

Fifth 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*

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.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	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.
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.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	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.
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	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, Hon.	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.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	
<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 9, 2011

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 219—The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that Bill 219, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the section of The Teachers' Pensions Act regarding the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund board by increasing the number of board members to nine, requiring at least one member to have investment management experience and requiring one member to be a retired teacher nominated by the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba. Thank you very much.

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

Order. If you wish to have a conversation, please use the loge because we're trying to do some House business here.

PETITIONS

PTH 5—Reducing Speed Limit

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Concerns continue to be raised about the number of motor vehicle accidents at the intersection of

PTH 5 and PR 276 at the intersection of PTH 5 and PR 68.

The Rural Municipality of Ste. Rose and the Town of Ste. Rose have both raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about the current speed limits on that portion of PTH 5 in the vicinity of Ste. Rose du Lac.

Other stakeholders, including the Ste. Rose General Hospital, Ste. Rose and Laurier fire departments, East Parkland Medical Group, Ste. Rose District Community Resource Council, have also suggested the lowering of the current 100-kilometre-per-hour speed limit on a portion of PTH No. 5 may help reduce the potential for collisions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider the importance of reducing the speed limit of PTH 5 to 80 kilometres an hour in the vicinity of the town of Ste. Rose from the west side of the Turtle River Bridge to the south side of the access to the Ste. Rose Auction Mart to help better protect motorist safety.

This petition is signed by S. De Laurier, W. De Laurier, M. Saquet and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

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

The backgrounds to this petition is as follows:

On December 11th, 2009, in Winnipeg, Zdzislaw Andrzejczak was killed when the car that he was driving collided with a stolen vehicle.

The death of Mr. Andrzejczak, a husband and a father, along with too many other deaths and injuries involving stolen vehicles, was a preventable tragedy.

Many of those accused in fatalities involving stolen vehicles were previously known to police and

identified as chronic and high-risk car thieves who had court orders against them.

Chronic car thieves pose a risk to the safety of all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all court orders for car thieves are vigorously monitored and enforced.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all breaches of court orders on car thieves are reported to police and vigorously prosecuted.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by C. Dynowski, G. Chmukynsh, K. Stasica and thousands of other Manitobans.

Convicted Auto Thieves—Denial of MPI Benefits

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

In Manitoba, a car thief convicted of stealing a vehicle involved in a car accident is eligible to receive compensation and assistance for personal injury from Manitoba Public Insurance.

Too many Manitoba families have had their lives tragically altered by motor vehicle accidents involving car thieves and stolen vehicles.

It is an injustice to victims, their families and law-abiding Manitobans that MPI premiums are used to benefit car thieves involved in those accidents.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Justice deny all MPI benefits to a person for injuries received in an accident if he or she is convicted of stealing a motor vehicle involved in the accident.

And this petition is signed by A. Wiebe, G. Jones, M. Jones and many, many more fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): I'm pleased to table the following report: Manitoba Innovation, Energy and Mines, Supplementary Information for Legislative

Review, 2011-2012 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): It's my pleasure to table the 2011-2012 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Department of Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2011-2012 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Manitoba Employee Pensions and for the Manitoba Civil Service Commission, and I'm also pleased to table the Manitoba Enabling Appropriations and Other Appropriations Supplementary Information for 2011-12.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the written responses to Order Paper written Questions 22, 23, 24, 25 asked by the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger).

* (13:40)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, last weekend's storms and additional rain forecasted this week will result in unprecedented flows of water on the Assiniboine River.

Yesterday, inflow upstream of the Portage Diversion was 38,000 cubic feet per second. This figure is expected to rise well over 50,000 cubic feet per second in the next two to four days, even before the additional rain is taken into account.

The increased water presents a serious challenge for the Portage Diversion and the upper Assiniboine River, and rapid upgrades to both the diversion channel and the river dikes downstream of Portage will be required to help manage these record flows.

The required upgrades to the Assiniboine dikes will need to be done in a very short period of time in areas of limited access and difficult working environments, especially in the rain. Manitoba is enlisting every available resource in an attempt to manage these flows in a controlled way.

On the recommendation of officials, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) spoke to the Prime Minister yesterday and requested the assistance of the Canadian Armed Forces to reinforce and monitor diking from Portage

to Headingley. The Prime Minister immediately pledged their full support and co-operation. Immediately after this call was made, our officials began work to co-ordinate with the military who are arriving in stages today and tomorrow.

Our officials worked throughout the night to assess the situation and the challenges that we face. Even with the planned upgrades to the dikes and the diversion channel, we will be facing water beyond the capacity of the system, and we're finalizing options to maintain this increased water in a controlled way.

