil Justice. That position now has been eliminated, so it's a wash. I should mention that the assistant deputy minister of Corrections is now the associate deputy minister of Corrections, to reflect Mr. Graceffo's experience and expertise.

Mr. Helwer: Following through that question then, can you tell me the difference between an associate and assistant in terms of seniority or salary thresholds, that type of thing?

Mr. Swan: Well, Mr. Graceffo would be unable to take you for lunch on the increase in pay that he's received when he became an associate deputy minister, because there isn't one. It really reflects the importance of the role of the ADM of Corrections as well as Mr. Graceffo's experience and his ability to work beyond the narrow—or the not-so-narrow confines of Corrections to work within the justice system as a whole.

So, back on where we were. I promised I would introduce people as they showed up. This is Debra Montsion, whose title is the senior financial officer for the department, and unless you have anything to follow-up, I can get back on the question you asked before the break about the number of employees within Justice. There are 3,034.01 approved full-time employees of the Department of Justice and Budget 2013-14 proposes to add eight full-time equivalents to get to a total of 3,042. 01.

Mr. Helwer: So, looking back, I guess the 2012-13 year, so looking back a year, there would have been some staff hired in that year as well. Can you tell me who that might have been, and if they were hired through—sorry, through competition or appointment?

Mr. Swan: Yes. I'm just wondering if the member can clarify the question, because, as you can appreciate, there's a large number of employees, the majority of whom are in the department of Corrections. So, you know, we can talk generally

about the process for hiring people in Corrections and other areas, but I just—I don't want to take you down the wrong road, so maybe if the member can just clarify we can try and get something—

Mr. Helwer: I guess, to clarify, new staff positions, as opposed to replacement staff.

Mr. Swan: Okay, Well, we have to break this down a little bit further because, I mean, generally speaking, when there's new staff hired on, they're hired through the Civil Service Commission, and, in a great majority of cases, there's a competition conducted by the Civil Service Commission. There are some exceptions for certain positions, but, by and large, there's a standard process for hiring. So, I think that may—the member may want to ask some more detailed questions about that because it's very difficult to answer a blanket question about people that would have been hired in the past—for the past budget year.

Mr. Helwer: Are there any staff that were hired in that budget year that were appointed?

* (17:40)

Mr. Swan: Yes, it's not an easy question to answer, and I'll give an illustration of why this is the case. When—let's say there's a new Crown attorney position created or there's an opportunity for advancement because, for example, a Crown attorney is appointed a judge federally or provincially. There's a competition for the position which is then confirmed with an appointment. So there's a process, but then I will take in a recommendation to Cabinet, and Crown attorneys are actually appointed by an order-in-council. So I don't want to put misleading information on the record. Generally speaking, there's a process. There'd be some individuals who are appointed, but all I'm doing is carrying through the independent process.

Mr. Helwer: Okay, so then should the—through you, Mr. Chair, I guess, the way to ask a question would be—is there anyone that did not go through a competitive process in order to get an appointment?

Mr. Swan: Okay, the number of direct appointments is quite limited. A couple of examples that my staff have provided to me, for example, when an articling student finishes their articling year they are often offered a position as a first-year Crown attorney without having to go through a separate competition. The point being, they really went through the competition when they articulated, when they interviewed for a position with the Crown.

Sometimes there are term positions. There's individuals who fill these positions and then when, for example, a position is converted into a permanent position, they get to keep doing the job they've been doing, sometimes for a matter of years, by direct appointment.

There're also some situations within Justice where positions are recognized as being very difficult to recruit and to retain people, and sometimes there can be a direct appointment. For example, the Thompson court centre is not always the easiest to recruit and retain people. If an experienced lawyer comes along from another province or even within Manitoba, and says, you know, I'd really like to be Crown attorney in Thompson, we may very well have a direct appointment which, of course, I would then still have to take to Cabinet.

Mr. Helwer: So were there any of those term-to-permanent positions in that year?

Mr. Swan: You know, I don't have a number handy. I mean, each year there are direct appointments, if you will. The collective agreement with many Justice employees provides—there's an automatic conversion to a permanent, full-time position after a certain amount of time. I can tell the member that I don't, as the minister, play a role in those direct appointments.

Mr. Helwer: Well, I guess, if the staff could maybe take some time over the next couple days to figure that out and give me a number on term positions to permanent positions, that would be helpful. But we'll leave that with them.

And through you, Mr. Chair, if there is a—have there been staff positions that have been reclassified over the year to a different level? Any numbers on that?

Mr. Swan: Yes, there have been, as there is every year.

Mr. Helwer: Would it be possible to find the numbers of those positions that have been reclassified and then we could pursue that discussion a little bit further?

Mr. Swan: Yes, you know, those would be questions that I think could be best asked in the Civil Service Commission Estimates because, as minister, I don't play a part in reclassifying employees.

Mr. Helwer: Can the minister tell me if he has or if there is a listing of vacant positions that are currently vacant?

Mr. Swan: Yes, we—Justice doesn't compile a list of vacancies. I mean, as we move through this, I can try to help out. So, for example, if you wanted to know is there a vacancy in the Crown attorney's office in Brandon, we can—we have people here who can try and provide that, but I can't give you a blanket number of there being X vacancies across the Justice system at a given date.

Mr. Helwer: Okay, we'll try to—thank you, Mr. Chair—I'll try to figure out how to better ask that question so it is answerable.

Is it possible to provide me with a list of staff, whoever we retired from the department in 2011-12 and 2012-13 fiscal years?

Mr. Swan: Well, in terms of the numbers, I mean, the—again, the Civil Service Commission may collect that information.

In terms of—and I'm not sure if the member's question was for the names of people who retired—we wouldn't give out personal information on individual employees who've—who may have retired in a given year.

* (17:50)

Mr. Helwer: All right. Does the department hire on a contractual basis?

Mr. Swan: Okay. I'll try and answer the question as best I can. Generally speaking, when people that work for Justice are either regular or term employees, there is a small class of employees who are on contracts which, again, oddly enough, comes back to articling students. And—because articling students serve a term until they're called to the bar, the hope, obviously, if the students perform well and there's a place then—they then get kept on. I'm told that there may be employees who are on a contract who work for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and—only—so only the Chief Medical Examiner himself appears to be on a contract. I understand the reason for that is there's a relationship with the University of Manitoba and the medical school. So I can't really articulate exactly why that's the case. As far as we know, those would be the only examples of Justice employees who would be working on a contract.

Mr. Helwer: I wonder if members of the committee were interested in having a conversation they could do it elsewhere while we're concentrating on the things at hand here.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, I agree, and I hope they will keep it in mind.

Mr. Helwer: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for that.

Perhaps we can move into some of the announcements that the minister has made, and one was there was some discussion about changes to the Dauphin correctional facility or perhaps new or portions of it new.

Can you expand a little bit more on that? Is it an addition to the existing all-new and then we can go through further questions on that.

Mr. Swan: All right, well, now joining us at the table is the associate deputy minister for Corrections, Greg Graceffo.

The questions about the Dauphin correctional facility—and it is our intention to replace the Dauphin court—Dauphin correctional facility. I'm not sure if the members had the chance to go there. The jail is about a hundred years old and well out of date. It's located beneath the courthouse in Dauphin, so we did announce our intention to create an entirely new facility. The City of Dauphin has been a very good partner, and they have identified land on the outskirts of Dauphin that they are prepared to give to the Province in order to move this along. From Justice, and I understand Infrastructure and Transportation, looking at the property, it seems to fit the requirements, and we'll be moving ahead in the next while to start what can be a long process of getting that new facility built.

Mr. Helwer: So, I would assume then that much of the design has yet to be taking place. But do you have a target—does the minister have a target for what the capacity of this facility would be in terms of inmates?

Mr. Swan: You know, the existing facility has a rated capacity of 70, and I have committed to the new facility being larger than that, but we haven't finalized what the number will be.

