

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

Vol. LX No. 36B – 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, May 6, 2008

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Dividing of Trans-Canada Highway

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The seven-kilometre stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway passing through Headingley is an extremely busy stretch of road, averaging 18,000 vehicles daily.

This section of the Trans-Canada Highway is one of the few remaining stretches of undivided highway in Manitoba, and it has seen more than 100 accidents in the last two years, some of them fatal.

Manitoba's Assistant Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation told a Winnipeg radio station on October 16, 2007, that when it comes to highways projects the provincial government has a flexible response program, and we have a couple of opportunities to advance these projects in our five-year plan.

In the interests of protecting motorist safety, it is critical that the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is completed as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider making the completion of the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley in 2008 an urgent provincial government priority.

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider evaluating whether any other steps can be taken to improve motorist safety while the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is being completed.

This is signed by Shauna Mager, Cyrina Lafrenais, J. Clarke and many others.

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

Child-Care Centres

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

There is an ongoing critical shortage of child-care spaces throughout Manitoba, particularly in fast-growing regions such as south Winnipeg.

The provincial government has not adequately planned for the child-care needs of growing communities like Waverley West where the construction of thousands of homes will place immense pressure on the already overburdened child-care system.

The severe shortage of early childhood educators compounds the difficulty parents have finding licensed child care and has forced numerous centres to operate with licensing exemptions due to a lack of qualified staff.

Child-care centres are finding it increasingly difficult to operate within the funding constraints set by the provincial government to the point that they are unable to provide wages and benefits sufficient to retain child-care workers.

As a result of these deficiencies in Manitoba's child-care system, many families and parents are growing increasingly frustrated and desperate, fearing that they will be unable to find licensed child care and may be forced to stop working as a result. In an economy where labour shortages are common, the provision of sustainable and accessible child care is critical.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) to consider addressing the shortage of early childhood educators by enabling child-care centres to provide competitive wages and benefits.

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider adequately planning for the future child-care needs of growing communities and to consider making the development of a sustainable and accessible child-care system a priority.

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider the development of a governance body that would provide direction and support to the volunteer boards of child-care centres and to consider the development of regionalized central wait lists for child care.

To encourage all members of the Legislative Assembly to consider becoming more closely involved with the operations of the licensed day-care facilities in their constituencies.

This petition is signed by S. Ryan, S. Krochenski, C. Hocking and many, many others.

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by Mary Wiebe, Ginny Peters, Elvira Hiebert, Sisy Hiebert and many, many others.

Lake Dauphin Fishery

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Fishing is an important industry on Lake Dauphin.

To help ensure the sustainability of the Lake Dauphin fishery, it is essential that spawning fish in the lake and its tributaries are not disturbed during the critical reproductive cycle.

A seasonal moratorium on the harvesting of fish in Lake Dauphin and its tributaries may help create an environment that will produce a natural cycle of fish for Lake Dauphin, therefore ensuring a balanced stock of fish for all groups who harvest fish on the lake.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) to consider placing a moratorium on the harvesting of any species of fish on Lake Dauphin and its tributaries for the period April 1 to May 15 annually.

To request the Minister of Water Stewardship to consider doing regular studies of fish stocks on Lake Dauphin to help gauge the health of the fishery and to consider determining any steps needed to protect or to enhance those stocks.

Signed by Louis Gancher, Bryce Amendt, Nathan Amendt and many, many others.

Pharmacare Deductibles

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The NDP government has increased Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent every year for the past seven years, with the curious exception of the 2007 election year.

As a result of the cumulative 34 percent hike in Pharmacare deductibles by the NDP government, some Manitobans are forced to choose between milk and medicine.

Seniors, fixed and low-income-earning Manitobans are the most negatively affected by these increases.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba to consider reversing his decision to increase Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent in budget 2008.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider reducing health-care bureaucracy, as previously promised, and to consider directing those savings into sustaining Pharmacare and improving patient care.

This petition is signed by Hazel Andrews, Florence Phillips, Corrine Carlisle and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 200, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Plastic bags are harmful to humans, animals and the environment.

Toxins from photodegradation, the breakdown of plastic bags, end up in Manitoba's soil, waterways and food supply.

Plastic bags take many years to photodegrade and are a blemish on our roadways, parks, streets, hang from bushes and trees and litter our landfills.

There are many alternatives readily available, ranging from re-usable bags to biodegradable bags to crates and boxes.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly to consider supporting Bill 200, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act, presented by the honourable Member for River Heights, which will ban single-use checkout bags in Manitoba.

Signed by James Snidel, Marty Draper, Scott Thurston and many others.

Crocus Investment Fund—Public Inquiry

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The 2007 provincial election did not clear the NDP government of any negligence with regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

The government needs to uncover the whole truth as to what ultimately led to over 33,000 Crocus shareholders to lose tens of millions of dollars.

The provincial auditor's report, the Manitoba Securities Commission's investigation, the RCMP investigation and the involvement of revenue Canada and our courts, collectively, will not answer the questions that must be answered in regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his NDP government to co-operate in uncovering the truth in why the government did not act on what it knew and to consider calling a public inquiry on the Crocus Fund fiasco.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by R. Allen, L. Thronson, T. Thronson and many, many other fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the Healthy Child Manitoba Supplementary Information for Legislative Review 2008-2009, Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

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 from King Edward Community School 53 grade 5 students under the direction of Mr. Paul Vernaus and Mrs. Irene Okumura. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Bill 37

Government Intention

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, through a series of

sneaky legislative amendments, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has, with the introduction of Bill 37, created a regime in Manitoba where the government of Manitoba at taxpayers' expense is free to communicate his message as loudly and as often as it wants outside of election periods.

He's left it wide open for special interest groups to communicate as much as they want with Manitobans as long as they're singing the song that he is singing. At the same time, he's introduced legislation to muzzle political parties and to muzzle Manitoba members of the Legislative Assembly, including his own backbenchers.

I want to ask the Premier: Why is it that he thinks he's got a monopoly on communications in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite spent over \$100,000 more on advertising in the last campaign than we did. He also spent twice as much as his predecessor and got less results.

I've always believed—The member opposite received a memo from Greg Lyle recommending that they hold on and not call an election at the four-year period, that they use public money to advertise their weaknesses in health care, Mr. Speaker. He won't find that kind of communication in our government.

Mr. Speaker, we didn't whine before the '99 election every day that they held on, every day that the chief of staff hung on with his fingernails on the ledge of power. We didn't complain. We didn't whine. We didn't go to the media. We didn't complain about being muzzled.

They spent money on the Pan Am Games. We cheered on the Canadian athletes at the Pan Am Games, and someday the member opposite will find out it's the messenger and the message that wins or loses election campaigns, not whining, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, we will have a chance to talk about his promise to keep balanced budgets in the 1999 election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, I don't recall anybody in government in 1999 bringing in bills to try to clamp down on party advertising, bills to try to muzzle MLAs. I don't remember any premier in 1999 hiding from debates. I don't remember any party leader in 1999 hiding out in backyards to debate the member opposite in election campaigns. But what I do recall from the last campaign was a premier who promised

to balance the budget, promised that the power line would not run down the west side of the province, and then he introduces bills coming into this House after the election to muzzle opposition, to muzzle his backbenchers, wide-open communications for his government at taxpayers' expense, wide-open communications for the special interest groups that agree with him. That wasn't our approach then. It's not our approach now.

I want to ask the Premier: Why is it that he thinks he's moved from being a democratically elected Premier to being a monarch, Mr. Speaker?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we have a lot of guests in the gallery here. They came to be able to hear the questions and the answers.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I point out to members opposite, they spent more money in the last campaign for those ads in front of Earl's restaurant. They spent more money. They spent over \$100,000 more money that we know of, in the [*inaudible*]

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: —campaign than we did, Mr. Speaker. I believe the claim for partial public financing in the last election campaign was over \$600,000 for the Conservative Party. It was less than that for our party. So they advertised more. We spent less.

One can look at the election results, Mr. Speaker. The people have spoken. You know, all these conditions going into '99, I just want to give—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind members again, we have a lot of students in the gallery that come here to hear the questions and the response and they have the right to hear that. Also, I need to be able to hear the questions and the response from the ministers in case there is a breach of a rule.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite accessed the public financing provisions in many of their constituencies, including Fort Whyte, including Concordia. They accessed more money for rebates than we did in the campaign. They advertised more, over \$100,000 more, that we know of, and certainly it's always useful to modernize the rules.

Members opposite, you know, took four and a half years from 1990 to 1995. They took another four and a half years when they were holding on through the summer of 1999 to the fall of 1999. I said before the last election campaign that we would call the election—if there was no flooding and no federal election, we would call it within a week or two of the last election campaign. We did that. We were fully up front.

One of the biggest issues the members opposite have raised is having fixed election dates. We provided that in the proposed election campaign to give them another bit of balance in the next election campaign.

I would suggest to them they worry about their message and their messenger, not all these other things, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, he went into the campaign between Crown corporations and government taxpayer-funded advertising with hundreds of thousands. He had hundreds of thousands of dollars in support in his secret deal with one of the public-sector unions going into the election campaign.

I want to ask the Premier, who has been Premier for longer than George W. Bush has been President, why he feels the need now—since he's been Premier for longer than Bush has been President, why does he think now that he can appoint himself king?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, again, members opposite would know that they spent more money in the last election campaign.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have some decorum, please. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the issue of third-party advertising, the members opposite opposed it. There were a number of their surrogates that took it to court, the Taxpayers' Association, many other organizations that are well known to the Conservatives, former Conservative candidates, other people that were very involved on the issue of third party.

* (13:50)

The sections of the act, because it was in court and I did not want to fight a federal—use taxpayers' money in Manitoba when there was already a case going on, the National Citizens' Coalition, on the

third-party issue in Ottawa at the Supreme Court. We certainly are prepared to listen to any advice the members make on dealing with this issue that they opposed to begin with. I guess they've changed their mind on that position as well.

Mr. Speaker, they spent twice as much money in advertising as the last election campaign. According to the public-sector polls that were out there, not that we buy them, but they were up to 40—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: You know, they can't handle the truth, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite spent twice as much as the last campaign. They got less seats. They spent more money than we did in this campaign. They still got less seats.

They claimed more money from the taxpayers than we did, and they got more money when the election results were over out of the alleged legislation that they were opposed to.

Bill 37

Consultations

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, we were unable to get an answer from the king, so let's try the prince. Under the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Members should know by now, I've made this ruling many times, that when addressing other members in the House, it's ministers by their portfolio and other members by their constituencies.

Mr. Goertzen: I withdraw that comment, Mr. Speaker.

Under The Elections Finances Act in Manitoba, an advisory committee with representatives from all registered political parties is in place to provide advice to the Chief Electoral Officer of Manitoba regarding the act. Prior to changes in 2006 to The Elections Finances Act, this advisory committee met with the Chief Electoral Officer to discuss some of the changes to the act.

Can the Minister of Justice advise Manitobans whether the advisory committee met regarding

Bill 37 and the sweeping changes to The Elections Finances Act?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the advisory committee is a function of the deliberations between the Chief Electoral Officer and the advisory committee. It's public record.

The recommendations come to a committee of this Chamber that I've sat at, and I think the strongest recommendation that I recall that's come through over and over again is to have a date fixed every four years for an election. That is contained in the act, and I wonder why members are so opposed to the act.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Mr. Speaker, in 2006, the Premier (Mr. Doer) indicated in committee in regard to changes to The Elections Finances Act that most of the recommendations come into the act from the Chief Electoral Officer and the advisory committee that works for all existing political parties. There's a strong feeling already that Bill 37 was crafted in the backroom by NDP operatives. This legislation is clearly designed by the NDP for the NDP. This advisory committee has not met, I understand, for more than two years. The recommendations didn't come from the advisory committee.

Why is this government hiding and not allowing the advisory committee to meet? Why are they trying to hide the provisions within this bill from Manitobans who deserve to know the truth?

Mr. Chomiak: I find it hard to understand what the member—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chomiak: I find it hard to understand how a bill that's tabled publicly and that is open for everyone to review can be hidden away, Mr. Speaker, firstly. Secondly, it models the federal bill that is in place in Ottawa, the provisions under a federal Conservative government. The amounts of spending are lower, are lower, than other jurisdictions that have this, Conservative jurisdictions and Liberal jurisdictions.

It's in line with the general reform of democratic processes across this country to make for an even playing field, and we do not want to find ourselves in the orgy of spending and difficulties that have occurred in other democracies, particularly to the south of us.

Mr. Goertzen: Let me review the facts for the Minister of Justice. The bill was introduced without notice or consultation with the public. It was

introduced late in the day and wasn't provided to the media. The advisory committee which has met in the past to discuss past changes to The Elections Finances Act didn't meet on this bill and, in fact, hasn't met for two years. Yet this bill comes with sweeping changes to The Elections Finances Act.

The delay and the deflection leads to only one conclusion, that this bill was created by the NDP for the benefit of the NDP. If the NDP is so confident in the provisions within Bill 37, why is there so much secrecy surrounding it, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I could feel better dealing with the member opposite if I knew every single member there did not take public funding from the Chief Electoral office, from the Province of Manitoba, since they were all elected. I would feel better if members opposite who, when the first election finance bill came in in '83, said they were going to repeal it, did not over 11 years. I would feel more confident if we had *[inaudible]*

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: —at a press conference and provided the bill, and we'll be having public consultations in Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker.

In other words, the member is grandstanding and the member is attempting to make a political statement on something, and, he, himself, takes money from this fund. If he were to return the money, his leader would return the money, then perhaps they might have a point.

Bill 38

Government Intent

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): When we look at Bill 38, I think we now know why it is that this Premier and government don't want Manitobans to allow opposition politicians to be able to communicate with their constituents. We now know, Mr. Speaker, why he didn't even discuss Bill 37 with his own caucus.

In 1995, Mr. Speaker, this Premier fought against balanced budget legislation. He voted against Bill 2, voted against balanced budgets. In 1998, he said, and I quote: I would never support fiscal conservatism. Then something miraculous happened. He read some polls. He went to the 1999 election

campaign, and one of his doable, achievable promises, No. 5, was keep balanced budget legislation. That's what he ran on in 1999 and Manitobans believed him.

Mr. Speaker, enough Manitobans believed him that they put their trust in this Premier and they elected his government. Now we have, eight years later, the true agenda of this NDP government coming to light in Bill 38. We're going right back to the Member for Concordia of 1998. He said he would never support fiscal conservatism. Bill 38 guts balanced budget laws, even after he promised Manitobans he would keep them.

I want to ask the Premier: Why is he betraying the people who voted for him who said they wanted balanced budgets, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, last year, I believe, the summary financial budget was balanced at close to \$300 million in balanced budget. In 1999, we said—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: In debate, we pointed out the weaknesses of the balanced budget legislation. It didn't include—the pension liability was off the books. We found out after we were elected the health capital was off the books. We also found out the Centra Gas capital was off the books. There were many other items all off the books.

The Auditor General, Mr. Singleton, in '99 and in '98, would not testify to the reliability of the books in his Auditor General report. We still maintained that we would keep the balanced budget legislation in 1999, which we did. We also promised to keep it in 2003, which we did.

Following that, Mr. Singleton and then the new Auditor General both recommended that Manitoba go from two sets of books to one set of books. Two sets of books were allowed and legal under the balanced budget legislation. One set of books was recommended under GAAP financial accounting by Mr. Singleton and the current Auditor General of Manitoba.

* (14:00)

That also was recommended by other outside bodies in the 2007 election. Before the 2007 election, we said we would go to GAAP financial planning. A promise made in '99, a promise kept on balanced

budget legislation. A promise made in '03, we kept it, but in '05-06 the Auditor General recommended we went to GAAP. We said we would do that. We presented our budgets under summary financial budgets.

We have absolutely followed the Auditor General in all of these areas, and we're very pleased that we now have gone from two sets of books under the Conservatives to one set of books under the rules of the Auditor General, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: What complete and total nonsense, Mr. Speaker, and actually I'm inclined to allow him to have free rein to communicate with Manitobans if that's the way he's going to keep up.

The answer about two sets of books, Mr. Speaker, what we're talking about is the fact that the core operations of government should be balanced each and every year. He shouldn't scoop money out of Hydro and Manitoba Public Insurance and other Crown corporations to mask operating deficits in the core budget of the Province of Manitoba.

We should be using Hydro surpluses to pay down Hydro debt, to invest in Hydro assets, to reduce rates for Manitobans. Instead, they want to use it to mask deficits on the operating budget of the government even when he promised in 1999—and it's very simple—No. 5: keep balanced budget legislation. That was his promise, Mr. Speaker. Now he's gutting it.

I want to ask the Premier: Why is he betraying Manitobans, whom he promised, he promised in three successive elections to balance the budget. He's broken that promise. Why, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm shocked that the member is so inadequate in his understanding of the proposal to go from two sets of books to one.

Let me explain. Under summary financial budget, if Manitoba Hydro makes \$400 million or \$300 million, it goes to the summary financial budget bottom line. If Manitoba Hydro makes \$300 million and there is a \$100-million dividend, it doesn't change anything. In other words, under the old act, that would be a benefit to the provincial government finances. Under having one set of books, it's absolutely revenue neutral to the government because Hydro's profit and government's expenditures are considered together on the same set of books.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, if Tories go out and promise not to sell a Crown corporation and after the election they sell a Crown corporation, it's illegal under this new balanced budget law to show that as a revenue item. It puts clearly to the test of financial auditing.

So the member was wrong on his question dealing with the Hydro dividend. He doesn't understand it. I suggest he go back and read it, understand it before he asks another question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier hasn't said anything new at all in that response. It was a nice attempt, Mr. Speaker, but the fact is what he's saying is that they'll take revenue from Crown corporations, put them in the summary statements and claim a balanced budget.

The issue is for Manitobans on fixed incomes who are paying their Manitoba Hydro bills, for Manitobans on fixed incomes who are paying premiums to MPI. They want to know, Mr. Speaker, that the core budget is being balanced and that money being put into these Crown corporations is being applied and accounted for separately, so there's transparency and openness in terms of our Crown corporations versus the core operations of government.

He's letting himself off the hook with this bill. He's gutting the balanced budget law after he promised to keep it. I want to ask the Premier: Since he can't raise taxes without a referendum under the balanced budget law, he's going to do it through rate increases, how much are seniors and others on fixed incomes going to have to pay to create an illusion of balanced budgets in Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, if Hydro took a dividend, in the past under the old balanced budget law, because summary budget did not include Hydro profits, it would be shown as a dividend. It would not be shown at a revenue-neutral way, because there were two sets of books. Under one set of books, if there's a \$300-million surplus in Hydro, if you take \$100 million over to government, it's \$200 million and \$100 million. It still adds up to \$300 million.

We've kept the provision. There can be no tax increase unless there's a referendum. We kept the issue of dealing with full presentation of having the balanced budget require the unfunded liability of pensions, which is not in the books. We prohibit the sale of a Crown corporation being shown as a

revenue item, which distorted completely the balancing of budgets between 1995 and 1999.

We are pleased now that we've gone from two sets of books to one set of books. The Auditor General feels that that's a step forward for the transparency and accounting in Manitoba. That's why I'm glad our Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has brought it forward for the Legislature.

Bill 38

Government Intent

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Premier (Mr. Doer) is happy that the Finance Minister brought it forward because now he can snow Manitobans with his summary budget. A core-based budget shows revenue in and expenditures out, and they have to balance. But right now, I have an urgent message for Manitoba taxpayers: Be afraid; be very afraid. The not-so-balanced-budget legislation proposed by the Minister of Finance is, in effect, a blank cheque issued to a compulsive spender.

This Finance Minister has proven that he cannot keep his spending in check. Last year, he overspent the operating budget, Mr. Speaker—the operating budget—by \$265 million. In past years, he's raided Manitoba Hydro to feed his addictions. Now he wants the legislative authority to hide his spending addiction.

Why can't the minister live within his means on an annual operating budget?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, here's how the members opposite lived within their means under their old balanced budget legislation. They sold a Crown corporation and used the revenues to balance the budget. They put it in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, counted it as revenue once. They took it out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and put it to the bottom line in the operating budget, counted it as revenue twice. The Auditor General said, no, you can't count it as revenue twice.

Then they went into Lotteries, took an extra \$100 million out of Lotteries to balance the budget. Oops, \$100 million of illegal borrowing to build casinos. That's where they got the \$100 million.

All of that is illegal under this law. One bottom line, one set of books, no selling assets to balance the budget. That's a better law in Manitoba.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans will recognize that that is not the better law when this

minister can hide all of the revenues from MPI, from MLCC, from Manitoba Lotteries and, by the way, his biggest piggy bank of all, Manitoba Hydro. That's what he wants to get his hands on. He has built in so much wiggle room in this particular legislation, he will never have to balance another budget in his next three terms—three years as Finance Minister.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, we'll see, Mr. Speaker. The last time I looked at *Hansard*, they make some mistakes, but they take them out. My mistake will probably stay, but the truth of the matter is in the next three years he won't have to balance a budget because after this coming election is when he's going to be responsible to balance the budget.

Why can't he stay within his means and quit with the wasteful spending, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I just wish over our next three terms the member would keep asking these questions so we can illustrate to him every single year during those next three years how we will balance the budget.

We will balance it every single year on a retrospective, rolling average based on those four years. We will show how the operating budget is doing with respect to operating revenues. We will show how all the Crowns are doing. We will show how the public schools are doing. We will show how the universities are doing.

We will have the broadest reporting requirements in the history of the province, and we will do it under legislation that has been endorsed by many legitimate parties, including the Accountants Association of Manitoba.

* (14:10)

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, this minister will only have to answer to the public for another three years; I can assure you of that.

Mr. Speaker, this not-so-balanced budget legislation gives the Finance Minister four years to come clean. They didn't come clean. In 1999 they made some promises to this House and to this province that they never came clean on. They said they were going to do away with hallway medicine. They didn't do away with hallway medicine, a failure.

They said they were going to keep balanced budget legislation and this legislation that's tabled before this House right now is not balanced budget legislation. If they weren't so afraid of it, they would certainly give an opportunity to Manitobans to debate this well into this coming year and the next year, but, no, he's trying to force it down the throats of Manitobans and that's wrong.

Why won't he give Manitobans the opportunity to speak against this legislation instead of forcing it down their throats right now?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to promises on health care, the member will remember the 10 years, 11 years the members opposite said they would build the Brandon Hospital anew. We did that. We accomplished that. While the member was on holidays in Florida, we built that hospital—pardon me, Arizona.

The reality is under this legislation there will be a broad reporting entity. There will be constraints on being able to sell Crown assets. There will be a requirement to balance the budgets. If Hydro has a bad year, as they did three years ago, that will become part of the rolling average. They won't be able to run away from a bad year. They will have to balance over those four years. That will be the requirement unless it's absolutely extraordinary circumstances as outlined in the legislation.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, we will balance the budget. The six credit-rating upgrades we received from independent authorities have proved that, and we will prove it again.

Pathology Errors Patient Inquiries

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, there are many concerned Manitobans who have been diagnosed with cancer who are concerned about the recently reported pathology errors.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us: Will the cases of all patients who phone the hotline be reviewed, or is the review limited to only the cases reported by this one pathologist?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. She's quite right. All members of this House and indeed Manitoba are concerned when we hear that there are questions about pathology testing.

I can inform the member that there is a review currently going on that was identified through a critical incident process, reviewing specific cases of one pathologist of that particular complement of tests. There was an initial test of 35 complex cases that has now been broadened in an abundance of caution.

I can let the member know that the particular review going on at this time concerns that particular pathologist, but there will be ongoing conversations about pathology safety generally.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, the minister didn't answer the one question as to whether all cases that come in on the hotline will be reviewed. Maybe she can answer that in the next set of questions.

Dr. Brock Wright said, and I quote: We have a process in place that catches it.

But it wasn't a process that caught the errors. It was another pathologist who brought forward his personal concerns.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us: If there is a process that is supposed to catch errors, why did it fail these patients?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I can let the member know that the review that is going on right now is concerning a particular pathologist and the results from those tests. I can also let the member know that the quality assurance processes that exist within pathology and other areas of the health-care system have been created in the same context that all patient safety initiatives are created, and that's in the post-Sinclair and Thomas report inquiries. We know pre-Sinclair, medical errors were swept under the carpet, not spoken of.

In the post-Sinclair era, we know that there's an emphasis on sharing medical errors. So in the cases the member has identified where one pathologist had concerns about another, this is part of the system now, Mr. Speaker. That is how it was caught, and that is how we're exploring to go forward to make sure that there are no adverse outcomes.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, DSM officials told the *Free Press* that botched diagnostic tests were unlikely in Manitoba, yet at exactly the same time, they were already investigating concerns raised about a pathologist's error rate.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us what has she done to address the conflicting

comments made by DSM because they were saying, unequivocally, we can't have botched tests, while they've been spending the last month looking at botched tests.

So I'd like to ask the minister what she has done to address these conflicting comments made by DSM because this hardly gives anybody confidence in what is happening out there right now, when we see an erosion of public confidence if this is allowed to continue without some intervention here by the minister on what DSM has said.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member and, indeed, all members of this House that Diagnostic Services Manitoba was created for the very reason to put in place a higher quality of care and a higher quality of standard in pathology and other diagnostics.

As I understand, the message in the article in question was about botched tests being unlikely. The member opposite knows well that when we're talking about pathology tests, these kinds of pathology tests, we're talking about the interpretation of tests. It's not a yes or a no test, Mr. Speaker.

These are very complex tests. In these cases, we know that one pathologist felt the interpretation was not accurate, and that's why this review is occurring. We'll keep the public updated as we go forward.

Disraeli Freeway Repair Project Plans

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I'd like to ask the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs whether he has spoken with or received correspondence from the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) regarding the Disraeli Freeway project.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I talk to the Member for Elmwood all the time, Mr. Speaker, and I welcome correspondence from all members of the Legislature. I know the Member for Elmwood, being a good constituency representative, recently wrote me. I think the member has read about that in the newspaper and didn't need to ask that question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We always have known the Member for Elmwood to be upstanding and always tell the truth in this House, unlike some other members on that side of the House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. All members in this House are honourable members and I'm sure they all—information that's brought forward is factual information. I ask the honourable member to withdraw that, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I will withdraw that, and I will say that the Member for Elmwood is very honourable.

I would note that I think we've all seen information in the media saying that he would like to see a six-lane proposal put forward for the Disraeli Freeway. He said that he wants to see the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs step in and make it happen.

What answer, Mr. Speaker, has the minister given to the Member for Elmwood?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, one thing I'm not going to do is get into northeast Winnipeg politics here, but I will agree with the member that the Member for Elmwood is honourable and not only honourable, but I think members of this Legislature—and I look to, you know, the Kenaston underpass. I've advocated on behalf of various projects at various times. The MLA for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), representing his constituents, is doing very much the same. The member can certainly see what's happening in the City. They're going through a consultation process. I know the Member for Elmwood has spoken out on that.

I'd be very interested what the Member for River East's view is on that. I think all of us would be, but I would say to the member opposite that when any member of this House, any one of the 57 members of the Legislature, raises an issue with me, I take it very seriously. Even if it's not directly within our jurisdiction, I work very well with 198 municipalities and *[inaudible]* those concerns.

Orthopedic Surgery Wait Times

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, Dan Martens, who is in the gallery today, injured his foot in the spring of 2006. Two years later he's caught in uncertainty by this NDP health-care system. You know, it took a year, but finally in April of 2007, he was told he had reached the point where he was on the list to see the orthopedic surgeon he needed to see. Now, a year later, he is still waiting in spite of being in a lot of pain because of his injured ankle.

* (14:20)

The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) knows full well that with her focus on hips and knees, ankles have been neglected.

I want to ask the Minister of Health whether she can tell the Legislature today what her plans are, after eight and a half years of government not solving this issue, what her plans are to achieve better care for individuals with ankle problems and needing ankle surgery in this province.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I thank the member for bringing forward some details about an individual who's in the gallery today. I know that I will be very interested to hear more about this particular case so that we can do whatever we can to assist in navigating the system and in bringing that wait time down. I profoundly regret the discomfort that this individual might be going through.

We know that when we came to office, we made a commitment to reduce the wait time for lifesaving treatment for cancer and cardiac. We now have the best wait times in the country, the lowest, that is, on that front. We've had dramatic results on quality of life, as the member has cited, on hips and knees. We've got more work to do, and I'm very interested to hear further details about this constituent to see what we can all do together to help.

Mr. Gerrard: The problem is that when you've got somebody who has waited two years after his injury and he has still not seen the orthopedic specialist that he needs to see because of the way the system works in this province, that there is a problem. There needs to be some sort of provincial bone and joint health network, perhaps like Alberta, which is able to co-ordinate things and make sure things don't drop through the cracks again, again and again.

I ask the minister: What is she going to do to make sure that those with ankle injuries—the same is true for shoulder and elbow injuries and other problems—can get orthopedic bone and joint health care promptly when they need it?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, and again, I want to say to the member opposite that I look forward to learning more about this particular case so we can work together to assist this individual. One of the things I can say to the member, about which I think he may be aware, is one of the things that we have been able to do to have very good progress in the

area of hips and knees, not only in bringing together the orthopedic centre of excellence at Concordia Hospital using clinical assists in a two-operating room model to increase the number of surgeries, but one of the keys to that success is having doctors centralize their wait lists and bring those lists together in order for patients to have more access, putting the patient first on that journey. I hope he can help his friends get on board.

**Bill 37
Government Intent**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, we need to be very clear in terms of what Bill 37 is doing in terms of limiting the ability of in particular opposition members to be able to communicate important messages to Manitobans.

The government is proposing in this legislation to put in a mailing cap, a first of its kind in the province of Manitoba. The Premier (Mr. Doer) knows full well that the biggest impact it'll have will be a negative impact on the opposition parties of this Legislature; in particular, I would argue, individuals such as myself, who already has limited rights because I don't even have the ability or the right to attend LAMC meetings.