I can also advise the House that the Premier is in Portage meeting with the Canadian Forces personnel as we speak and was in Brandon yesterday where the City has declared a state of local emergency. Crews in Brandon were working rapidly to raise the existing dikes by another two feet in preparation for the heavy rains. Precautionary evacuations of around 900 homes began in an in-at-in-pardon me-in an at-risk part of Brandon this morning, and further evacuations are a possibility. The Province has provided 130,000 sandbags to Brandon, and they have requested 50,000 more. The Premier confirmed with the mayor that we will provide any and all additional assistance requested by the City.

I would like to note that for administrative purposes we're declaring a localized provincial state of emergency for the city and RM of Portage la Prairie and for the RMs of Woodlands, Rosser, St. François Xavier, Headingley, Cartier, Macdonald and Grey. This is not related in any way to the military presence in the area; rather it is to support provincial and municipal flood-fighting efforts.

I would like to stress that the situation on the Assiniboine River is evolving very quickly and that every effort is being made to keep local leaders, residents and the general public apprised of the latest information as quickly as possible.

Finally, I would like to take-pardon me-I would also like to make the House aware that there is also a significant flood risk and the flood-fighting activity is ongoing in and around many areas of the province, particularly in the areas of Lake St. Martin and with the communities of Lake St. Martin and Little Saskatchewan and the surrounding communities in that area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the latest updates. My colleagues and I would like to also extend our sincere thanks to the

federal government for making members of the Canadian Forces available to assist with flood efforts. Their assistance was very beneficial during the flood in '97, and we know their efforts will be greatly appreciated this spring as well.

As noted, there have been significant developments on the flood front since last week; first of all, the precautionary evacuations being undertaken as Brandon-in Brandon as we speak. Work continues to raise or to reinforce dikes in communities like Brandon and the rural municipalities of Cartier, St. François Xavier and Headingley, and thanks go out to the countless volunteers who have been helping with those efforts in recent days.

Many along the Portage Diversion and around Lake Manitoba are also carefully watching the flood forecast to see how they will be impacted by the current flooding and the possibility of more rain in the days ahead. Similarly, many are evaluating the impacts of continued runoff in the Parkland area and regions further north. Travel remains problematic in many regions due to the many, many road closures.

As always, we hope that Manitobans will proceed with an abundance of caution when it comes to the flood. Hundreds of men and women are working diligently on flood preparation measures across the province, and it is imperative that they be allowed to do the work without interference. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have permission? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join other members of the Chamber in expressing a concern to the people in Brandon who are now undergoing an evacuation. The situation there is clearly pretty critical. People are working very hard trying to make sure that the water-the river doesn't overflow the dikes that have been put up, and let us hope that the water can be contained, but it is certainly a worrisome situation.

The situation along the Assiniboine River between Portage la Prairie and Winnipeg is also of significant concern, and I was out there and-on the weekend and seeing the houses being threatened, the Assiniboine River in places going over the banks and flooding farmers' fields. And certainly it is a significant concern already, and with the expected increase in flow, it is going to be a, you know, a

major issue that we'll have to watch very carefully. And we're very pleased that the Canadian Forces personnel are coming and will be helping, because it's certainly needed.

I also want to speak briefly to the situation at Lake St. Martin, which the minister alluded to, because I was there on the weekend as well. The major dike on the community which was put up appears to have failed. The water was essentially as high inside the dike as outside. There are large numbers of houses which are threatened. There are many roads where the water has gone over or threatening to go over. There are people being evacuated from the community, and certainly this is one of the results of having to put huge amounts of water into Lake Manitoba and the excessive water levels in Lake Manitoba. And because the water there may be going up considerably more yet in the days ahead, it is an area that needs significant attention, and I'm sure the minister will be providing that. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today, we have Henriette Fontaine who is the mother of our clerk assistant Monique Grenier.

And also we have some family members of Karine Martel, who is one of our pages. We have Elva Martel, who's her grandmother; Jules and Jeannette Gosselin, also her grandparents; Diane Collette, who's her aunt; and Michele Martel, her mother.

And also in the public gallery we have with us from Grandview School, we have 17 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Barbara Grexton. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Mr. Struthers).

And also we have seated in the public gallery from Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, we have 68 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Heidi Thiessen. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer).

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

* (13:50)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Brandon Flooding Mitigation Strategies

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to thank the Minister of Emergency Measures for the statement in the House today, also acknowledge the fact that we had the opportunity last evening at about 8:30 to have a conversation on the phone about the circumstances facing many Manitobans from the border of Saskatchewan all the way to Winnipeg.

I just want to ask the minister: In light of the circumstances being faced in Brandon, what appears to be higher water in that area than what had been anticipated a short time ago and the fact that to date there's been no request for military assistance in Brandon, whether he's satisfied that every step that could reasonably be taken to protect people and property in the city of Brandon is currently being taken.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): I want to stress that the reason the request was made in terms of the Assiniboine dikes, as I did relay to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, was the very highly specialized nature of what needs to be done. It's going to be very challenging to say the least. It will be made more challenging by the rainfall that we're anticipating, and, of course, our armed forces are trained and have experience and have the necessary equipment.