Mr. Helwer: So, to the minister I guess, so, if the facility is to be larger, one would also perhaps assume the staff might be larger, as well, or will it be a more efficient facility with similar number of staff?

Mr. Swan: Just to correct myself, the rate of capacity for the Dauphin Correctional Centre is 61 at present. Yes, the larger facility, for it to be more effective, there is an expectation that it will require more staff to manage the population and also, hopefully, provide more tools to try and reduce

recidivism to try and get more done with individuals who will be incarcerated there in the future.

Mr. Helwer: Would it be a different mix of staff then or different proportions or more on the educational side, or how would you characterize changes that you would look to make to that type of staffing?

Mr. Swan: Yes, you know, we can't, like, define that right now, but it is the hope that a new facility would have some additional opportunities for education and training and life-skills work with inmates which could, as part of the overall hiring process, result in additional positions for teachers, for trades instructors, perhaps some other opportunities for inmates to be what are called trustees, individuals who actually have a role in food services or in housekeeping or in other areas. So it's a bit premature to talk about details on that front. But, yes, additional positions will include, not just what we might call line correctional guards but also others who can hopefully provide a useful service to those inmates.

Mr. Helwer: Well, obviously, it is early in the process.

Is there a target date when a plan and an estimate—a cost estimate might be available?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I'm not able to answer that at this time. As we go forward working with the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation, you know, eventually, an estimate will be put together. But I don't have the number now.

Mr. Helwer: Is there a target date for when construction might start or when this facility might actually open?

Mr. Swan: There isn't. I do want to commend the City of Dauphin for their co-operation. Having that land set aside, which appears to be appropriate—

Mr. Chairperson: Order. As was previously agreed in the House, the hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

* (16:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Or in other words, will the Committee of Supply please come to some semblance of order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Civil Service Commission.

As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner and the floor—not surprisingly—is open for questions.

Anyone? Anyone?

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): When we ended Estimates the last time, the minister had been indicating that it is the intent of his government to eliminate 600 positions over the next three years and the intent was to—he'd indicated to say that they were going to take a 2 to 3 kind of a ratio, and he said that if you have three positions that come open we'll fill two of them.

And I would ask the minister, I guess, that seems to be a bit of a loosey-goosey kind of approach to how one might take advantage of an opportunity here to look at some criteria that's more than, you know, a—you know, 2 to 3 kind of ratio. Why wouldn't the minister work with the civil service in a very concerted way, and work with them to get their input and look for some kind of a formula here on how to develop a high-performance government and work with the—you know, the people on the front lines to determine what might be some opportunities here to create a high-performance government?

And, you know, I mean, it's true you—nobody has to get a pink slip. There's going to be more than enough retirements happening, and there'll be a number of positions that do have to be filled. And the minister is indicating, you know, he's quite a—well aware that a good secession plan is needed.

But there's certainly an opportunity here rather than being sort of loosey-goosey about, well, we'll fill two and not fill one. But there has to be better criteria than that, I would think, working with the people on the front lines to come up with something that defines a high-performance government. Is that not a better approach, in the minister's mind?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for the Civil Service): Well, to begin with, I wouldn't describe what we're doing as loosey-goosey. I think that's a mischaracterization of what it is we're doing.

Another thing I want to say is that we did and we are and we will continue to work with the Civil Service Commission, to work towards, I guess, what she refers to as a high-performance government. I don't know exactly what she means by that, but high-performance sounds pretty good to me.

I think one civil servant after the next shows us time and time again what high performance is. They

work very hard, put in late hours. We mentioned earlier, you know, when the 2011 flood hit Manitoba, so many civil servants in departments right across government were high-performance and worked very hard to help Manitobans in their time of need. And I want to say that it doesn't take a flood to be able to see what it is that civil servants do in Manitoba. They work hard each and every day on behalf of the 1.2 million Manitobans that live in our province.

The 2 to 3 ratio is a guideline for departments. That a—that's not loosey-goosey, that's a—I think, a very effective way in which we can lessen the footprint of government, which is what we're doing in this case and in so many others. We can lessen the footprint of government, but maintaining the priorities of the people of Manitoba. Every department knows the priorities of the government; every department has a role to play in attaining those goals; every department understands that when they—from one year to the next, what those priorities are; and every department understands that we need to deal with, first and foremost, the vacancies that are there.

One other undertaking that we did was we looked at vacancies that had sat there for two years or more and eliminated those vacancies. We—and I'm the first to say that in many times we do ask our civil service to do not just the job of one person, but of more, more than one. We ask them to take on big jobs and it does take up a lot of their time, both in-office hours and outside of office hours.

I don't mind using the term such as high performance. I don't mind looking at lean management, the principles of lean management. I think there's good lessons both in the private sector and in the public sector that we can apply to what we do in government. I think the conversations that I've had with leaders in the private sector have led to some improvements, I think, in the public sector. One private sector leader said to me that he was making decisions based on some of the things that he saw going on in our government and in other governments around in other jurisdictions. So I think we can learn a lot both ways.

What I would caution against is language such as the word chill, which was exactly the word used by the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) to describe what the Progressive Conservative approach would be. There are—to use the word chill, I think, sends absolutely the wrong message to civil servants, to nurses, to teachers, to all those folks who

remember round one of the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) back in the '90s when that chill translated into layoffs, firings, you know, the priorities of Manitobans being shunted to the side for other reasons, back in the day.

Some governments across the country have taken that approach. There are some governments who in this year in their 2013 budgets reduced drastically, and I will say indiscriminately, the numbers in the civil service with no regard to what the priorities of government would be, with no regard to collective agreements and with no regard to the priorities of man—of the families that live in their jurisdictions. That will not be the approach that we take.

We think we have a solid approach, not a chill, but an approach that capitalizes on the strengths of the civil service and works with each department to make sure that the priorities of government are attained. And we do that in a reasonable way and that we understand that we can do it with the goal of reducing by 600 over the next three years the positions in the civil service. And we can do that without laying people off and other draconian measures that come along with an approach that we can—that the Leader of the Opposition describes as a chill.

Mrs. Driedger: Okay, I'm not sure why the minister is indicating that, you know, with some of the words he's chosen and to go down the road of looking at a chill.

It's obvious in his own documents that recent projections show that 23 per cent of civil servants will be eligible to retire within five years. So there aren't going to be pink slips. We're going to be trying to hang on to people, but there are some opportunities here as long as one is working with the front-line staff to try to maybe take advantage of some things.

So a chill isn't going to mean that people are going to lose their jobs. Obviously, especially when we look at sort of the demographics and the numbers in the members own book that within, you know, a few years we're going to have a lot of people that are going to be retiring.

* (16:10)

But in all of that I do want to ask the minister—and in speaking with a number of front-line civil servants, a lot of them are wondering why this government has gone down the road of hiring an

increasing executive civil servant positions by 28 per cent or 90 positions.

There are a number of front-line workers in the government who do oppose that increase in the number of executive positions. In fact, they're quite vocal about that, and perhaps the minister's already heard that, but they want to know, and we're kind of curious too is, why did you feel—why did the minister feel that his government needed to increase the—you know, the highest ranking level by adding 90 positions or 28 per cent? Why did he feel that those positions were more important than, say, putting in more front-line workers?

Mr. Struthers: Let's be clear. I mean, I did not use the word chill. Her leader used the word chill. Chill is not a nice, warm, cuddly, comfortable word that civil service—that would breed confidence in the civil service. Chill means something cold, something arbitrary. Chill describes the approach that her leader took when he was in Cabinet in the Filmon government that saw Filmon Fridays come forward, forced upon civil servants, the same approach that they—we saw with nurses and teachers.

So it's her leader's words that I'm quoting into the record. If she has a problem with her leader's words, she should talk to her leader.

I suspect what's happened, like as—like we've seen on four or five different occasions in the course of these Estimates, is that they make a tough-sounding speech and her leader puts out a tough-sounding news release and he speaks to Manitobans who might agree with that, or that portion of Manitobans that agree with that, and then they come in here, into Estimates, and they backtrack from what their leader has said. This sounds an awful lot like they're backtracking on the word chill that her leader used to describe their approach when it comes to the civil service and all the hard work that's done by civil servants in Manitoba.