The Premier is doing this—it's not fair—while at the same time he allows the government to spend whatever it is that he wants. If the Premier wants to be a king, he should go to Burger King where he can get a free crown.

My question to the Premier is—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, Mr. Speaker, LAMC, which is responsible for the mailings, has consistently overbudgeted on printing allowances, plus the member gets three franks every year.

Mr. Speaker, the member was a member of this House when a previous government reduced the mailings to two and reduced it. It's now at three franks and there's a budget and we're always over budget and we're trying to keep under a budget. In Ottawa, they've gone \$7 million over their mailing budget. We're talking about partisan mailings into constituencies other than the member's own constituency. There's a budget that has to be lived with—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: We've seen some of the examples of partisan mailings, but the point is we want to be on budget. The member will have access to the same mailings he had before. The budget is bigger, Mr. Speaker, on a variety of functions. The member doesn't talk about that.

As long as he follows the rules, he'll have as much or more mailings as he had in the past, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manitoba Movement Centre Fundraiser

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, since 1958 Manitobans have enjoyed the delights of The Original Pancake House on Pembina Highway.

This morning I had the pleasure of attending a charity event there in support of a wonderful cause, along with the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) and other members of this House. We served a delicious breakfast to hundreds of hungry Winnipeggers in support of The Movement Centre of Manitoba.

I'd like to thank Margie Nelson, the staff and volunteers from the Movement Centre for the wonderful work that they do. This organization works with children and adults living with physical disabilities to improve their health and mobility. Their outstanding efforts have helped to improve the lives of Manitobans living with cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, stroke, head injuries and Parkinson's disease. Using conductive education, a holistic approach, the Movement Centre empowers young people to achieve new levels of mobility and independence. I have volunteered in support of their efforts on numerous occasions as I know how grateful the clients and families who use their services are, and what a wonderful job they do.

All who attended this event appreciated the opportunity to support the Movement Centre of Manitoba. I was part of a brigade of servers, including Hannah Guttormson from École Robert H. Smith, Winnipeg City Police Chief Keith McCaskill, City Councillor Jeff Browaty, Larry McIntosh from Peak of the Market, renowned children's entertainer,

Fred Penner, Max Poulin from the Winnipeg Goldeyes, Matt Sheridan and Kenny Ploen representing present and past Blue Bomber greatness, Jill Officer, Manitoba's own champion curler, Laurie Mustard, Steve Thompson, Maralee Caruso and many other local media and many, many others. Buzz and Boomer, Mick E. Moose and Goldie were also on hand to entertain those in attendance.

I also congratulate Wally and Monty Guberman, along with their families and staff, on 50 years of success at the Pancake House. I know we sincerely appreciate their support of the Movement Centre and this wonderful event. Thank you.

Friends of the Snow Lake Firemen

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): As we know, fire protection is a huge issue for any community, but it becomes an even larger challenge for northern communities.

I vividly recall a funeral in Pukatawagan a short while ago where we mourned the death of three young boys who tragically died in a trailer fire. Later, another victim of that fire died in a Winnipeg hospital.

Fire protection is serious business and it requires serious periodic upgrading and modernizing. For example, Snow Lake is taking proactive measures in fire protection. The town is replacing its aging fire truck. The town's current truck has served the community for 30 years and everyone in Snow Lake realizes that it has done its duty and then some. The fundraising for the town's new fire truck is being spearheaded by the Friends of the Snow Lake Firemen who have raised over \$30,000 in just over two months, with the aim of raising \$300,000 for the new truck. On March 12, the fundraising received a major boost when the Snow Lake Health Auxiliary presented Friends of the Snow Lake Firemen Chairperson Bev Erickson and Fire Chief Bob Forsyth with a cheque for \$20,000.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hard work and the tireless efforts of the Friends of the Snow Lake Firemen who have taken it upon themselves to ensure that Snow Lake residents will always be adequately protected in the unfortunate event of a fire. We also thank the donors for their generosity and the volunteer firefighters for sacrificing their personal time in order to strengthen our collective security. Well done, Snow Lake. Thank you.

Manitoba Soldiers in Afghanistan

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I recently had the honour to meet Carl and Fern Smorang, parents of Barclay Smorang, who is a soldier currently serving on the Provincial Reconstruction Team with the Fort Garry Horse in the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan. Canada assumed responsibility for the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team or PRT in August 2005.

Twenty-five Provincial Reconstruction Teams throughout Afghanistan help the democratically elected government of Afghanistan extend its authority and ability to govern, rebuild the nation and provide services to its citizens. The PRT concurrently works on projects that have impacts in the long, medium and short term. The most important achievements will be those which bring about long-term sustainable benefits to the Afghan population. That being said, immediate need, quick impact projects are also being carried out across the province.

Mr. Smorang contacted my office, wondering if there was something that we in Charleswood could do to show our support for the Canadian soldiers currently serving in Afghanistan. In particular, there are 25 soldiers from Manitoba serving there and three are from Charleswood.

* (14:30)

While visiting Westdale Junior High for the I Love to Read Month, I told a group of grade 9 students about his father's request. Their enthusiasm was wonderful, and they agreed to prepare a package with letters and artwork for us to give to Mr. Smorang. Karen Body, a teacher at Westdale Junior High, agreed to co-ordinate this plan, and her support was greatly appreciated.

Following are some of the comments made by the students on the posters: Thank you for serving. You're cool. Keep up the good work. Good job. Good luck. Thanks for your bravery. We love all of you.

In addition to the letters and artwork, I sent a package including a Manitoba flag, provincial pins, a card, and some photos. Mr. Smorang arranged to have this package delivered to the Armed Forces headquarters where it will be flown over to the Manitoba soldiers in Afghanistan.

I want to express my deep appreciation to the soldiers from Charleswood and Manitoba and all of

Canada who are serving our country at this time and also to the students who so enthusiastically volunteered to do this for them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

African, Black and Caribbean Communities

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I rise before the House today to pay tribute to the African, Black and Caribbean communities in our province and to the contributions they have made to our multicultural identity. As I see the world emerging with new dimension of human values, of equality amongst all, Mr. Speaker, I feel extremely happy to see that dreams of social reformers are being realized.

In celebrating the Black History Month, Mr. Speaker, we all realize how freedom and social justice have brought us all together to live in community as brothers and sisters. Our universal values have, in the true sense, made Manitoba a global village. In the past year alone, Manitoba has benefited greatly from the arrival of over 10,000 immigrants from all over the world who have chosen to settle on our province.

During Black History Month, this last February, I was privileged to attend a number of events highlighting the culture of Manitobans with African and Caribbean roots. In particular, Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to attend the African, Black and Caribbean Communities Initiative, Black History Month Conference, and to bring greetings on behalf of the provincial government, joined by the honourable Lieutenant-Governor and the honourable members from the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the conference presented a wonderful opportunity for these groups to meet with the government, the community organizations, and discuss issues like youth, seniors, community services and the political participation, cultural expressions of the African, Black and Caribbean communities in our province.

I applaud the African, Black and Caribbean Communities Initiative members and their effort to fostering unity and co-operation within the diverse communities. In particular, I would like to commend Alix Jean-Paul and the other members of the organization for their leadership and excellent work they do in their efforts for the organization of the event.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke with great pride to mention about the great things taking place where we see an African-American as a frontrunner for the race of

being the next president of the U.S.A. What a change.

We in Manitoba have been always advocating to building an inclusive society that embraces all culture, religions and traditions. In a society as diverse as this one, however, it is important to remember that our differences unite us all, and I want to thank the African, Black and Caribbean communities for their initiative in modelling that unity amongst all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Rosalinda Natividad-Cantiveros

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Earlier today, Mr. Speaker, I was in the Legislative Library where I saw a copy of the *Filipino Journal*, which brings me to share with all members the following sentiments.

Rosalinda Natividad-Cantiveros was born in the Philippines in 1946 and immigrated to Canada in July of 1974. Earlier this year, on March 4, Linda passed away. She was married to Rod and had two wonderful sons both, Ron and John. She was a journalist, educator, author, community leader, a volunteer and a good friend.

It is important to recognize that Linda adopted Canada with all her heart, but her passion and love for the Philippines never subsided. Her passion to preserve Filipino heritage and culture here in Canada was admirable, and let there be no doubt, her impact went far beyond the Filipino community. I, for one, have personally benefited by her friendship and the way in which she made me feel a part of the community. It was through individuals like Linda that allowed me to have a love and passion for the Filipino people as a whole. Her hard work, hospitality and kindness were inspirational.

Linda ran as a Liberal candidate back in 1995, and I have indicated in the past her candidacy under the Liberal Party gave me immense pride. Linda always made time for me when it came to talking about areas of interest that we shared in common. She had a passion for getting immigrant credentials recognized, for standing up against racial intolerance and defending members of the Filipino community that were being exploited in so many ways.

Mr. Speaker, she was involved in so many nonprofit organizations, whether it was Folklorama, Rainbow Stage or the cancer walk and so many more. But I do want to leave one final point in terms of her volunteer. Her passion and commitment to the

Philippine Canadian Centre of Manitoba, better known as PCCM, was second to no other, and today the centre is a part of her legacy to the Filipino community.

I thank you for the opportunity to share those words, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please canvass the House to seek unanimous consent to amend the Estimates sequence as follows: Room 255, Estimates of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines to be considered after Estimates of Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat are concluded.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to amend the Estimates sequence as follows: Room 255, Estimates of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines to be considered after Estimates of Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat are concluded? Is there agreement? [*Agreed*] There is agreement.

Mr. Chomiak: Pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be put forward by the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Saran). The title of the resolution is *Komagata Maru*.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to rule 31(8), it's been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable Member for The Maples, the title of the resolution is *Komagata Maru*.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the House. I wonder if we might resolve the House to Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker: The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Would the appropriate Chairs please go to their respective rooms. In the Chamber will be Competitiveness, Training and Trade; Room 255 will be Intergovernmental Affairs; and Room 254 will be Family Services and Housing.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FAMILY SERVICES AND HOUSING

* (14:50)

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Family Services and Housing.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): The budget this year provides almost 1.2 billion for the Department of Family Services and Housing. That is an overall increase of over 17 million or 6.2 percent over the '07-08 adjusted vote.

There is, of course, a number of key areas for investment, notably affordable housing, persons with disabilities, increased funding for Child and Family Services and, of course, the start of the five-year child care strategy.

In '07, we introduced the multiyear 104.5-million HOMEWorks! initiative, as part of our HOUSINGFirst four-pillar strategy for affordable housing for lower-income Manitobans.

The budget continues support for the rollout of HOMEWorks!. Just last week, I had the opportunity to announce the status of the affordable housing strategy. Across Manitoba it is at work already, to build, rehabilitate or repair 1,366 units. In the first year of HOMEWorks!, 39 million was allocated or earmarked; 48 million more will be allocated or earmarked in year two. Notably, in year two, funds will be included to build the first Manitoba housing multifamily units in 15 years.

Indeed, on Friday, I was able to go to Brandon to announce that that city would be one of three cities in the province to get a MHA or Manitoba Housing build on land that we have negotiated with the City of Brandon for. They're contributing that land to the initiative.

We were also able to announce that of the 1,366 units, 722 are being rehabilitated which allows them to remain on the market then as stock for affordable housing. Three hundred and sixteen of the 1,366 units will be new units, a quarter of them with rent

supplement, 75 will be home ownership units and 24 will be co-op units.

Additionally, in '08-09, 24 million is being allocated to fund capital repairs to the existing public housing stock owned by Manitoba Housing. This follows on our announcement on December 13 of the transformation of Manitoba Housing. The \$10.84-million building foundations action plan was announced at that time and the 24 million for increasing revitalization of the existing stock by way of whether it's new roofs, ventilation projects, enhancements to the building envelopes and new windows. That's a very sizable and historic commitment actually over three years at \$72 million for that, but many other components to the Building Foundations initiative.

The budget will provide funding of 3.5 million to extend the Manitoba shelter benefit to include eligible non-disabled single adults and childless couples who are on EIA. As well, we will be introducing a portable housing benefit as a pilot project for persons with mental illness. That will be a new transitional shelter benefit for eligible—I should say, and, in addition, there will be a new transitional shelter benefit for eligible, non-disabled single individuals and childless couples who leave welfare for work. We announced the details of that today. The total announcement today is worth \$4.3 million, which includes not only just the enhancements to recognize the increasing rental costs, but, as well, some components of the Rewarding Work strategy, one called Get Started. It's a one-time benefit to help people who leave welfare to work to help them pay the costs related to starting a new job, such as work tools. The Rewarding Work Health Plan was also announced today, and that will extend coverage for single parents and persons with disabilities who leave welfare for work, to cover prescription drugs and dental and optical services for up to two full years after leaving welfare. There are different start dates to the different components of that, which is another key part of our anti-poverty strategy.

The '07 budget introduced Rewarding Work, and I don't think I need to say more about that right now other than what was in today's announcement, building on the child benefit, the initiative to recognize that some people need a longer training period with supports, so that we can enhance the quality of their employment as well as several other components of rewarding work.

Services for persons with disabilities remains, of course, a very important area for the department. We, in December, for example, announced our new initiative called marketAbilities to help get people with disabilities off welfare and into employment. The budget before us increases funding for the Supported Living Program by \$12.4 million, which will provide opportunities for more adults with a mental disability to receive residential day and other support services.

In addition, Children's Special Services has been allocated an additional \$1.4 million to expand therapy services. We've also, as a very important area, significantly increased resources in this budget for Child and Family Services with an additional \$39.8 million in '08-09. That's an 11.1 percent increase over last year's adjusted vote.

Family Violence Prevention Program is receiving an additional infusion of \$1.3 million. Manitoba's program, I understand, is recognized as one of the most comprehensive in the country, supporting 34 community organizations throughout the province. We are building on our announcement from November where we put in place an historic \$2.6-million investment for shelter security for children exposed to violence through a fund called At the Roots and for work for stability and training.

We also have a very significant launch of Family Choices; that is the five-year agenda for early learning and child care in Manitoba which was announced last Monday. The funding for child care has increased significantly since 1999, I believe, doubling the investment in child care. An additional \$5 million in spending to improve access to quality child care and funding more spaces, enhancing salaries of educators by 3 percent effective July 1, and having a new special wage adjustment are components of this year's child care strategy as year one.

In addition to that, though, there are amounts from Advanced Education and Training to equalize tuition costs at Red River College, outside of Winnipeg campuses at Steinbach and Portage, as I recall. As well, there is a significant contribution of \$2.5 million from Education in year, in order to contribute to capital enhancements so that we can locate more child-care spaces in schools, preferably in surplus space in those schools.

Those are some of the priority areas, but I just wanted to add that there's another initiative that is

new in the department and we call it the Cross-Department Coordination Initiatives. It's a joint initiative with Manitoba Health and Manitoba Healthy Living. A senior respected official has been assigned as well as other key officials to work across the departments, so that we can build on the necessary initiatives to support the vulnerable populations with the focus on homelessness, housing and supports for seniors as well as persons living with mental-health issues.

Those are my opening comments. I look forward to the discussion, the advice and questions of the critic.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have an opening statement?

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Mr. Minister, for giving me the *Coles Notes* editions. I think we're going to get a lot more into detail on some of these issues that—once again, I will be dealing with the CFS issues in particular, which is my critic's portfolio, and Bonnie Mitchelson will be dealing with the Housing issues and—

Madam Chairperson: Excuse me. We refer to members by their constituency or ministers by their portfolio.

Mr. Briese: The critic for Housing will handle the Housing portfolio, sorry.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Briese: There are a number of things that I want to get into on Child and Family Services with a little more depth. There are some that are new initiatives of yours and there are some that are old initiatives that I have some concerns about how well they're working.

I don't think I'll go a whole lot further on an opening statement. I expect the minister has some staff that he wants to bring to the table. I think, if it's helpful, we can probably arrange it so that you don't have to keep all the staff here all the time if you want that, if that's helpful to you.

Madam 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 defer consideration of line item 9.1.(a), contained in Resolution 9.1.

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. Mackintosh: Sitting next to me is the deputy minister, Martin Billinkoff. Next to Martin is Sheila Lebrecht. She's the ADM for Administration and Finance. Next to Sheila is Carolyn Loeppky, ADM for Child Protection, Child and Family Services.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister.

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

Mr. Briese: I would prefer a global discussion.

Mr. Mackintosh: That's fine.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. It is agreed then that questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner with all resolutions to be passed once questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Briese: There are a number of the housekeeping issues that I kind of like to work on first.

I know in the Estimates book there's a flow chart on page 7 that, I think, gives us most of the things that we need out of the organizational chart. I would like to know, though, how many of those positions are open at the moment.

* (15:00)

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, there are some acting positions and some doubling up of tasks right now, but, to strictly answer the question, under Housing, that's an area that is undergoing some significant change as a result of the Building Foundations initiative and the strengthening of the executive functions there. So the housing services director is currently vacant, and the housing programs position that was formerly filled by Terry Wotton is currently vacant. Terry has accepted a position with CMHC.

Over in Family Violence Prevention, that director position is currently vacant. Paulette Fortier is acting, and a competition is under way to fill that important job. In Child Protection, Ms. Loeppky is

acting, and that position is going to be filled very shortly.

Madam Chairperson: Just prior to recognizing the honourable Member for Ste. Rose, I just want to remind everyone in attendance that, in light of the fact that we are in committee, if everyone could turn their phones to vibrate so that they won't be ringing audibly, that would be much appreciated.

Mr. Briese: Just led to a question from your answer there. Who is handling the housing right now then if somebody was contacting there? Because I know my own community is in some of that right now, so who would they be contacting? I know they were in contact with Terry Wotton before.

Mr. Mackintosh: The contact for the member's community would be Roy Kirby, and he'll be familiar, I know, with the challenges in the constituency. I think he's very familiar, actually in HOMEWorks! and the fort-builder, you know, the pockets of help that could be available for the member.

Mr. Briese: I'd like a list of the political staff that's in the minister's office and their positions and whether they're full time or part time, please.

Mr. Mackintosh: The current list of political staff comprises the following: Fiona Shiells is special assistant; Jessica Irvine is executive assistant but works in the constituency because that's, you know, as part of that standard arrangement; Felix Meza as policy adviser; Jenny Opazo, intake case co-ordinator, and Maeghan Dewar, the project co-ordinator.

Mr. Briese: Another number I'd like from you is the number of staff currently employed in the department.

Mr. Mackintosh: The number of staff in the department at last count was 2,428 in the Family Services component. Manitoba Housing and Renewal is 94. The Manitoba Housing Authority is 339. The direct service workers, that's with the MGEU component, is 1,009 and the direct service workers, and that's in the CUPE component, 410. So I have a total of 4,280. That's not the FTE count, but that's the total number of staff.

Mr. Briese: That's a small town. I guess where that leads to now is: What is the vacancy rate that your department is running at? I know there's usually an ongoing vacancy rate and I'd like to know what the percentage is.

Mr. Mackintosh: In Family Services and Housing, we have about 11 percent vacancy, which, I note, is down from just over 12 percent a year ago.

Mr. Briese: I thought I had a different figure than that for a year ago out of the Estimates, but I'll take that.

Are you actively trying to fill those positions? Are they posted? Are they out there, right now, most of them, or are they positions that have been sitting open for quite some period?

Mr. Mackintosh: The deputy advises that, in terms of numbers from last year, the vacancy rate that I gave is effective March 28, 2008, and the number I gave for last year was March 30. So the number that may have been in Estimates last year might have been in the fall. But we can look at reconciling that.

Now, in terms of the number of vacancies, the usual is to fill those vacancies with competitions on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Briese: In addition to that, does the department contract out a number of things, like, I'm trying to think of the words—what kind of contracts do you let out in the department for various services? I don't think you need to go down to very small numbers. If it's something that's over \$25,000 or \$30,000, what kind of contracts do you contract out?

Mr. Mackintosh: There are different kinds of arrangements with outside service providers. For example, in the area of Housing, we have contractual relations with about, at last count I had, it was about 440 or so organizations. In the area of Child Care, there are over 580; Child and Family Services, we have over 20 there, and about 200 more in Family Violence and supportive living and children's services. So we're looking at over 1,200 agencies or organizations that we have contracted relationships with. Then, in addition to that, you would have contracts. For example, Manitoba Housing, maybe, would be contracting with organizations for services or materials for the BUILDINGFoundations initiative, for example. So perhaps the member would want to break down the kind of contracts, and maybe we can drill down and provide further information there.

* (15:10)

Mr. Briese: I'll stick with the CFS and child care and family violence ones, if I may. I'd be interested to know what is in that 580. What is the breakdown? Is that the agencies? Is that the shelters that are

provided? Are they considered staff of the department, or are they basically contracts that you sign with various organizations and agencies?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, just in the area of family violence, just very quickly, I have a convenient breakdown here where we fund 10 women's crisis shelters. There are four residential second-stage housing programs and four women's resource centres. In addition, there are three urban support programs to access or exchange services, and there's another specialized program.

Then, when you go to the area of the Child and Family Services division, as opposed to Family Violence in particular, you have many, many collateral services. I mean, there's a list here, but I can give some examples that might illustrate the kind of organizations that provide services that are within the mandate of the department.

The Addictions Foundation is one; some of them that are larger: the Family Centre of Winnipeg; of course, the Child and Family authorities; MaMawi-Wi-Chi-Itata Centre; Macdonald Youth Services; Marymount; New Directions. Maybe I can give some other examples of where we have arrangements: Andrews Street Family Centre, in my part of the world; the Aurora Family Therapy Centre; big brothers and sisters, including in Neepawa, I notice here; Brandon Friendship Centre; the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, I'm proud to say; Churchill Health Centre; Compassionate Friends. So those are some examples—well, maybe, Elizabeth Hill Counselling. That might be through Family Violence Prevention, but there may be other services there, I'm just thinking.

Oh, here's an important one, the Health Sciences Centre, the Child Protection Centre there. People may not realize that that is funded through Family Services and not the Department of Health, although it is thought of as primarily a medical or forensic service for abused children. Dr. Charlie Ferguson is the head of that centre, but they also provide social work functions, other supports for families and children and we're working on an exciting project with them.

Ka Ni Kanichihk, that's worth mentioning because Leslie Spillett is the key progenitor of that organization which is an Aboriginal-run organization, relatively new, providing some great programs including specialized foster resources for sexually exploited children. But, as well, they're providing a program that we're helping to fund called

a buddy service. I think there are other opportunities that we look forward to partnering with them on. Klinik is another one, EVOLVE, Knowles Centre, I think a well-respected organization that provides many services, L'Entre-temps des Franco-Manitobaines.

So those are some examples there. Moving into other areas, we could get into the supported living, but I don't know if the member wants to pursue that. He said child care. It's over 580 agencies under the child-care umbrella. We would be looking there at the child-care centres across Manitoba and, of course, there's a funding formula that goes along with that.

In the area of disability programs and Employment and Income Assistance, St. Amant is one that jumps up here off the page; Independent Living Resource Centre; CNIB, they do some children's special services work; Community Respite Services; Society for Manitobans with Disabilities is a very large contracted party. The children's program there, the Communication Centre for Children and Therapy Outreach, are the components. I mentioned St. Amant, but the Applied Behaviour Analysis initiative is largely focussed at St. Amant and that's for children with autism.

Then Main Street Project. I'm pleased Siloam Mission now, and if the member's had an opportunity to see their facility there, but they are a new agency with us and we're just hammering out the SPA to accompany that. We started per diem funding there and realized that that wasn't as useful as we had anticipated and we've converted that to block funding now. Salvation Army, Centre Flavie-Laurent, then we've got Association for Community Living.

So those are some examples just to give the member a sense as to the kinds of organizations that are included in those numbers. I think almost every social service agency in Manitoba with only rare exception would be funded by the department and would form part of the safety net that we tend to provide for Manitobans who are vulnerable.

So, hope that answers the question. I don't know if the member wants others. We could certainly provide lists of those organizations if the member wants to drill down further.

Mr. Briese: You just answered my next question. I was wondering if you would share those lists with us. I don't need them today, but, at some point in

time, I would appreciate getting the lists of the various agencies.

*(15:20)

Mr. Mackintosh: Just to make it clear then, I've discovered what an amount of work this is, although this one might not be very difficult. It looks like we've got that ready to go, but, just to make sure the member then—would the member like all of the agencies, or is there a certain area, or is it just Child and Family or child care that the member is interested in, or all of the agencies that the department contracts with or has funding relationships with?

Mr. Briese: It would be very helpful to have them all if that's not too onerous, because it gives us an idea of what's being funded from provincial coffers, too.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, perhaps what we can do then, is we'll break it down into categories. It might make it easier for the reader to discern the different areas of investment.

Mr. Briese: Thank you. I would appreciate that.

Just in follow-up, you mentioned Siloam Mission, and, yes, I did have the opportunity to go through Siloam Mission. When we were there, it's my recall that they told us that they were almost 100 percent privately funded, like out of donations and such things. There was some quite small grants, I think, from the Province in the scope of their operation. I'd like a little more detail on what kind of an arrangement—you indicated their arrangement had changed. I am just wondering in what way and what levels the provincial funding is going to now because I think it's a wonderful facility and I would like to know how much the Province got involved in it.

Mr. Mackintosh: I got to know the good people at Siloam quite well over my brief tenure as minister, and I am really heartened by their devotion to their mission, and as well, though, to how great that organization fits with the array of other organizations that we work with, and I'll explain it.

I understand that, initially, we were approached to help to fund the cost of the shelter there. Specifically the beds, and as a result of our analysis, we agreed to fund them on a formula of per diem rates for persons on employment and income assistance because they were living there and that was a reasonable way to fund them.

After a brief period of time, it was realized that actually very few of the individuals who are sheltered there were enrolled in employment and income assistance. They have, for a variety of reasons, not shown up on the welfare rolls, and some of the thinking is that they have been denied further benefits for refusing to comply with conditions or employment expectations, or because they are not open to interventions of any kind. You know, they're an intervention or treatment-resistant population, or, and this is also interesting, because they're employed. There is a sizable percentage of individuals who, from time to time, use the shelter at Siloam who are actually employed, whether temporarily or otherwise, and may be in between jobs. So there are all kinds of combinations of reasons why the EIA per diem formula didn't work as well to support that organization because they needed something sustainable and we had put aside certain dollars based on thinking that the formula would work.

So the department went back to the table with Siloam to look at how we could help them in a more meaningful way. As a result, just two or three months ago, we concluded and the government agreed on an agreement whereby we would fund them in block. I understand that for '08-09, there's just over \$360,000 that would flow to Siloam for shelter costs.

Now, what I can say in addition is this organization clearly has a great base. It has a very live fundraising capacity. Indeed, I joked with Mr. Mohan last time I was there that I get more mail from them than the New Democratic Party for fundraising. And, by the way, we've been responsive, because the needs are great and the organization is great. They have that base for fundraising and, indeed, as the member might recall, the boiler went on them. They were in a crisis situation and, lo and behold, a private-sector individual, an anonymous donor, provided the funding for them to remedy that situation. There is that fundraising capacity, but additionally, there is a tremendous volunteer capacity that they have generated.

They have everything from students to members of the host, the sponsoring church, but way beyond that. I think, when we see that kind of private-public partnerships, that it's a great model for us to try to expand. Quite frankly, I've had some discussions and the department has with Siloam in terms of whether there are some other opportunities for us to work with Siloam to provide even greater enhanced

services for the clients, the residents. I can't recall what they call the Manitobans that have come there. I can't recall if they use the word "clients," or "patrons" I believe is the word that they have chosen carefully.

So we'll continue to look at that over the year because we are keen to see how we can more effectively deal not only with the crises that homelessness is, but what preventative capacity we can build. When I hear directly from those who work at Siloam, I listen carefully because they do have great insights into what triggers homelessness and what could be done differently to reduce the risk of that. I thought that maybe that's a worthwhile Q and A we just did because, just in conclusion, I would like to see us enter into more of those kinds of arrangements. There are other organizations out there that are somewhat similar, perhaps not as robust as Siloam, but they are a wonderful organization, and I'm very proud that we have that as part of the continuum of services that address homelessness in Winnipeg.

Mr. Briese: I think you probably neglected one when we toured there, and I think it's a wonderful organization. I think the clinic in the building was a large private donation, too, if I remember right. I am somewhat curious, though, just for the record: When you do block funding, what's the process you follow? I'm not averse to it, I'm just wondering what kind of an agreement do you enter into, and what is the reporting back aspect of it.

* (15:30)

Mr. Mackintosh: As I said, there was initially an analysis of the number of beds that were expected to be utilized each at a daily rate. So, when the original formula didn't work out, it's my understanding, then, that the amount of beds, which number 60, at the daily rate was just converted then to a grant. We do expect that there will be further discussions about whether more funding would be called for and we look forward to those discussions.

In the meantime, in terms of accountability measures, I'm advised that there are reports on bed utilization that are provided, and based on that interim arrangement, we're constructing with them a service purchase agreement, so that on a go-forward basis we have a good accountability measure that is workable, that is realistic, and that is a good measure of utilization so that we can move, then, ahead,

perhaps, with other arrangements that are even more beneficial for the patrons there.

Indeed, yes, the member is right. The medical clinic was most striking and I believe that it's named after Mr. Sair—or was it Dr. Sair? *[interjection]* Dr. Sair, I think he was a pharmacist, I think, practising on Notre Dame Avenue. Yes, that's a tremendous operation that they have there.

Mr. Briese: There are a couple of other—we got into more discussion there on the kind of housekeeping questions that I ask, but one—and I'm sure you're prepared for it because we usually ask it—is ministerial travel and what trips the minister took and what staff went along and how those trips were paid for.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, this time I've got the list 'cause last time I missed one I had to put in later on. The request, I take it, would be for travel outside the province? *[interjection]* Yes, the member confirms that it's travel outside of the province. I'll just go through the list.

I don't know which of these actually were dealt with in the fall in Estimates. It seems like we were just here. I can't recall at that time what the time period of the request was, but maybe I'll go through the list that I have at least for—starting in August of '07. That was in St. Paul, some in Minneapolis.