And I just want to put on the record, by the way, certainly I think I speak for everyone in this House and everybody across Manitoba that we've always known that the armed forces were there if we needed them.

We needed them, and, as I speak, I know the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is meeting with the first contingent. We're anticipating further mobilization tomorrow, so I want to put on the record how much we, in this province, appreciate the immediate mobilization of the armed forces in that area.

Assiniboine River Increasing Water Levels

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): And we, too, would like to acknowledge the quick response of the Canadian Forces from last night's request to start to move into place to deal with things over the coming days.

Mr. Speaker, the information being provided yesterday, which the minister quite rightly identified as the challenges created by very high flows of water both from the Souris River and the Assiniboine and, in particular, the situation along the Assiniboine River east of the point at which the Souris River drains into the Assiniboine, is quite significant. The information being provided yesterday was that it was expected that around 49,000 cubic feet per second of water would be flowing up the Assiniboine River into the range of Portage la Prairie. The ministerial statement now is indicating that could be well over 50,000 cubic feet per second, quite a significant increase in a short period of time.

Can the minister just indicate how rapidly the situation is evolving and whether he's satisfied that all the steps that are required to be taken to deal with that water are being taken?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): And just to complete from the first answer, Brandon has, indeed, requested assistance from the forces, and that has been conveyed to the federal government, and my understanding is that the assistance will be arriving this afternoon. Of course, many of the armed forces personnel will be stationed in Shilo. I should indicate, by the way, that it's also going to—we're going to be accessing the services of many reservists in both Manitoba and probably Saskatchewan as well.

And, in terms of the specific flows, certainly we're anticipating now above 50,000 cfs—the member's quite correct—and one of the things that we've done overnight is actually further confirm the latest weather forecast. I want to stress that the storm last weekend and the anticipated weather event that we're going to be facing over the next period of time is the prime determinant of the significant flows.

As the member knows—and I'll continue with it—

Controlled Dike Breaches Proposal

Mr. McFadyen: And I want to thank the minister for providing the update on the deployment of the forces to Brandon.

And in connection with the events along the Assiniboine approaching Portage la Prairie, the minister has indicated the possibility of well over 50,000 cubic feet per second with the Portage

Diversion having capacity of up to about 25,000, leaving significant flows of water yet to come down the Assiniboine.

Can the minister indicate whether there may be any plans at all to do controlled breaches of dikes along the Assiniboine in anticipation of the amount of water now moving eastward down that river?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, we will be finalizing the plans immediately after question period.

I also want to, by the way, on the record, thank the opposition for allowing Estimates to be rescheduled for myself and also the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick).

We are going to be looking at a number of proposed options that could significantly enhance the capacity of the Portage Diversion beyond its current limit of capacity which is approximately 25,000 cfs.

In terms of the dikes, we've put a fair amount of time, effort and resources into the ability to continue to have in around 18,000. The member is quite right, we are facing amounts that are greater than the physical capacity of both the Assiniboine and we're looking to see what we can get out—additionally out of the Portage Diversion, and we will be looking at other options which will be finalized probably immediately after question period.

And I thank the opposition again for the leave on Estimates.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of Official Opposition, on a new question.

Mr. McFadyen: On a new question, Mr. Speaker.

With the very significant and changing estimates of the amount of water coming down the Assiniboine River, can the minister just indicate whether controlled breaches of those dikes around Portage la Prairie is one of the options currently being considered by the government in order to divert some of that water that's making its way eastward?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can indicate that, indeed, the preferred option in this particular case is anything that would control the flow.

The member mentioned one option. I've talked about the enhancement of the Portage Diversion.

We'll have a very good sense in terms of what we can get out of the Portage Diversion.

And I want to stress again that the No. 1 priority that we put in place over the last number of weeks is to maximize the capacity of the Assiniboine, and no matter what happens we will be working hard to prevent any uncontrolled breach because if you look at it, an uncontrolled breach where you have 15, 16, 17, 18,000 cfs flowing through a channel could have very significant consequences, very difficult consequences to control.

We'll be finalizing that at 2:30, and I did brief the member yesterday and I will put on the record, too, as soon as we've finalized the decision on this, I would like to offer to the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Winnipeg Crest Level

Mr. McFadyen: We will take up the minister's offer for briefings which is appreciated by all members who are representing people who are being impacted.

I just want to ask the minister: We are aware of the circumstances that could be faced in municipalities to the west of Winnipeg where the Assiniboine River is narrower and quite windy and the impacts in those communities which look as though they could be fairly serious and certainly the efforts being undertaken to shore things up and to protect people and property in those areas.

In addition to that, I wonder if the minister can just provide a current estimate of how high the Assiniboine is expected to rise within the city of Winnipeg and what the timing of that crest may be, based on currently available information.