The other thing I want to point out is that the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) needs to be careful when she throws statistics out as she did. The number that she used, of 90—I think she said 90, I remember—of that 90, that's not deputy ministers and ADMs; we've maintained a steady level when it comes to those positions.

What I believe she's talking about are directors, executive directors in—throughout the civil service. I think what she needs to understand is that 74 of those positions were not new people coming in, as

she seems to suggest they were. They were reclassifications of people already in the system who were reclassified, which is a way to recognize the—maybe the scope of the work that they're doing, the experience that they bring to the table in doing it. It's a committee of people that look at that and really try to understand the scope of the work that that person is doing and then have that classification reflect the scope of work. So 74 of those were reclassifications; 11 were new positions that were created and classified into those levels within the civil service.

So I would hate to have the member for Charleswood mischaracterize what those positions were and paint it as if that level in the civil service was something that was simply added to with a whole bunch of new people, that they were basically reclassifications according to the scope of practice, scope of work that those people do.

Mrs. Driedger: Oh, the minister can try to torque this as much as he wants, but the fact of it is, through a FIPPA from his own department, it shows that the number of executive civil servants ranked as senior officers and managers or higher grew by 28 per cent, or 90 positions. So that came right out of FIPPA from his own department. So, you know, good try for him to try to misconstrue some of this, but these are his own numbers.

But even, you know, front-line workers are commenting on what they're finding as well, in their trying to do their jobs here, you know, and do a good job on the front lines. They are wondering why there is so much emphasis having been put on the hiring of, you know, 90 positions. We're talking 90 positions of senior civil servants versus what might have been able to go into more front-line workers.

So, you know, the minister can try to misconstrue some of this, but this does come from a FIPPA and it does show that there was a creation of 90 positions.

So, you know, maybe he can explain to front-line workers why he feels the need to grow the top ranks rather than putting them into—you know, putting more of that dollar or resources into the front lines.

Mr. Struthers: Well, here we go again, Mr. Chairperson. I can see the member's got her lines all set, she's got her story and she's going to stick to it. And the truth of the matter, the facts of the matter isn't going to change her attitude on this one iota.

She is incorrect to say that 90 positions have been hired. I can help her with that FIPPA if she likes but I don't think she's willing to listen, but I'll try again. Those were not 90 positions that were hired; 74 of those positions were reclassifications—same person reclassified because of the scope of their work. That's not bringing in 90 new people like she's trying to portray here, Mr. Chairperson. The FIPPA was—that she has, I think, made that clear. She's reading into this scenario to match her own political narrative that she wants to be able to go and say.

I fully expect that that—now that will appear in a Progressive Conservative caucus news release someplace saying 90 new positions were held, even though they know that that is not correct. I suspect it'll appear in the speaking notes for question period as early as tomorrow afternoon—that is pretty predictable. But I want her to know that that would be incorrect and a mischaracterization on her part.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister just confirm, we—I have some other numbers that the civil service grew by 14 per cent under his watch?

*(16:20)

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Chairperson, well, again, I would ask the member to dig down deep into this, do a little more homework. The 14 per cent increase were increases that were seen in departments like Family Services where there were more people needed because of the volumes of work that that department has faced. I think she can probably keep an eye on the Hughes report and see what kind of an impact that will have. And maybe if she thinks we shouldn't be investing in people to work with kids who need protection, legislatively required on our part, maybe she can suggest that we shouldn't have as many of those increases in Family Services.

Justice was also a department that had an increase, predominantly corrections officers. We're not going to do as some states in the US have done and start opening up the doors of our jails and letting people out. We are going to hire the people in Corrections that are necessary, given some of the laws that have been put in place both at the federal and provincial level that require us hiring people to meet the volume of work that is there in Corrections.

We have an—increases in EIA caseworkers, people working with people who, again, driven by volume, people who need that support, and we're going to continue to do that. And, of course,

increases in the number of people in health care, health care is the No. 1 priority of Manitobans. Health care has a number of volume issues that they deal with. You know, an undertaking like we have at the Selkirk Mental Health Centre requires a number of—well, there's pressures on our overall numbers in the civil service.

I would indicate this is the numbers as of last March. We have, as she has pointed out, undertaken the goal of reducing by 600 over the next three years, and we're well along towards that goal already.

But I would ask her if she thinks that we shouldn't be hiring people to deal with children who need care, or is she saying we shouldn't be deal—we shouldn't be hiring corrections officers to work in our jails, or should we let that just balloon. And we saw what happened when their government tried this back in the '90s and Headingley became quite a headache for the provincial government at the time. I think she was actually in the Legislature when that was going—when that was under way.

And I know they could care less about the numbers in Health, given their track record back when Gary Filmon was the premier, but we're going to continue to put in place the people to provide the services to Manitoba families. They can decide whether they like that or not, Mr. Chairperson.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate, in terms of his commitment to reduce the size of the civil service by 600 positions—and he's indicated he's well along that—I wonder if he could tell us how many of those positions have been eliminated now and what criteria he used to eliminate those positions.

Mr. Struthers: Oh.

An Honourable Member: Okay.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. As you've probably guessed, 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.

The committee recessed at 4:26 p.m.

—————
The committee resumed at 5:30 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: When we last left our intrepid heroes, they were in the Committee of Supply

considering the important Estimates for the section on the Civil Service Commission.

I believe the minister had the floor.

The minister can continue with his answer whenever he's ready.

Mr. Struthers: So you had asked about the numbers, what kind of progress we've made towards the 300 and the criteria by which we were looking by number. Okay. I'll give that a try.

We've made the commitment of 600 over three years. In our first year, we believe that we've made good progress, 167 positions. We're going to continue on in that same approach. We think that that's working and that we will be able to meet or even exceed the target that we've set for ourselves.

Each department, in terms of criteria, each department is given the—both the direction to meet the target and the flexibility to do it as well. It needs to be based on the priorities that we set as a government corporately. They can employ what we talked earlier about, in the 2 to 3 ratio in terms of dealing with vacancies. So, if they have a number of vacancies, they're not going to replace every single position. We'll work on that 2 to 3 ratio so that will produce a smaller footprint when it comes to that department and its civil servants. It means we don't have to lay people off if we do it that way, which we've undertaken.

It also means that departments have to review programs that they offer and if they can find a better way to do a program, a better way to provide a service and do it with fewer positions than the department will undertake that, and we've seen some good examples. I mentioned earlier lean management principles, and a number of departments are working to make sure that they do things in a lean way. That doesn't mean cuts in programs. That means a program might be different. It might do the same service delivery in a different way. It might mean that we take on—if there's two bodies that are doing the same kind of work, we have amalgamated some together and we've briefed opposition critics on Bill 39, The Government Efficiency Act.

We—if we can find ways that we can have two bodies who are doing the same kind of work meld together and cut down administration, that is one way in which we can achieve the numbers that we're looking to achieve.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions or comments, we will move to consideration of the resolutions for this section of the Committee of Supply.

Resolution 17.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20,159,000 for Civil Service Commission, Civil Service Commission, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

An Honourable Member: Is there another salary in there for me?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Maybe next year.

Resolution 17.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$41,000 for Civil Service Commission, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

This now completes the Estimates for the department of Civil Service Commission. I want to thank the staff for their time with us today, while they make their escape.

ENABLING AND OTHER APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is the Enabling and Other Appropriations—like your heart rate wasn't racing already.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement or any staff that you care to have join you?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): No, I'm fine.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Does the honourable minister have any opening statements on this section?

Mr. Struthers: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing none, thank you for that. Opposition critics? None?

Staff can join at the table and minister can introduce them once they're settled.

An Honourable Member: I sure could—are you waiting for me?

Mr. Chairperson: No. Just introductions of your staff whenever you're ready.