Does the member want to know the visits and the purpose?

Mr. Briese: Yes, I'd like to know the purpose and, yes, I think starting in August is probably good. We'd asked from the start of the fiscal year, I think, in the fall. Quite a number of them will be covered off, but from August to the end of the fiscal year, I think, would be appropriate.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, the St. Paul meeting was—there were a number of studies and interviews done there. One of the primary interests was to become familiar with the Minnesota differential response model, so we met with the department of human resources, Mr. David Thompson in particular, and associates that had designed the differential response model, which is now recognized, actually, as one of, if not the strongest, in North America on differential response right next door. They phased it in through the counties which deliver child welfare in Minnesota. I don't want to get into details unless the member wants to ask me, but I'll just move on.

It was very interesting, actually. We do hope that he will come to Manitoba in the very near future just to provide advice on how we're doing with the design of our differential response pilots. In addition, we reviewed their child death review initiative. Another one was the housing partnership council which works for affordable housing with the Minnesota housing investment people.

We met with Professor Doherty at the University of Minnesota on parenting help, on how to communicate and provide assistance for parents. We met with the Family Relations Council, which is a national council based in—I think it was St. Paul or Minneapolis—on a number of different issues to provide supports for parents and as well with the Children's Advocacy Center, called CornerHouse. That's located in downtown Minneapolis. That meeting was very important as another model for our design of a children's advocacy centre here for Manitoba. We have a working group that Ms. Loeppky co-chairs along with Winnipeg Police Service in the design of that initiative.

It was great to walk into CornerHouse and see everything all in disarray. That's the bad news. The good news is that it was Target Corporation that was investing in new carpeting throughout, and the kind of public-private partnerships that we hope we can also attract to our children's advocacy centre here.

There may be another organization or so that I met with there, but that comprised the meetings in the Twin Cities. As well, in August, I was accompanied by Ms. Loeppky and Claudia Ash-Ponce, the manager of Children's Resources, as well as the Children's Advocate, and an individual from the private sector. We went to Pilot Butte, Saskatchewan, and visited Ranch Ehrlo residential centre. As well, we went to Regina and saw their group home facilities for children in the child welfare system. As well, on the following day, I met with the then-Minister of Social Services and housing who also provided a tour of some of the public housing initiatives that were under way; so that was in August. How's my time? Keep going?

In November, the American Humane and Child Welfare leagues 2007 international conference on differential response in Long Beach, California; Brian Ridd, the Manager of Community Support, Child Protection; Debbie Besant, Executive Director, Rural and Northern Services; David Berry, Supervisor of CFS southwest team; Marnie Barker, Interlake Regional Director; and Cheryl Martinez,

Co-ordinator of Authority Relations took part. That was a very intensive initiative.

That's where the jurisdictions all over the world came and presented on the implementation of differential response. American Humane is recognized as one of the repositories of the best intelligence on differential response; this was their second international conference. This was a real eye-opener, representations from as far away as New Zealand and Ireland.

Hearing the models that had been implemented in the United States was quite heartening to see the statistics. I think, notably, it's North Carolina, Minnesota; Ohio's is rolling out now; Hawaii, but there were quite a few Canadians there as well.

The 22nd Annual San Diego International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment, accompanied by Linda Burnside, the Executive Director of Disability programs and EIA, Claudia Ash-Ponce, Manager of Children's Resources, and Lorna Hanson, provincial investigation specialist—this also attracts a large medical faculty. There were representatives, at least two from the child protection centre that were there as well. That, of course, is the permanent international think-tank on child maltreatment.

*(15:40)

As well, I was able, because I was encouraged to do so, the Polinsky Children's Center in San Diego, a very interesting facility for emergency placement of children, a state-of-the-art, beautiful building, swimming pool, athletic field, library, but a very different model than Manitoba. It's good to know it's out there. In February was the federal-provincial-territorial ministers of Housing. We met and strategized there. I should just say, we most recently met just a few weeks ago in Ottawa with the federal minister, at long last. That's a tale that I can tell, but that's on the Housing side. Finally, the Child Welfare League of America's national conference and the National Housing Conference in Washington in February. Those were some good opportunities and a lot of materials.

If the member wants to get into any of the areas that are emerging as areas to focus on, I'd be more than happy to share that information with the member. It's tremendous to see, with the hundreds of U.S. jurisdictions responsible for child welfare, how they incubate certain ideas and how we can learn from them. Of course, when we have a more

provincial and larger territorial approach to child welfare, in particular, it's always important to recognize the differences in other jurisdictions and whether those programs can be transplanted. But I often have discovered, sometimes in Justice, that we can successfully bring those initiatives to Manitoba. So I came back loaded with a lot of questions for the department and we're looking at a number of other approaches. Hopefully, we can build on some of the initiatives that have worked elsewhere.

Might I just add, too, that one of the core features of these think-tanks and these workshops is the evaluation component that, I think, was missing only a few years ago. When people come now to present at these conferences, they are expected to provide an evaluation that is fair. So I think we're seeing a good sharing now of best practices across North America and beyond, that I'm glad that Manitoba, for one, is part of. I say the word, part of—the Child Welfare League was represented from, I think it's fair to say, most of the provinces in Canada. It was a large Canadian contingent there, which is important that we have that kind of link with the Child Welfare League of America, even though we have the Child Welfare League of Canada as well. They were represented and I've got to know those people quite well as a result. I don't think I've missed anything there.

Mr. Briese: Because you've kind of started in that direction, and I know we had some discussions about it last fall, and it was in pretty initial stages on the differential response. I think maybe we'll go there, and if you're willing to go there, we'll talk a little bit about it.

In December, I know you reported that there was going to be a shift to that model that would begin in January. There was \$13 million, I think, was the figure that was allocated. I'd like to know a number of things about it. That \$13 million, over what period of time is that allocated? I know that in the press releases I read that you talked about phase 1 and phase 2, and things like that. So I want a kind of a breakdown of where you're at, where you're going, what the expected results are on this, because it's a fairly dramatic change, I think, from what we've been doing.

Mr. Mackintosh: We've seen differential response grow, particularly in North America. A little bit slower in Canada, I take it, although Alberta has been recognized as the model and was recognized in

the external reviews into child welfare as a model that Manitoba may want to pay some attention to. I understand that Ontario as well, though, has been moving on differential response, and I suspect that in varying degrees it will just be part of the lay of the land for child welfare in this country as it will soon, I'm sure, be south of the border.

It's based on some evaluations that have been conducted showing that earlier intervention and helping struggling families does reduce crises, does reduce, then, protection, or calls for protection. So, based on that, I understand the Alberta model is continuing to unfold. Ontario is strengthening its approach. What we're seeing, though, as one of the key formulas for introducing differential response, is a careful roll-out that's staged. We want to be sure-footed in Manitoba when it comes to this model. We want to make sure that we build on an understanding right from the front line to the general population of what differential response is and that we put in place checks and balances and evaluations and build on pilots to get things going.

So I know that there's been a fair bit of work done with the literature and what's going on elsewhere. There have been some preliminary consultations and some more in-depth with other jurisdictions, including the forms that I outlined, particularly with American Humane and the Child Welfare League. Between March and May of '07, in particular, there were promotional and educational presentations developed and interactive workshops done with representatives of the child welfare agencies in Manitoba.

The next phase, then, is to actually conclude the specific planning by the authorities for implementation and the work through standing committee of what has to be the common elements. The plans are now, I understand, in the final days of being reviewed for forwarding now for financial approvals, again, based on a pilot commencement. Of course, I just would want to note that American Humane has produced what are the core features of differential response. It's important to recognize that this is not about a system of response when children are in danger. This is a system of response when there may be some neglect, some troubles in families and families struggling, but it is to provide more proactive and voluntary assistance for families so that abuse that results in protection files having to be opened and children taken into care can be avoided.

The federal government, I might just add, in terms of the Canadian lay of the land, I think, has been very keen to see differential response develop across the country, and that was just enunciated in the recent federal budget where they have signalled that they are prepared to partner initially with Alberta so that there can be some symmetry on reserve because, as the member knows, there's two-tiered child welfare in this country and the on-reserve federal funding is very different than the off-reserve provincial funding. So, with an interest now developing by the federal government to support differential response, we look forward to having some productive discussions with the federal government so that we can have that kind of partnership in Manitoba as our differential response model unfolds.

*(15:50)

A lot of this is about parenting skills. There may be a robust role for Triple P, by the way, which we should be talking more about. Over the longer term or even the medium term, the objective is to have fewer children in care because the protection issues have been neutralized. Early indications from jurisdictions like Minnesota strongly suggest that that, indeed, is the outcome from this kind of approach, which is, by the way, why the excitement is building across the western world to move towards differential response in a sure-footed and targeted way.

The phase that we are in now is to identify those common elements: the planning, the preparation, the development, the demonstration, the evaluation that is necessary so that we have a framework. Then the next phase will be the rollout. That will take place right into '09-10. We're going to do it right as best we can and continue to build.

It's also important that there's an agreement at standing committee, which is comprised of the branch and the authorities, that a standardized risk assessment tool for not just the intake agencies, but the service delivery agencies is important. They are developing that as a, what they call a foundation of differential response. There is now a good analysis taking place of risk assessment instruments.

I'll tell you, I've seen the paper on this; I've heard the workshops on it. There is no standardized risk assessment tool that's universally accepted whatsoever. In fact, the model that Ontario brought in from New York a number of years ago was discredited

then by some studies. In fact, the front-line workers were saying that it's just a lot of work and there's no better safety. I know Ontario has gone at it again. But we are joining in those efforts. That's one part of it. The other, though, is to ensure that we have a good and comprehensive evaluation. Again, we are going to be very careful about this because we have to, in the interest of our children, ensure that this is going to work.

The funding will go along with that kind of scheduling. It is our hope that in the coming couple of months would be roughly the time line—we want to conclude this in the first part of the year—that we will be able to conclude, then, the plans and the financing for the initial pilots. As well, opportunities for training front-line staff are continuing.

I know that some of the work that is being looked at is how to deal more effectively with adolescent parents, perhaps immigrant families, different approaches which I find really encouraging. I look forward to hearing from the department then and the standing committee what it plans as the first run.

Perhaps I'll leave it for further questions from the member.

Mr. Briese: Has every authority done this, that phase 1? Are all four authorities involved?

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm advised that all four authorities have been developing the ideas for the pilots. They've been working together in standing committee then to conclude that and to provide the costing so that the financial people in government can look at it. We're right at that stage right now. I understand that we're just on the cusp of getting that work from the standing committee.

So they're all working together on this one. I understand that there's a recognition across the authorities of the importance of moving in this direction. I might add that you will hear from time to time where some workers will say, well, we already do prevention work, and that is true. There's a great deal of prevention work that does happen in different ways. Traditionally, we've called them the family files. But differential responses have a very unique and different structure to it.

We can get into that if we want, but I've just been advised that each authority has also done an authority plan for all of the respective of all the agencies within the authority's jurisdiction, and that's

being used as part of the building of our framework here in Manitoba.

So we'll hear from Minnesota's experience. They can sort of have a look and provide some advice. I know Minnesota was instrumental in getting Ohio's up and running, which went live on July 1, I understand, and we'll see how that unfolds.

So I guess what really comes down to is that the words "differential response" actually speak to the need to have a different response depending on the nature of the concern about a child. It recognizes that apprehension may not be the best intervention, depending on the circumstances in the family and the nature of the concern. So that's, I think, the overview.

I just noticed here, yes. The federal government has prioritized working with Alberta to implement differential response on reserves in that province, and so I'm very encouraged by that. I think they need to take a broader approach on reserve, but, clearly, they've said that if they are going to get into stronger funding arrangements they're going to do it only, at least at this point, by way of a differential response implementation model.

Mr. Briese: So the \$13 million that you've directed to this is directed only to develop the program, or is it to implement the program? I'm not sure you follow where I'm going. Is it just to do the training and set up the mechanics to do it, or is some of it actually going to have the program implemented and operational?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, that allocation was actually a number that was identified by the external reviews the Ombudsman and advocate, as an amount that should be necessary to achieve the implementation of differential response, but that was a number that was projected and, to do this right, we'll continue to look at that, to look at the resources that are necessary.

You know, there's still a lot of learning going on across North America with how to implement differential response. Some jurisdictions have added very little and, in fact, have found that they have saved some money through differential response. Others have said it's absolutely critical that you make added investments, but in Manitoba, the external reviews I respect. We will phase in these dollars which, you know, we'll see this in the next fiscal year lead up to what we anticipate to be the full implementation then of differential response.

But it's important, though, to learn as we go. If we have to make adjustments to timetables, then that

should be secondary to the interests of children and getting differential response on a sure footing in Manitoba. I mean, that's been my concern, that we do this right.

* (16:00)

Mr. Briese: The minister in his letter also indicated that for phase 2. I'm not even clear how many phases there are, whether there's just phase 1 and phase 2, but in phase 2 there would be resources available for hiring contractors to implement phase 2, or wording somewhat to that effect.

What specifically would these contracts be? What are they implementing at that stage?

Mr. Mackintosh: There may be contracts that bear on differential response relating to CFS, or the information technology system and changes that are necessary there, and, specifically, though, to differential response. Uniquely, there have been external consultants that have been retained by the authorities to develop the authority plans for differential response.

In terms of how many phases, yes, there are three phases. The member is right. Phase 2 is the planning preparation, the development of the authority plans, but, as well, the testing and demonstration and some initial evaluation on the pilots. Phase 3 is the implementation phase which would be more comprehensive and province-wide.

There are other contracts that may be used at the community level to provide family supports. Different jurisdictions have different approaches to how you provide those preventative services. Preventative services, by the way, will usually be in the nature of parenting skills which in Manitoba, hopefully, will be focussed more around Triple P, but there may be other approaches as well. Triple P doesn't have a monopoly, but that is a world-class—actually, in the San Diego conference, it was presented to me as one of the world's best practices, and it's right here in Manitoba.

But the other kinds of services will be addiction services. There will be their homemaker services, for example. In other words, a lot of family support services for which organizations or agencies already exist to provide those services, but it's a matter of triaging them to supervising their intervention. There may be other kinds of services as well.

So what I'm getting at is we've noticed, for example, in parts of Minnesota—I think it was in

Dakota County, no, Hennepin County, which is generally Minneapolis—the services are being provided by independent contractors. In other words, the child welfare system with the county does not provide most of the family support services for differential response, so there are different models. I suspect in Manitoba we're going to have some combination of it as we've seen by way of the service delivery in the past, but I would think that Triple P, for example, will be delivered through existing agencies. It might be that, in some parts of the province, the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba is a service provider. So that would be a contract. Whether child welfare agencies will get into addictions counselling is a question. They may just defer—and I suspect that that will continue—to the expertise that exists and whether it's a native addictions organization, Addictions Foundations of Manitoba, the Behavioural Health Foundation, other organizations like that.

So what we will see from the proposed pilots then is how they plan to have the services delivered by, is it by contract or is it by in-house staff.

Mr. Briese: I guess that begs the question of why would you have four basic pilot projects rather than the Province doing one pilot that would cover all authorities.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, one of the features of differential response that we've seen, I think, almost, well, the ones that I'm familiar with—for example, in Alberta they rolled it out in different areas of the province. Then it recognized regional differences, and it recognized the different agencies that were in the different parts of the province.

In Minnesota, as I said, it was rolled out on a county-by-county basis. I think they started with, like, 10 counties or something like that, and then expanded, so necessarily your services will differ depending on what part of the province you are in. Same here. I mean, the services and the organizations that provide services in Brandon area, for example, may be quite different than in Winnipeg and may be very different than in Island Lake. That's part of the reason.

The other, though, is that there are some different needs. I said earlier that agencies can identify differing trends or pressure points affecting families, and there are, for example, within the general authority and within the Winnipeg Child and Family Services ambit, increasing concern about supports for immigrant families and the need for

unique interventions there to assist parents with adjusting to life in Winnipeg or Canada in general.

I think we should be open to recognizing that there can be a continuum of approaches. I think that could be one of the important attributes of differential response in Manitoba, as it is in other jurisdictions. Everything that is being done, though, has certain common elements. Again, differential response has a definition. There are certain criteria that have to be met in order to define your child welfare program as having a differential response stream. That will be part of Manitoba's differential response model. There will be core elements. They'll be common criteria that won't differ, but the nature of the programming and the way service is provided may differ depending on different needs across the province.

Mr. Briese: You're talking beyond the child welfare system, though, here, are you not? You're talking family interventions with the goal of prevention, like early intervention that will probably derail some of the future problems. So you're outside the child welfare system to a degree on some of that, I would think.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I think there may be traditional notions of the child welfare system as being simply an apprehension and placement function, but there's a long history of child welfare all across the western world that has collateral services contracted for or services within child welfare agencies that provide the range of services that families need to function in a way that ensures the safety and well-being of children.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I think it's important that, when you think of addiction services for families, you not think of it as something outside of the child welfare system. I think differential response will put an exclamation mark to that one, but I don't think we can say that, in any recent history, addiction services, for one, for families has been excluded from the considerations of child welfare workers when they're looking at the problems that arise in families.

Mr. Briese: I know very little about this, but there was a Snowbird Lodge opened in March, and I believe it has something to do with differential response. I'd like to know how it's being staffed, what services are there or what services are proposed there. Is it only catering to Aboriginal families at this time, or is it responding to all families?

* (16:10)

Mr. Mackintosh: That facility, which is in Winnipeg, is under the auspices of the All Nations Coordinated Response unit anchor, although it's under the umbrella of the southern authority, does serve all families. It's under the umbrella of the southern authority. I said that, so. But the services offered there may well become part of the formalized, differential response model. It contemplates that. We've seen that kind of a facility as part of differential responses elsewhere, but what we're seeing there is a place where families from intake can get referred for a range of services and consistent with that approach.

Mr. Briese: In differential response, where do you see the, I guess, flag being raised? Will it be CFS caseworkers that suggest the original intervention and then suggest what directions you go with intervention, or is there going to be some new staff that's separate and apart that basically those concerns go to immediately?

Mr. Mackintosh: The general model, and I'll speak to that first, is there's always an assessment of safety that's always—that nothing changes there in terms of job one. For example, in Minnesota what they do is once the safety assessment has been concluded and it's determined that the child is not in need of protection, but the family is in need of assistance in order to guard against a risk of physical or other abuse, the matter is then referred to a—I'm trying to remember what they call it in Minnesota now—but a Family Support stream, and the workers are hired in that separate stream. They're not protection workers, but are Family Support workers. In Alberta they're called Family Enhancement workers. So they then would go back to the family and say, we've done an assessment. We're of the view that the child is not in need of protection or in need of apprehension, but we would like to provide services or we would like to link you with services that will strengthen your family and strengthen the well-being of your child. Then there would be an agreement entered into whereby those services are provided. But, at any time, if there's any change in circumstances or concern, then the matter can be referred to child protection once again and, indeed, the child could be apprehended if there was evidence to support that decision.

But the answer to the question is, yes, that's one of the key components. It's a separate stream. In Minnesota, for example, they offered some of the

positions in the Family Support stream to the protection workers and some took up that, wanted to change their focus and others wanted to stay in child protection. So that will be a component of the Manitoba plan as well, because it is one of the fundamental components of differential response.

I might want to say, by the way, when I heard the words "differential response," I thought, well, that's a term that's been cooked up at the university or some, you know, social work program. So I think we've got to speak differently and call the program something that speaks to families for what it is. I am looking forward to what the recommendation from standing committee is on what we would call that stream here in Manitoba.

Mr. Briese: So I finally just figured out what those words mean, you're going to change them. I know one of the expected outcomes or goals is to prevent having to go to apprehension. There must be some other goals here or outcomes. What's measurable here in the long term to say, we have something that is working? Would it be a drop in the numbers of children in CFS services or—there's obviously going to be some kind of cost to this because you have said there's a separate stream. So there's going to be an on-going cost.

What's measurable that we can say, okay, something has happened here; it works, it's accomplishing something for us.

Mr. Mackintosh: What I'd like to do, actually, when I go back to the office is look for some of the materials that I got from the differential response seminars and what I got from Minnesota. They had an outside evaluation company come in and very carefully look at their initiative. In fact, when they present, the differential response team presents and then the evaluation team presents. They look at the number of those cases that then become open for child protection and the overall numbers as well.

The objective is to guard against abuse earlier on in a more formalized way. Really, I think looking at more of the cases of what we call neglect than abuse where, perhaps, there aren't the parenting skills that are necessary to ensure that the child is clean and supported because it is based on an observation that in families like that there is a very serious risk then of neglect, compounding and leading to abuse.

I will look for some of those evaluations and some that are close by that have demonstrated the value of differential response because they've

measured the impact on caseloads in the protection area and the cases that go on to become protection cases.

Mr. Briese: Would things like education and early family planning, things along that line, conceivably be part of differential response too?

Mr. Mackintosh: The objectives, of course, of differential response are stronger children as well as stronger families because there are parenting skills present and there's an amelioration of the risk factors, whether it's addictions—there may be mental health issues; there may be literacy issues that can be addressed by way of the differential response stream. At the same time, it may be that the child should have a focus of attention by way of some enhanced interventions. Perhaps there are speech and language therapies that are required. Perhaps there are other anger issues that the child can be helped with. Perhaps there can be working with the child to deal with learning challenges at school. So, depends on the family circumstances. I think that's been the experience elsewhere as well, is that there has to be a liberal offering of supports for the family.

*(16:20)

Mr. Briese: I think I'll wrap up on this. I think, probably, this is something that needs to be done and needs to be explored. I hope one of the outcomes down the road is that we're going to see a somewhat drop in intervention because that number seems to continue to grow. Maybe the outcomes and the goals and the payoffs out of putting differential response into place will be that we'll see a drop in numbers of cases per case worker, that type of thing. Then I believe that would show us some kind of a measurable outcome out of putting this system in place.

Mr. Mackintosh: We think that differential response could make a marked difference in this province when we look at the disproportionate number of neglect cases as they are defined in Manitoba, where there are some significant numbers of apprehensions, not because of physical abuse of a child so much as neglect, which speaks to the need to enhance parenting skills. So I think that there is a great potential here in light of that. In fact, I understand that a lot of the increase of the number of children in care is because of the increase of neglect cases. I'm not sure that's unique to Manitoba, but I think it may be a Canadian phenomenon, but it certainly is present in Manitoba.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): My question to the minister is, there are a number of acres that are just north of the Meadows West which MHRC is responsible for. I wonder if the minister can indicate whether or not the Province is getting close to any sort of an agreement for the development of that property.

Mr. Mackintosh: There's not yet a decision to put those lands on the market because the department is looking at a number of criteria. First of all, they're looking at if the land is to be developed, what is the best way to develop that. There are different models of development. One was Waverley West, for example, where the Manitoba Housing was the landowner. Then home builders were invited to purchase properties, but the Province there did the basic infrastructure.

Then there is Royalwood, which is another model where there was a joint arrangement with Ladco, in that case, with the developer. Then there could be—there's another option, which is simply to sell the land. So that's under consideration following our discussion last Estimates round.

But, as well, the department is looking at market conditions and, in particular, market conditions in the parts of the city where we have existing land banks. There are a couple of them. So there's nothing definitive as yet with regard to that property, but I can tell the member that we're having some discussions within the department on that.

Mr. Lamoureux: Have there been any formal proposals brought forward to MHRC in regard to the development of that land from the private sector?

Mr. Mackintosh: The deputy has some recollection that there may have been one or two expressions of some interest relatively recently, but, again, there's not going to be a response until full due diligence and an analysis of the options is concluded.

Mr. Lamoureux: No doubt when the minister looks at due diligence, and a look in terms of what happened during the '90s, during the '90s there was an agreement to develop the property. In fact, there was a pent-up demand, which probably to a certain degree is there today, where a portion of the land that was owned by the private sector finally started to get developed. Some might argue it's because the community pushed for the development, not the big developers and not the government.

As a result, there are a number of new homes that have been built, a condo complex. You'll see that

it is selling virtually at the same time that they're being built. That property has been in discussion, sold, or not necessarily sold, but entered into an agreement with the Province. It just seems that it has been hanging there.

There are two big concerns coming out of the community: No. 1 is what is the Province going to be doing with the property; and No. 2, any development in that property has to be sensitive to the needs of the immediate residents.

I would ask, as I believe I've done in the past, that MHRC do some sort of an evaluation in terms of what could be happening there, in a very short time frame, that we shouldn't be talking years, we should be talking months before we at least hear some strategic plan for that area. I would strongly recommend that the residents be incorporated into that plan.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Mackintosh: Perhaps, then, just to hear the member out, I wonder what advice he may have, or what thoughts he might have on what such a development would look like in terms of what would be the kinds of residential approaches that he thinks would be compatible and sought after. I was just wondering, is the member hearing from area residents an eagerness to see that land developed and developed quickly? If so, what would be driving that interest?

Mr. Lamoureux: The biggest drive from the local residential point of view is likely in dealing with infrastructure. It's a community that has not had or been afforded the same opportunity that many other communities have had in terms of community club facilities, proper road infrastructure, and so forth. So that's one of the driving forces.

Another driving force is that there are many residents who built, back in the early '80s, homes there and want to be able to stay in Meadows West, but, because of the limitations, there really isn't that much that's there for them to go into a larger home. Many, especially within let's say the first generation immigrant community, there's a very high priority given in terms of extended families, and they need the larger homes in order to be able to accommodate.

So there's a desire for people to live in this wonderful community. Yet, without the development of some of the larger houses, it does pose a concern.

A mixture, when he asks in terms of how would I envision that property being developed, I would hope that it's not going to be one super developer. I think that there are other options, such as parcelling out the development. It can be done in a piece-meal way. It can be provided even direct in certain areas for lot development, so if someone wants to purchase a lot.

I think there are many different options. My concern is it doesn't seem that we're really moving forward on it. I would think, given the expertise that's within MHRC, and their background, they've had many dealings with different types of proposals. It could be the Ladco from the past; it could be to the Waverley West for the present. It could go back into the Meadows West development itself. I think that the expertise and the knowledge is there, and people wait, trying to figure out, well, where do we go? Should we be moving? What sorts of facilities are going to be developed? The government has been very, very quiet on it. Now that last portion of private land is virtually developed. So now there is no other land. You'd have to go outside of Plan Winnipeg.

Now, my intent was not necessarily to talk this long on it other than to emphasize how important it is that the Province at least state in terms of some sort of strategic plan for the development of that area. I'm more than happy to participate with MHRC in a apolitical way in regard to that development if that would help.

* (16:30)

Mr. Mackintosh: Just further to our discussions in the fall, I committed to the member to kick the tire there, and I'll just recommit that—I just said to the deputy let's move this along. We'll continue to advance this thinking, and we do indeed have, I would say, even developing expertise within MHRC as a result of what we're learning with Waverley West and with Royalwood. So I'll move this file along and I can let the member know how that's coming along. I'm not going to skip any beats on due diligence, but I'm prepared. As a resident of north Winnipeg, I appreciate some of the comments that the member's making. I'd like to see development spread so there are opportunities for north Winnipeggers, as well, to move into other communities and to accommodate more people.

I am heartened, by the way, with the private-sector developments in north Winnipeg, just having

come out from West Kildonan Collegiate's opening last week. It was tremendous to drive into that new school and see all those new houses and apartment buildings. But, as well, I know over toward Meadows West there, there is continued development.

We will look at that, I can assure the member. I'm very interested in this one. I think maybe I should spend a little more time on this one with officials to move it along.

Mr. Lamoureux: I thank the minister for his comments.

Moving along, and, again, I'm going to focus my attention on the inner city, the North End in particular. There has been a concern, I believe not only on my part but on the part of many, of the overall condition of the housing stock.

I'm wondering if the minister has any measuring tools that would clearly indicate how that housing stock is moving forward. I know, for example, the City of Winnipeg will often break down the city in terms of areas of development and comment on housing stock.

To what degree does the Province have a fair assessment of the condition of housing stocks in the sectors, and particularly in the North End of Winnipeg?

Mr. Mackintosh: I'd like to introduce Joy Cramer, the ADM of Housing, and Brian Brown, comptroller at MHRC.

There's a misunderstanding. Is the member talking about private stock or is he talking about Manitoba Housing?

Mr. Lamoureux: It's private stock. I'm just going to expand on it. You see, if I was to make a general statement by saying that, over the last number of years, it would appear as if I'm seeing the housing stock overall deteriorating, more boarded-up houses is an example, the minister was saying, no, no, no, that's not the case. Things are getting better. How does he know whether things are getting better or worse?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, first, CMHC does do national analysis on housing stock, of the age of housing stock, and I think they largely use age to do their analysis.

Here in Manitoba, what we've done since the governments have come back to the table, starting in 2002 to invest in affordable housing, we have worked through community organizations to attack the shortcomings in housing, in neighbourhoods. We have, of course, relied on these organizations, whether it's, for example, the North End Community Renewal Corporation. They have within that structure housing coordinators that, you know, provide analysis locally of housing needs, of housing stock. I have put in place plans to deal with boarded-up housing, along with the municipality, with some differing results, with some varying successes with the municipal approaches. I think that's getting better.

Then what we've seen are these organizations coming to the funders, which usually has been through the Province or the Winnipeg housing or homelessness and housing initiative, the Affordable Housing Initiative, and making a case for investments. That is how critical need has been addressed since about 2002.

In fact, just in the last few days, we announced that there's going to be either the rehabilitation, repair or construction of 1,366 homes just as a result of commitments made so far under HOMEWorks! based on largely this kind of analysis of local need.

I can give examples, you know, whether it's Thompson or Brandon, Winnipeg, smaller communities. The creation, too, of these renewal corporations has been tremendous in providing that kind of intelligence on where the needs are.

Now, it has been our view, though, that we really need a more comprehensive province-wide analysis of what the pressures points in housing, affording housing in particular are in the coming years. We think we really need a multi-year plan, a 10-year analysis to find out, for example, what the impact is of the increased housing costs on rental affordability. What is likely to be the future of our housing stock as it exists now, given the age of the housing stock? How are we going to be able to maintain the social housing stock that's already in place when the mortgages come due and there's no more funding to assist with upgrades? That's going to start happening in March of 2009. What do we have to do to address the needs of new Canadians as they come into different municipalities, not just Winnipeg?