Mr. Ashton: I can provide the detailed information perhaps at the briefing.

What I can indicate is that the real pressure is not within the city of Winnipeg. What has happened, of course, is that the Assiniboine has already crested. The Red has crested. Having said that, we have—we've given full briefing—full information to the City of Winnipeg and we will be working with them. We're not taking anything for granted over the next 24 to 48 hours.

But clearly, the pressure is from the Assiniboine, including Brandon, but when you're downstream of Brandon, you're also dealing with the inflows from the Souris. You're dealing with a very dynamic situation. And we will have, probably, immediately after question period, some decisions I will undertake to immediately communicate to the leaders of the parties in the House. And I will undertake also to provide detailed briefings to MLAs from the impacted areas.

I mentioned this yesterday, but if the members from Brandon or members from any of the constituencies around the Assiniboine would like more detailed information, we'll provide it.

* (14:00)

Mr. McFadyen: Just in order to provide some clarity, the minister has indicated that there has been a crest already of the Assiniboine River in Winnipeg, and we are aware that the river did rise and has dropped somewhat since that time.

The question is whether there is expected to be a second crest of the Assiniboine River within Winnipeg and, if so, what is the anticipated height of that crest.

Mr. Ashton: I can indicate that we will provide the detailed information. Much of our attention over the last 24 to 48 hours has been on the development of contingency plans.

And when I referenced in my comments that staff have been working around the clock, I just can't say enough about how we appreciate not only the efforts of our provincial staff but municipal staff, the armed forces and the many federal staff that are involved with this, and, quite frankly, we've got—retirees have come in, many of the consulting engineering companies.

We've been working around the clock on those contingencies, but I will undertake at the briefing to provide the maximum information possible. I can indicate that what I mentioned yesterday may be the case today. A lot of our key staff are out in the field right now as we speak.

But I will certainly undertake, with the fullest information I have, to make sure that members of the Legislature are fully informed on developments, not

only today but in terms of the future critical number of days.

Brandon Flooding Military Assistance

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): First of all, I would like to extend my thanks to all the volunteers, EMO staff, City of Brandon personnel and provincial employees for their efforts in controlling the extraordinary flood waters in the city of Brandon.

We do know, Mr. Speaker, that military assistance has been approved by the federal government, and we now know, as of today, that that assistance has been asked for by the City of Brandon.

Can the minister tell me today, please, the number of personnel that will be deployed to the city of Brandon and how long will it take for the military to stage the appropriate response?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): I can indicate, in terms of Brandon and in terms of the Assiniboine dikes, that we've asked the military to focus on the completion of certain tasks. It will be very much up to the military to determine how many personnel, what equipment is required to do that.

I can indicate, certainly, from the most recent information on the Assiniboine dikes that in that area we're already looking at probably 300-plus armed service personnel mobilized within 24 hours—that'll be later today—and I have every confidence that they will be able to mobilize just as quickly for Brandon.

I can't give an exact number largely because the scope of what we're dealing with will be in co-operation with the emergency management officials, both the municipality in Brandon and municipalities around the Assiniboine and EMO and other departments that are involved.

But I can tell you one thing: The military stepped up to the plate. They are there on the Assiniboine. I have no doubt they'll be there for Brandon as well.

Municipal Flooding Request Responsibility for Military Assistance

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): That fits in to my second question very well. We do know that other municipalities surrounding Brandon are being

adversely affected by these extraordinary flood waters.

If there should be a request of a municipality other than the city of Brandon currently, how is that request made? Who is it made through, and, Mr. Speaker, is it the Province that's going to make sure that military personnel will be available to those municipalities, or is it the municipality themselves that have to make the request?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Essentially, it's a combination of factors. In the case of the Assiniboine dikes, the department which is responsible for constructing the dikes—which is MIT, my department—is going to be co-ordinating the construction work in that particular case. The indications from MIT, in consultation with Water Stewardship, was that we would need that specialized assistance.

Each case is taken on its own merit. We are dealing with the federal protocol, but I can tell you one thing: What's also appreciated here is not only the response of the armed forces, but the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had made this contact with the Prime Minister during an election. He took the time—the Prime Minister I'm talking about here—to actually offer the assistance. I believe the communication from the Prime Minister's office was made within three minutes of the Premier making that request. We've had similar co-operation on Brandon, and if there is further need, I have every confidence that it will be provided.

Brandon Flooding Evacuation Plan and Resources

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Yesterday there was a mandatory evacuation order for homeowners and businesses in the city of Brandon. As we have heard, the threat is far from over and the evacuation may, in fact, be in the—it's set in for an extended period of time.

Can the minister inform this House now if any evacuation centres have been necessary, and what plans are there if the evacuation order is needed for that extended period of time for the individuals who have been evacuated?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): This member knows from his time in the municipal office in Brandon, each municipality has its own emergency plan. We obviously have taken a precautionary measure in

terms of the evacuation notice. We feel that's important.