Mr. Struthers: Okay. We have—thank you—we have Barb Dryden, the head of Treasury Board Secretariat, and Lynn Zapshala-Kelln—Zapshala-Kelln.

Mr. Chairperson: Well done.

Mr. Struthers: I had to practise that one.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for that.

Thanks for joining us everyone. Does the committee wish to proceed globally? *[Agreed]*

All right, there—is therefore agreed that Estimates for this section will proceed globally. Floor is open for questions.

Seeing not very many questions, we will now proceed to consideration of the resolutions for this department Estimates.

Resolution 26.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,102,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Enabling Vote, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,400,000, for Enabling Appropriations, Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,250,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Justice Initiatives, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$42,871,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Internal Service Adjustments, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$18,604,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Capital Assets-Internal Service Adjustments, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for the Department of Enabling and Other Appropriations. Thanks very much to the staff for your amazing work today.

EMPLOYEE PENSIONS AND OTHER COSTS

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): And the next—wait for it—the next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for Employee Pensions and Other Costs.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

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

* (17:40)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for that. Do the opposition critics have an opening statement? No? No—it's not popular.

At this time, we'll welcome the minister's staff for this section, Employee Pensions and Other Costs, to rejoin us at the table. Do you want to be reintroduced?

An Honourable Member: I'd like that because I've got to get her name right.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. Introduce the hard-working staff, please, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Struthers: We have Barb Dryden, head of Treasury Board Secretariat—

Mr. Chairperson: —got that one right—

Mr. Struthers: —and Lynn Zapshala-Kelln—

Mr. Chairperson: [*interjection*] —Lynn—she says that's close enough—

Mr. Struthers: —Lynn Z.-K.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. Thank you for that, again.

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing none, well, we'll now proceed to consideration of the resolutions.

Resolution 27.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$53,242,000 for Other Appropriations, Emergency Expenditures, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 27.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$500,000 for Other Appropriations, Allowance for Losses and Expenditures Incurred by Crown Corporations and Other Provincial Entities, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 27.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,651,000 for Other Appropriations, Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

We will thank the staff once again for joining us, and this completes the Estimates for Employee Pensions and Other Costs.

Next set of Estimates to be considered is Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. So we can allow for a brief recess and allow the ministers and the critics an opportunity to prepare, if the committee wishes, or we can plunge straight into it. Any suggestions?

An Honourable Member: Half an hour.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, I've got a half hour break on one hand. Anyone with a counter proposal?

An Honourable Member: How about 25 minutes.

Mr. Chairperson: We're whittling it down. Why don't we just say a five-minute recess and then we'll launch into it. All right.

The committee recessed at 5:43 p.m.

The committee resumed at 5:46 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: We'll now resume consideration in this section.

I want to inform members of the committee that I erred and we do have one resolution outstanding from the previous section. So I'm going to read out the resolution and ask if the committee wishes to pass it. This is under the section of employee pensions and other costs, so it's—

Resolution 6.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$18,288,000 for Employee Pensions and Other

Costs, Employee Pensions and Other Costs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the committee's indulgence on that front.

AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL INITIATIVES

Mr. Chairperson (Mr. Rob Altemeyer): And now we will head into consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I definitely do.

Mr. Chairperson: Please proceed, sir.

Mr. Kostyshyn: Well first of all, Mr. Chair, I'd like to welcome members opposite. I kind of sense we'll have some very fruitful discussions as we move forward for the betterment of the economy of the province of Manitoba and the agricultural industry as we all strive to make things more inviting for our agricultural producers and for the betterment of the economy.

I would like to say that, Mr. Chair, it's my pleasure to be here making opening remarks on my department's behalf in the 2013-2014 Estimates, and the outcomes we are seeking is to strengthen the agriculture and agri-food industry and the Manitoba's rural economy and communities. The impact of agriculture and food to Manitoba—I'd like to provide some context to the importance of agriculture and agri-food production sector in the economy of the province of Manitoba and the role as a solid foundation for future economic development not only for rural Manitoba, but for the entire province of Manitoba.

Manitoba's agriculture and agri-food industry makes up \$3.6 billion in GDP, which is approximately 9 per cent of which is the province total GDP. These industries also continue to 30—provide 30,000 direct jobs and 32,000 indirect jobs. The impacts are huge to Manitoba, and my department's budget for 2013 and '14 focus on grow—and growing the impact of these industries in Manitoba today and building a solid foundation to thrive for the future.

Mr. Chair, on April the 22nd, the Honourable Gerry Ritz and I announced launching of the Growing Forward 2, a five-year federal-provincial-territorial agreement to support future growth and profitability of the agriculture and food and agri-production industry in the province of Manitoba. Growing Forward 2 programs will help industry seize future opportunities and realize its full potential as a major driver of Canadian economy. Growing Forward 2 builds on the investments made in Growing Forward in the areas of innovation, environmental stewardships, and farm business management and market development. And, in fact, Growing 2 will increase investments 'strategically' in investments of \$176 million over five years. That's a 50 per cent increase over the previous agreement.

Growing Forward 2 has three years of focus that I am convinced that will provide producers in food and ag production industry with a strong, long-term return on investments for the operations for the industry as a whole.

* (17:50)

Mr. Chair, these three pillars include innovation, competitiveness, and market development. The industry has it clear in its advice to the department as we developed a new agreement. Investments in Growing Forward 2 must meet the unique needs and priorities of Manitoba's agri-businesses and need to be strategic. And we've done that.

The investments will also significantly contribute to meeting our objectives to increase the profitability for the agriculture sector, future increase in capacity of the agriculture industry to be good stewards of the land, water, and air, ensure that food produced in Manitoba is safe and that systems are in place to allow Manitoba producers and processors to access markets throughout the world. The growth of the food processing industry in the province beyond its current level of \$3.7 billion per year, take advantage of the green economy development opportunities and grow a bio-products industry in the province to \$2 billion by 2000–2020, pardon me.

Growing Forward will also continue to offer ongoing funding for effective suite of business—risk management programs to ensure farmers are protected against severe market volatility and national disasters. These programs include ag insurance, ag stability, ag invest and ag recovery.

The agriculture and food industry continues to evolve and their needs for information, advice to make informed business decisions. Throughout our history, the department has responded to the needs of agribusiness through means as personal contact, extension events, and information bulletins on timely issues, to name a few. However, our clients' needs change, and so does my department's needs change the way we deliver our services. The client today is much more sophisticated than yesteryear's due to the tools that is disposable and access to much more information is on demand.

The use of the Internet and the growing use of power smart phones has changed the way our clients have access to information for their business needs. Information is demanded around the clock at a scheduled set of clients. Clients seeing value of accessing information electronically but also continues to value the ability to speak with a skilled and unbiased agriculturist in our office or in our field. In fact, Keystone agriculture producers have commented to my department that they recognize the need for change—with changing times in the agriculture industry. As a result of these changing times and technology, my department's service delivery model must also change to keep pace. We have made changes to our service models and will continue to evolve the model in the future to better meet the needs of our clients.

Our service delivery philosophy is based on three principles: Use the right approach for the right client at the right time.

Let me give you a few examples how we are making the progress of servicing our clients more effectively and efficiently. The department is no stranger to using technology for delivering information to clients. We have extensive video conferencing networking through our partnership with Community Futures organizations and Western Economic Diversification. We regularly deliver training through the use of webcams. In the past fiscal year alone, we've delivered 24 webinars for producers, attracting 1,472 producers, and through the ag business, ag industry participants. And many more to come to view webinars after they are delivered.

We are regularly using video conferencing to increase our efficiencies to conduct internal businesses. A few weeks ago we launched a new re-amped MAFRI website that serves as a platform for delivery of technical information and risk

management tools for our clients. The new format provides the clients with valuable information based on their needs and creates a more efficiency process to update timely information to help with the management decisions.

We are also aware that our information must be available in a format that allows mobile users to access the information from the field, from the truck or whatever location they happen to be at.