As a result of some discussions, there's been a decision to work with the Institute of Urban Studies

at the University of Winnipeg, Mr. Tom Carter, who has some significant expertise in housing to do such a multi-year strategy. It'll be the first time that Manitoba's done that, and we've just come to some conclusion on the terms of reference for that. We're hoping that in the very, very near future we will conclude a contract with the institute. It's also our strategy to have Manitoba Housing, though, as part of that analysis so we can tool up internally, so we can have greater expertise on these issues.

I think the answer to the question is it has been happening in terms of an analysis, but I think we can do better. That's why we're going to go ahead with a housing strategy that is longer in term and scope than we have seen in the past under the Affordable Housing Initiative from 2002 to this year, and HOMEWorks!, which is a three-year strategy.

*(16:40)

Mr. Lamoureux: It's encouraging to hear that the Institute of Urban Affairs is getting involved. I think there's a valuable resource there of wannabe and actual experts in an area that we need additional advice on. I raise it because it is very much a long-term issue. Virtually every other day, if not every day, I'm driving down Burrows Avenue. In the back of my mind, I'm wondering, 10 years from now, what are these houses going to look like? Some of them are pretty scary today, and they're not the Manitoba Housing houses.

Now, if it was just Burrows Avenue, it wouldn't be all that bad, maybe. But it goes beyond Burrows to include many North End streets, and I think it becomes very important for us—and, again, my apologies for those that might be thinking, well, I'm being very narrow-minded in terms of just North End Winnipeg, but this is the area in which I travel day in and day out. That's the reason why I pose the question to myself quite often: What are these houses going to be looking like in 10 years from now? I think that government often asks for ideas, and I'd suggest to you that there is a need for the government to come up with some bold programs in terms of providing encouragement for the private sector to start retrofitting, fixing windows, roofs, things of this nature, before the houses structurally become unsound to the degree in which they have to be demolished. I think that it becomes critically important in certain sectors, and this would go beyond just Winnipeg's North End, in certain areas of the city, indeed, no doubt, the province, where we've got to have a good understanding of 10 years

from now, what's it going to be like and how the government might be able to improve the overall housing stock.

So, with those comments, I'm prepared to leave that particular issue, but hear the minister's response.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, first, just so the member knows in terms of some positives here. Last fiscal year we earmarked funding for 722 rehabilitations, which allow those 722 homes or units to remain on the market as affordable stock. When you look at affordable housing initiatives, some people just look at the new units. You also have to look at the rehabilitated units because they keep those units from falling off the market, as they say, and let them continue to be available.

I live in the North End on Cathedral Avenue, and I can just say that in my particular neighbourhood and on, I guess even more so, just to the south of where I live, when governments abandoned affordable housing investments, we started to see the property values bottoming out. We started to hear, of course, of stories of people who were prepared to just give up their homes just for the cost of their taxes, or just give it up and walk away entirely. But it was undermining the whole—the well-being of entire communities.

Since I think, in particular, 2002, when all governments across the country, regardless of ideology, got back into investments and affordable housing, and, as well, I think in Winnipeg and the other Neighbourhoods Alive! communities in Brandon, in Thompson, and now many others, as a result of other, I think, initiatives as well, we're seeing a rejuvenation of a lot of older neighbourhoods. So I can go back to my own neighbourhood now and look up and down the alley at the investments, whether it's new garages; I look at all the new—the shingling that's taking place, the painting that's taking place.

The renewal corporation has something to do with that in some parts of Winnipeg. But sometimes it just takes one house to bring down a whole neighbourhood. By the way, that house might not even be the physical condition; it might simply that it's a drug den and, you know, the safer communities act can clean that up and turn around a whole—I mean, the letters that I recall in Justice that came from closures from the safer communities act just can sometimes turn around neighbourhoods. I think that in no small way the closing of the crack houses in Point Douglas as a result of the mobilization of

residents, and, you know, Mr. Burrows, he's rightly being celebrated for some tremendous efforts. That can make all the difference, but so can a rehabilitated house, so can an infill house, even sometimes just one house on a block. Now, in my neighbourhood, just over the last seven or so years, property values have doubled. Now the wind doesn't even catch any of those For Sale signs anymore; they're down within a day or two. There are some positives that are becoming evident. I think the robust housing market is in part a product from investments, but there are other factors at work as well.

There are a number of opportunities that have been unleashed in the last number of years and we'd have to continue that. I think, with HOMEWorks!, we can see that continued momentum but I raise this with the member and he may want to help on this. Ministers of housing from all ideologies and political parties across the country are raising the alarm bells; all of the federal programs are expiring in March of '09 for homelessness, for affordable housing—although our HOMEWorks! will go for one more year after that—for the social-housing stock that CMHC used to own and for RRAP.

RRAP can be very important, as the member knows. If anything, I would like to see the criteria expanded for RRAP; there's a very low-income threshold there and there are other matching grants and so on that are matching contributions. We have to keep an eye on that. Why does everyone from every ideology say the federal government has to continue its role? It's because the federal government has some deep pockets, and housing is very expensive. It's a very expensive social policy.

I'm amazed, coming into this portfolio, of how significant the investment has to be in order to enhance and build housing. It's only going to get more expensive but we're joined—there are crises in many parts of this country. The member has seen pictures of homes for sale in Calgary that just boggle the mind, homes that are similar to the houses we live in, that go for five times what—so, hopefully, that will help to push the federal government along to concluding some commitments because, right now, they're saying no commitments at all. They are concerned but concern isn't going to get us strong affordable housing for Canadians.

Mr. Lamoureux: I'm going to just conclude because I appreciate the opportunity to be the last, questions I have asked already. If you were to take—and I'll suggest a challenge to you—if you were to take a

picture today and I wrote down, Pritchard, Burrows Avenue, Alexander and Magnus, between Main Street and McGregor, and you have one of the staff take a drive down and say, here are vacant lots, boarded-up houses or derelict homes. This is what it is today; then one year from now, do the same drive and see if it's actually better. I think that it would go a long way in terms of helping assess whether or not we're moving in the right direction in some of the more-difficult areas of the city. It's just to get a sample of it. I will leave the challenge to the minister, and he can determine whether or not he wants to accept it.

Mr. Mackintosh: I drive around Pritchard between Main and Salter usually once a week. It was just yesterday, actually, where I noticed the number of infill homes that were there—I think a lot of them are North End Housing—and how that street has changed. There remain some significant challenges, and many of those challenges remain as social issues, sexual exploitation, for example, and poverty.

I appreciate what the member is saying but this is a big job. We have to continue to focus on this because, I think, way beyond what housing can do for particular families, the impact is immeasurable on the well-being and sense of community, the community that surrounds that home. If we're going to have, indeed, vibrant older neighbourhoods in Winnipeg, these investments have to continue.

*(16:50)

I just met with West Broadway Housing people yesterday, people who are really committed to enhancements in that neighbourhood. I think there's a neighbourhood where, not many years ago, it was a very, very serious situation in terms of the housing stock. I think from the key investments, from the role of the neighbourhood associations, they're turning a corner there. In fact, yesterday they expressed concerns about gentrification. So, work to do.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): I want to thank the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) to allow me a few minutes with the minister to address some issues.

First of all, I'm glad to see we have the staff from Housing here because I do have questions related to housing. The first thing I need is some explanation, so I just wonder if you'd take a moment to turn to page 48 of the Estimates booklet. I'd just like to get some clarification on some of the figures on that particular page.

I understand and realize that Strategic Initiatives and Program Support, that's explained pretty well. Maybe you could explain the other issues there, relative to Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation in terms of the funding there. If you could explain those figures to me, I'd certainly appreciate it.

Mr. Mackintosh: First of all, starting with the \$33.5 million voted on by the Legislature, the member will see that on page 47 as transfer payments to MHRC. The amounts above that will indicate the calculation that was arrived at. That probably is the best explanation on the vote of—it's basically the difference between the operating and the rents of MHA and MHRC. I think there's a good display there but, if the member has other further questions to drill down there, we can provide answers.

The next one, on the Rental Revenue, you'll see that on page 47 where there's footnote No. 1. Underneath that the explanations are set out as either being MHA direct-managed housing operations or MHRC housing operations. So that's the addition of the two.

On the \$97 million, \$97.2 million for Recoveries, the member will see that, as well, on the earlier page where the Recoveries are subtracted from the amounts, that those dollars are used for the—under MHRC Housing Operations, you'll see Portfolio Administration. Those are expenses that are from that line. The fourth area is Shelter Benefits. That's the Manitoba Shelter Benefit, and when it comes to Capital Programming under The Loan Act, that's the expected capital. That's the incremental expected capital. If the member has other specific questions, we can get into that.

Mr. Cullen: So, in terms of the \$62 million in capital funding, is that just new construction or is there refurbishing coming under that particular line as well?

Mr. Mackintosh: The \$62 million is comprised of several components. There is land development—well, maybe I'll just put it in order of magnitude. M and I or Modernization and Improvement, that's the investments in Manitoba housing properties. We have made a decision under the Building Foundations initiative to double capital investments in existing MHA properties to \$24 million. It was \$12 million for awhile there. So we're doing three years of about \$24 million in each year. So that's the single biggest piece of that bottom line.

The second largest is land development, \$23 million, and then we're moving into HOMEWorks! and then into bridge financing. There's a HELP program and non-profit mortgage funding for 62.6.

Mr. Cullen: I wonder if the minister would be willing to share that breakdown with the committee. He could forward that to me at some point in time, in writing. I would certainly appreciate that.

And the other question being, in what part of that \$62 million is allocated to the City of Winnipeg?

Mr. Mackintosh: We don't have a breakdown available, but what might be helpful—for example, the largest chunk, the \$24 million in there for MHA properties, we, I think, might have a good sense as to how many MHA properties are in Winnipeg as opposed to the rest of the province, but I don't know if we're in a position to provide that right now.

Mr. Cullen: Well, I appreciate that. If the minister could, when he forwards me that in writing, if he could just give me a relative breakdown in percentage-wise what might be allocated to the city and what might be allocated to rural Manitoba.

Clearly, we have a number of housing issues in rural Manitoba, too, where the Province is involved directly, and there have been some upgrades in some of those facilities. I know I have a couple in my area that I certainly want to bring to the minister's attention. Pilot Mound and MacGregor both have facilities which currently need some renovation. I know I sent some letters to the minister on that and certainly hope that he would follow up on that. I'm assuming that sort of renovation would take place under that particular fund.

The other issue I just want to bring to the minister, as well, is some of the vacant dwellings that are in rural Manitoba. I know communities and people do want to make an investment in some of those facilities, so it might be an opportunity for the Province to have a hard look at some of those buildings that have been vacant for quite some time.

Madam Chairperson: I have to interrupt proceedings at this point. The time being 5 p.m., committee rise.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

* (14:50)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs.

As previously agreed, the discussion is to proceed in a global manner, and the floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I promised to provide some information before our afternoon sitting and I can provide the member with a vacancy report as of March 31, 2008, which lists vacant positions in terms of contracts, the untendered contracts report, of which there were four last year. Most of the time period there were none. I can provide that information directly to the member.

The staff in the minister's office, the vacancy rate, once again and the staff in the deputy minister's office, so this basically is the list here. I can table it, provide it—asked for, information given.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, thank you for the prompt delivery of the items.

When we left off at noon, I was asking you about PSAB and if the provincial government will enter on the PSAB for their roads and bridges and values, similar to what the municipalities do—will be required to do.

Mr. Ashton: Yes, we already do have amortization of our infrastructure. For a more detailed question, probably recommend it to the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), because that has changed since I was minister. I mentioned earlier that highways capital was not amortized; it is now currently, and we have an extensive classification. You know, it's *[inaudible]* capital, which does amortize the actual costs of capital, is also life-cycle costing and it's done in terms of analysis *[inaudible]* infrastructure and transportation. You know, I would suggest that the member might, if he wants more detail on that, he could ask the Minister responsible for Infrastructure and Transportation.

Mr. Pedersen: I have one other issue that I just want to bring up from this morning, if I can find my notes. Manitoba Building Fund—Building Manitoba Fund, sorry. I have to get the words right, the acronym right, here. Can I get an itemized list of the projects

that were funded through Building Manitoba Fund for '07-08?

Mr. Ashton: I assume the member's talking about the library and rec fund because the Build Manitoba Fund, you know, the broader Building Manitoba Fund is in terms of municipal transfers which I did outline in the numbers. I did read into the record the projects, but I could provide, you know, another list of the actual projects that were funded under the rec and library component of the BMF, the forerunner of the \$9 million. So I can provide that information perhaps at the end of today's sitting.

Mr. Pedersen: But you should also be able to supply me with a list of municipalities that got transfers then, like a full reconciliation of the monies that was disbursed from that fund. I'm pulling from memory, but \$140 million, \$50 million went to the City of Winnipeg, but the—no, I got that wrong—\$90 million to the City and \$50 million to the municipalities. We should be able to get an accounting of where that money was spent.

Mr. Ashton: That's why I was—clarify whether it was strictly through the rec-library component, or the broader component. This was provided by way of FIPPA as of October 2007. We can provide the same information. It's quite detailed. I think it would take the rest of Estimates combined to read it all into the record. If the member wants, it would be kind of the Estimates equivalent of reading the phone book into the record, but, we have all of the components; it would just be a simple fact of upgrading it.

Again, I think the member's seen that when we've offered information, we've delivered on it. I'll undertake to make sure that we get an updated version of it. I believe the member would have access to the FIPPA. I believe it's his caucus that did FIPPA the information before, so it is readily available and we can provide updated information in terms of post-October 11, 2007, which is when the letter went over from IGA in response.

Mr. Pedersen: Yes, I'd appreciate getting a copy of it then, if you can. Maybe it was FIPPA'd, but if I have my own copy then I know where it is, so.

I'm going to turn it over to the Member for River Heights right now, Mr. Chairperson.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): One of the intergovernmental issues which has now been going on for two and a half years since I raised this in the Legislature for the first time was Jordan's Principle,

and ensuring that Jordan's Principle is implemented and that kids get care rather than there being jurisdictional bickering.

Now, I understand that the federal government Minister of Health, Tony Clement, has made some indication that there might be some progress. Can the minister tell us where we are in terms of the implementation of Jordan's Principle?

Mr. Ashton: Well, I think it's not something that would be particularly within the normal purview of IGA, but I'm certainly aware of Jordan's Principle. I note there was renewed debate in the House of Commons yesterday on this. I know the federal government has looked at some pilot projects; I think Norway House is one of the areas.

Certainly, it's been something the member's raised, but I think it's been commonly accepted as a very solid, basic principle, but I'm not quite sure in the context of local government, you know, if there's a specific element of local government and any of the services we provide that the member's asking questions on it, that I can answer as minister, then I'm more than happy to do so.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, I presume that, as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the minister has responsibility not just for municipalities, but for relations with First Nations governments and the federal government on a variety of issues.

Let me ask another intergovernmental question which has been outstanding for many years. There has been a need for a health centre, hospital, in Cross Lake, which the minister knows well, because it's not far from Thompson. Yet, when I ask the federal government, they say it's a provincial responsibility, and when I ask the provincial government, they say it's a federal responsibility. So I presume, therefore, it must be under the purview of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, and can the minister provide me an update?

Mr. Chairperson: Just before recognizing the minister, I do want to point out that federal-provincial relations do lie outside of the purview of the department Estimates that we are considering at the moment, as do relations between First Nations communities and the federal government. Now, under a global discussion, if the minister in question is willing to entertain a question outside of their purview, then that's their prerogative. But I do want to just highlight that this line of questioning is

technically beyond the realm of the Estimates before the committee.

Mr. Ashton: Beyond the realm, yes. Beyond the pale, I don't know. But, yes, certainly, I'm not the minister responsible for that federal-provincial relations. As much as I would love to be involved with many of the issues that the member is talking about directly, I think the member, as a former federal Cabinet minister, probably had more direct involvement than I will ever have on First Nations health issues. There are certainly many issues, in terms of health care in northern Manitoba where we're seeing, quite frankly, offloading from the federal governments, the previous federal government, as well, and certainly not acceptance of responsibility in terms of health care.

Even though, again, I'm not the Minister responsible for Health, I can point to a number of areas where we have worked creatively, probably the best is in terms of personal care homes where we've now moved to provincial funding on-reserve for level 4 care. The significance of that, by the way, is taking the sort of extension of Jordan's Principle, we're funding that anyway. When you have, for example, NCN, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, developing a personal care home, it just made sense for us to provide the funding for level 4 on-reserve because, quite frankly, if it wasn't available on-reserve, it would have to be provided off-reserve. I think that's a good example.

In the Island Lake area and Garden Hill, we've moved in terms of dialysis. I know the member is aware of that. We're also moving in terms of another number of other First Nations, Berens River, for example, in terms of dialysis. Again, it recognizes that there is a need to provide health-care services. I think it's been a positive move on behalf of our government, but I still believe that the federal government has a fiduciary responsibility to First Nations. The patent neglect of First Nations health has been there, I believe, for many years.

We're seeing all sorts of challenges in many First Nations communities, including high levels of tuberculosis. There are communities that have a higher rate of tuberculosis than countries in sub-Saharan Africa. I know the member knows that. All sorts of other health-related issues. So, while we're a part of the solution, clearly, I'm sure if the members asked the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin) or the Premier (Mr. Doer), who are more directly involved in these type of

discussions, I think our clear view is that the federal government has a fiduciary responsibility, particularly coming from the treaties.

We do believe, and I put this forth that health care is a treaty right. I think it's quite appropriate, this year, and I'm not sure if the member is aware of this, but many of the First Nations communities are marking the signing of the treaties. Actually, many of the signatories to Treaty 5, and adhesions to Treaty 5, were signed in 1906 and 1907 and 1908, so it's the 100th anniversary, for example, of TCN in June, and a number of other communities, including Cross Lake. So, I think, it's a good time to renew that. I'm not sure under what basis the federal government would suggest that, in Cross Lake, where the population is primarily in the First Nation—there is a significant Northern Affairs community, but the population is primarily a First Nation—that they would not have a responsibility to provide that health care. They do provide health care through medical services, which is appropriate. I think the solution to the challenges facing Cross Lake and other First Nations, quite frankly, is pretty straightforward, and that is to work co-operatively. But the first element, I always say when it comes to First Nations, is respect for the treaties and particularly respect by the federal government for its fiduciary responsibility to First Nations people, starting with health, including education, which I think also can be arguably a treaty right.

*(15:00)

So I appreciate the member raising the concern, but really what's happening in Cross Lake is very similar to the difficulties many other communities have faced. I have a brother who's a doctor who practises in two First Nations communities and certainly, you know, while there have been some improvements to health-care facilities, there still needs to be a lot more to be done. When you look at the size of Cross Lake, for example, you see a very significant population. I look at Cross Lake, I look at Norway House, even the Island Lake communities, the four communities. The four Island Lake communities in the next years will be the equivalent size of Thompson. Fifteen thousand people, and we made some steps with dialysis, but clearly there needs to be better health care.

Mr. Gerrard: Since the minister really can't enlighten me at all in terms of the Cross Lake hospital, let me move to the Winnipeg issue.

I know that the minister was at least attending a meeting recently on rapid transit, and the government, I gather, has allocated, I think it's 3.8 million in capital funding for transit to Winnipeg, but is there any earmarking of any of that money to rapid transit, or is the City totally free to spend it in any way that it would like on transit?

Mr. Ashton: Well, first of all, in terms of rapid transit, indeed I did attend the same meeting that the Member for River Heights attended. I had just met with the rapid transit coalition, and I thought it would be very useful as Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, and particularly including transit, to be there and there were some very good presentations. Again, they highlighted the seeing of an interest in the city of Winnipeg in terms of rapid transit. They came out with rapid transit right now—by the way, 2005, our provincial government was there for rapid transit. There was a change at City Hall and different parties.

That having been said, the current mayor, Mayor Katz, and City Council now have committed to rapid transit, but through the adoption of the Rapid Transit Task Force. The task force is headed by Councillor Wyatt, I believe, and there have been a number of initiatives already put in place that reflect some of the findings of the Rapid Transit Task Force. We have been involved with that in terms of funding, in terms of diamond lanes, for example, party lanes for buses. That is a part of it. The more significant element though—perhaps I'm anticipating future questions from the member—but what the federal government's \$17.9-million transfer to the province, our per capita portion of the trust fund that was announced at the end of this fiscal year, we have already secured that funding. Mr. Lemieux has indicated our interest in using it for active transportation.

It's important, by the way, in talking even about rapid transit, to point to the fact that the corridor—the first corridor that would be constructed if rapid transit was to proceed—is essentially a combination of a dedicated busway, BRT as it's called, but also a bike commuter route. So it is active transportation in a general sense. Certainly, we've been involved with discussions with the City.

The key change, too, over the last couple of years is the fact that we now have moved back to 50 percent funding for transit. We think that is very significant. That was in place prior to 1993. We have put in an element to the Kyoto bill that commits that

50 percent share of transit funding, including for future costs of a rapid transit system, that there be that 50 percent provincial funding.

So we're involved with discussions right now with the City and, certainly, rapid transit is very much on the agenda, as is active transportation generally. We as a province, as I've said, have been there going back to 2005. Given the clear indication from the City that they are seriously looking, as well, at rapid transit and active transportation generally, we view the availability of the federal money as being an opportunity, certainly, to make sure this matter was on the public agenda.

So, yes, I was at the meeting. Yes, we're involved with the discussions with the City, and there are certainly some very significant advantages that could be there for the province in terms any kind of rapid transit and active transportation development and we're very anxious to be part of those discussions.

Mr. Gerrard: I take that very long answer to be a no. The minister's funding from the Province to the City has no ties at all which would require the money to be used for rapid transit.

You could have answered that a yes or a no. You chose to talk on and on and on without answering it either way, and I presume that that means you're providing \$3.8 million to the City of Winnipeg for transit without any stipulation that any single penny of it be used for rapid transit.

Let me move on to another issue which is important to, I presume, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, and that is The Forks North Portage partnership. I presume this is under the authority of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Is that right?

Mr. Ashton: Well, before I allow the member to put that on the record, I made a mistake of probably providing too much information to the member. He talked about rapid transit, and I talked about the bigger picture. If he wants to just focus in on \$3.8 million in transit capital, you know, we've had a variety of purposes that have been earmarked in terms of transit capital, in terms of provincial support. I mentioned the operating.

You want to talk about capital, including more fuel-efficient buses, you know, that has been the current earmarking, but we have been involved through funding of diamond lanes and of priority lanes. That's part of the Rapid Transit Task Force.

We've also been involved, by the way, with our roads allocation in terms of bike paths, as well. There's a growing interest in that in our community.

I actually thought the member was interested in a comprehensive answer on rapid transit, but if he's not interested in looking at where the rapid transit might be going in the future, then my apologies, but if he wants to just ask narrow questions, I can do that too. I just thought it was important to put that on the record.

Mr. Gerrard: Again, a long and convoluted answer which didn't change the answer which I got, which is that there are not specific ties which would require that any of those provincial dollars be spent on rapid transit.

Now, let me get to the next one, which is The Forks North Portage Partnership, which, I presume, the minister has some responsibility for. I had a commitment some time ago that we would have, before the legislative committee, representatives of The Forks North Portage Partnership so that we could ask in the Legislature questions about The Forks North Portage Partnership. Will the minister deliver on that commitment?

Mr. Ashton: Well, first of all, the Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs is essentially the provincial shareholder, but I'm not the House leader, so my suggestions are to get the House leader to talk to the House. I don't schedule committee hearings, nor do I determine who goes before those committees.

The member knows that and, you know, I do want to comment on The Forks North Portage, though, that it's a very open, public organization. It's information was there for the member. If there are any specific questions I can answer, given our direct involvement with Forks North Portage as the provincial stakeholder, I'm more prepared to do that as well, and he's put on the record that he would like a legislative committee. I'm sure that the House leader will be avidly reading *Hansard* to determine the member's comments. The member knows essentially how committees are called to deal with entities.

* (15:10)

Mr. Gerrard: Well, I trust I will have the minister's support in having the representatives from The Forks North Portage Partnership appear before legislative committee.

Those are my questions. Thank you.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Chair, I'd just like to ask a few questions of the minister on the city of Winnipeg. I'm not sure that the minister really answered the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). We do know that the House leaders do call committees and there are negotiations between the House leaders, but I guess his question—and I would have pursued it a little further saying, is the minister prepared to go to his House leader given that questions have been asked in committee and support openness and accountability by recommending to his House leader that the committee be called?

Mr. Ashton: I'm surprised about the tone of the questioning. I mean there's an annual general meeting. The member was at it. All of the information is public. There's all that opportunity to raise it. It's not a Crown corporation. It's an entity that has three governments that are shareholders, so I don't speak for The Forks North Portage. I'm merely one of the shareholders as minister on behalf of the Province, but if the member feels there should be a committee called to look at it, he's put it on the record and he's certainly more than welcome to raise that. The reason I say that is, having been House leader in the past, I know that House leaders do schedule committees, and there's also, obviously, a determination of what committees consider what reports and what organizations.

I just want to stress on the record. This is not a Crown corporation. It's not a provincial entity. It is a very unique entity that's federal-provincial and City of Winnipeg. So, if the member's joining the chorus for a call for the committee, you can do it by putting it on the record in Estimates, and I'm sure the member speaks to her House leader as well. So, if it's a priority, I'm sure she'll raise it with her.

I just know one thing, having been House leader, that I defer to the House leaders and, essentially, we're two official parties, but we have three House leaders. I have every confidence that they can and will consider such issues, but if the member's asking my particular view of this, this is a public entity. It's a fine entity. It's open and accountable. It's a model for a lot of other areas and I don't necessarily feel there's a need to bring it before a legislative committee but if members do, that's their prerogative.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think the minister did indicate in that answer that it certainly wouldn't be a priority of

his. Anyway, I just want to follow up on some questions that I asked in question period today of the minister and thank him for his responses and really glad to hear that he does give an ear to his colleagues in the Legislature that may have some issues that they want to bring forward.

If I could just ask the minister if he could provide for me some information on what other major infrastructure projects—and I know that he indicated in his opening remarks that there aren't any provincial highways that run through the city of Winnipeg and, I guess, through any other major centres. So there really isn't a provincial responsibility, but I do know that the Province does get involved from time to time in major infrastructure projects within the city of Winnipeg and within the city of Brandon and other areas.

So, if he might be able to indicate to me what other major projects in the last number of years the Province has been a significant contributor to.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I'll start by focussing in on roads. In this budget, we have a \$29-million allocation that builds on a previous year's \$21-million allocation. This is for funding of regional streets and bridges. This recognized, by the way, the fact—and I did put on the record earlier, the member is quite correct—that within the city of Winnipeg there are no provincial highways. There may be roads that are earmarked. You know, there's—present the Trans-Canada, but, again, that's a City, entirely City responsibility. In Brandon, for example, there are provincial highways going right through Brandon. It's the same case in Thompson and, you know, other communities.

So there was a clear recognition, and this is something that came from City Hall. I mean if you look at what happened, it's been referenced to rapid transit, but the City did indicate one of its priorities was regional streets and bridges.

I'll just maybe scan through this now, not take too much time. Without giving detailed numbers, I can provide that, but, in 2007, in terms of regional streets, total contribution was 13.6 million and included: parts of St. Anne's Road, Bishop Grandin, Corydon, Dakota, Grant Avenue, Henderson Highway, Inkster Boulevard, King Edward Street, Logan Avenue, McGillivray Boulevard, Oak Point Highway, Brookside Boulevard, Pembina Highway, Tuxedo Boulevard, Bond Street, Waverley Street, Corydon Street, Grant Avenue, Henderson Highway,

Higgins Avenue, McPhillips Street, Pembina Highway, Portage Avenue, Portage Avenue East, St. Mary's Road and Buffalo Place. Probably the more significant ones in that group, just in terms of actual financial contributions, were St. Anne's Road, Logan Avenue, Oak Point Highway and Waverley. So those are fairly significant.

There are also residential streets. I'll run through these quickly again and not take too much time: Toronto Street, Victor Street, Riverton Avenue, Marion boulevard, Devon Avenue, Galloway Street, Windermere Avenue, Elizabeth Road, Sweetwater Bay, Sharp Boulevard and Victoria Avenue East.

Again, we are also this year having an increase of 29 million. We've also provided a long-term commitment to continue to fund city regional streets and designated bridges as well recognizing the infrastructure challenges facing the city.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I was thinking of projects like the Kenaston project, also the 18th Street bridge in Brandon: What would the provincial contributions have been to those projects?

Mr. Ashton: I'd have to get the member the numbers. That was actually not true core IGA funding. That's the difference here. This is coming through IGA. That was the Kenaston strategic structured fund and I'd have to go back and perhaps check with the Infrastructure Minister. I'm sure we can get that information for the member.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think I've done that before in the past to the same member and I apologize for that.

I'm wondering if the minister could indicate, then, why his colleague the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) would have sent a letter to him requesting that he get involved in some of the plan and the development of the Disraeli Freeway.

Mr. Ashton: Well, there was a time that, obviously, you wouldn't even think to talk to the IG Minister about roads and bridges in the city of Winnipeg because the government of the day, a certain previous government, really wasn't providing any funding and we obviously have.

By the way, these lists of streets represents needs throughout the city, this represents the needs that are out there and we're currently, obviously, involved again with discussions.

I wouldn't doubt, in the same way that I remember certain members of the opposition

advocating for a certain underpass, that they saw no difficulty in advocating for that underpass. I remember a certain Conservative MLA who, he's undergone a political transformation, that had signs up, I think, saying, phone the Premier's office.

I notice that there was a bit of a northeast Winnipeg aspect to the question. You know what? I mentioned on the record I don't get involved in northeast Winnipeg, southwest, any of those kinds of politics, back and forth.