It does not mean that there is going to be a failure of the dike necessarily, but these are the precautionary measures that are part of the plan. I can get the detailed information for the member. In fact, I will add that, if the member is interested in a direct briefing, to make sure we provide that, along with the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell), who I know has been asking similar questions.

And I thank the member for the question, but I can tell you we—every municipality in this province has an emergency plan, including for evacuations of this kind, and I have every confidence that the City of Brandon, working with EMO, will be able to do the right thing for the people in Brandon.

Assiniboine River Flood Forecast Gauge Failures

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the EMO people and volunteers around the province working on these flooding issues, as well, but I noticed that in the May 6th flood bulletin it was announced that the Assiniboine River forecast had been revised and that record flows were now being forecast to the Brandon area between May 12th and the 14th. The bulletin then went on to state that the forecast adjustments were needed because of an inaccurate reading from a faulty gauge on the Qu'Appelle River in Saskatchewan.

I just wonder if the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) could inform the House when she and her department first learned of this faulty gauge and by whom did they hear from the—whom informed them of the information.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, I do want to stress one thing. There was an adjustment in the forecast related to the gauge, which is located in Saskatchewan. It's operated, I believe, by the federal government. One of the challenges in that area in eastern Saskatchewan, as is the case in Westman, is that we're dealing with unprecedented water levels and flows.

We did adjust the forecast, but what I can indicate is the significant adjustment in the forecast came from the predictions of the upcoming weather event. That's really what's impacting on the current

situation both in Brandon and between Portage and Winnipeg on the Assiniboine.

So, notwithstanding that faulty gauge, the vast majority of the challenge we're dealing with and the flow we're dealing with is related to that precipitation, and this is something we did flag several weeks ago.

I want to put on the record that we're dealing with a 50 per cent greater volume—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maguire: I'm sure the minister knows, Mr. Speaker, that accurate information, accurate data, is essential in developing sound flood management strategies, and so we would assume that there's a—that the provincial government uses readings from a number of different gauges when it develops its flood forecast.

And so I wonder if the Minister of Water Stewardship could explain how many gauges are used to calculate flow levels for the Assiniboine River and how often they're read and if she could inform the House as to what fail-safe system is in place to ensure the accuracy of these forecasts should one of these gauges fail in the future.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I want to indicate that we, indeed, have been mobilizing staff. There are normally two teams checking gauges; we've had 13. This error in the gauge was detected, and, again, this is something that is important to note.

I want to stress, though, that the key challenge in the Assiniboine is the fact we have 50 per cent more volume—that's the estimate in the watershed—50 per cent more volume than the flood record in 1976 and combined with a very significant storm that we're going to be seeing over the next number of days and combined with the previous storm from the previous week, that is what is pushing the Assiniboine River and our flood defences to the limits.

So, the gauge, indeed, did result in a minor change to the forecast late last week, but what we're dealing with now is not the result of that gauge or any other gauge; it's the result of the very significant precipitation we're going to see over much of southern Manitoba and in eastern Saskatchewan over the next number of days.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the minister's flood reports there's been considerable adjustment to

the flood through the flow levels expected on the Assiniboine River as it moves through Manitoba, and as the minister has pointed out, on May the 4th flows in the Assiniboine River at Brandon were predicted to be close to 26,000 cfs. Two days later, their forecasted was revised upward to significantly—to 32,000 cfs, and on Sunday afternoon, yesterday, 37,500, a difference of 11,500 cfs.

And, so, Mr. Speaker, in order to protect the people along the way, is the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) confident that there will not be future challenges with the systems being used to calculate the critical flow on these rivers?

* (14:10)

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the key thing to really note here is the degree to which we're dealing with a very geographic, widespread flood situation. We've been saying for weeks now that we anticipate it will be also a prolonged flood season. We have seen the pressures just in terms of states of local emergency. The maximum we achieved in the flood of '09 was 16 states of local emergency. We had, at one time, 33 states of local emergency and that was early on in the flood season.

We have had our staff working around the clock. We have increased our ability to be able to pick up data over the last period of time. We've invested in that. We've added—and I want to stress again, my colleague the Minister of Water Stewardship, her department has added an additional number of crews from 2 to 13.

We are increasing our data collection and a lot of this is really the evolving circumstances—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Assiniboine River Flood Forecast Gauge Use (Headingley)

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): And I just want to also thank the municipal leaders, the provincial departments and all the people that have been working very hard on reinforcing the dikes along the Assiniboine.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard about a gauge in Saskatchewan that may have been responsible for some improper forecasting along the Assiniboine River levels. There is a gauge at the Trans-Canada Highway and Lido Plage Road, and this is basically right in the heart of where the flooding is taking

place today, as we speak, and has been over the weekend.

And people in the area are wondering why that gauge wasn't used until just recently so they could really very accurately look at the levels that are coming up in their backyards, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I'll undertake to respond to the detailed question the member has.