We continue to improve our offerings to mobile users in a way that meets the needs of users in the physical sustainability. In Growing Forward 2, we are making it easier for clients to seamless apply for programming through online applications.

In 2013, we'll be reorganizing parts of our department to support our new service delivery model, and, for example, we've brought together all economic development resources into our one knowledge centre that will work to attract investments, support the retention and expansion of businesses, to help create new businesses in the rural Manitoba, and work with regions and communities to create and execute economic development plans. This new knowledge centre is valuable added and rural economic advancement.

Although we will see changes in many ways we do business, my department can continue to be counted on to provide the foundation of programs, services and information that will help producers and industry meet their challenges. Through Growing Forward 2 and our other program departments, we will continue to provide services that are focused on marketplace, producing—producers and processors to increase innovation, competitiveness and market share.

Industry leadership and restructuring: Let me say a few words about our key partners, industry associations and individual producers. While government is an important player in business development processing, we know that individual producers, processors and membership-based industry associations will collectively drive innovation, market development and transformation. Producers have chosen industry associates lead their respected industries in development—

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry for the interruption, but the minister's allocated 10 minutes time has expired and we thank the honourable minister for those opening remarks.

Now, asking—our honourable member for Lakeside?

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Do you have much more to go?

An Honourable Member: We got about another 10 minutes for sure.

An Honourable Member: Well, we'll grant him leave, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the honourable opposition critic have an opening statement?

Mr. Eichler: No, we'll grant the minister—

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, granting time. I'm sorry; I misheard. Thank you for that. Honourable minister may continue with his opening remarks 'til he's completed.

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Through Growing Forward 2, government will work alongside industry associations and producers as they seek the strengths in the competitive position of agriculture and agrifood industries, seize new opportunities that position themselves for the future. For an example, we will create program to support industry-led strategically planning and the execution of these plans will achieve through the industry's vision.

We are also ramping up our partnership with stakeholders to improve client service and information to producers. For an example, we have signed an MOU with the Canadian Fertilizer Institute to increase collaboration to provide fertility information to producers that support the four Rs of fertilizer use: the right fertilizer, the right rate, the right time and the right place.

Individual producers: We are positioning Growing Forward 2 as a resource to—in-support individual producers to drive innovation, strengthen their own business ability to compete, capitalize on their commitment to environmental stewardship, and capture more income from existing and new markets.

On April the 22nd, we announced growing assurance program that will continue to support the development in environmental farm plans and beneficial management practice to improve practices focused on nutrient management and water quality. Individual producers further expect programming through Growing Forward 2 to increase on-farm innovation, support businesses, competitive and market development.

Often said, we believe in young farmers and we continue to strive on that. Young farmers are the drivers of transformational change. Through Growing Forward 2, we will continue to support the development of the next generation of bold producers with program that will target innovation, management skills and market development. We recognize that young farmers have specific needs and programming, and Growing Forward program will meet those needs.

Mr. Chairperson, 2013 marks the hundredth anniversary of 4-H Canada. And with Manitoba having distinction of being the birthplace, the 4-H Canada. Also to note is that my department has been a primary supporter of the program for almost—for over, well almost a hundred years.

The 4-H program is one of the most successful rural youth leadership programs in Canada and has made a significant starting place for many young farmers as they gain not only leadership skills, they also—hands-on agriculture production experience. We joined with the thousands of 4-H'ers, volunteers to help out in the rural youth.

Manitoba has experienced the impacts of floods, excess moisture and a lack of moisture recently often in the same year. We will work in 2013 and '14 on the development of a short and long term—

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry once again for the interruption but the hour being 6 o'clock, committee rise.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (16:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Tom Nevakshonoff): Order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now continue consideration of the Estimates for Executive Council.

Would the minister's staff and staff for the opposition please enter the Chamber.

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Chairperson, we're ready to proceed with the line by line appropriation consideration.

Mr. Chairperson: All right.

Order. As the minister's salary was deferred to the end of discussion, we will begin the process with resolution 2.2.

Resolution 2.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,000 for Executive Council, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the department is item 1.(a)–2.1.(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 2.1.

Resolution 2.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,607,000 for Executive Council, General Administration, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Goertzen: One question—this—as the appropriation that deals with the Premier's salary, is the Premier's staff generally asked to leave?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes. At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this last item.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Chair, I have a motion for the committee. I move,

THAT item—that line item 2.1.(a), the Premier's salary, be reduced to \$1.08.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for Steinbach,

THAT line item 2.1.(a), the Premier's salary, be reduced to \$1.08.

The motion is in order.

Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

Mr. Goertzen: Comments on the motion—and certainly we don't bring this motion forward as Progressive Conservatives at the caucus lately. We do it after a great deal of thought and it's similar to the concern that we've raised with other ministers, when we've done the vote, that ultimately we think that elected officials need to be held accountable, and they need to be held accountable in a variety of different ways.

And certainly one of those ways is by the electorate. And, when all of us go to the electorate,

and we are there to say what we will or we won't do, Mr. Chairperson, we do so with the expectation that those promises will be kept. And I think that the public's expectation is that those promises will be kept. And, when they're not kept, they breed cynicism and scepticism in the political process. They make people concerned about the validity of issues around politicians and politics more generally.

We bring this forward because we want the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to understand the severity, the importance of the promise that he made to Manitobans, not to raise the PST during the last election in 2011. He said to Manitobans, either individually or collectively, there at the door, or at events, or at news conferences, or after the debate that was held, and it's on the public record, and it's in the public domain now, that it was nonsense that he would consider raising taxes generally, or raising the PST, specifically. In fact, he went as far as to say, that everybody knew that that wasn't true.

Now here we are, barely two years after the election, where that promise was made, and not only has the Premier ushered in one of the largest tax increases in the history of the province last year, by the expansion of the PST to such items as insurance and a host of other fees and services, but he's broken the big promise not to raise the PST.

Now he's had a host of excuses and we've had opportunity to look at all of them. He told us that there was a flood coming, that everybody should batten down the hatches and put on their hip waders because there was going to be a massive flood coming in the spring of this year and this money was needed. That's what he told Manitobans. He told everybody that they should be prepared for a monumental flood in this spring, and that we should all be happy to pay for the extra PST because it would pay for that flood fight and that flood protection. And then we found out that, about two days after flood offices were open, those flood offices were closed, and in the dark of night the government put out a news release that a flood crest had passed without barely any Manitobans knowing that they were there.

Now today he's brought forward a different excuse in question period. He's pointing to the Alberta flood. And certainly our hearts and thoughts go out to all of those people in Alberta who are displaced and affected by the flood. They are our friends and they're fellow Canadians, and we support them. But how the Premier can draw the link

between needing to increase the PST here to pay for the flood fight in Alberta, is a little bit beyond the pale.

He's also made excuses about the need to use funding to match federal funding and federal dollars. Now we also know that the federal support that this federal Conservative government has given, under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, is among the highest support in the history of any federal government in Canada. In fact, I would say that the federal government and Mr. Harper have been exceedingly generous with the provinces in terms of transfer payments, and that is certainly a poor excuse, a weak excuse, at best.

* (16:10)

We've heard a variety of other excuses from the Premier (Mr. Selinger). He talked about the urgency—the urgency to get things moving in terms of construction. That's why he couldn't have a referendum—that's why he wouldn't allow for a referendum to be held on this PST increase and why he's decided to break the law and go around the law.

And yet, Mr. Chairperson, we know that we've been in this House for more than 50 days, I believe—certainly time enough to have held a referendum. And much of the discord and difficulties that have happened in this particular session could have been avoided had the Premier simply followed the law and called the referendum. But we understand the reason he didn't do that is because he knew what Manitobans would say—that Manitobans would ultimately say, no, we don't think that you need to increase the PST; that you could find savings internally; that instead of coming to our kitchen table and looking for more money, go to your own table, your Cabinet table, and look for savings internally first.

And they've not seen that from this government and this Premier, and so we brought forward this motion to stand up for Manitobans, on their behalf, to say to them we're listening, we understand your frustration that you feel, that you've had, by this Premier and by this government.