Clearly, it's the MLA's prerogative, the MLA for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) to raise issues with me. I think the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) on occasion has talked about an occasional city infrastructure issue as well over the years. I'm sure you might want to ask the Member for Elmwood. I don't know if there's some other aspect here to this that I'm missing, but I get letters from MLAs all the time, and I take them seriously. Just as when I get a concern in Thompson that's something the city is dealing with there, I certainly pass it on, and I'll undertake to do that in this particular case.

*(15:20)

By the way, it's important to note that with infrastructure and our long-term commitment—I mentioned this was the last year's list—but we do have \$29 million this year. So we're not precluding that we may indeed be part of this or any other infrastructure program down the line. This is obviously in the early stages of development by the City, but if you look, we've been involved. For example, the Fort Garry bridge, in terms of our funding there.

So we are certainly part of the funding solution for roads, bridges. When I say roads, both residential and regional streets. Like I said, there was a time when you wouldn't even think of the IGA Minister in terms of Winnipeg roads and bridges. You certainly do now, and it doesn't necessarily mean that we have any specific funding earmarked for this or any other future projects, but, you know, I can understand why the MLA for Elmwood or the MLA for River East or previous MLAs with the Kenaston underpass, you know, might think it legitimate to raise the issue with the IGA Minister. I thought it was totally appropriate and I take it seriously, and I would take seriously any of the recommendations that the member has about areas affecting her constituency. I know she's been in the Legislature for some time, and I know that you think globally and you act locally. I know from experience. So, when MLAs come to me and they

have thinking and acting locally as well, we take it seriously.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess I wouldn't always be on the same side of an issue as the Member for Elmwood, but, certainly, when it comes to, you know, trying to ensure that northeast Winnipeg isn't short-changed, I think we both would agree that—and we both are on the same page in wanting to make sure that when there is such a significant infrastructure project being undertaken, that thought is given to making sure that we're doing it with a long-term vision, not a short-term vision and a quick fix that isn't going to meet the needs of the community in the years to come.

So I would just ask the minister whether he knows whether there has been any discussions with his government on partnering in some way with helping the City of Winnipeg to develop or to fix the Disraeli Freeway.

Mr. Ashton: First of all, just going back to the member's previous question, Kenaston underpass, provincial contribution was \$13 million, and while I'm at it, I may as well put these numbers on too, in terms of other infrastructure commitments: waste water, \$25 million; rec facilities, \$17 million. So those are direct contributions under infrastructure.

As I said, we're currently working on 2008. By the way, we also have other capital funds that are put forward. It's not just roads and bridges. We're also looking at flood protection and there are a number of areas that we've identified where that's a challenge. Again, we work with the City on that and, in the case of this particular project or any other project, it's, obviously, at fairly early stages.

I note that there are public hearings. I don't believe the City has even necessarily decided how to proceed yet. So, obviously, that is part of their process, as we do with infrastructure. So I certainly—I'm sure that the member is aware of some of the public documents and the information is out there. My role as minister in this particular case—I mean, if I get concerns, I do take them seriously even if, in this case, the development of the project is with the City of Winnipeg, and I will certainly make sure, if the member has any issues of concern, that we do pass that on to the City.

We have a good working relationship with the City, and, quite frankly, many of the issues raised by municipal leaders often are not strictly municipal issues. They're often provincial, sometimes federal.

You know, sometimes the jurisdictional lines get a little bit blurred, but, if you're concerned about issues in your constituency, that's part of the reality of being an MLA, and the member's got lots of experience to know that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The minister indicated that the budget had been increased to \$29 million, and that's unconditional support for regional streets, bridges, and residential streets for the city?

Mr. Ashton: It's designated and there's, you know, a list of roads that are part of that. What I read on the record was last year's list. There'll be additional, different projects this year. So, in the sense that it's designated in the specific streets identified, I wouldn't say it's unconditional. But, on the other hand, it's all going for roads, all going for bridges. Given the wide variety of projects, the main condition that we're looking at is that it meet the criteria which is, it has to be for a road or for a bridge; it's not for any other purpose. I think that's a very significant commitment, and that \$29 million is probably a long-term commitment too. We've announced in last year's budget that this will be an ongoing commitment over the next several years.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I know when the minister indicated the 2007 work that was done was 13.6 million, but, in his original comments, he said that the budget had increased from 21 million to 29 million. So what's the difference, then, between the 13.6 million that was provided and the 21 million that he indicated was available in the budget?

Mr. Ashton: Yes, that total is the regional residential streets. Actually, that was the list I was reading off and the total with all projects included—I mentioned, for example, the Fort Garry bridge, and there have been a number of other significant projects—is the 21 million. The 29 million will be similar in the upcoming year. It'll be a combination of regional residential streets and bridges.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So, if I have it clear, then, there will be \$29 million expended in this year's budget for the city of Winnipeg for regional streets, for bridges, for residential streets.

Could I also ask, because the minister did indicate that there is a list, is that list provided or does the City choose what the priorities are from the funding? Is there mutual agreement, or how does the process work? Does the Province make the decision on which regional streets and which residential

streets get funded or does the City make those decisions?

Mr. Ashton: Well, put in perspective, by the way, just so the member's aware how significant this contribution is, we've now achieved in this year funding pretty well 50 percent of the street work the City is doing. The key element here, by the way, when I mentioned the 29 million, that's over and above some of the capital contributions through the Building Manitoba Fund which, you know, predates, as the member knows, the current commitments. So there's actually an additional \$7 million.

We will be announcing the projects for 2008 very shortly, so the member will have full access to the process. Essentially, obviously, the City being the relevant authority develops projects. We're obviously involved with discussions, you know, with them, but I must stress again, there are no provincial highways. So, obviously, they identify needs, you know, various projects in the city, and we have been involved with that, but the new list will be out very shortly.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Can we just move on to—and I'll refer to page 48 in the detailed Estimates under Urban Development. On that page it talks about activity identification. There are a couple of funds that are available. There's the Building Communities Initiative, which has two components, a Community Home Renovation Program and a Community Improvement Program.

* (15:30)

I'm wondering if the minister could provide a breakdown. I believe that that was an agreement that was signed between the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba beginning in 2001 and ending in 2007. So that was a \$14-million, cost-shared agreement. It sounds like all of the funds have been expended in the one component, the Community Home Renovation Program. Maybe the minister could just explain to me or provide a breakdown in funding provided to community organizations for specific projects. Is that possible?

Mr. Ashton: Be careful for what you ask for; you might get it. I have a very long list here. I can provide, perhaps, to the member separately, rather than take up time of the committee. Just to explain, I think the member is aware of this, but for other members of the committee, we have initiatives in the inner city, obviously, through Neighbourhoods Alive!. The Building Communities Initiative deals

with the challenges that are in place in other neighbourhoods in Winnipeg, whether it be the commercial side or the housing side, where, obviously, we want to work with the neighbourhoods to see a big difference in terms of community renewal. So there's a wide variety of programs and funds that happen.

I was going to suggest that, if the member would like, I can get a copy of that made. They range in quite a range of projects, but there is also quite a range in terms of specific investments and a lot of work with our community centres, our parks, schools. I think the member, when she looks at the wide variety of projects in place, will see it covers the spectrum, so I have a four-page list that we can get to people.

We also, I should mention, have a commitment from the City. They're interested in renewing the Building Communities Initiative, and we're involved in discussions on that as well because, as the member has pointed out, this has reached its termination in terms of the element of it. So we're certainly very interested in talking to the City because we've seen some very significant improvements through the program. These are not necessarily neighbourhoods that have quite the same definition of need as the Neighbourhoods Alive! neighbourhoods, but part of it is to make sure that we get that renewal before there's any significant decline in some neighbourhoods. Quite frankly, there's a bunch that have aged, too, as well. There's a lot of community infrastructure, community housing that's starting to get much older in different neighbourhoods.

We're certainly interested in talking to the City about renewing the project.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Would the minister be able to get a copy of that and provide it to me, so that if there are any questions around it, I can look through them and, maybe, ask a few more questions?

Mr. Ashton: I can do that. If the member is interested, too, I can also provide a listing of the neighbourhoods that have been identified on the Building Communities Initiative.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is for both components, then, the Community Home Renovation Program and for the Community Improvement Program? So there would be a list of all, then, the projects that have been funded over the period of the agreement?

Mr. Ashton: My suggestion would be under the—not on the community home improvement; those are hundreds of small grants to homeowners. I'm not sure if it would that useful to the member. But the other is to specific projects to schools, community centres, community groups. I'm assuming that's probably of more interest than individual citizens who have received rather small but significant grants under the housing side. We don't have that information on the housing side, but we can certainly get information on the specific community projects, certainly before, I don't know if we are likely to finish Estimates today, but certainly before Estimates tomorrow.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So that is the \$12.5-million Community Improvement Program that you have the listing for. Yes, I would be pleased.

Now, has all of the money from that component of the agreement been expended, or is there still some remaining?

Mr. Ashton: I'm advised there's about \$30,000 left. You do end up with projects that are not proceeded with even when the commitments are made. So there's some small amount of money that's available, largely because of that reason. It's only \$30,000 left. That's one of the reasons we're engaged in discussion about a potential renewal program.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Are we close to any agreement with the City of Winnipeg in negotiations on expanding? I guess I should ask first, is there an evaluation component to the programs? Does the minister feel that it has been money that has been well spent? And if there was to be a new agreement, would it mirror the old one or would there be significant changes?

Mr. Ashton: There has been an evaluation. Certainly, our view and the city's view are that it's been positive. I think that's reflected in the communities that have been impacted.

As we are involved in discussions right now on the potential renewal of the initiative, there may be some changes. It's important to point to some of the similar changes that have taken places in the city since even 2001. We want to make sure that we are up to date with any potential future initiative in terms of communities that perhaps aren't part of the original shoulder communities, as it's called, and are now facing some challenges.

There may be some shift as well in terms of the focus. Once the member has a chance to sort of go through some of the proposals, we certainly are open to advice on some of the challenges. We all know in the city there are aspects of our business community and neighbourhoods that are facing some real challenges. That's one of the advantages of this program. It recognizes that we have a real interest in keeping our communities within the broader context of the city. I'm particularly interested in ways we can work with the business community in certain areas because we certainly are seeing the challenge of shifts in retail, big box stores, malls, and all that can impact on smaller businesses.

We see on the housing side as well too, the aging of housing stock but it—often very small grants and we're able to work with home owners to turn that around. I've always believed that one of the key elements to getting confidence back in a community, actually, the looks of an area can often be fairly significant.

Centring on the community centres, and there's been some significant support that's gone on there. I know the member will know from her own constituency that they play a key role in quality-of-life issues.

We have not set in stone what the program will do other than the fact we're going to build on the existing experience which I think is fairly positive. Anyway, it has been reviewed and we're certainly interested in negotiating an extension.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Is there an evaluation or a report that could be provided? Is it a public document? Is it an internal document, or is it something that can be provided to us so that there's the openness and transparency that should be there with programs that are funded through government?

Mr. Ashton: I certainly don't have any difficulty with that. It is however, a joint program and it is actually administered by the City so I can't commit to them to release it, but will certainly raise that with the City. I think it would be quite useful for people to see what the experience is and we will make sure that we advise the City of that request and I'll get back to the member. Hopefully, there won't be any difficulty with the City releasing that information.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Given that the agreement expired in 2007, maybe the minister could help me find out whether there is an allocation in this year's Estimates for a renewed program. Where that might be?

* (15:40)

Mr. Ashton: We're just trying to get the exact page in the book. It's under the capital commitment of the City of Winnipeg, but it is listed on the document. We'll track down the specific part of it.

Mrs. Mitchelson: If we move to page 54 in the detailed Estimates under Urban Development Initiatives, I'm wondering whether the minister could provide a breakdown for me of all the funding that's been provided to various groups under the Urban Development Initiative.

If we could maybe back up, is this a provincial program and directly administered by the Province and the minister's department, or is this a jointly administered program with the City of Winnipeg?

Mr. Ashton: First of all, page 72 is the specific, another capital assessment of the city of Winnipeg.

If you're talking about UDI, this is a provincial initiative not to confuse it with—you know, we do have federal-provincial, City of Winnipeg agreements. Winnipeg Partnership Agreement is probably the best known example of that. That is a continuation of the various trilateral agreements we've had since the early 1980s and this has been in place, I think, going back many years. You know the rural counterpart is REDI.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So, from that answer, the Urban Development Initiative is a federally administered—I mean provincially administered provincial program solely?

Mr. Ashton: That's correct.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I'm wondering if the minister, then, could provide for me a breakdown of the amount of money that has gone to all of the different organizations or programs over the last, I guess over the last year, the \$24.7 million that was expended last year under Urban Development Initiatives.

Mr. Ashton: Yes. I'll see if we can pull that information together. You know, I assume the member is talking about the last fiscal year? Yes, we can provide—obviously it'll be different parties in this year, but we'll see if we can get some information on some of the recent examples.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So the minister is indicating to me then that there are different initiatives every year under this appropriation. What would the criteria be for funding of these organizations?

Mr. Ashton: Actually, I think the member will recall this. I mean when I mention this is the equivalent of REDI. This goes back, predates obviously '99 it was established I think with the initial—you know the lotteries side and the recognition there needed to be a sort of broader availability of funds for the development and, similar to REDI, it provides support to a wide variety of areas.

Probably the best way—I mean, I can get into some of the details, but, I think, by providing a list of some of the types of projects, the member will see that it supports a lot of government-wide and community-based initiatives and the intent, as is REDI, is to ensure that there is a fairly broad ability to deal with urban development issues, REDI, of course, being the equivalent outside of the Capital Region. We'll try and pull that information together prior to the beginning of Estimates tomorrow.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Can the minister indicate to us whether he's satisfied that the funding that has been provided under the Urban Development Initiative is being spent as it is intended? What evaluation is done? What checks and balances are in place to ensure that the money is spent appropriately?

Mr. Ashton: Well, certainly, and I'll include, by the way, also Neighbourhoods Alive! in the context, just to sort of save repeating this. We do put a significant amount of effort into ensuring accountability for each and every dollar that's spent. We do have agreements on all funds that are transferred to NGOs or the City. We certainly reflect, and it's more of a case in Neighbourhoods Alive! than it would be here, that that does put some requirements on the paperwork side. And I hear this, that there are staff hours and volunteer hours that go into Neighbourhoods Alive!, into filling out forms and the rest. But we take it very seriously, ensuring that any dollars that are transferred anywhere are accounted for. In addition to any of the Treasury Board processes internally, we do have agreements, contribution agreements when we are involved with planning with any outside government or agency.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Is there a template contribution agreement that could be provided on this program?

Mr. Ashton: Yes, I'm sure we can do that, and actually most of the contribution agreements would have very similar themes, but we'll try and get one that gives a reflection of what we do and whether it's like any other activities in the department.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, I would presume that some of the agreements that are made under this program are multi-year agreements I believe. So, if the minister is compiling information from this past year to provide—I'm wondering if he could provide for me whether this past year's funding is part of a multi-year agreement and what year that agreement would run from and to, and what the total commitment would be under the program. Is that possible?

Mr. Ashton: Yes, definitely, and that'll give the member an idea of what is kind of the current scenario and just with the proviso that there may be new initiatives this year. We budget for that and there's an increase, by the way, in terms of the UDI funding which, I think is, a pretty important note. It's one of the reasons why the department has gone up, pretty significant funding. We'll provide that information by department Estimates tomorrow.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank the minister for agreeing to provide that. I just have a document and an issue that I want to raise with the minister. We do know that back in 2002, Treasury Board did approve operating funding to the North End Housing Project under the Urban Development Initiative for, I think it was \$480,000 over a four-year period to facilitate community-based housing renewal in Winnipeg's North End, through the North End Housing Project. That was in 2002. By the year 2004, the North End Housing Project was in deficit of some \$300,000—no, I think by 2003, just a year after the money had been approved under the Urban Development Initiative. Then, in June 2004, there was incremental funding provided again through the Urban Development Initiative for another \$160,000 for the North End Housing Project.

* (15:50)

So I guess my question would be, did the full \$480,000 flow over four years, and the additional \$160,000 in incremental funding flow, and was there any other money subsequent that flowed to the North End Housing Project from the Urban Development Initiative?

Mr. Ashton: Yes. Actually, I think the member correctly identified the 480, the 160. There were no further funds after that. As the member's aware, the Department of Housing did administer. They were involved in direct administration of this with the agency that the member's talking about. I know she's asked various questions about this in the past. This predates my time as minister, but, again, the numbers

are correct, but there was no more funding advanced after the two transfers that the member talks about.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So, if I'm clear then, the full \$480,000 did flow, even though—it was approved in 2002 and it was a four-year commitment, so that commitment would have ended in 2006. Even after the significant deficit and the deficit, the additional grant funding, the money continued to flow to North End Housing Project two years after the deficit financing approval was made?

Mr. Ashton: Yes, I think I identified that the funding was flowed, the 480, over that three-year period the member's talking about.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Could the minister indicate whether he, and I can't remember when he became the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, but, you know, ultimately, ministers do change, but policies and practices within government very often stay the same.

Can the minister indicate whether there are any other instances in his department where the same kind of activity would have taken place and that funding that had been approved—I don't know how to say this except to say that, obviously, when an organization was funded and one year into a four-year agreement, they were experiencing a deficit higher than the money that they had already received from government. Did alarm bells not ring? Were there red flags that were raised? Are there other instances where this kind of activity is occurring and government is continuing to turn a blind eye, yet, to these kinds of activities?

Mr. Ashton: Well, I think it's important to note here, and there's a distinction, for example, within the department between Neighbourhoods Alive!, where we directly administer the program and where we are responsible through that direct administration, you know, for our relationship with various neighbourhood renewal corporations, through our funding programs with various community organizations. So where we have a direct relationship and UDI, which is, obviously, a provincial initiative, or, in some cases, we have bilateral initiatives, you know, City of Winnipeg and the Province.

We mentioned that earlier where they actually administer it, or we have some cases three governments, through the WPA, so there is a difference in this case between funds that are directly administered by the department and/or they're administered by another department. There's a cost

recovery from this or any other budget line. In this case, this was administered by the Department of Housing. I think the member is aware of that and has asked questions on this, fairly detailed questions, and, as such, they were the relevant department in terms of the agreement and administration of the program with the funded agency.

That's no different from a whole series of other lines we have in the department where we essentially are advancing specific capital through other departments or to other budget lines. So there is a difference between where we directly administer the grant and the program and interface with the community organizations such as Neighbourhoods Alive!, and in this case, this particular case that we're talking about, it was the Department of Housing that was the responsible government department. I mean it was a Housing initiative and, certainly, while it fit within the parameters of UDI, you know, the essential administration of it was through Housing.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That leads me to, then, a few more questions because how many other grants through the Urban Development Initiative are partnerships with the Department of Housing or other departments within government where the grant from Intergovernmental Affairs is only a small portion or a portion of grants provided from other departments?

Mr. Ashton: Well, I mean it's no different here or through, say, Neighbourhoods Alive! where often Neighbourhoods Alive! funding is a part of funding that community organizations receive. They often, you know, receive funding from other governments. They receive private funding. So, clearly, each case is unique and each one goes through, you know, relevant determination in terms of, obviously, what the parameters are of the application in terms of the funding that's provided.

But, in this particular case, clearly, if you have a Housing initiative and the recovery is through UDI, I think it was, you know, very clear that we're not the Housing Department. We have various expertise, you know, very good people in the department, but the lead department on Housing is Department of Family Services and Housing, and that's been the case for many years.

It's no different with Neighbourhoods Alive!, where we would provide some funding, you know, through our Neighbourhood Housing Assistance.

You know we have small grants, for Front and Paint programs. You know we have housing co-ordinators that are out there, you know, through the development corporation, but essentially when it comes to the core housing programs those are offered by the Department of Housing. In many cases, as a fact, it's no different when the member was in government and issues are often a combination of available federal money, when available, provincial money, perhaps, even in some cases City of Winnipeg, and you know, the key element here is which department is the lead department and then the specific questions that the member is asking. It was the Department of Housing that had the expertise and was directly involved with the agency that was involved, and I think that's only reasonable. I think that our department has a lot of very skilled people in it, but we're not the Housing Department.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But then, again, my question would be—I mean, \$480,000 is a significant amount of money. Are you saying that these kinds of grants are given on a regular basis through the Urban Development Initiatives by your department when there's no expertise to evaluate whether it's good use of tax dollars?

Does Housing demand or direct, through this program, expenditure of funds? And then, how would your department get into a bailout to cover a deficit with this organization? I mean, somewhere there has to be the accountability, and it's not good enough for the minister to say, well, it was a Department of Housing initiative, and there's no expertise in the department to know whether it's a good use of tax dollars or not a good use of tax dollars.

How do we rationalize or justify an expenditure of \$480,000 without the due diligence that's needed? And were there any flags raised by his department when this grant was provided?

* (16:00)

Mr. Ashton: Well, I'm not sure how things worked when the member was in government, but we have one provincial government. We have, we said we had one taxpayer. We don't duplicate across department functions that, in this case, were clearly responsibility in terms of Housing. If the member would look at it, in this department, we have numerous programs that involve capital. I ran through the gamut where we either directly administer where we are involved. Neighbourhoods

Alive!, that's the expertise and it's the jurisdiction of this department. And in other cases, I'll give the member the example, the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement where that is a three-government initiative and there are various reporting processes put into place there.

So the bottom line is, you know, I think the minister's raised questions, and that's standard practice. My suggestion to the member is she should be asking those questions directly to Housing, which is responsible for the administration of the project. There's one provincial government and, you know, you don't have every department tripping all over itself in terms trying to do that. We've been trying to eliminate some of the silos in government and members opposite have on occasions hammered away where we've had one department seemingly saying something and another department saying another.

So, in this particular case, there's the central accountability that goes through any budget processes. The member knows that, you know, Treasury Board, Cabinet, reporting requirements here in Estimates, the Auditor General has a role. So there's a broad macro scrutiny that goes into that. There are various accountability measures that are built into that all the way through. But in terms of the interface with the funded agency, again, you'll find that it hasn't changed since the member was in office as well. You have the lead department and in this case, we had a housing initiative and surprise, surprise, it was the Housing Department.

So, you know, it's not that there isn't due diligence or scrutiny and it's not that the member opposite doesn't have the perfect right to raise questions about the level of that or all the way through it. But any one of our capital programs and grant programs in this particular department, but the key thing, and the member knows this, the key thing that we have done across government is in terms of with funded agencies, and I know it's not an easy thing for funded agencies. And this applies not just to UDI, and doesn't apply just to housing, but the member knows, issues in terms of, you know, Family Services, another area that she knows quite well from previous involvement.

The bottom line is, here, we do have agreements with funded agencies and, you know, I hear it from agencies in my own area. The crisis centre, I met with them a couple of years ago. There's a lot more scrutiny that's out there and I think that's what

members opposite wanted to see. That's what we wanted to see. I wouldn't want the member to be of the view that there's not due diligence. There is. Or that there isn't financial accountability. There is.

But, in this particular case, if you have a housing grant, the Housing Department has the expertise in terms of Housing and the administration of housing programs. They do evaluations and they make decisions in terms of the particular relationship with this or any other agency based on that. The member has every right to raise those issues, but the lead department, again, is highways, not Department of Intergovernmental Affairs. You know, we may be involved indirectly with Housing, but we do not have—we're in the planning assessment community renewal side of things within government, not actual direct administration of housing programs. But where we can help out through IGA programs, we will.

By the way, we've done a lot, a lot of things like community-based housing through some of the IGA-funded programs. Do we deliver it directly? No. We also don't hammer the nails in and put the doors on and build the houses either, but, again, I'd rather you go with the people who have the expertise there. If you want to build houses, it's usually people in the construction business and, if you want to administer a housing program, it's usually the Housing Department.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That was an interesting answer, and talked around in circles a lot. I'm not sure we got any answer. Could the minister then, while he's compiling a list of the grants that have been provided under the Urban Development Initiative set, indicate how many and which ones have been partnerships with the Department of Housing?

Mr. Ashton: We've undertaken to provide a list, and they'll be part of that list.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I know the minister was in Education Estimates the other day when I was asking about the police in schools program, so I'm here to follow up on my questions from there. I'm sure the minister recalls what I was asking, but, just to put it on the record, it sounds like a very good school program. It is happening in a number of locations in Manitoba. I know that a North End School Resource Officer program began as a pilot in 2002, and it placed three Winnipeg Police Service members in 15 north-end schools for a three-year period. It was cost-shared then between

the Province, the police and the school division. When that project ended in '05, the program was renewed for another three years with all three partners eventually agreeing to continue funding the program.

Then in '07, three more officers were announced for the Winnipeg School Division, Gordon Bell High School, Hugh John Macdonald school and six downtown elementary schools. After a lot of encouragement and pushing from concerned south-end parents, a South District School Resource Officer program was introduced serving Churchill, Grant Park and Kelvin and two junior highs in south central Winnipeg. Again, the Province made a commitment over three years, in this instance from the Neighbourhoods Alive! program to provide funding for these three additional officers.

I understand that, also, Brandon has received that same consideration following their request. In 2006, there was funding. Now, I notice that the announcements seems to have been made by the Attorney General, and they were supporting the Brandon Police Service with two more officers. The funding added will create a new school resource officer position. The second position was for a new criminal investigator position. This school resource officer was going to work in Brandon's elementary and junior high schools.

There seems to be a precedent, certainly, set in terms of supporting the requests that have come forward, and I think a lot of the school communities are feeling that this is something that is very beneficial for the students, but also for the teachers and then also for the communities in a broader sense.

The minister would probably know that Pembina Trails School Division requested that consideration be also given to them. It was approved in their budget by the school division board of trustees, and they've approved it as a three-year pilot. They're very hopeful that something might be put into place this fall. Behind this request coming from the Pembina Trails School Division, there was a very, very significant parent group that was behind this project. It represents a lot of the schools in the community. They've been driving this project from the very beginning, and there's a significant number of schools that are totally supportive of this.

My question to the minister will be: Will he be supportive of this project in Pembina Trails and commit the government to following through on their

request as has been committed with all these other schools in Manitoba?

Mr. Ashton: Well, the member's quite correct. I did happen to sit in on the discussion of it. I'm not mentioning anybody's absence here, but I can mention people's presence of the members here and so is the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), so it seems to be kind of replicating itself here in another committee.

* (16:10)

First of all, I'm a big fan of school resource offices. We have one in Thompson, by the way, not funded through Neighbourhoods Alive! or directly through the Province. There's an RCMP officer, Lois Cormier, who does a terrific job, in my former high school, R.D. Parker Collegiate.

I also believe that in Brandon, by the way, funding is not through Neighbourhoods Alive! to my knowledge. It's probably through Brandon's direct allocation of the transfer. We are doing more police officers in Brandon similar to what we're doing in Winnipeg. Second of all, we have expanded the program beyond the original Neighbourhoods Alive! community, so that is quite correct. We certainly are open to further expansion. I know I've had interest expressed by other MLAs, too, in the city, MLA for St. Norbert, MLA for Fort Garry, and I know the MLA for Charleswood is now raising that.

Really, any school districts that are interested, we'd be open to receiving applications. I do want to stress, by the way, that in other jurisdictions, this is a direct initiative usually of the relevant police force itself, and I actually am hopeful that the City of Winnipeg police force itself will see the value of placing police in our schools.

I want to stress, by the way, what I've seen happen in my own community, so I can talk best about Thompson, is that it's not what some people think it is when it starts. It's not an acknowledgement of some dramatic crime problem in schools. It's really about connecting with kids, and I was actually talking to the school resource officer in Thompson on the weekend about how she's been working with kids who are under a lot of pressure to join gangs, one in particular. She said, you've got to get to them before the gangs do. Part of it is seeing the police not as the problem, but seeing it as part of the solution.

They're actually now working not only in the high school but in at least one of the elementary

schools, because there is increasing recognition that when kids are involved with gangs, it doesn't start in high school anymore. It's earlier than that. Getting that trust is huge, so I'm a big fan of it. I've taken the member's comments that she's a fan of it. Well, we're more than open to specific proposal and the reason that I mention the caveat about the city of Winnipeg is that I actually think that this is something that— you know, it's like community policing generally. I'm not telling the City how to run the police department. That's a major responsibility, but part of dealing with crime is about prevention. I don't know of anything that's been more effective than getting police officers in school developing decent relationships and human relations with people, and we're certainly interested in expanding the program.

Mrs. Driedger: I certainly see it as a prevention program too. We had a community officer that made himself very, very available. He was with the Winnipeg Police Service and he made himself very available as a community officer in our schools. It made a tremendous difference because the children learned from a younger age what it meant to talk to a police officer, be able to turn to them for support and help and advice. It was changing the whole dynamic in a school. It was a school in a bit of a troubled area, and this police officer made a significant impact on the school and the community.

When he retired from the police service, the school had a party for him. It's been a long time since I've ever seen anything like that. The community came out and it was an incredible experience to be a part of that. They put on a performance and the children wrote poems and read statements and there was music and food and they were very supportive. If there was ever an example of what we can do to get in front of issues, this was a really great example of it.

So I am very supportive of that school resource officer program. I would indicate that I think the government has created a precedent in terms of the programs that they already have funded through the government. I appreciate what the minister said that Thompson is doing it on their own, but precedence has been set by the government in terms of all the other ones that they have funded. I'm just asking for, I guess, fairness from the government in terms of the request now that has come from Pembina Trails School Division because, I think, it is coming down to a fairness issue now. It's been supported before, and I would hope that this government would take the request from the Pembina Trails School Division

into account. I know the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) has been made aware of it. I hope that this minister will champion this request and treat Pembina Trails School Division as fairly as the other ones have been treated and provide them with the resources they need to move forward with this.

I think it will have a significant impact. We have a lot of high schools in our area where it could make a difference and, hopefully, there might be a ripple effect into other schools, as well. But we're dealing with a lot of kids in our area and, as much as prevention is a part of it, we also have seen incidents at schools where, had an officer been available, there would have been quicker reaction to some serious incidents.