I can indicate that the gauges are part of what we look at that measures, obviously, the immediate flows. The key thing we're looking at right now, I really want to stress again, is a very significant storm that is going to impact in this province over the next number of days, and that is essentially what is driving the flows in the Assiniboine to this current flow.

I also want to stress that we have maximized our use of the Shellmouth Dam this year. If it hadn't been for the Shellmouth Dam, we would have been looking at several feet of higher levels on the Assiniboine as we speak. It's made a huge difference, and it certainly made a difference in combination with the Portage Diversion and the other aspects of our flood control systems, including the floodway.

So I will undertake to look at the specific gauge, but I do want to stress the key factor we're dealing with right now is the—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the weather conditions are seriously going to affect the levels of the river, but, as we know, the levels of the Assiniboine River, the grading from Brandon to Winnipeg, there's a steep grade down and, as well, the river is very winding and narrow and wider in some areas. So it really is important for local people to have that local readings of gauges in the local area which really reflects the level that they are experiencing.

So, I'm just, again, expressing what an emailer has said to me today about a gauge that's been there since 1997 but really has not been used in this flood to adequately predict the levels that are increasingly coming up in people's backyards and encroaching on their properties, and I'd like to just ask the minister if he wouldn't look into the situation. Thank you.

Mr. Ashton: I will make sure we follow up on that, and if we are to arrange a briefing, I will undertake

to get a direct response to the member at the briefing which—I just want to stress we are—we have a lot of staff that are out there in the field right now. It may be difficult to reach some of them, but, certainly, by tomorrow I'll undertake to get a specific response on that specific gauge.

Cattle Producers Effect of High Water Levels

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, cattle producers in the Westlake area of my constituency and many other areas of Manitoba were hard hit in the recent storm that brought rain, heavy snow and blizzard conditions. I know some of my colleagues have also received calls from producers who experienced similar storm-related issues.

Does the minister have an estimate of how many cattle producers were impacted and how many cattle were lost in the storm?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I appreciate the question from the member for Ste. Rose.

Staff in MAFRI are hard at work in conjunction with producers and with the Manitoba beef producers and other groups to assess that situation. Yet, again, a number of Manitoba farmers found themselves up against the wall in a very tough position. We don't intend to leave these farmers hanging, Mr. Speaker. We intend to assess this—the damage that has been done, take stock and then move forward from there.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, I and many of my colleagues and municipal offices throughout the western side of the province have had many calls related to the cattle losses from that storm.

I ask again: Has the minister received similar calls and has he got an estimate of the total losses?

Mr. Struthers: We've been receiving phone calls through the department, through our GO offices, which I'm very pleased with, because I want to make sure that cattle ranchers and others hook up with the very fine folks in our MAFRI offices so that we can get—so we can all get our heads around the kind of damage that was done in that storm, Mr. Speaker.

We are working to assess this situation. I've been very clear that we're not going to leave farmers hanging out to dry on this. We're moving forward. We need to take stock of the damage that was done, and we do that in conjunction with the ranchers and

others and with the farm leadership who I've been in contact with as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, in addition to those challenges, high water levels continue to pose problems. Westlake area ranchers have been unable to move their cattle to higher ground because of road closures and wet conditions.

Mr. Speaker, ranchers are desperately trying to cope with the results of the storm and the high water levels. It's having a tremendous impact on their families. It's a very stressful situation.

What actions has the minister taken to address the feed shortages and the necessary movement of cattle to other areas of the province?

Mr. Struthers: Again, I appreciate that question from the member for Ste. Rose, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the help of the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) and Emerson (Mr. Graydon) last week in dealing with an issue in the Interlake, in the Shoal lakes area. Those kind of situations are prevalent all around the province, in every region. We want to make sure that people who are in need get contacted with people within MAFRI.

As a matter of fact, this morning I was on a conference call with the leadership of KAP, the pork producers, Manitoba beef producers, egg farmers, chicken growers, in a conference call to talk about people who we can set up with each other to talk about real solutions, practical things we can do to get feed to the animals that we need to get feed to, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Children in Care Hotel Lodging

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, since the NDP government has come to power, a record number of families in this province have been broken up. When the NDP took power, there were just over 5,000 kids in care in the province, and since the NDP have taken power, that number has skyrocketed to over 9,000 kids in care. Some of these kids have been warehoused in downtown hotels and, at times, without adult supervision.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister of Child and Family Services answer why he's been neglecting children by having them unsupervised and in hotels?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Well, Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate record of children in hotels

in this province is well known to members of the public and members of this House, and, indeed, I believe it was in August of 2006, it was recorded there were 166 children in hotels on the particular day.

And as a result of a recruitment strategy, we've been able to reduce those numbers, and it appears that we are been able—we've been able to sustain that reduction to what I understand is an average of—a monthly average of two per day.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's track record of breaking up families is appalling.