And it's not just the Premier. Obviously, I think that all the NDP MLAs, they bear responsibility whether they're in Cabinet or not. And we've tried to hold them responsible, whether that's in question period or other ways, so that they would be forced—if you'd use those words—to stand up for their constituents, Mr. Chairperson.

That is what I think elected—people who are elected are expected to do by their constituents, to stand up on those critical issues. And I think that the PST increase is one of the most critical issues that we, as a province, have faced; that we, as a Legislature, have had to deal with.

And yet we can't find out from members opposite how they're standing up for their constituents. We don't hear that they're going to their constituents and telling them that this is an unnecessary increase of taxes. And it certainly is unnecessary, and it certainly isn't needed, Mr. Chairperson. And so this is, I would say, more than symbolic. Often these motions are considered to be symbolic by those who see them in the Legislature.

But I think it's more than symbolic; it is our act of standing up for Manitobans and saying to Manitobans that, as the head of this government, the Premier needs to be held responsible. And it was the Premier who said to all Manitobans, who looked into the camera and knew that he was speaking to all Manitobans, knew that he was making a commitment on behalf of his government and his MLAs, and said that we won't raise the PST, that that's nonsense; that everybody knows that's not going to happen.

And yet I think at that time he knew clearly it was going to happen. I think clearly he knew that the financial restraints that were on his government because of the actions of the government itself—because the government itself had put themselves into that position, I think he understood full well and clearly that they were going to have to raise the PST.

And yet he still looked into that camera—he looked into that camera and he said to Manitobans: It's nonsense; we're not going to do it. And it's been said by the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) and by the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) in question period. He proverbially said to Manitobans, read my lips; no new taxes. It's a phrase we've heard in other jurisdictions before and it's come to mean something; it's come to mean that people believe what you're saying. And yet it's the Premier, I think, who never believed it; who never believed that he was going to be have to be held account to that.

And so we're doing our job on behalf of Manitobans by holding them to account, by ensuring that Manitobans know that we're doing all that we can to stand up for them and to give this government and this Premier an opportunity to change his mind; to change his mind and to follow the law, to change

his mind and to follow his promise—not extraordinary things.

We've been told that this is an emergency session or an extraordinary session. But it's not an extraordinary thing to keep your word—shouldn't be. It's not an extraordinary thing to do what you said you were going to do in the last election; it's not an extraordinary thing to follow the law. Those are actually ordinary things. Those are actually average things. Those are things that Manitobans would expect as a default. They'd expect that elected officials would keep their word. They'd expect that elected officials would follow the law. Those are the expectations that Manitobans would have.

And so we bring forward this motion with the hope that the government will understand that Manitobans are disappointed, they're frustrated and they're concerned. And we share those frustrations, those disappointments and those concerns, and we express it as best we can in the means that we have in this Legislature and in the public. And I hope that the Premier understands that what he has done is broken the trust with Manitobans, and he does not deserve the pay that's associated with the Premier of Manitoba.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): I'd like to thank the member for Steinbach for the comments that he put on the record. I know the Premier well. In fact, over the years I've had the opportunity to bump into him and his family. In fact, one time I was in Canadian Tire with my children because that seemed to be the best place to go; it was forty below and actually I was chasing my children around a corner at Canadian Tire and ran into the minister of Finance of the day and that was the Premier of today. And he was there with his kids, and I know he's a great husband and a great father. I know he was just out for one of his sons' graduations and, you know, never, never would we sit in this Chamber and say anything other than he's a great man to his family and that speaks very highly of him.

So to want to take away somebody's paycheque, I think, is something that should never be taken lightly, and there should be a good case made for putting forward a motion where you suggest that somebody's pay should be taken from them. So this isn't about the Premier as a husband or a father, but it has more to do with the kinds of things he's done in politics. And I'd like to just point out to this House that back in 1999 and then 2003, 2007 and 2011, he

ran on the following promise and I quote this from NDP literature and it says, and I quote, we'll keep balanced budget legislation and hold down—and hold taxes down. Today's NDP will balance the budget and continue paying down the debt without raising people's taxes. And I have the document here. If the Premier (Mr. Selinger) would like, I could always make a photocopy and send it over to his office and he could refresh his memory on what he ran on.

But what's very important in that, not just is it that he would not raise taxes, that's what he ran on in four campaigns, but also that he would keep the balanced budget legislation or, as most people know it, taxpayer protection act. The Premier assumed the leadership of his party and in the 2011 campaign ran on a very ambitious program of expenditures; lots of money was promised by the Premier, the NDP member for St. Boniface, and, when he was challenged, by then the Leader of the Opposition, Hugh McFadyen, who prodded him and said, how are you going to pay for all of your commitments—and he said, well, I'm not going to be the hacking slasher like you. I will not do that and I'm not going to raise taxes, he said. In fact, it was after one of those debates that the media spoke to him and have it very clearly on the record, where they said to him, so the suggestion is that you're going to pay for your commitments by raising the PST, and he said, that is nonsense. He basically said to the public, read my lips: no new taxes.

It was a very cynical campaign. It was a very cynical promise made by the Premier because this isn't an individual who's a johnny-come-lately, happen to just come on to the scene and wouldn't have known the finances of the province. On the contrary, was the individual who was the Finance minister for 10 years, so he knew the state of the finances of the province, knew what ramifications his commitments were going to make and knew that by promising what he was promising that he was committing his government to tax increases including a PST.

One of the things that troubles me, and one of the reasons why I think we should support this particular resolution, is after the election campaign, he was chastised by many in society and the media, in particular, on the low voter turnout. Now that had, in part, to do by the nasty, negative and untruthful campaign that was run by the NDP, and I can remember the Premier getting up and saying, you know, we're going to have to look into this and, you know, his very wise and sage voice that he put on

and put on a little bit of that dour look, looked in the camera and said, you know, we're going to have to investigate and look into this. I would suggest one of the reasons why we have such a low and poor voter turnout is none other than the Premier, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger). If you are going to put the blame anywhere—anywhere—on why we have people tuning out, why young people are disgusted by politics and politicians, is because of the behaviour of the Premier, the NDP member for St. Boniface.

* (16:20)

(1) You go out and you say exactly the opposite of what you are going to do. You go out and you say exactly the opposite of what your opponent's going to do, and you get into power over and over again, and you do the opposite, and then you wonder why there is such cynicism out there in the general public.

I would suggest if there's going to be any investigation by the Premier, by the NDP, they should investigate themselves and they should investigate the Leader of the NDP, the member for St. Boniface, because that's how you turn people off, by saying, read my lips, no new taxes; by saying, no PST increase, that would be nonsense, and then going out and doing exactly the opposite when you knew—you knew—there was trouble in the economy, when you knew you were going to need the money to actually live up to the kinds of things that you are committing the Province to. He should have known.

And what's even more troubling, we have the—mentioned earlier on in question period, the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady), the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald), Dawson Trail, Southdale, Assiniboine, member for Fort-Garry Riverview (Mr. Allum), St. Vital, and the list goes on and on and on. Each and every one of them went door to door and said, we are going to live up to our commitments.

We are going to live up to everything we've committed to without raising any taxes, without raising a PST. Every NDP candidate went to the door and committed electoral fraud. They basically lied to Manitobans when those NDP members went door to door.

And then you wonder why people are turned off from the electoral process. In fact, we have the member from Kirkfield Park who got up in this House and went so far as to say she doesn't stand up for the taxpayers of her community. Well, I wonder

if that's a sentiment that the member for St. Boniface, the Premier, echoes. Perhaps he also does not stand up for the taxpayers of Manitoba; rather, he just does like the member for Kirkfield Park and stands up for his friends.