So I would encourage the minister to look at this and, in fairness, also fund this request.

Mr. Ashton: I do want to stress that what did happen here is we did start by focussing on Neighbourhoods Alive! areas, the high-needs schools that are out there. We certainly have recognized that, however, there are needs outside of Neighbourhoods Alive! areas, and we continue to be involved with that. Again, we're certainly more than open to it. There are, obviously, some limitations on the budget side, but it's interesting how we can have partisan disagreements on some things, but I don't think this is one where you'll see much disagreement.

I know you're connected to the community. You see what's going on. You really see the value of getting out ahead of it. The only reason I want to stress, by the way, earlier, that if you get a school resource officer, it doesn't mean it's a problem school. I've heard that. There's a bit of a reluctance at first and, you know what, when I look at my own high school, it has a school resource officer, and there are some challenges. But, when I was in high school, there were challenges, too. I think we tend to forget that a lot of things happen.

I do want to stress, by the way, that we're not just in the school resource officer side of it, and I'm very proud of the fact, for the first time, funded rec directors in the inner city. Because, quite frankly, a lot of those kids we talk about have less available to them now than they did 20 or 30 years ago. There's a lot you can do on the prevention side by giving kids things to do, positive alternatives, and giving them what the school resource officers do, as well, which is a sense of their own security. But, also, quite frankly, what I noticed is that a lot of the students

start looking at the school resource officers as role models.

What's interesting, I was talking to one of the city of Winnipeg police who's been involved in the school resource officer, and you're right about that, sort of, connection that's out there. You get kids, he said, and they go from, they're afraid of you day one, because they've, sort of, had this sense that maybe you're someone they should stay away from. At the end, he said, there were kids that would come out, and say, I want to be just like you. Maybe that's what we need more of.

Mrs. Driedger: Can I just indicate that, when the minister is making his grant cheque to the Pembina Trails School Division, if I could join him?

Mr. Ashton: I'm tempted to say that that sounds like an offer I can't refuse. I love the way the member is jumping ahead but, in all seriousness, a number of school divisions have indicated an interest, and I may suggest to the member is to make sure that the school district, in particular, is contacting our department. Can contact my office. We're certainly open to expansion of the program. So thanks very much.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I just have a couple of questions concerning the City of Winnipeg waste-water treatment facilities upgrade. I know the City of Winnipeg is estimating the total cost, roughly, around \$1.8 billion. In the recent budget that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) brought forward, he indicated that the provincial government would be covering one-third of the cost of those facilities, yet went further on and was quoted as promising \$235 million toward the project.

I'm wondering if the minister could explain these numbers. Is it that the government is committed to one-third of the funding, one-third of the 1.8, or is it that they're only committing to the \$235 million?

* (16:20)

Mr. Ashton: Well, I can speak to the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) when the CEC report comes in on the city of Winnipeg waste water and, certainly, in my current capacity as Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs.

First of all, it's important to go back to why the Clean Environment Commission held the hearings it did and came up with the result it did. That was, essentially, that the city of Winnipeg facilities were not licensed. They should have gone to licensing in 1993; they didn't. They did go to hearings and the

result of the hearings was essentially requirements to license the three city of Winnipeg waste-water facilities.

The government at the time indicated agreement of principle on that, in support in terms of that. In fact, now the City of Winnipeg has received the first of its licences, I believe, for the west end plant. So they are in the process of upgrading their waste-water treatment facilities.

It's also important, by the way, to indicate that there were two components to the Clean Environment Commission hearings.

The second was the combined sewer overflow system. As the member is probably aware, in the older part of the city, there's combined overflow system going into the Clean Environment Commission hearings. The City of Winnipeg said it had a 50-year-plan for fazing them out. That was certainly indicated to be not sufficient in terms of the Clean Environment Commission.

The key element we're talking about here is the waste-water treatment facilities, the licensing and the removal of both nitrogen and phosphorous. I appreciate, by the way, that there's political debate over this. I know the members opposite, in fact, both opposition parties have put forward the position that we should ignore the Clean Environment Commission licensing, which requires removal of both nitrogen and phosphorous. That is proceeding.

Notwithstanding the situation in the construction industry and notwithstanding that we do not yet have a federal commitment to the full cost of the three waste-water treatment facilities, we have indicated our support for that. We have previously committed, by the way, \$28.8 million to infrastructure funding. It's important to note, by the way, that the three waste-water treatment facilities, the completion date for this is the year 2014.

So what the City was looking to the Province for is what we came forward with, which is a commitment as we proceed over the next number of years to full waste-water treatment to that cost.

I just quickly, I'm not trying to extend the discussion here, but I just want to stress that what we're doing here is no different than what we're doing with—every single major city in western Canada has this treatment. Quite frankly, many U.S. cities have the same sort of treatment as well.

We have licensed waste-water treatment. We put that commitment in. Obviously, we're still looking to the federal government to be there, but our commitment is there in terms of waste-water treatment facilities. There's the long-term issue that combines for overflow system that is in place, but now, and up to and including 2014, the city of Winnipeg will have significantly better waste-water treatment. As a result, that's good for the environment; it's good for Lake Winnipeg.

By the way, the city of Winnipeg will become—it's the single largest point source of nutrients as a result of the waste-water treatment plants. It will now be the single largest reduction in nutrients going into Lake Winnipeg, partly through licensing and partly because of our commitment to be there as partners with the City and the federal government too, to get the job done.

Mrs. Stefanson: It doesn't sound to me that your provincial government is actually committed towards one-third of the funding then. We're talking about \$235 million now. Now, it sounds like this is going to be \$235 million over the next six years to 2014. This is, as in today's dollars, expected to be a \$1.8-billion deal. The \$235 million is no where near one-third of the \$1.8 billion, let alone the longer and longer and longer we have to wait to get this facility upgraded and completed. I think that the provincial government—it's incumbent upon the provincial government to live up to its one-third that was mandated by its government to the city of Winnipeg, and this is five years after the Clean Environment Commission report came out, and yet, only now is the government announcing that they're potentially going to cover one-third. Well, this doesn't even come close to one-third.

Now, we're sort of hearing—if I am hearing correctly from the minister—that this \$235 million, announced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), is not going to be now towards the \$1.8 billion, it's going to be over the next six years. Well, six years from now the project is going to be three or four billion dollars because we're going to wait and wait and wait, and it'll never actually get done.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

The minister—and my question for him would be: Is the \$235 million what the government is committing over the next six years, or how much out

of this budget, out of this Estimates process, and where would we find how much money is going toward this waste-water treatment facility out of this specific budget?

Mr. Ashton: Well, I'm disappointed the member continues to lump in waste-water treatment and the combines from overloads system, continues to ignore the fact that, quite frankly, if this had been built in the 1990s, it would have been built for a lot cheaper price. But the previous government didn't think it was important enough to license the City of Winnipeg even though the Clean Environment Commission had called for hearings in 1993, okay?

So it was this government, in fact, the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) was Minister of Conservation, that sent it to the Clean Environment Commission. The Clean Environment Commission held hearings and there are two components to the significant improvement to waste water. The first is licencing and construction of state-of-the-art waste-water treatment plants. Now, by the way, the opposition still doesn't agree with that. The opposition doesn't believe that we should be following through with the removal of nitrogen, which I find interesting. We're being sort of criticized here on the funding side, but they don't even want to do the full nutrient removal.

But, quite frankly, we already have the first licensing in place. This construction project is being run by the City. It's over the next number of years. This is a significant overhaul to the waste-water system. By the way, we're not just funding the city of Winnipeg, we're involved with the city of Brandon as well—Neepawa, in terms of improvements to waste water there. There have been improvements to waste-water treatment at the R.M. of Gimli, a very significant improvement.

So it used to be that—the federal politics of years gone by, it was what's a million? It seems like the opposition has problems with the magnitude of the billions, whether it's east-west power grids or on the waste-water infrastructure.

I don't know what part of licensing for the first time the city of Winnipeg waste water that the opposition doesn't get.

I don't know what part of following up on the Clean Environment Commission recommendations to license removal of both phosphorus and nitrogen

the opposition doesn't get, because quite frankly, they oppose removing nitrogen.

I don't know why we should be any different from major cities across western Canada, because they all do that, or why we should expect to have any credibility in the U.S. dealing with water-quality issues, when for years people used to point at us—including people in Devils Lake—and say, you don't have adequate waste-water treatment.

I don't know what part of any credibility on dealing with Lake Winnipeg you can have without the waste-water reduction, but we're doing it. Our commitment is based on the costs that the City has put forward. The City is going to construct this. They operate it. They will be basically required to under the licence.

The real question here is in terms of where is the federal government going to be, quite frankly, and we have concerns there, given the fact that the federal government now is doing everything possible to get out of its commitment and the previous government's commitment on the floodway to phase 2. In fact, they want to take the floodway money out of general infrastructure.

But, again, as we proceed, we already have put \$28.8 million in place and, as the City proceeds in this budget, for example—in fact, in 2006-2007, we provided \$8.2 million; 2007-2008, a further \$8.5 million for Winnipeg waste-water projects. So we think our commitment of the one-third to the waste-water treatment through the three treatment plants is very significant and, quite frankly, our money has already been there through our portion of the infrastructure commitment. As this proceeds over 2014—by the way, that's not our timetable. It's not even fair to say it's the city's timetable. That is essentially what the licensing process required the City to do, which is to move ahead. Unless you're willing to challenge the licensing process, and I know the members opposite have on nitrogen, we think it's the right thing to do, and we are there for the one-third of the waste-water treatment plant.

*(16:30)

Now the combined sewer overflow system, I want to mention this again, because the member keeps lumping the two of them in together, I'd suggest the member read the Clean Environment Commission report and look at the timing that the City itself has put forward, both in terms of its immediate licensing requirements—the priority there

being the waste-water treatment plants—and its long-term plans on the combined sewer overflow system, which the Clean Environment Commission said a 50-year plan was not good enough. That indeed will be, as the member knows, the next phase of the upgrading of the city's system.

But we're there. We're already there in terms of funding, and we already have put funding in. If one looks at the current stage of construction, you'll see that the amount of money we've already put in is in keeping with the provincial share. The City is gearing up construction over the next number of years. The west end plant is already licensed. There are some more significant investments coming in the upcoming years. We've indicated we're there. We don't know where the federal government is, but certainly we're working with the City.

I mean, I don't know what part of licensing and delivering on waste water the opposition doesn't get. I know they don't agree with it, but our commitment is there.

Mrs. Stefanson: How much money is committed by this minister's government department within this budget for the upgrade of the waste-water treatment facilities in the city of Winnipeg to deal with the Clean Environment Commission report that has to do with the upgrade on the phosphorus and nitrogen?

Mr. Ashton: Well, appropriation 15.6, it's a capital appropriation where, again, there's funding available. The way it works is the City constructs the west end treatment plant, or any other treatment plant, and they come to us in terms of the costs.

The member should be aware that one of the issues for the City has been logistical. I think, if the member was to talk to the City, you know, it's like with any particular capital project. It's like the floodway. You have certain stages where there's a higher degree of construction that takes place. This, there'll be provincial money flowed over the time period of 2014. I've indicated what we've flowed thus far. The amount that'll be flowed this year will depend very much on the level of construction this year, but we already have provincial money put in place, and we will continue to have provincial money put in place.

By the way, the mayor of the city of Winnipeg has acknowledged that this is, I think he called it a good first start. I think that's because, just like anyone would expect, the mayor is going to, I'm sure, be back on the combined sewer overflow. The

key thing is look at the Clean Environment Commission and look at what the City is doing right now. We're doing waste-water plants. As the City proceeds to meet the 2014 deadline, the Province has been there with assistance, both through our share of the infrastructure project and through capital grants to the city.

Mrs. Stefanson: What page in the Estimates book would we be able to find out how much money is committed from this government department's budget, for this budget, how much of it is committed toward the upgrade of the waste-water treatment facilities in the city of Winnipeg to deal with the phosphorus and nitrogen issue? Tell us how much goes toward that, because I've asked this question and I'm not sure why the minister isn't answering it.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I believe the member has asked questions in the Infrastructure Department.

I mentioned earlier, our commitment through the infrastructure program, the \$28.8 million. Again, that's with the west end plant that flows as expenditures are submitted. That's the Department of Infrastructure. We have a separate Department of Infrastructure and Transportation. The member knows that.

We are involved, obviously, through this department in our relations with the City. The licensing is through the Department of Conservation, but, as we proceed over the next number of years, in terms of that, I wanted to give the member a bit of a clearer picture, because I don't think it's good enough to go around and quote figures, \$1.8 billion, and deliberately confuse the combined sewer overflow system and the water treatment plant system, because the Clean Environment Commission licensing requirement that is being dealt with by the City right now and has been the subject of all the discussions, has been in terms of the West End treatment plant and then moving on to the other treatment plants.

The money that has flowed, again, is depending on the level of construction in that year, and I can, perhaps as part of Estimates tomorrow, get the member a better indication from our knowledge of the current city schedule in terms of that. I will undertake, perhaps through the Infrastructure Department, I'm sure we can get some sense of what the flow is, but, I mean, the money that is forwarded under the initial commitment, and this is not a future commitment. The commitment that was put in place, the previous \$28.8 million, the first part of it, again, is through the infrastructure funding, and I believe

that minister's had his Estimates already. I don't know if there was discussion there of the cash flow, but I'm sure I can, if it wasn't asked or wasn't provided, we can get information on what has flown.

I did outline, certainly, my understanding and I'm not directly involved, obviously, with the administration of the infrastructure program, but in terms of the funds that have already flowed to the City of Winnipeg and, again, this year, it will depend very much on what portion of the work is completed in this year. That's the way infrastructure funding works. We don't send out funding through any of the infrastructure programs before the work is done. The work is done and then the infrastructure programs provide that money.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I have asked the same question in the Estimates process from the Intergovernmental Affairs Minister. I've asked the Water Stewardship Minister. I've asked the Conservation Minister. You know, I've asked the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger)—*[interjection]* Yeah, of Infrastructure as well. I've asked all of these ministers, nothing of which is coming from their government departments. They all point to you.

So I guess that's why I'm here today to ask how much, out of this specific budget, and you know, I'm just wondering if the minister could just point us to the page within the Estimates book as to where we would find this figure that is going towards the upgrade of the waste—you know, what is committed for this year, estimated to be put towards the expenditure for this year, to upgrade the provincial portion toward the upgrade of the waste-water treatment facility?

Mr. Ashton: Well, you know, if there's any confusion here, I think it starts from the member continuing to talk about \$1.8 billion. That is not the cost of upgrading the waste-water treatment plants, the three plants. That is not what is going to be expended up until 2014.

The member's mixing in the combined sewer overflow system, which is for future change by the City and the waste-water treatment plants. I think the member is also not recognizing the fact that, essentially, and I can just, in this case, I'm not directly responsible in terms of dealing with this issue, but the first step, following the Clean Environment Commission, obviously, was the licensing requirement. Then the City has been going

through the engineering work and some of the development. It's still an early stage in the project, but there is funding that is already in place, and this is early on in the project.

This is the year 2008. You know, there will be significant cash requirements, obviously, in upcoming years, but currently, we do have infrastructure funding through the infrastructure agreement. I think that's critical that that is, in fact, been flowing, and I think I gave the member an indication of some of the money that already flowed, but what I would suggest is, if the member wishes, I will give her a list of the specific dollar amounts that have flowed over the past couple of years.

I stress, again, this is still very early on in the project, and, as that infrastructure initial allocation is depleted, we certainly look to the federal government to partner along with the Province. We will be there. We've said that we want to be part of a trilateral agreement, and, again, the initial funding—but the key thing here, by the way, is we're dealing with 2008. We recognize 2009 and, moving forward to 2014, there'll be continuing expenditures. That's why we do need a renewed commitment from the federal government. We're at the table, and our Premier's (Mr. Doer) said that, and I don't know what part of our commitment, going into 2014 with \$28.8 million already budgeted for through the infrastructure agreement—it was public knowledge. I think we announced that what?—a couple of years ago as a government. I'm not sure what the member's difficulty is with this because, you know, we're not looking at a budget here for the year 2014; we're looking at 2008. In the year 2008, we're licensing; we've already got the first licence. We are providing funding for the initial stages, and we will be at the table partnering with the City up until the year 2014.

* (16:40)

You know, I'm really surprised that the members opposite continue to fight the reality of this. The reality is they did nothing about waste-water treatment in the province, didn't even license it. We're licensing it and more than that, we're there with the City on phase one and we'll be involved with discussions in terms of combined sewer overflow when we've reached that point.

But, if the member again looks at the Clean Environment Commission report, there is no work being done on the combined sewer overflow system this year because the licensing requirement from the

Clean Environment Commission was for the waste-water treatment plant. So the City sat down with us on the waste-water treatment plant, us as a government, and we have said we're there for our one-third of the waste-water treatment plant. That's not 1.8 billion. I know the members opposite have problems with those extra zeroes on the billions. You know, what's a billion? You know what? To my mind it's a big difference because you know—*[interjection]* Well, what the member doesn't get, there is no work being currently done on the combined sewer overflow system. That is the next capital requirement that the city's going to be involved with. There is work being done on the waste-water treatment plant. We're there for a third.

So, you know, I'm surprised that the member opposite is still trying to find some political angle out of this. You know, the reality is there was no licensing; now there is. There was no work on waste-water treatment plant in the city of Winnipeg; now there is. The Province is there through infrastructure funding up until this year, 2008; we will be there from 2008 to 2014, and I just hope that the federal government will be there as well. Either way, we're there to back up the City of Winnipeg, and I think, you know what? Most citizens in the city of Winnipeg and I think, citizens of our province, understand that that's how you do it. You know, you get in, you license, you protect the environment, and you provide cost-shared funding. We're doing it.

We'll look at the combined sewer overflow system, you know, once we're done fixing up all the waste-water treatment plants that should have been fixed up 10 years ago. I can assure the member that we'll look at further improvements on waste water. But really, the members opposite don't have a lot to lecture us about when it comes to waste water in the city of Winnipeg, believe you me.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, could the minister just again take us back to the page that he indicated—the funding for the city of Winnipeg for waste-water treatment is what page?

Mr. Ashton: It's appropriation 15.6 under Infrastructure Programs. That's not in our Estimates, but that's the Infrastructure Program. I keep stressing again that the Infrastructure Department is obviously involved with the administration of the Infrastructure Programs. But you know, the key thing to stress here again, and as we proceed, and this is 2008, what we're dealing with right now are the commitments that have been on the table, and our commitment up

until now is on the table. As we proceed from 2008 to 2014, we've already said that we will be there. We've given the specific commitment, and we would like to see another infrastructure program with the federal government at the table from 2008 to 2014.

Again, we're flowing money. We're licensing. We're improving the waste-water treatment plant. This is only 2008. By the year 2014, we'll have a state-of-the-art waste-water system in the city of Winnipeg. From 2008 to 2014, we'll be flowing provincial money. So, again, our infrastructure commitment is already there through the first step, but it's like anything else. Rome wasn't built in a day; neither are waste-water treatment plants, and that's why we went and sat down with the City and well in advance of each budget year. We didn't say, wait until our 2013 budget. I know the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) was talking about, you know, the next three terms. I mean, I don't think that way. I don't even like to think, sort of, ahead to year to year.

What the City of Winnipeg wanted and what the City of Winnipeg got was money on the table for the initial cash flow requirements. Done. And a longer-term commitment as the cash flow goes over to 2014. Done. Now, the real question will be: Will the federal government follow through on the provincial and City of Winnipeg governments' commitment to waste-water treatment? That's the real question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Is there anything in this minister's budget for the city of Winnipeg for waste-water treatment facilities? Is there a penny?

Mr. Ashton: There was a cash flow from the department earlier and this pre-dates the infrastructure agreement of \$3.8 million. There was a specific infrastructure commitment, our portion of that. This was made by the previous federal government, if the member will remember, was for \$28.8 million, if the member will remember the discussion with the Kenaston underpass. It was said that the, you know, the same time period, so we have pre-committed the first phase. Our money is there in terms of the first phase.

But my point, again, is from 2008, 2014, there'll be significant construction by the City of Winnipeg on the waste-water treatment plant, and what we have said is we want to see an extension of the infrastructure problem so it's not just our money, provincial money, and the city's money on the table, but the federal government.

Again, we were involved prior to the infrastructure program, but up until now there's been a flow of our pre-commitment of \$28.8 million and that certainly deals with some of the initial cash flow needs, but we recognize this. We've said right from day one, that we need a broader commitment. We don't want the city of Winnipeg taxpayers to have to pick up two-thirds of the bill because the federal government doesn't want to be at the table in terms of this. That's why we have said to the City, and you can ask the mayor, ask city council, they've been very clear on their views of this. You know, our money is there through the infrastructure program and we will be there to work with the City of Winnipeg to get the job done.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So the minister, with that answer, has just indicated to me that there isn't a penny in his budget this year for the city of Winnipeg for waste-water treatment. Is that correct?

Mr. Ashton: I've indicated that the Province, through its commitment of the infrastructure funding, has committed it through the Infrastructure and Transportation Department.

An Honourable Member: Just say yes or no.

Mr. Ashton: Well, no, you know what, I get back to the fact that members opposite, through their question, seem to have the difficulty that I do. There's one provincial government. There's one taxpayer and one provincial government. Our provincial government—and the line item and I gave the member the line item, it's line 15(6), not through the ongoing capital requirements of this government. We are involved with flood protection, by the way, and other issues of capital with the city.

I've said 10 times, and, you know, if the member will recall right from day one on Infrastructure—the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) has a commitment already for the first part of that. Period.

Mr. Pedersen: Well, I'd like to ask a couple of questions, but I'm afraid of long answers and we'll run overtime here, so I'm going to try. I'm going to try. The questions will be very short and it's—*[interjection]*—it's short snappers, and I'm asking for short-snapper answers because it doesn't have to do with waste water, but it does have to do with livestock operations policies.

An Honourable Member: Oh, short answers on livestock operations policy.

Mr. Pedersen: How many R.M.s and planning districts have actually filed their livestock policies, and how many has he actually signed?

Mr. Ashton: To save time, I will get that information to the member before Estimates tomorrow.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you. Emergency livestock planning, disposal planning. Has the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs been involved with the AMM or municipalities in coming up with a disposal plan in case of mass—for an animal disease outbreak and mass disasters?

Mr. Ashton: I spoke too soon. I can actually give the information to the previous question now. Complete, 60; and under review, 24; project initiated, 45; limited progress, 12, for a total of 97. That's status of development plan amendments to livestock operation policies.

In response to the immediate question from the member, our involvement, quite frankly, has been in terms of co-ordinating with the federal government to make sure they're involved, but Ag is the lead department on that. But we certainly do recognize that it is an issue of concern. The municipalities have raised it, not directly with me, but I know they've raised it with government.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions on the floor, we will move to resolutions.

Resolution 13.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$37,667,200 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Community Planning and Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,741,700 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Provincial-Municipal Support Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$205,712,500 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Financial Assistance to Municipalities, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,400,000 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Emergency Measures Organization, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$185,000 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Cost Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Resolution agreed to.

Consideration of Minister's Salary. Last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 13.1.(a) the Minister's Salary contained in Resolution 13.1.

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

The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I'm extremely tempted to reduce the minister's salary to zero and have the big dollars that he gets paid for the job that he does transferred to the City of Winnipeg, given that there's zero in his budget for waste-water and sewers treatment in the city of Winnipeg. I indicate that I am very tempted, but, in the interest of trying to ensure that the minister's children do get an education, I'll forgo that motion.

Mr. Ashton: Oh, that's nice, and I thank the member. So does my family.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 13.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,265,400 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs. Is it the committee's will to see 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

COMPETITIVENESS, TRAINING AND TRADE

* (14:40)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): It's a pleasure to put some words on the record about Manitoba's economic performance and outlook. It's also a pleasure to talk about the initiatives within the department, a department which, of course, works on its own to create initiatives and increasingly works with our other government departments to make sure that we have the best possible initiatives.

I'm very pleased that my department has a good working relationship with business, with labour, with post-secondary institutions to move ahead on issues of importance to Manitobans.

In 2007, Manitoba's real GDP growth exceeded expectations with preliminary estimates at 3.3 percent above the 2.6 predicted in the 2007 budget. Despite the risk of an economic slowdown in the U.S., Manitoba's growth in 2008 is now expected to reach 2.7 percent, with growth in business profits, wages, salaries and farm incomes.

The outlook for Manitoba exports in 2008 is for modest growth. A weaker U.S. economic outlook, combined with stable or lower prices for primary goods is expected to temper foreign export growth this year. Recently, strong prices for grains, oil seeds and cattle have buoyed optimism for these sectors. Continued positive results could offset risks of weaker metal and oil prices.

Manitoba's population is expected to increase by 1.1 percent in 2008, matching growth in 2007. The labour market will continue to grow by similar measure in new jobs and entrance at the labour market. Employment growth is projected at 1.6 percent in 2008.

Our province's diverse economic structure has fostered a vibrant yet stable economy. Manitoba is the most stable economy in Canada as measured by the least amount of variation in growth over the last 10 years. Manitoba has experienced consecutive years of private investment growth, as well as a positive employment growth for many years. Manufacturing in Manitoba showed great strength and resilience in 2007, despite the competitive pressures of the Canadian dollar, weakness in U.S.

markets and increased and heightened competition abroad.

Manitoba manufacturers shipped over \$16-billion worth of goods last year, setting a new all-time record high. Manitoba's foreign export growth was third highest among provinces in 2007.

I'm pleased we're continuing to support the manufacturing sector through innovative programs and strategies such as the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, which seeks to promote practices that remove waste and increase productivity in the workplace. We've established a direct response team with the Canadian manufacturers and exporters to expedite the resolution of issues faced by the industry. These and other strategies will help our manufacturers remain competitive in the global economy.

Manitoba's strong economic performance is anchored in our commitment to the development and sustenance of our labour force. The Co-operative Education Tax Credit, tuition fee tax rebate, apprentice programs, technical-vocational initiatives, industry training partnerships and Manitoba bursary and scholarship programs all support growth in today's knowledge-based economy by promoting the development of skills necessary for the growth in all sectors.

We have introduced a tuition tax rebate incentive for skilled young people. This 60 percent tax rebate on tuition fees is available to all post-secondary students, including international students who stay and work in our province.

In 2007, we pledged to create 4,000 new spaces for apprentices in Manitoba as a response to critical shortages in the skilled trades, and to increase opportunities for young people in Manitoba. Recently, the Apprenticeship Futures Commission provided 23 recommendations to expand and enhance the apprenticeship training and certification system. The implementation of these recommendations will significantly enhance the Apprenticeship branch's ability to add the additional 4,000 training spaces over the next four years.

The new Journeypersons Hiring Incentive, part of the expanded Co-operative Education and Apprenticeship Tax Credit Program will provide an employer who hires a recently certified journeyperson a tax credit of up to \$2,500 a year for up to two years for each journeyperson hired.

These tax incentives will encourage apprentices to stay in Manitoba and encourage our employers to hire them, increasing the number of skilled workers in the provincial labour force. The Province will continue to work with its partners, including employers, government, educational institutions and employees to increase opportunities for young people in the skilled trades.

Sector councils focus the attention and commitment of industry partners to take action by developing solutions to human resources challenges that are specific to their sector or industry. By acting as a bridge between and among firms and permitting collaboration in collective action and skills issues, sector councils promote economies of scale in addressing human resource challenges, which benefit all industry partners. There are presently 15 sector councils in Manitoba. I'm very pleased that the 16th council, the Manitoba Construction Sector Council, will be incorporated by June 2008.

The Advisory Council on Workforce Development Act was introduced in April 2008. The bill creates an advisory council to provide information and advice to government about workforce trends, initiatives, policies and strategies for developing Manitoba's workforce.

*(14:50)

Recently, on April 11, 2008, I was pleased to join with federal Minister Solberg as the governments of Canada and Manitoba signed the Canada-Manitoba Labour Market Agreement to help Manitoba workers improve their skills and prepare them in the jobs of the future. This represents a significant investment in the Manitoba labour market, while addressing employers' needs for skilled workers.

Under this new agreement, the Government of Canada will invest nearly \$110 million in Manitoba's labour market over the next six years. Through this agreement, residents of Manitoba who are not eligible for training under the Employment Insurance, or EI, program will have increased opportunities to improve their skills. The Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative is a multi-year, multi-intervention training and employment strategy which includes an entire continuum of training interventions and supports to enable northern Aboriginal residents to prepare for jobs on the proposed northern hydro-electric projects. The initiative is now in its sixth year and its progress is continuing in training and employment readiness.

Manitoba's successful Provincial Nominee Program for Business continues to attract entrepreneurs from countries all around the world, including China, Korea, India and many others. Last fiscal year, 101 business immigrants arrived in Manitoba with their families. Fifty-one business investments were made in excess of \$16 million, pushing our total business investments to 179, with \$83 million invested since the program started.

The Canada-Manitoba Business Service Centre, a federal and provincial partnership, has just completed its 10th year of successful operations. The centre continues to provide business information, entrepreneurial training and business counselling services to Manitobans in both Winnipeg and the rural centres via 33 regional offices located across the province.

The province is introducing additional measures to reduce red tape and provide single-window service delivery for business, including the streamlining of business permits and licences through the new BizPaL service, on-line filing of retail sales tax and other provincial taxes, and the creation of a Manitoba business portal for easy access to business information and services over the Internet.

With regard to Aboriginal economic development, we've worked with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to develop the First Peoples Economic Growth Fund to support First Nations business development in the province. The fund includes six financial programs to assist in the start-up, expansion or purchase of a business.

Now 2007 was a very challenging year for the exporting community in Canada, with the strengthening Canadian dollar and the economic turn down in the United States, Manitoba's No. 1 export market. Manitoba's exporters were faced with a very difficult business environment. However, I'm pleased to say that Manitoba companies continued to be very competitive in all regions of the world. Through a focussed strategic approach, they were able to sustain themselves in traditional markets and take advantages of opportunities in new markets.