In 2006, there were over 6,600 kids taken by the NDP from families. In 2007, that number was over 7,200, and the most recent numbers show there were 9,100 kids that had been taken from their families by the NDP. Manitobans know that some of these kids are still being warehoused in hotels by the NDP. Some are missing school, and on occasion they've been left to wander unsupervised alone on the streets.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP minister of Child and Family Services neglecting vulnerable children?

*(14:20)

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, on the one hand, he ends with this question about neglecting vulnerable children, and at the beginning of this question, he talks about why are we increasing the number who are taken away from abusive and negligent parents.

So, you know, he argues both sides and, of course, that's the politics of child welfare for this minister. He'll get up in the House half the days in here and say, why didn't you have those children in care? The next day he gets up and says, why are the children in care?

And we know he's interfered in individual cases. He said he interviewed the parents where there was a decision and advice from experts that the children should be taken away. He said: I interviewed them; I think that child should go back; there's no abuse here. He made a decision. He doesn't wait for Dr. Charlie Ferguson or the courts to make a determination, or the Winnipeg police.

There are professionals that are doing their level best, sometimes under very difficult circumstances, to save the children in this province and, Mr. Speaker, there are children in care because there are children who need to be protected in this province.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, there are far too many children in care in this province because this government is not standing up and supporting families. The numbers show that the member for St. Johns has mismanaged this portfolio more than anyone else in history. Since he's become minister, the number of kids taken by the NDP has increased by 2,491. Under the NDP, thousands of kids have lost their brothers and sisters because the NDP have been too busy playing suburban politics to provide support for struggling families in inner Winnipeg.

When will the minister for Child and Family Services admit that the NDP have broken up far too many families and neglected inner Winnipeg for far too long?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, sometimes families have to be broken up if it's to save the life of a child who is being sexually abused by a parent. You know, it's dismaying to see what parents can't do for and do to children every day in this portfolio. But that is why there are people in the front lines who actually see the faces of these children, who see the blood and the bruises, who have the fortitude to go out there and go into a family situation and seize a child.

But to get up in this House and just say, just send all the children back home. There are plans in this province, thankfully, as a result of a federal government that—and I commend minister-former Minister Strahl for making that necessary investment in First Nations prevention, because we do have to help families who are showing early signs of trouble, and I congratulate them for finally helping the Province to move ahead more upstream and get the children safer at home.

Health Sciences Centre Dialysis Unit Expansion

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, every year more than 275 Manitobans start chronic dialysis therapy to stay alive. Currently, over 1,000 patients receive renal replacement therapy through the Manitoba Renal Program and an additional 4,000 are followed through the MRP renal health clinics.

Could the Minister of Health please inform the House what our government plans to do to continue the development of the provincial renal health framework?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): We were very pleased to be at the Health Sciences

Centre today with representatives from the Manitoba Renal Program to officially open a \$5.5-million dialysis expansion. That is an expansion of 10 seats that will enable 60 additional patients to be dialysed there.

But, Mr. Speaker, at the same time and arguably more importantly, we also initiated a first-time-ever pilot project, a nurse-led clinic in Thompson to, through the use of Telehealth, allow people to have access to specialists and teams that will, hopefully, prevent more people from needing dialysis or at the very least to delay their need for dialysis.

For every seat that we invest in in dialysis, we need to double our efforts on prevention, and we're committed to do that.

Red River Floodway Flow Levels and Capacity Information

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate to this House what the current flows are in the Winnipeg floodway?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, I—it was hard to make out the member. He was very quiet-spoken which probably caught me—caught a lot of us by surprise, but the other day in Estimates I was asked to speak up so it cuts both ways.

I think he made reference to flows in the floodway and I can provide the detailed information to the member on flows in the floodway.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, could the minister also provide to us what the current capacity is of the Winnipeg floodway?

Mr. Ashton: It's sufficient to protect to a one-in-700-year flood. I can indicate we're nowhere close to that on the Red River this year. The Red, of course, has crested and it crested actually below the 2009 levels.

So I can provide the cfs. I can provide the full details in the cfs but I can indicate that the—with the redesigned flow there was more than enough excess capacity in the floodway. This year again we invested in this province very significantly in flood mitigation, close to a billion dollars over the last 10 years.

Portage Diversion Dike Upgrades and Capacity Information

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could ask the minister, as well, in regards to the flows on the Portage Diversion: Coming in from Arthur-Virden last night, I noticed that they're adding more dirt to the top of the floodway dikes or the diversion dikes at Portage la Prairie, and if he could elaborate on that, and, as well, it's—from the flood updates we've been getting, it looks like about 20 to 25—or 20 to 20,500 cubic feet per second going through the Portage Diversion.