And that's why this motion is so important. This is not to be trifled with. It is not trivial. It is important, and it sends a message. It sends a message that Manitobans are not pleased with their Premier, that Manitobans are not pleased with the NDP government. They are not pleased with the member for Kirkfield Park, the member for Assiniboine, the member for St. Norbert, the member for Southdale—

Mr. Chairperson: Order. Order. I just want to caution the honourable member. After discussing with the Deputy Clerk, here, you had mentioned every member lied. And it's advisable to use careful language in this regard, and we just want to caution the member that making references, specific references like that is approaching the line. So just for the honourable member's consideration.

Mr. Schuler: And, of course, we always appreciate the sage advice given by the table officers, and I will choose my words accordingly. And what I should have said is, every candidate—every candidate—that ran for the NDP in that election lied. And I accept that. And we want to make sure that we keep things appropriate here.

The member for Kirkfield Park, Assiniboine, St. Norbert, Southdale, Riel, Seine River, Dawson Trail, and the list goes on and on. Each and every one of them went to the door and canvassed on the no taxes, including the member for St. Boniface.

So I'd like to conclude by saying that this is a very important resolution not to be taken lightly, not to be trifled with. And the reason why it should be supported is that the Leader of the NDP, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of Manitoba at the time, the NDP member for St. Boniface, promised to uphold the taxpayer protection act and has not done so, has promised not to bring in the PST and has done so and then wonders why there's such voter—low voter turnout. I think he's been put on the scale and found wanting.

We should support this resolution.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Question before the committee is as follows:

THAT line item 2.1.(a), the Premier's salary, be reduced to \$1.08.

Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Recorded vote, Mr. Chairperson.

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

All sections in Chamber for formal 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 committee proceed to the vote.

In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber considering the Estimates of the Department of Executive Council the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) moved the following motion:

THAT line item 2.1.(a), the Premier's salary, be reduced to \$1.08.

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

The question before the committee, then, is the motion of the honourable member for Steinbach.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 17, Nays 33.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The sections of the Committee of Supply will now continue with consideration of the departmental Estimates.

In the Chamber we are resuming consideration of the Executive Council Estimates.

Resolution 2.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,607,000 for Executive Council, General Administration, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for this department. The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the committee are the Estimates of Family Services and Labour.

Shall we recess briefly to allow the minister and the critic the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next set of Estimates. *[Agreed]*

The committee recessed at 5:30 p.m.

The committee resumed at 5:33 p.m.

FAMILY SERVICES AND LABOUR

Mr. Chairperson (Tom Nevakshonoff): Will the committee please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Family Services and Labour.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I don't want to use up a lot of time, I'm sure there are many questions. I look forward to a broad discussion. I just want to speak a little bit about some of the things that the department has been doing over the last year and what the mission of the department is.

First of all, I think, as all members know, the Department of Family Services and Labour has many roles, has many aspects. Certainly, probably the one that gets the most attention is the role that we play in terms of child welfare. But we also play a role in terms of services for people with disabilities, both adults and children. We, of course, have charge over the child-care system. We've seen tremendous growth in the last year in the child-care system, both

in terms of funded spaces as well as capital projects that are coming on line about expanded capital projects and brand new child-care centres.

Part of my role is that I get to—I get the opportunity to go and visit many of these centres. Recently, I was up north in The Pas, got to visit the new child-care centre that's opened that's right next to the University College of the North, and just a tremendous place built for kids, designed for kids, and it's right next door to the University College of the North and right next door to the student housing that's been built for that university. And I think it's a good model for how, especially when adults return to school later in life, you can both take care of their needs in terms of a place to live, a place for their kids to be looked after and a place for them to learn.

And I've also had the opportunity to visit many of the expansion projects that we've been involved with; one recently in the neighbourhoods in the North End of Winnipeg that took an old fire hall and expanded it into a child-care centre. And that child-care centre is located just about right across the street from the adolescent parent learning centre. So, again, it's a very good relationship where you've got young parents who are able to go and continue their education knowing that their kids are looked after. And those children also get the advantage of early childhood education.

So I think—we know there continues to be a tremendous need in terms of child care. It's something I hear about regularly, probably because I have a young child and so those are the other parents that I speak with. And we continue to make investments in that area.

Of course also within the Department of Family Services and Labour is the domestic violence program. This past year we released our domestic violence strategy. It's a strategy focused on prevention, focused on dealing with offenders and focused on how we can all, everyone in our society, become an advocate for ending violence against women and girls. I look forward to that strategy continuing to roll out.

I'm particularly proud of the work that we've been able to do with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers. It's not the first time that that work has been done; it was done in British Columbia with the BC Lions. In fact, it's all over the world where women's organizations have been working with people who play football or soccer or rugby to help get the message out, especially to men about their

responsibilities in being advocates for ending violence against women.

We also have in—made available in this budget an additional half-million dollars to help support that strategy, to work with women's organizations and others. And how we take a look at the services that we're offering to victims of domestic violence, how we can do a better job, and make sure that those services are appropriate and make sure that we're able to assist women, put their lives back together and do the best that they can do, not only for their own lives, but for the lives of their children.

Other things I should talk a little bit—also about the labour side of the department. Of course, one of the big responsibilities in the Department of Labour is in workplace safety and health. This year we also saw the release of a five-year strategy again focused on prevention of workplace illness and injury. I think that that strategy, I hope, will make Manitoba one of the safest places in North America to work. One of the things that we know about most, if not all, workplace injuries and most, if not all, workplace illnesses is that they are preventable.

And we need everybody, from the people who are working on the shop floor to managers to workplace health and safety inspectors to leaders in the business community, we need everybody to work together to make sure that we're doing the best that we can to prevent injuries and illnesses in the workplace. So I think that strategy also has very promising elements to it.

Some of the things that we're looking forward to being able to fund in the coming few years will be enhancement to our SAFE Workers of Tomorrow program, which we work in partnership with the Manitoba Federation of Labour and with others in the education system.

We want every high school student to have the possibility of either having an in-person or online learning opportunity to know about their rights when they go to work, their rights to refuse unsafe work, how to exercise those rights, because one of the things that we know about workplace injury, especially in workplace accidents, is that newer workers, young workers, workers who are newcomers to our country tend to be the most at risk and the most vulnerable. And we know that, if we can talk to young people early on, get them to embrace and adopt safe work practices, that's something that will last through their entire career.

One of the things that I have the opportunity to do is go and talk to high school students who are doing some remarkable projects to help talk to their peers about workplace safety, and we know often that young people talking to young people is the best way to go forward.

* (17:40)

So many things, of course, happening in the department. I would say one of the things that links all of the elements of the department together is that every division, every group, every part of the work that we do in Family Services, is really dedicated to helping some of the most vulnerable people in our province, whether those be adults with disabilities, whether those be children in need of protection, whether those be newcomers who are unaware of their rights in the workplace, that is the work that we do. And I'm proud of the work that the people working on the front lines, working in the department, I'm proud of the work that they do every day to make sure that all Manitobans are protected and that all Manitobans have an opportunity to live and work and play in an equal and just society.

And with that, I will conclude my opening remarks and look forward to those of my critic.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for River East, have any opening comments?

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I welcome the opportunity to put a few comments on the record. Although I am not the official critic, I'm going to be—I'm the unofficial critic of Family Services, and I will just put a few comments on the record.

And I know that the Minister of Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard) has a pretty onerous and heavy workload, not only with the department that she has responsibility for, but also for the other duties that she has as the House leader for the government and trying to keep things on track in that respect. So I know that she works very hard and that some of the issues that she deals with are some of the most difficult issues to deal with across government when it comes to delivering and supporting child and family services.

We know that the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry has been ongoing, and it hasn't wrapped up yet. Significant amount of time and energy and effort and

money, resources, the financial resources have been spent as a result of a very unfortunate circumstance where Phoenix Sinclair was killed at the hands of her parents as she was moved back into an unsafe family situation by the very system that is supposed to support children and care for children. And we'll be interested in seeing what the results of that inquiry are.