Manitoba's international exports continue to show positive growth. In 2007, Manitoba's total merchandise exports grew by 13.8 percent over 2006, exceeding Canadian export growth of 2.3 percent. While the companies maintained their strong trading relationship with the U.S., Manitoba companies recognized the need to diversify markets.

We note that Manitoba's exports to the United States increased by 6.9 percent over 2006 exports, but non-U.S.-destined exports actually increased by 36.7 percent. In 2007, Manitoba exports to non-U.S. destinations comprised 28 percent of our total exports.

My department continues to work with Manitoba companies, industry associations and economic development agencies to provide targeted programming and services in support of export development activities. Through the Exporter Development Initiative, we are working to co-ordinate the delivery of programming and services to all Manitoba companies.

Of course, Manitoba is a leader in the field of international education, attracting student talent and skilled immigrants to our province. International student enrolments increased by approximately 10 percent year over year, despite a highly competitive international environment.

In concluding my remarks, I would like to thank my deputy ministers in my case and their staff for their support and their good efforts to build and develop our department's initiatives and policies. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), have any opening comments?

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Madam Chairperson, it's my pleasure to welcome the minister here as well, newly appointed minister of Manitoba's Competitiveness, Training and Trade, the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan). I look forward to taking part in these Estimates with him.

I understand that the deputy minister of Trade is not available today and so we will move forward accordingly. If we don't cover everything today, then we will look at subsequent days as well.

First of all, I want to say that there are many things in Manitoba that I feel could be improved upon. There are obviously great opportunities in employment, training, trade, and competitiveness in this province. I look forward to being able to hear the minister's views on some more of those as we move forward as well.

I believe that we have an excellent workforce in Manitoba. We are importing people into Manitoba

from foreign countries as well as neighbouring provinces but at the same time, we are losing some net migration numbers as well to other provinces from interprovincial numbers alone. I understand that we have larger immigration numbers and that is because, I think—I could go back to a number of the initiatives taken by my predecessors, having never had the opportunity of being on the governing side since I was elected in '99. But I know that a number of initiatives that were taken at that time have created a vast array of employment opportunities that have not been able to be met by the number of citizens in Manitoba that we had at that time.

That this is happening in a number of jurisdictions in the world, Madam Chairperson, is an important issue to make, not just here in Manitoba, certainly not in isolation. I would say, in fact, here in Manitoba, it's happening as a result of an overflow from what's happening in some other provinces. Notwithstanding that the government hasn't made attempts to try and improve the economic decisions that they've made to try to bring and attract industry and individuals here. As I said in my opening statement—first sentence I believe it was—there's more to do and much more could be done.

I want to say that the situation around apprenticeship is very much needed, and I appreciate the fact that the apprenticeship group came forward with their document of some month and a bit ago, in regard to the establishment of what the minister will be using to look at training programs for this province and enhancing those opportunities.

I also know that he knows that—at least, I'm hoping that he's very well aware—of the trade opportunities and the importance of trade for Manitoba. The importance of having a North American Free Trade Agreement. The importance of CUSTA, the Canada-U.S. Trade Agreement that was initially signed, and the importance of the trade corridors that we have. I know transportation is not a responsibility of his in this area or infrastructure. But I know that the minister's very well aware that competitiveness depends on these issues for Manitoba and their importance. I look forward to some of his comments in regard to his role with those and their importance to the province as well.

I want to say that when we look at the types of corridors that we have, there are a number of other studies like the apprenticeship study that have come forward, in the areas of transportation. I believe that that provides us with a competitiveness opportunity

for Manitoba that we must grasp and for all citizens in this province, for all of the businesses that we presently have in the province of Manitoba as well as the opportunity for various sectors that have not had an opportunity to be in business in some of those areas. I know that I would put on the record that 62 percent of our gross domestic product in Manitoba comes from small business. That's a huge number, almost two-thirds of the gross domestic product of the province, Madam Chairperson, comes from the small business individuals and companies that we have in this province.

I think that we need to do everything we can. We'll be encouraging the minister to do everything he can around making Manitoba a more competitive opportunity for more businesses to locate here in Manitoba and we'll get into some of the specifics of that as we go through questions.

* (15:00)

I know that I mentioned the infrastructure process, but in Competitiveness you can't talk about being competitive in Manitoba without talking about the finance responsibilities in the province as well. I know the member is very well aware that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) just brought down his budget close to a month ago, and I know that he knows that there are other things that can be done and that could have been done in that budget to have enhanced Manitoba's developmental opportunities in both labour and business. So we need to look at what some of the rest of the world thinks of Manitoba instead of looking internally at ourselves all the time.

I think we need to take into account of how we are viewed by some of the rest of the world and our neighbouring provinces. I think that that could be—there's room for improvement in expanding opportunities for our youth and our businesses in those areas as well.

Madam Chair, our youth are one of the most important sectors of our society. I believe I said it in my nomination speeches back in 1999 that our youth are our future in this province. I've stated it in every election campaign I've ever run in. I'm as dedicated to that today as I ever have been in the past and I believe that having raised two children and have grandchildren in Manitoba, as well, Madam Chair, as we all do that I think this shows the importance of why we need to move forward and why we need to be very, very cognizant of doing everything we can in those areas to enhance the opportunities on the ground in Manitoba.

Madam Chair, I just want to say that I'd be prepared to enter into questions. I want to, first of all, say, though, in closing that I look forward to dealing with the minister over the terms. I know he's got a few bills that he's had the opportunity—one in particular that he's briefed me on. It might not be the heaviest bill in the world, but every bill's important. I think we need to look at the very important sector or issues that may be involved there because there are a huge number of sector councils, as the minister pointed out in our briefing, that deal with issues across the province, and I look forward to asking questions on that as well.

I want to however indicate that, if it's okay with the minister, I'd be prepared to move forward in a global manner today at least, notwithstanding what I said about the Trade side, because I think, you know, as there may be three—some people may see it as three titles in this responsibility that he has or the responsibility that I have as critic. They are certainly all interrelated and as I said with other departments as well in my opening comments.

So, with that, Madam Chair, I look forward to providing some opportunity to hear the minister's view of a number of the areas that I hope to ask him questions on in the limited time that we will have in the Estimates process here. I look forward to providing him with some ideas that I hope he can implement from our side of the House to his department to make Manitoba a more competitive society and a more competitive province in our national scope, notwithstanding that I know that he has placed a number of positions on the paper or in his opening comments today—not on the paper, pardon me. He's made some comments in his opening remarks about Manitoba's position in export growth and a number of those areas and employment as well, but I think that there's always room for improvement.

I'm sure he would not be the minister today if he didn't feel the same way, that there are things that can be done in the province to enhance our opportunities for business and youth and individual companies and individual privately owned businesses in the province as well as our labour force.

So, with that, Madam Chair, I look forward to moving into the Estimate process.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the critic for those 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 1.

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

Mr. Swan: Madam Chair, I've got the dream team assembled here in front of me. My deputy minister, Hugh Eliasson, who, I believe, may be the longest serving deputy in all of Canada. With me as well is Bob Knight, who's executive director of Industry and Workforce Development; Craig Halwachs, who is the director of finance and administration; and Jim Kilgour, who is the director of Financial Services.

Madam Chairperson: It has been proposed and agreed to have the discussions in a global discussion.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Chairperson, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the committee of Estimates. I thank my honourable colleague for Arthur-Virden for allowing me to participate at this time to accommodate my own schedule.

I'd like to ask the minister, as it pertains to the portion of his responsibility that deals with apprenticeship here in the province of Manitoba—Friday last, I had the opportunity to attend the Portage Collegiate Institute, a now merged high school with more than a thousand students, and the open house that allowed the public to see the vocational programming that is available to students at the Portage Collegiate Institute. Cosmetology was very interesting, as were the automotive and building construction trades.

But I was most disturbed by talking with and mostly listening to one of the building trades instructors who came to Canada from the U.K. His bottom line was that others in his profession that still remain in the U.K. he was counselling not to try and come to Manitoba. Although he now is very happy with his position and the lifestyle which is afforded the residents of Manitoba, the hoops and hurdles thrown in his direction, a skilled woodcrafting trained individual whose credentials of an impeccable nature were tossed aside by the rules and regulations existing here in Manitoba. It is very disheartening to hear the story that is very current

and not much has changed to his own personal experience.

Therefore, I'm wanting to ask the minister the question: Is there a porthole, a single window, an opportunity for an individual such as the instructor in the building construction trades in Portage la Prairie's Portage Collegiate Institute to come forward and to relate his personal experience and allow for what I believe is absolutely necessary, a review of how credentials are evaluated and how individual institutions world-renowned in reputation, can be tossed aside simply by an individual within his department or within the professional trades that are scrutinizing the credentials for apprenticeship?

* (15:10)

Mr. Swan: Well, I thank the Member for Portage la Prairie, and I'm actually pleased to talk about trades in Manitoba. I think he and I are of like mind that it is certainly a goal of our government. I think the Member for Portage la Prairie is well to increase the stock of skilled trades people in the province of Manitoba.

I am very pleased that you visited Portage Collegiate Institute. I think, again, we agree that we need to do what we can to encourage young people to be interested in the trades, to consider careers, not just jobs but careers in the trades. I am sure we'll be discussing some of those ideas a little bit further.

With respect to an individual situation with apprenticeship, there are a couple of things that we can discuss. First of all, the Apprenticeship branch provides a very wide range of services, and that would really be the first place that any individual who has a concern or frustration should go. The branch provides a number of creative and different remedies to assist people in getting their journeyman papers. It may be that they can do something in this situation.

For example, if somebody has the experience in their home country right now it may not be recognized. I'll get to that piece in a minute, but somebody has the skills and the abilities and the experience, they could meet with the Apprenticeship folks and could be in a position to challenge the exam. As the Member for Portage la Prairie knows, there is an apprenticeship period for each trade, but there are ways to shorten that for individuals who can demonstrate their proficiency. Now, if the individual that you're talking about is from the United Kingdom, he probably doesn't need

translation services. My wife is Scottish so I'll defer on that point. But he may very well be in a position to challenge that exam.

I should also mention that the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) has touched upon the bigger question of credentials recognition. That is a priority for our government. I know the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) went through this in some detail in her Estimates. It is our hope when we deal with some of the professions to get on to some of the trades and crafts in Manitoba to do what we can to ensure that their policies for admitting people to practise or to trade or to be involved in that craft are fair and transparent. We want to work with each trade and with each profession.

We know we have some ways to go. We know there's frustrations from some new Manitobans. We are working to deal with each trade and each profession and we will be working very hard on that in the months and years to come.

Mr. Faurichou: Thank you. I do appreciate the minister recognizing that we are on the same page looking to promote and accommodate the trades here in the province of Manitoba. The credentials once again in order to challenge apprenticeship are very rigorous. If you don't have five years uninterrupted participation in that particular trade, then you're not eligible.

The example was given that he was employed in the carpentry, in building homes, but he took a summer and helped his brother-in-law out constructing the concrete elevator, and that was working with cement. So his five years of continuous engagement in carpentry was interrupted and, therefore, not eligible to challenge. These are the sort of examples that I think the minister as well as myself find really a stretch to understand why this would pre-empt or prevent an individual from challenging for an apprenticeship here in the province of Manitoba.

Where I am going with this, I would like to ask the minister that there is a clearly identified individual or office where persons that want to progress in a particular trade can go to get the counselling necessary to—and this also would allow a window to the minister's attention where we need to pay greater attention and perhaps modify regular rules and regulations in order to get by this absurd example that I've given here this afternoon. Is that a possibility, or does this now exist?

Mr. Swan: There are a couple of different routes that any individual could take. As I've mentioned, there are individuals within the Apprenticeship branch that are prepared to talk to him or her or whoever.

There are some other specialities. I mean there are individuals that deal with prior learning assessments to see what background somebody has and what assistance that they can give to translate the skills and experience that they have picked up elsewhere and use that toward apprenticeship.

The first place may be for the person to go to the employment centre, to Employment Manitoba in Portage la Prairie. We have, I believe, it's 17 employment centres across the province.

But the bigger picture that the Member for Portage la Prairie raises is making the apprenticeship system more fluid and more flexible, and I agree that we do have work to do. Last year my predecessor struck the Apprenticeship Futures Commission and brought together representatives from industry, from labour, from government and from our colleges to see if they could come up with some recommendations and some directions in which we could go. I was very pleased that the Apprenticeship Futures Commission did issue a report. I'm even more pleased that it was a consensus report that all parties, despite their own turf, if I can call it that, came together and issued a report which is the starting point for trying to improve the system.

I think it's very important to note that everybody involved in that process believe in apprenticeship. They believe that it's a very good way for Manitobans to get their credentials. It's a way that provides the minimum number of barriers and obstacles to people getting involved in their trade, and we'll be going forward.

There are some items in that report that deal with doing a better job of working with those who have prior experience and prior skills. There are some recommendations for us to look at, some of those flexibility issues, and I'm going to be very pleased to work with all of those partners again to see what we can do.

So, if it's somebody who does legitimately have the skills and experience who can work in those areas without there being a concern about their own safety or the standard of their work, our hope is that we can continue to make that more fluid and

encourage more people to become journeypersons in Manitoba.

Mr. Faurschou: I really appreciate the minister making reference to the federal government, and this was a particular point that the individual I spoke with was—that upon immigrating to Canada, the institution to which he accredited his training, was recognized by the federal government. But, when he came here to Manitoba, all that accreditation, all of that recognition went out the window because we here in Manitoba will be the ones that determine what institutions we recognize and what institutions we do not.

That even is bothersome between institutions here in Manitoba. Where from a college to a university to another university, and we see that there are hang-ups in accreditation and recognition of standings from institutions even within our own province.

So I just leave that with the minister because it's not going to be resolved today. But I do raise this with the minister, that I believe that if the federal government of Canada recognizes for a person's entry into this country a particular accreditation or recognition, that here in Manitoba we should be at least on the same page or making our reasons known to the federal government that it is not the case. I do not exaggerate or mislead the minister in this regard, and, in fact, if the minister would like to meet directly with the person with whom I spoke, I would very much encourage him to do so.

*(15:20)

Mr. Swan: I'm not sure I did reference the federal government in my previous answer, if the member thought I did—[interjection] No, my friend is talking about the Employment Manitoba office. What happened actually is that the federal government decided to get out of the employment business some time ago, and, although they still issue the EI or Employment Insurance cheques, the administration of employment services in Manitoba is now the responsibility of the provincial government, so we do have Employment Manitoba offices, 17 of them across the country, including one in the beautiful city of Portage la Prairie.

You know, every case is a little different, and sometimes there are some misunderstandings of what particular credentials somebody has. I would encourage the individual you're speaking of to work with Employment Manitoba and work with

Apprenticeship. If somebody is recognized to carry on their trade in one province of Canada, generally that means they have what's called a Red Seal certification. All the provinces work together—not the federal government. I'm not putting the government down; I'm simply saying that provincial governments work together on that to make sure that somebody who becomes a journeyperson in Manitoba can work in Ontario or British Columbia and vice versa. So I think the gentleman you're speaking of should take his particular situation to Employment Manitoba or to the Apprenticeship branch just because it's very difficult in this format to fully understand the nature of the certification problem that he has.

Mr. Faurschou: Well, whether the office is administrated by the Province or by the federal government, it's still providing for the services the federal government is in partnership with, so we won't get hung up on small matters. The point being is that if the federal government recognizes a person's credentials for immigration purposes, I don't see why we here in Manitoba would not regard those same credentials as valid.

This Red Seal, I do agree, is—[interjection]

I thought this was the committee that was responsible for competitiveness, trade and industry here. The minister is distracted by the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan).

Right now, if in fact the journeymen and individuals that are effectively recognized between Manitoba and Saskatchewan—and I'll cite the specific issue current is that there are ready-to-move homes in Manitoba being constructed, being inspected by Manitoba Hydro, of recognized journeyman electricians, that once that home is moved into Saskatchewan, that permit, that recognition evaporates. Whether or not it is a problem between Manitoba Hydro and SaskPower or whether it's a problem between this minister's office and the office in Saskatchewan that recognizes journeyman work, this is a current issue. I'll leave that with the minister as I've already raised it with the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro as well.

In any event, I've raised the issues that I came here today to do so, and I definitely believe that there is much more to do in this area, and the encumbrances that I've made mention of here today are certainly ones that need to be addressed.

Mr. Swan: Just to explain to the Member for Portage la Prairie, indeed, the Minister for Labour and Immigration was giving me some advice. The issue of Canada's immigration policy is within Canada's control. I know the minister went through Estimates dealing with some of the different programs that we operate in Manitoba, so the decision of whether somebody is admitted to Manitoba, or admitted to Canada or not, really isn't within the control of anybody in Competitiveness, Training and Trade. You've raised a question about prior experience and prior qualifications, and I think we've outlined a number of different options that are available to an individual, so I hope you'll pass that on to your constituent. I hope that we'll get him practising in his trade as soon as possible, because I think we can all agree that we need skilled tradespeople here in Manitoba.

With respect to the other issue you've raised, again, it's very difficult, without knowing all the facts, what the nature of the problem is. I can only guess that it might be a building code issue because we do work closely, and the different trades work closely across provincial boundaries, to make sure that a journey person in one province is able to do the work in other provinces. There may be some particular issues that maybe you and I aren't aware of that might be the problem.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) taking the time in his schedule to deal with this situation in his area and for the questions that he's brought forward to the minister.

I want to welcome the staff as well as the critic for the areas of Competitiveness, Training and Trade and thank you for your continued role in carrying out all of the issues that are being dealt with across the province of Manitoba and looking forward to the input that we can have in this particular area. I would, of course, encourage you to take that back to the rest of the staff in the department as well.

I want to open today by asking some general questions in regard to staffing of the minister. If I could go back to the, basically, the organizational chart, I guess, that he has in his Estimates books, but I want to ask the minister, just a number of questions around individuals that may be working for him in his office. I wonder if he could outline to me who his political staff would be, their names and positions at this time, and perhaps, whether or not they're full-

time equivalents or what their role would be in that area.

Mr. Swan: Yes, I have a special assistant, Greg Merner, who has many years experience advising ministers. I also have an executive assistant, Emily Grafton. Emily works out of my constituency office on Sargent Avenue. Emily was actually a legislative intern last year, and we're very pleased to have a legislative intern continue on in the employment. She's a very good person. As well, I have three administrative staff, non-political administrative staff, that assist me in the office. I've got a secretary and then two administrative secretaries. One has just headed off on maternity leave, but they tell me they're going to find someone to fill her capable shoes for the next year.

Mr. Maguire: I wonder if the minister could just provide me with the names of those individuals, the three secretaries that he has. Can he do that at this time?

Mr. Swan: Yes. My secretary is Lisa Rowe, and the two administrative secretaries, Alison DePauw and Cindy Field, who has just departed on maternity leave.

Mr. Maguire: I wonder if the minister could provide me, as well, with the list of the staff in the deputy minister's office as well.

Mr. Swan: I can and just on the previous question, I should mention that each of those positions are full-time positions. Within the deputy minister's office, there's Gail Lemoine, who's the secretary to the deputy minister, and Barb Wild, who's the administrative secretary. I understand both of those are full-time positions as well.

Mr. Maguire: I thank the minister for indicating the full-time equivalencies.

Can he provide me with a number of the total staff that would be employed in his department at the present time?

* (15:30)

Mr. Swan: Yes, within the department are 428 full-time equivalent positions.

Mr. Maguire: Is this the number that are presently employed? Or can he tell me how many vacancies there would be and if they are over and above that, or if they're out of that 428?

Mr. Swan: Yes, there are currently 31.5 equivalent full-time vacancies within the department.

Mr. Maguire: Just to follow up on that, that's out of the 420 that we—428 is the full complement of the minister's staff minus the 31.5. Is that correct? Vacancies.

Mr. Swan: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Maguire: Can he provide me with his view as to whether that's a normal staffing complement? I know we've got the Estimates here for comparative purposes for the last few years, but can he indicate to me whether that's—how up or down the 428 is?

Mr. Swan: I'm advised that the normal range for vacancies in the department is roughly 5 percent to 7 percent. So, certainly, the rate we're at now is at the higher end. I would like to think it's a function of a very, very solid economy in Manitoba which may be drawing some of our staff to private industry.

Mr. Maguire: Pleased to hear the minister's concern in those areas. But I want to say that—can he indicate to me then what main areas those vacancies are from?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I understand that the vacancies are spread pretty consistently through the different reaches of this department. I can tell the member that the largest single component of the department is Employment Manitoba, and the greatest number of vacancies are also within Employment Manitoba, but not at a rate much different from the overall rate.

Mr. Maguire: I don't know if this is a serious question or not, Madam Chair, but does the minister see any irony in the fact that the most vacancies are in Employment Manitoba?

Mr. Swan: Maybe.

Mr. Maguire: I want to ask the minister, if I may, the names of staff that have been hired in '07-08. Can he provide me with an indication of who's been hired in the last year?

Mr. Swan: I can advise the member that the department hired 39 staff in the past year. I understand that those were the results of external competitions for those positions. I can go through each of them if the member wishes.

Mr. Maguire: That's fine, Madam Chair. If the minister has them, then obviously he can just make them available to me, if he has a list of those, maybe today or, if he could, I don't need them all listed, just

in the—today, but as long as he provides me with that, that would be fine.

Mr. Swan: Yes, I'm told we can make that available to the member.

Mr. Maguire: Are there any positions that have been reclassified or changed in the department in the last, perhaps even since last—I know that this is a shorter period of time in Estimates than what we've perhaps normally had. I know the minister has just taken over this spring in regard to this area. I know that the minister from Assiniboia was the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade previous to the Member for Minto, and I recall the Estimates process that we went through last fall with him, and so if he could provide me with any reclassifications that have taken place, even just since last August or so, that would be fine.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Swan: Yes, we can provide the member with the list of all reclassified employees from August 1 of 2007.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, thanks, Mr. Acting Chair, and I believe the minister indicated to me that all of these hirings have been through external competitive positions, and can he confirm that, or were any of them from appointment as well?

Mr. Swan: I understand that there have been 60 employees within the department who have shifted positions in the past year. Some of those would be taking term positions; some would be term positions moving into permanent positions; some would be short-term moves, and others would be promotions within the department. So there are 60 changes of positions, if I can term it that way.

* (15:40)

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister provide me then, as well, with a list of the re-classifieds and with names and position changes from where they were to where they are?

Mr. Swan: Again, is the member looking for that information from August 1 of 2007? Is that the—

Mr. Maguire: Any time over the last year since—you know, I guess we had an election in June or in May last year, so if the minister can indicate any changes since the election, that would be fine.

Mr. Swan: Yes, we can provide that.

Mr. Maguire: Can he provide me with a list of the vacant positions, then, as well?

Mr. Swan: We can provide you with the vacant positions as of today, keeping in mind this is a moving target and we hope to be filling those as we go. But we can do that as of the vacancies today.

Mr. Maguire: I want to, then, ask, as well, if I could, and I know the minister's just indicated that he can provide us with a list of the hirings since last August or since the election. So I appreciate that, as well.

The question I didn't ask in regard to staff within his offices and that sort of thing: Are all of the positions that he has in his office presently filled?

Mr. Swan: Yes, within my department and my office, that's right, keeping in mind that I expect the new term person is going to show up to replace Cindy, at some point in the next week or two. There's no one in her chair right now, but I'm presuming someone will be very shortly.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate that, for sure. Perhaps the minister can just provide me with that name when it becomes available to him. I'm certainly not going to pursue that, but if he could just provide me with the name of the person that's replacing Cindy on maternity leave, that would be great.

Mr. Swan: Yes, I can do that.

Mr. Maguire: I know that the minister's indicated that he'll provide me with a list of the relocations from where these 60 employees were to where they were that was reclassified. Can he provide me with information as to how many positions—first of all, maybe he can tell me if there are any positions that have been relocated within the province.

Mr. Swan: Yes, to the best of my knowledge, I can tell the member there haven't been any physical moves of employees from centre to centre.

Mr. Maguire: I was wondering if the minister—I know that there are a number of—it's 31.5 vacancies. That's, as he's saying, a little bit on the higher side of that. Can he indicate to me how soon he is looking at bringing that complement into, sort of, the lower end of that range or is it his objective to fill all of those positions?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I can assure the member that my department is working to fill the vacancies. It doesn't happen overnight. As he's aware, there are processes to be followed within the civil service to fill

positions they are actively recruiting, and again, I didn't mean to have that come across as a glib comment. The truth is that Manitoba's economy is very strong. The unemployment rate is very low, and it's become that much tougher to attract the top-notch people that we want to work in government to come to the department, but they are certainly working hard to fill all those vacancies.

Mr. Maguire: Well, I appreciate that, but I think the minister, in his opening comment, indicated that it is a more normal number, 5 percent to 7 percent vacancies. So I see it as not having that much change from some of the previous years. Maybe a percent or two. We're finding, you know, when I'm also the critic responsible for Infrastructure, Transportation and government services, and when I was speaking with that minister—he's got a much bigger department given the highway structure across the province of Manitoba and all the people involved in that area of maintaining the roads, which, I know, the minister will talk about the competitiveness side of the importance of those, but many, many more numbers there as well, and he has just indicated to me that some of the persons leave on a regular basis. I understand that.

Can he provide me with names and positions of persons who might have left Manitoba then from his department, other than that 31.5, or other areas? Perhaps the names of persons that have left over the past year because some of those positions may have been refilled, and if he could provide me with the names of the ones that have left and that would be out of province, or have taken positions out of province, that would be appreciated.

I know, while the minister is looking for that answer, I don't necessarily need to have—he won't necessarily or his department know, once the person has left the department, whether they went out of province or not, so I'll rephrase that question to: How many have—if he can tell me the names of the persons that have left the department over the past year.

Mr. Swan: We've talked a little bit about vacancies, and if a position is vacant, it's because somebody has left for one reason or another. In some cases, they've retired. In some cases they've moved on to a different position. In some cases they've taken another job elsewhere. In some cases they've gone on maternity leave. So there's a whole number of different possibilities, and I don't think the member is surprised to know we don't hold people to an exit

interview before they leave their employ with the Province so we can track exactly what it is they're doing. I don't really think I can help the member in any great degree on that front.

Mr. Maguire: Then perhaps the minister can tell me how many people have been hired in his department in the last year. There are 31.5 vacancies. I'm assuming that there is some other turnover, that this is a more normal vacancy rate, and can he tell me how many people they have hired then in the past year?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I think we've covered that ground. There were 39 new external employees coming into the department in the past year. As well, there's 60 employees that have moved from within the civil service into positions within the department.

* (15:50)

Mr. Maguire: So what the minister is telling me is that the 60 reclassifieds that he answered my other question about, the ones that have been reclassified, or—I mean, I see a difference between a reclassification and a relocation, but can the minister just clarify if they are the same ones?

Mr. Swan: Of those 60, I believe my answer was that some of those are reclassifications. The majority, I believe, are simply taking other positions within the department. It's not that their positions have been reclassified. So I'm sorry if I left the member with the wrong impression on that front.

Mr. Maguire: The 39 new external persons then that have been hired, can he provide me with a list of those people since the election?

Mr. Swan: I believe we've already undertaken to do that earlier this afternoon.

Mr. Maguire: At that time, he will obviously know where they came from, can he indicate to me of the ones that have been hired, what department they came from? I know that that was part of what he committed in his reclassifications. Can he tell me how many of those might have come from out of province?

Mr. Swan: I can tell the member opposite that simply wouldn't be information that we, nor any government department, would normally compile. We send our staff out to do their best to fill vacancies. They get the best available person to fill that spot. There's no central registry of whether

people came from private industry or they came from the city or the federal government or another province. That just isn't something that I believe any government department would retain and put into a report.

Mr. Maguire: So the minister wouldn't know whether any of the people that left his department have gone to other provinces either then and the reverse of that?

Mr. Swan: Again, we don't conduct exit interviews and ask people where they're going, whether they're going into private industry, whether they're taking a job with the city or the federal government or whether they're going elsewhere. So I'm sorry we don't keep that information.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me—just as a thought occurred to me—for persons that are leaving on their own fruition, on their own will, would he think that it might be a good idea to ask them about why they're leaving and have an exit agreement, not an exit agreement, but an exit discussion with them? I only put this on the table because it might be beneficial to department, not just his department but in others, to get some opinions from those individuals as to how they feel that they can help the department or what can be done to improve the levels of service. I'm sure that these persons have taken jobs that—they wouldn't leave the job they had unless they felt that they were moving to a better area or one that's more beneficial to their personal life situation at that time. But I wonder if he's given any thought to that.

Mr. Swan: Well within the department, if an individual employee wishes to sit down with the department, with their supervisors or with HR, they're given that opportunity but it's the employee's decision to avail themselves of that. If an employee makes comments about the operation of the department or about the opportunities available for that position, certainly my department will take that into account but we don't have any plans to formalize an inquisition of where somebody's going if they decide that they want to leave the provincial government.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the minister's answer. Of course, any kind of conversation like that with individuals would certainly be voluntary, I would assume, but it's something that maybe we could look at down the road.

I wonder if the minister can indicate to me, in another vein, just what type of contracts that he might have tendered in his department or have been put out in his department since the last election.

Mr. Swan: Just to try and break that down a little bit, contracts of employment or other contracts or all contracts?

Mr. Maguire: I was thinking more of contracts that the government would put out or that his department would put out in relation to, such as the apprenticeship one. They've had the committee to look at apprenticeship for sure and how many other contracts there might have been for the government to gain information or—not a contract certainly, with each individual that might have been hired by the department. If he could provide me with what types of contracts they may have offered.

Mr. Swan: Yes, I can tell the member that any contract that the department enters into with another party for more than \$5,000, of course, forms part of the Public Accounts of Manitoba. I can also tell the member that due to the nature of the services provided by this department, including on the training front, including Employment Manitoba, there are approximately 250 external agencies with which we contract to provide those services.