I'm hopeful, because I do know that there are still many recommendations from previous reviews that have been done, whether it be on the Phoenix Sinclair review that was done, several reviews that were done at the time of her death or shortly after her death, with many recommendations. And then, of course, the unfortunate circumstances of Gage Guimond who was also murdered as a result of being taken from a supportive and caring foster home and moved into a very unsafe situation by the very system, again, that was supposed to protect and support him and care for him. And there were many, many recommendations that came as a result of that review, Mr. Chair, and we have not yet been satisfied that the recommendations from those previous reviews have been implemented. In fact, we know there are many that are still outstanding, and I'm hopeful that the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry will give us something different to look at rather than just repeating the same recommendations that have already been made in the child and family services system.

I'm hopeful that government will have learned something from the time and energy and effort and financial resources that have gone into the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, and that by the time we get the results and the recommendations from that inquiry we will have seen the recommendations from the other reviews implemented by this government. And I am hopeful we will see that; I'm not sure that that will be the end result.

The minister mentioned in her opening comments the supports for people with disabilities within her department, and we know that there is legislation that is before this House that will be debated over this summer that will support people with disabilities in the community and have some requirements for business and those with disabilities to work together to ensure that supports and services are in place. I would believe that the disability community, in some respects, would have liked to have seen that legislation go further, but it is a good first step in recognizing some of the needs of the community.

The minister also mentioned child care. And, yes, there are some new spaces. There are some pressures also within the system. I do know from some of the schools that I represent, some of the elementary schools in my constituency, that what one government department is doing, that be—the Department of Education and the Department of Family Services maybe haven't necessarily been working together.

But we do have some programs that I believe probably are right throughout the province of Manitoba that provide support for kindergarten students. And they have a preschool program, so they can go to kindergarten half day and then into child care right within the school for the other half day. And, as a result of the government's change in the class size to 20, there may be need for additional classrooms within those schools. And there's fear that those preschool programs, or those programs for kindergarten children, may have to be cancelled.

So I would hope that the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) and the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Howard) have had some discussion around that, to look at whether that is, in fact, the case, whether that's widespread throughout the province of Manitoba and whether that is something that can be resolved, because I believe very strongly that there should be child-care opportunities within our school system. And I do know that the government is moving in that direction with all new schools that are built, and that is great, but—want to make sure that we're not displacing very valuable child-care programs that do presently exist. So I would like minister's commitment to at least look at that and make sure that both departments are working together in the best interests of children, both within our education system and within the child-care system that need that kind of support that has been available.

The minister also mentioned domestic violence in the programming, and I think the whole strategy that has been laid out is a good one. I am pleased with that. One of the concerns that we have had over the last few years is that, although the budget within the Department of Family Services does—has increased considerably, that those external agencies that support women through domestic violence programming and the shelter system have not received 'incrise'—increases in their operating funding. And I'm not sure—I guess we can get into some more detail around what increases are available to those external organizations, but there's significant

pressure placed on—and it's not just in the domestic violence area, but it's non-profits right throughout the department and throughout government that have seen their operating grants frozen in some years. And I'm not sure whether there's an increase this year. We'll have to sort of go line by line and take a look at that.

But, when we see a government that talks about increasing the minimum wage, very often people that are working in our non-profits, dealing with vulnerable people, are working at low incomes or minimum wages, and as the minimum wage goes up, if we're not funding the non-profit organizations to deal with the increase in wages, then—and we're starving those agencies—then it's going to be very difficult for them to do their jobs. So I think that's an important issue that we need to have some discussion around.

* (17:50)

I noticed, too, of course, that the regional service delivery system for Employment and Income Assistance is in the Department of Family Services, when the money for Employment and Income Assistance has been transferred to—I'm not sure what the name of the department is. EI—*[interjection]* E, T and T. And that creates some problem for us trying to follow the money, I guess, and figure out what—where the money and where the support services are for people that require that. I'm still not sure that having that in two different departments is necessarily the right direction. So we'll have to have some discussion around that as we go through the Estimates process. So I look forward to that opportunity and with those comments, I guess we can get started with questioning.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable member for her opening remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is traditionally the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of line item 1.(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 9.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us in the Chamber, and once they are seated, we will ask the minister to introduce the staff in attendance.

Ms. Howard: I'm joined by my Deputy Minister Jeff Parr and the assistant deputy minister responsible for finance, Aural Tess.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the committee wish to proceed through these Estimates in a chronological manner or have a global discussion?

Mrs. Mitchelson: If possible, if we could go global and, hopefully, try to respect the fact that different staff may have to be brought in for different areas, but maybe we could try to work together and ensure that we're not tying up all of the departmental staff, you know, unnecessarily.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for River East has said—is that agreeable to the honourable minister.

Ms. Howard: Yes, I'm agreeable to that. The one thing I would ask, and maybe she can convey to other members who may be asking questions, is that if we could get a sense of kind of when the Family Services questions are and when the Labour questions are and try to have them all on the same day or within the same time period, that would be helpful because they are fairly discreet parts of the department. So I appreciate not trying to tie up everybody waiting to be asked questions. I'm sure they appreciate not having to be in this hot building every moment of every day as well. So, thank you for that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, I agree with the minister, and we'll try to accommodate as much as possible that so that staff aren't tied up and in here as we move through the next few days.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I want to welcome the minister's staff and just indicate the deputy happens to be one of my constituents, Jeff Parr. So I just want to welcome him. I do see him out in the neighbourhood from time to time, and it's good to see him. We do bump into each other quite often, and I know he's had a pretty hectic schedule and been doing all kinds of different things over the last period of time that, you know, are trying to move Manitoba forward so just thanks to him for the job that he does.

I'm wondering if—and I don't know whether the minister has this information or not, but I'm wondering if we could get a list of all political staff, including their names, their position and whether they are full-time employees.

Ms. Howard: In my office, I have Jeannine Kebernik. She is full-time. She's a special assistant. She focuses on the Labour, Disability and Status of

Women parts of the department. I have Courtney Maddock, who is an executive assistant, so she works mainly with constituency issues in Fort Rouge, and I have Meghan Gallant, who is also in my office as a special assistant, special adviser and mostly focusing on the Family Services area of the department, and I also have—I know—I think that's it actually, yes.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Would the minister indicate is there any staff in the Policy branch of her department that are political staff?

Ms. Howard: No, I don't believe so. I'm sure they have political views, but they're certainly not—would not be considered political staff.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I would be concerned if they didn't have political views and they were working on policy for the government.

Can the minister give me a list of all the staff in her office and in the deputy's office?

Ms. Howard: Okay, well, in addition to the political staff that I just mentioned, in my office I have Kathy Dobriansky, who is the secretary to the minister, scheduling co-ordinator; I have Kelly Davidson, who's administrative secretary; I have Christine Shachtay, who's an administrative assistant. We're also holding one administrative secretary position vacant. In the deputy minister's office, in addition to the deputy minister, there's Sarah Obaid, who's assistant to the deputy minister; Jan Doerksen, who's also an assistant, and Kim Stewart, who's an administrative assistant. We also have—I guess we have a couple of STEP students: one is Toby Riley Thompson, and one is Jenikka Lumbera.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Could the minister indicate to me what the STEP students are doing? Are they working out of the minister's office, the deputy's office and what their role would be and how long their term is?

Ms. Howard: So Jenikka works in the deputy minister's office. She does clerical support. She's employed through the summer and then she is—as on a casual basis throughout the rest of the year, as support is required. The other person, who I know as Piper [*phonetic*], although her name is different. Maybe Piper [*phonetic*] is a nickname, I don't know. I'll have to find out when I go back. She also provides clerical support. She's part of the administrative complement in my office and she, I believe, is only here through the summer, and mostly

here to support as different people go on holidays to make sure that that work continues.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So then, just for clarification, there's a position that's vacant in the minister's office, how long has that been vacant and is there anticipation that that position will be filled any time in the near future?

Ms. Howard: I think it's been vacant for about a year, and I don't think there's any intention to fill it in the near future.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank the minister for that.

Can the minister indicate—

Mr. Chairperson: Order. The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, the hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 24, 2013

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