If it's in the area of untendered contracts, any untendered contract over \$1,000 is regularly reported and is available to the member. I'm not trying to be difficult. I'm just hoping maybe we can get some more focus on exactly what kind of contracts the member is asking about and then my staff and I will see what we can do to help.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate that. Certainly, I'm only looking for something in the neighbourhood of \$25,000, \$30,000, those type of contracts, Mr. Acting Chair. There may be contracts tendered for a specific study that the minister wants done in his department. That would be one such type of contract, I guess. I wondered if he could just enlighten me or provide a list of the numbers of contracts, say \$25,000 or greater, that his department would have tendered for. I'm assuming that all of them would go to tender. He can inform me of contracts that he might have asked for that weren't going to tender, or if there were any. Just perhaps indicate to me the types of those contracts that he might have.

* (16:00)

Mr. Swan: I'm working with my staff to try and accommodate what my friend is asking for. Again,

this is a department that has a number of different contractual arrangements with external agencies that provide service. I've just been huddling with my staff here to figure out what might be the best. The suggestion is that perhaps if my friend wants to review the public accounts and has any questions or any concerns with any contracts, say of \$25,000 or more, perhaps what my friend could do is write to me with those requests and we will try to satisfy him on the reasons for those contracts.

Mr. Maguire: Well, I was only asking because there may be something that I wasn't aware of. I just thought, well, I can't really write and ask about those, so if the minister has—you know, certainly he made the comment about the thousand-dollar ones and you know, don't need that. I'm not asking for that type of work. It's just that if there were any contracts tendered by the department or his Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade since the last election, if he could just indicate to me what they were for and who might have received those tenders.

Mr. Swan: All right, my staff are making every effort to accommodate this, and they tell me that they will be able to generate a list of the contracts over \$25,000. I have no problem with providing that to my friend.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you. I thank you for your indulgence because I think that would just save me a bit of time instead of going through those thick books to try and find out just exactly how many of them there are. I appreciate that the minister will have a list of that in his department and look forward to that.

I just wanted to touch base on page 19 of the Estimates books under Administration and Finance. The Executive Support team, the eight persons that have been indicated that would work there, these are the ones that the minister has indicated to me in his office, I'm assuming. Is that his office and the deputy's office? I believe there are eight full-time equivalents there.

Mr. Swan: Yes, the member's correct.

Mr. Maguire: If there are other names other than the maternity leave in that area, I don't know whether you've provided me with eight names in that area or not, but if you could provide me with those, I would appreciate that.

Mr. Swan: Yes, I believe we have provided you. Of course, there's my deputy and myself are two of those eight.

Mr. Maguire: The minister, I know he's only been there a few months, and I had the opportunity of discussing this issue with his predecessor last year and so I have that information. I know that the previous minister was still there for a few months after our Estimates period last year and so perhaps I would ask a similar question to the one that I asked the previous minister as well now that we've had six months more time, virtually.

I wonder if the minister could just provide me with some discussion or a number of the special meetings that he may have had, delegations that he might have had the opportunity of being on in regard to travel from his department, not only since he took over, but might as well go back to at least last fall's Estimates process, if he could provide me with that.

Mr. Swan: There were three trips made by the Minister responsible for Competitiveness, Training and Trade in the last fiscal year. I understand that the details of those trips are all among the items that are going to be provided publicly and made available over the next number of days.

Mr. Maguire: He'll be making that available to me in Estimates here then?

Mr. Swan: In accordance with the steps we've taken to make travel more transparent, it will be posted on the Internet in the next number of days.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me how many delegations he has led himself, if he's had that opportunity since he became the minister?

Mr. Swan: This won't be a very exciting list. I can tell the member opposite that the only travel as the Minister of Competitiveness, Training, and Trade, I took in the last fiscal year was, I believe, the last day of the fiscal year, when I went to Ottawa to meet with Minister Emerson. There was an FPT for trade.

Mr. Maguire: How many staff accompanied the minister?

Mr. Swan: In addition to myself, there was my special assistant, as well as Bob Dilay and Alan Barber, who are both with the department.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me, just for the record again, the purpose of that meeting and who he met with?

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Swan: We were summoned to Ottawa for a meeting of the various ministers responsible for international trade. I went representing Manitoba.

Mr. Maguire: These were all Canadian fellow ministers or was it from all provinces represented, or just with the federal persons at this time?

Mr. Swan: It was FPT, so there were federal, provincial and territorial representatives there. I believe Saskatchewan had just brought down their budget, so I know Saskatchewan wasn't there.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the answers from the minister. I'm assuming if he was to post some of the other positions that I've asked for, or the other delegations that have gone previous—these are the ones that he was talking about posting on the Web site. Would he be able to provide me with the intent of each of those delegations as well? I don't believe there's that many every year.

Madam Chair, just for clarification: just the delegation. Who was in the delegation and where they went and the purpose of it.

Mr. Swan: I understand that staff in the department are working on pulling together the disclosure again in the form that we are going to be posting on the Internet for my friend and also all Manitobans to review. That's been their priority so we don't have that available for the member today but again, it will be available in the near future.

Mr. Maguire: So he has had no delegations where there've been other persons from private industry travel with him, not at this point at least, anyway?

* (16:10)

Mr. Swan: I can tell the member that I haven't been part of any trade missions or similar missions of that sort. Not yet.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me whether he has travelled with the Premier (Mr. Doer), first of all, at any of these locations?

Mr. Swan: I haven't travelled with the Premier at all outside of Manitoba.

Mr. Maguire: So all of the costs of the delegations that he's had at this point have come out of his department?

Mr. Swan: That I've had, that's correct. Although, again, the only travel I've had is the overnight to Ottawa at the end of March.

Mr. Maguire: Seeing as how the minister brought it up, what are his plans, then, in regard to movement in that area, and not necessarily from a trade mission perspective but just from a competitiveness point of view? Certainly, trade is a main thrust of his department, I'm sure, but, you know, making sure that we have the people in the work force being competitive with a number of other areas.

Can he provide me with the vision that he has, at least as far as his agenda tells him today, what kind of trade missions and which area of his department they would be working with and—what kind of delegations may be a better word, Madam Chair, than trade missions—in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Swan: Sure. Well, maybe I can answer the question this way. Of course, Manitoba is a relatively small province, but we do our best to make sure we get word out to markets with which we want to trade, to which we want to export. I'm very pleased, actually, getting to know how this department works. I'm actually very pleased with the amount of territory and the amount of turf that our Trade officials can cover. I will do what I can as minister to add value where appropriate, to assist. Manitoba Trade provides a great deal of support to an increasing number of businesses here in Manitoba who have let us know they want to pursue export opportunities. They want to pursue other markets. We provide support, for example, by putting together missions, by assisting with getting booths for trade shows, unlocking some doors, as it were, for exporters who are interested in pursuing those markets.

Certainly, there are trips happening all the time where our Trade officials go with private industry to different countries. I will take my lead from industry and from the department on trips where they think the minister would truly add value. I expect there will be a couple of those coming up in the next year, subject to my duties here in the House. The idea is for the minister to make sure he's adding value when he's going along with Manitoba industry and our Trade officials.

Mr. Maguire: I know the minister will have that opportunity and I'm assuming that he will, as has been done in other departments, include private industry in some of those trade missions to check out not only opportunities for exports out of Manitoba but in trade there's always imports as well. Can he confirm for me that that would be the case, and that that's a normal way to deal with such missions as well?

Mr. Swan: Absolutely. We take our lead in determining which countries and which regions are priorities from the information that we get from private industry. We're not going to pull private industry into where there is no market. We listen carefully to what private industry has to say and I can assure the member that we will continue to do so.

Mr. Maguire: Can he just—whether it was he or his predecessor, provide me with the last trade mission that they were on and the list of the delegates or the list of the personnel that were the persons that travelled with his department on that mission?

Mr. Swan: As I think my friend is aware, then, there will be information forthcoming on the trips that I and my predecessor made in the last fiscal year, including where the trips were and for what purpose. Generally, if a private company is coming along on a trade mission, although the department provides assistance in terms of paying for a booth, smoothing some of the channels, generally private industry—actually they pay their own way on the trips, so that's not coming out of the public purse, so I'm not sure if that answers the member's question or whether there's more clarification that you want.

Mr. Maguire: No, thanks, Madam Chair. I'm pretty aware that the private individuals would pay their own way in most cases. I just wondered if the minister could provide me with the list of who went on it. I'm assuming that it wasn't under his ministerial position. It would have been his predecessor.

Mr. Swan: If I could just have my friend clarify—are you looking for the names of departmental staff who would have gone on a trip, or are you looking for the names of people in private industry who went along on the trip?

Mr. Maguire: That would be all of the above, Madam Chair.

* (16:20)

Mr. Swan: Yes, in response to that clarification we can indeed provide the names of departmental staff who went on the mission. On the other front we'll do our best to provide, at the very least, a list of companies that would have been represented on the trade mission. I'm not sure what would have more detail available, but at the very least, I think we can provide you with names of the companies.

Mr. Maguire: I just felt, if it's a company and they're represented, they have to have a repre-

sentative, and I'm sure the government would know who it was that was on that delegation. I would just ask that he provide me with the names of the individuals representing those companies. I don't want to go back to all of the ones that have taken place since I was elected, Madam Chairperson, just would request the very last one, just as an example. So, if the minister could provide me with the names of those individuals, I would appreciate it, and their companies, of course.

Mr. Swan: We'll do our best to pull that information together for you.

Mr. Maguire: I know as I have gone from the front to the back of the Estimates book here, and it's just a quick question: There are only two full-time equivalents in Ottawa, in the Manitoba office in Ottawa, in International Relations and Trade, and I wonder if the minister can indicate to me the names of those two individuals.

Mr. Swan: Yes, I can. I think my friend recognizes it's a pretty tight ship that we run in Ottawa with our two employees. The first employee is a gentleman named Jim Stewart. I can tell the member that Jim Stewart is another proud graduate of Silver Heights Collegiate. I had a chance to meet him when I went to Ottawa several weeks ago. The other employee in Ottawa is Chantal Labelle.

Mr. Maguire: Could I just get the last name of that last individual? I didn't get it; I didn't hear it clearly.

Mr. Swan: The last name is Labelle, which I believe is L-a-b-e-l-l-e.

Mr. Maguire: I thank the minister for that clarification. Can you just describe, in two sentences or less, the role and how—what role they play, and of course I'm assuming that it's liaison and interaction with federal officials on Manitoba's behalf and with other provinces. Can he just inform me of what other duties these individuals would have?

Mr. Swan: Again, our two employees in Ottawa cover a lot of territory in terms of what they do. They assist not only the government, but also our partners in industry, in dealing with the federal authorities and in coming up with other ways to develop business within the province. They work with other provincial and territorial offices in Ottawa. Sometimes, of course, our interests are in lock step with some of our other provinces. Sometimes, they're not. It being Ottawa, of course, it's our intention that that office will assist Manitoba to get our fair share of federal work for Manitoba businesses.

Unfortunately, that's been an unhappy issue in the past, and it's our hope that as we go forward that Manitoba will receive our fair share of federal work.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister confirm for me that we're still sharing space with New Brunswick, I believe, or co-sharing there?

Mr. Swan: The member is correct. We share an office with New Brunswick, that's right.

Mr. Maguire: While I've been to Ottawa many times, Madam Chairperson, not that many times since I was elected as a member here. Can he provide me with the address of our office in Ottawa, which I'm assuming I might be able to get on the Web site, but if he could just provide me with that, I'd appreciate it, or if it's available there, just say so.

Mr. Swan: I didn't know the answer offhand because, instead of going to meet Mr. Stewart in his office, I took the opportunity to watch the House of Commons in action, which makes our Legislature look like a positively civil place to be.

Our office in Ottawa is at Suite 908, 130 Albert Street, and, indeed, if the member has a chance to be in Ottawa, if he let's my office know, we'll make sure that he's welcomed there.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate that.

Can you indicate to me the capital cost or capital assets. It's listed on page 82 as Amortization and Other Costs Related to Capital Assets. Obviously, this topic services a number of items, but the Amortization Expense of \$684,000 on an annual basis, can he indicate to me what capital items that amortization would represent?

Mr. Swan: I understand that amortization expense relates to information technology systems used by the department.

* (16:30)

Mr. Maguire: Can he provide me with a capital value of that equipment?

Mr. Swan: You've asked about the tangible capital assets of the department. I understand that, as of March 31, 2008, there were three categories of capital assets. There's one item which is described as projector, which has an estimated net book value, as of March 31, 2008, of \$1,190,000. Secondly, there's the job vacancy management system, which I can tell my friend is an information technology system, which has an estimated net book value on March 31,

2008, of \$655,400, and, as well, there is another information technology system called the job referral service system, had an estimated net book value on March 31, 2008, of \$3,048,800.

Each of those three items will be amortized over the 2008-2009 fiscal year. There will also be some additional capital purchase with some amortization, which is where we get to the expense that you've mentioned.

Mr. Maguire: I just was negligent in asking before—I was asking the minister what trade missions he might have gone out of the province on or will be in the near future. Just for clarification, can he provide me with the listing of any planned delegations that he would have at this time? If there aren't any, that's fine. If there are any planned delegations that he intends to, either he or his department, lead in the Trade area in the next—or in his department, it doesn't necessarily have to be in Trade—in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Swan: Yes, maybe I can help out the member. The Manitoba Trade actually maintains a business calendar on its Web site. The information is out there so that any business which has an interest in trade can actually see, at a glance, where different trade missions are going. If my friend turns on his computer and looks that up, he won't see that this minister is yet scheduled to go on any of those trade missions. That may change, depending on the House schedule. That may change, again, depending on the wishes of industry and the recommendations of the officials in Trade. At this time, I don't have any plans to go, but I expect that will develop over the next couple of months.

Mr. Maguire: I know that there are other delegations. I know that the minister is only one of many that will lead some of those. Can he also provide me with any trade delegations that he might have hosted in Manitoba that have come in from outside the province, and if he could provide me with any details as to where they have come from or whether he has had that opportunity since he was appointed?

Mr. Swan: I'll do my best off the top of my head to answer the member's questions. My Trade officials aren't on the floor right now. I've got kind of the—this dream team can be replaced by other dream teams as the need arises. One of the first events I was involved in, as a minister, was a meeting with three senators from the state of Minnesota. We hosted them here in

Manitoba. We had dinner with them and talked about some issues of trade, of mutual importance. We talked particularly about enhanced drivers' licences. I can tell you they were very upset with their federal government's view. They saw that as foisting enhanced drivers' licences onto the states. We sort of shrugged our shoulders and said that even though they may be absolutely correct, there's nothing more important than keeping the flow of people and of trade between Minnesota and Manitoba. So it was a good meeting.

We also hosted individuals from a Brazilian province. They came through a couple of weeks ago. I believe that it was the governor of the state, as well as some trade officials in that state. There were meetings with other ministers, and I had the chance to host them for dinner, and I believe that there is a group from Manitoba that will be going down to Brazil, to the southernmost state in Brazil. I believe that they'll be going late in August, early in September for a trade show.

Now, if I have forgotten any delegations, I will let you know that.

I can advise there have also been various ambassadors and consul generals that do come through and usually as the Trade Minister, I'm on their dance card. So I've had the chance to meet with a couple so far.

Mr. Maguire: I just wanted to—well, the minister has mentioned the enhanced driver's licence—inform him of the meeting that the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) and I were at back in early March. I guess it was in Detroit, in regard to the midwest legislators' human relations group that got together there and had the discussions. I'm sure he has had discussions with the Member for Brandon East in regard to enhanced drivers' licences as well, and of course, in the trade corridor between Minnesota and North Dakota, South Dakota and Manitoba, that we meet on a regular basis with as well.

The whole topic of flow across the border of trade and people, personnel, is most important, as the minister has indicated, in regard to enhancing trade opportunities. Many of the states were somewhat more, I think, actually the states were more in tune to enhanced drivers' licences than some of the federal people were on some of those circumstances. Not all, by any means, but most are watching intently the situation between Washington State and the province of British Columbia, and I know that it's the intent of

Manitoba here to bring in enhanced identification cards this fall. From what I've been led to believe, and of course, looking at enhanced driver's licences down the road as well, I think it's just a matter of the format and how those would be established.

I wonder if the minister can inform me what his intentions are in regard to the type of enhanced—what all would be involved in the enhanced driver's licence here in Manitoba and, if I am correct, in how he intends to proceed with the enhanced identification card.

Mr. Swan: First of all, I didn't realize the member was the opposition member who went to Detroit. That's certainly helpful. I know that the Member for Brandon East and you would have done a very good job of putting forward Manitoba's point of view. I know that the member also was involved in—I split the legislators' forum, which involves Manitoba, as well as our closest neighbours in South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota. I know the member is also involved with the Midwestern Legislative Conference, which I personally think is a great chance to express our views and receive the views of our partners across the border.

As the Trade Minister, I can tell the member that I don't—I'm actually not actively involved in the design of the enhanced identity cards. My job is more in terms of advising. I listen to what our tourism industry is telling us about their concerns, about the western hemisphere initiative—if I've said it right. So, certainly, as the Trade Minister, it's my job to promote something which is accessible, something which is reasonably priced, and most importantly, something which is going to pass muster and allow Manitobans to enter the United States and similarly work with our American partners to make sure that Americans who receive the equivalent card are able to make it into Canada.

*(16:40)

Mr. Maguire: I know that the minister of Trade isn't here, but this won't require her presence. I think it's just a statement in regard to the importance of our Emerson crossing here in Manitoba. Of course, being the largest trade corridor in western Canada now, it's my understanding—that's ahead of Vancouver. Can the minister confirm that for me?

Mr. Swan: When I met with the federal minister, I joked that we thought it was so important we renamed the border crossing after him.

Indeed, the member is right the Emerson border crossing is the busiest border crossing in western Canada, and I think I can agree with the member that we think that that portal and connecting with the interstate system I-29 is vitally important, not just for Manitoba but for all of western Canada.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, that's what I was seeking from the minister as my understanding it is the largest in western Canada now. I want to just outline as well, you know, the minister indicated the discussions that he's having with his fellow ministers in Cabinet in regard to border trade issues and crossings. I wonder if he can inform me as to the discussions that he's had with his fellow ministers, particularly in Intergovernmental Affairs in relation to the signing of the Building Canada Fund that would enhance quite a number of federal dollars for the port in—it's my understanding for the port along 75 highway to the U.S. at the Emerson crossing, and if he can tell me what status that is at and what role he has to play in it.

Mr. Swan: Well, certainly, as the Trade Minister I'm interested in any investments that we can get to improve our infrastructure and certainly improving and enhancing Manitoba's trade opportunities at the same time. I don't want to go into a big political speech because I think my friend and I have had a good dialogue this afternoon.

I, like my colleagues, don't believe that the deal being offered by Ottawa to Manitoba is fair, so that's probably all I need to say. I would like us to be able to resolve our differences with the federal government. We would like federal money to flow but not to flow in a way that's going to hamper Manitoba's ability to continue to improve our infrastructure.

Mr. Maguire: Of course, the Canada-U.S. international relations director, Luci Grechen was with us in Detroit at that particular meeting and I know there were some discussions there around the security of North America, obviously, which is a huge issue when it comes to trade as well and our ports. I know the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) and myself both felt, in our workshops that we were in, that perhaps a greater attention should be paid to securing the perimeter of North America as opposed to our borders between our countries.

I know the Member for Brandon East expressed that. I also expressed the desire that maybe we should take the lead between Canada and the U.S. in

that area, because there is quite a difference between the Canadian-American border and the American-Mexican border as expressed by some of our U.S. counterparts. The minister will appreciate the differences there. But to not move ahead in, you know, to wait until both areas—was the point we made—could agree might delay the efforts in that area to get more of a perimeter focus on our border security, which, of course, is not just our seaports, but still has to involve all the inland airports, international airports that we have. Those have to be extremely secure as well, as steps are being taken in both countries, all countries in that area.

But I wanted to say that, if Canada and the U.S. hadn't first made the effort to come together under the Canada-U.S. Trade Agreement and begin a more open trade between our two countries, we may never have got to the North American Free Trade Agreement, because, you know, Mexico only came in after that first agreement was signed and proven to be working. The NAFTA has certainly been beneficial for both countries, all three countries in North America here, now.

I wonder, if the Central American areas, certainly with Mexico as well, as a major participant in that NAFTA agreement, I wondered if the minister would concur that steps—I mean, the parallel we drew was that to begin the Canada-U.S. relations on a security basis similar to what happened with NAFTA perhaps would lead to, sometime down the road, being able to provide a greater relationship with the Americans and their Mexican neighbours as well.

Part of the reason that we would do that, of course, is because we have a mid-continent corridor running from Winnipeg all the way south and right into Mexico, and many, many goods would be transported through our efforts, coming into Canada through Manitoba, and we need to make sure that Winnipeg is documented as a trade hub. I wonder if the minister would agree that that sort of an initiative would be worth pursuing.

Mr. Swan: It's a long question. Let me try to respond the best I can. I think my friend is quite perceptive in understanding the importance of the mid-continent corridor. Winnipeg, because of its geographical location, has some tremendous advantages. We think in terms not only of east-west trade, but north-south trade, of trade across the pole. A case can be made that whether someone's shipping from Europe or Asia or shipping to Europe or Asia, Winnipeg actually makes sense as a hub for much of

the mid-western United States and indeed, down to Mexico.

So we are certainly continuing to work on improving our relationships with the United States and also with Mexico to work on the freer, the fairer trade of goods going both ways. I know that the Premier (Mr. Doer) and Minister Lemieux are intending to go to an upcoming NASCO meeting which, I believe, is scheduled for northern Mexico later on this year. It's a continuation of the meeting which occurred in Gimli two years ago. I know that the Premier and also the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) are continuing to work on that. As Trade Minister, I will remain briefed and aware of those issues.

So, I do agree with my friend that the mid-continent corridor and making sure that goods can travel as efficiently as possible between all three countries is something we should continue to pursue. I'm very pleased, actually, that Manitoba has taken a leadership role in dealing with that. I know that not every state along the I-29 or the I-35 corridor is quite as enthusiastic. I believe Iowa is. Hopefully, we can get more states on board. I know that our friends in Mexico are quite interested with the possibilities.

So, my friend's right. It's a good way for us to go and I'm pleased that my friend's put in a plug for Luci Grechen and her staff because they do a very good job of arming us, whoever we are, going down for any opportunities to meet with our American friends.

Mr. Maguire: I thank the minister for his response, Madam Chair, and we will be asking more questions tomorrow on trade. Given the time today, I've got more questions than 10 minutes will allow and certainly, look forward to the minister's response to a few more questions in Trade tomorrow.

Just today though, in closing, I'd just like to—I know that the minister's been very attentive in regard to the Apprenticeship Futures Commission that he had the opportunity to announce a short time ago, that he inherited, pardon me, I was looking for that word, from the previous minister and can he indicate to me what his intention is to do with the Apprenticeship Futures Commission recommendations and of course, the commission was entitled *Meeting Tomorrow's Needs*. I wonder if the minister can just indicate to me what his intentions are, then, with this report.

* (16:50)

Mr. Swan: Sure. I won't repeat everything I said to the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurischou) early on, except to say that I'm very pleased at the effort that was put in by all of the stakeholders to come up with a consensus report, because apprenticeship truly is a very complex partnership of government, of industry, of labour, of our colleges, and, of course, the apprentices and journeypersons themselves. Getting everybody on side was no mean feat, and I'd like to congratulate Leonard Harapiak, the chair, for pulling that together.

Now that we have the report in hand, the question is: Where do we go? There were 23 recommendations which were made by that commission, some wholly on the part of government; some requiring some negotiation and maybe some give and take between industry and labour; some which involved strengthening partnerships between government and our colleges, and government and industry and, indeed, industries and colleges. It's a very large package, and we are going to move on various items at different speeds. I can be quite honest with the member. It may be that some legislative changes are warranted. There were some recommendations in there about how the various bodies are constructed and maybe we can improve that. We made a decision not to rush on that, to make sure we've done the right thing.

There are other areas where we are going to have a series of ongoing meetings. The report suggested there were certain places where we should review certain issues and certain practices to see whether we can make apprenticeship more flexible, make apprenticeship more attractive to business and also to individuals who may be looking at taking up a trade. So I plan to keep working with our stakeholders to give them the opportunity to comment and to suggest if there are ways that they're mutually agreeable to move forward we can take them.

I can tell you I've had a chance, as the former legislative assistant to the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan), I've had a chance to observe her work, which has gone so well because she's been able to pull together industry and labour to get more give and take than if it was simply a minister demanding concessions or imposing rules. It's my hope that because of the particular nature of apprenticeship and the fact that everybody in the province believes that there should be more opportunities, everybody agrees that there are existing opportunities in apprenticeship. It's my hope that we're all going to work together to start to

implement the commission report in a way that's going to continue to reflect consensus and not division.

Mr. Maguire: Will the minister be putting forward a statement in regard to how soon he intends to proceed then and what direction he will go, or will he deal with each of the 22 recommendations independently?

Mr. Swan: Well, I can advise the member opposite that that process will have already started. There were a few items in budget 2008 that speak directly to enhancing apprenticeship which are in keeping with, not only this government's previous announcements but also with what the Apprenticeship Futures Commission had to say.

First, of course, there was an additional \$3.8 million which was announced by the government to create 1,100 more training seats. Our commitment in 2007 was to increase the number of seats by 4,000, and I like to speak of this as being a down payment. We still have some ways to go, but it's a major investment. I think the hiring incentive for employers, the apprenticeship tax credit for employers that was announced in the budget is also a positive thing to make it that much more attractive for employers to take on journeypersons who've completed their study. As well, the tuition rebate, the 60 percent tuition rebate, which has been available for college and university students, has now been expanded to include apprentices as well. So not only do we think that's a good way to encourage people to become involved, we also think it's a good retention strategy so that journeypersons stay and practise their trade or their craft here in Manitoba.

There are other items which, I can be honest, are going to take some more time to resolve. Areas such as ratios. I think there's a conversation that needs to happen among labour and industry and apprentices and journeypersons. Other areas, alternatives to training, alternatives to the current program where it's a block release where people do come into Winnipeg or Brandon or now UCN in Thompson for training.

Maybe there are ways that we can make it more flexible. As I think the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurischou) suggested, we need to look at different ways that we can recognize previous experience that people have. If people come to Manitoba and they bring with them experiences and skills and know-how, I would hope that we can get to

a point where we're more flexible at recognizing that skill and that experience and move people along.

Those things are all going to be moving at different speeds. I'm hopeful that if we have industry engaged, and I have every reason to believe we will, if we have labour engaged, and I believe we will, it's never in my experience a difficulty engaging the colleges. They're great partners, and they work very hard to meet our needs. I think we can make some serious headway over the next couple of years.

As I mentioned to the Member for Portage la Prairie, I think the most important thing that came out of this process is the acceptance by all stakeholders that apprenticeship is a system that works, that it's important. It's a cost-effective, but it's also an attractive way to train people. It's not broken, but there are certainly ways to improve it to make it even more attractive.

Mr. Maguire: Is it the minister's intention to continue? I'm not going to take too long on this question, but there's a number of very good initiatives working back into the school system, not just in the technical schools that we have today, but into the regular school curriculum.

Is it his intention to expand that into a number of areas?

I know I've spoken at the Manufacturers and Exporters Conference with a number of industry people who have already expanded their programs. It's been looked at in some of the other high schools here in the city. I'm wondering how that could be expanded into some of the other areas or all areas of Manitoba if it could be, but I just wondered what the minister's thoughts are on that and if it's his intention or his department's intention to continue to expand that?

I know it will be to a certain extent because these kinds of programs enhance our young people getting into the trades, is my point. I think any time

we can enhance that opportunity of moving young people into those trade sectors, it helps them become competitive in high school. I don't mean from one trade to another or trades versus other professions. I just feel that it's a benefit to young people to provide them with a greater awareness of options before they get out of high school. In fact, they may have an advantage of being able to move right into the work force at some pretty decent salary levels if they've already been able to accept that training is basically an apprenticeship in the high schools. I know of a situation in another province where this has worked well, and I just wanted to get the minister's opinion of it.

Mr. Swan: I'm glad to answer the question from my friend because I think apprenticeship and technical vocational opportunities are something we should all be passionate about as Manitobans.

I know, in addition to being the critic, my friend represents a rural area in the western part of the province, and I know that increasing those opportunities is actually going to be a rural development strategy for his area.

I expect in Virden and other communities in southwestern Manitoba, you have as much trouble finding plumbers, electricians, carpenters, trades people as people in Winnipeg or people elsewhere in the province.

I'm very glad to hear the member's interest in finding more ways to attract people to consider careers in the trades. I can give an anecdotal—

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Petitions		Pathology Errors Driedger; Oswald	1741
Dividing of Trans-Canada Highway Taillieu	1733	Disraeli Freeway Mitchelson; Ashton	1742
Child-Care Centres Briese	1733	Orthopedic Surgery Gerrard; Oswald	1743
Long-Term Care Facility–Morden Dyck	1734	Members' Statements	
Lake Dauphin Fishery Stefanson	1734	Manitoba Movement Centre Fundraiser McFadyen	1744
Pharmacare Deductibles Rowat	1734	Friends of the Snow Lake Firemen Jennissen	1745
Bill 200, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act Gerrard	1735	Manitoba Soldiers in Afghanistan Driedger	1745
Crocus Investment Fund–Public Inquiry Lamoureux	1735	African, Black and Caribbean Communities Jha	1746
Tabling of Reports		Rosalinda Natividad–Cantiveros Lamoureux	1746
Supplementary Information for Legislative Review 2008-2009– Departmental Expenditure Estimates– Healthy Child Manitoba Irvin-Ross	1735		
Oral Questions		ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)	
Bill 37 McFadyen; Doer Goertzen; Chomiak Lamoureux; Chomiak	1735 1737 1744	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Bill 38 McFadyen; Doer Borotsik; Selinger	1738 1740	Committee of Supply (Concurrent Sections)	
		Family Services and Housing	1747
		Intergovernmental Affairs	1765
		Competitiveness, Training and Trade	1787

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>