I wonder if—and it seems to the top, yet they're talking about 25,000 cfs being available. Can he indicate what work is being undertaken and how much more than the 20,500 he thinks they can put through the diversion?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): I thank the member for the question. There's two elements, obviously, we're dealing with. One is the capacity of the Portage Diversion. I can indicate that the normal rated capacity is up to about 25,000 cfs. We have been looking at options which we'll be finalizing probably within the next hour or so. We're meeting after question period on ways of increasing that capacity.

On the Assiniboine the normal capacity was in the 15,000 cfs range. Because of the additional work we did on dikes this year and the repairs we did on those dikes, the investment of approximately \$20 million thus far—this is prior to the events of the last 24 hours—we feel we could get upwards of 18,000 cfs or more. Those details are being finalized as we speak and our goal, again, is to maximize capacity both in the river and—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maguire: I wonder if the minister could just elaborate a little bit more in regards to how he expects to get over 20,500 cubic feet through that floodway given that that's the maximum that's been coming through it in any of the reports we've received this spring already, and how much more he expects to have to build the dikes on the Portage Diversion to get to 25,000 cfs?

Mr. Ashton: Yes, the normal capacity is 25,000. We are working right now with the best engineering advice that's available to determine if we can increase that capacity.

When you've got that surge of water that's—can be coming through the Assiniboine, primarily because of the significant weather event that's coming up combined with the pre-existing flows, that is the goal. We've got some of the best engineering experience and expertise anywhere in this province to begin with and we've been working around the clock.

And I want to put on the record, by the way, we pulled in retired staff, some of the best consulting engineers, some of the best engineers in the Department of Water Stewardship, MIT and all across government. Right now, as we speak, they've been working round the clock on potential solutions. We're going to try and maximize the capacity through the Portage Diversion because that, again, will take some of the pressure that we know is going to exist—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

*(14:30)

Lake Manitoba Water Levels

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, could the minister tell us what the current level is of Lake Manitoba and why has his department stopped publishing that number?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): In terms of Lake Manitoba, we flagged the high levels. I can get the detail. We—the way it works on the 24-hour basis is we get our situation report, updated situation report just prior to the press conference which we usually hold—I believe we're holding one at 3 o'clock. I can get the latest information.

I do want to indicate though, and I want to put it on the record again, we have been saying for weeks there are going to be significant high lake levels in virtually all lakes in Manitoba, particularly in Lake Manitoba.

And tonight in Warren, I believe, we're having a meeting with all of the impacted municipalities and communities, because there are both First Nation and Northern Affairs communities around Lake Manitoba. We have been preparing maps that show where we're likely to see impacts this summer and fall if there's significant wind and storm events.

We're going to be working with those communities around Lake Manitoba because we

know there are a significant number of homes and cottages that could be—

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

eChart Manitoba

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, we are entering into a new phase of health care and I am proud that The Maples is playing an important part in it. On March 9th, 2011, the Province launched the first electronic health-record system known as eChart Manitoba at Kildonan Medical Centre at Seven Oaks General Hospital.

We know that time is invaluable to giving patients the best possible chance at recovery; eChart Manitoba is a new tool for physicians to make sure patients get the care they need as quickly as possible. With this new system, health-care providers can see patients' key information instantly. This also means the doctor can check things such as laboratory results in one health-care centre, even if the tests were originally done somewhere else.

I am very pleased that Kildonan Medical Centre is one of the first sites to participate in eChart Manitoba. By July 2011, we hope that this system will be used in 30 sites across Manitoba.

For doctors and nurses to do the best job possible, they need to have the information available when they need it, quickly and securely. Patients' privacy is closely protected and only the health-care providers who need it will be able to access the patients' personal information.

More and more we are using developing technology to improve our quality of life. This impacts every Manitoban because no matter who we are, we have all had family or friends in the hospital at some point in time. Those professionals now have another means to support us even further. With the new eChart system, we are taking the best possible care of our patients. Thank you.

Herm Martens

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to honour one of my constituents for his outstanding contributions to our community. Herm Martens was one of four recipients of the Capturing Opportunities 2011 Award, specifically, in the community leadership category. It was no surprise

that his efforts have been recognized by our province as he is truly a valued community leader.

For many years, Herm Martens has been a dedicated volunteer in his hometown of Rosenort. He has been a leader in many positions throughout our community and has made a positive impact throughout the region.

In 1995, Mr. Martens became the reeve of the RM of Morris and served on council until 2010. He chaired the Pembina Valley Water Co-op, the Red River Basin Commission, and served on the advisory committee for the Manitoba Floodway Authority.

Herm Martens manages a large farm operation, is a director of the Manitoba Egg Marketing Board, and a hockey coach. He also donates his time towards his church and the Mennonite Central Committee auction.

The Outstanding Community Leadership Award is given to an individual who has made significant and notable contributions to the betterment of their community or region. Recipients have served as a catalyst for positive action and have exhibited the highest standard of community leadership, dedication, ability and innovation.

Award recipients were honoured at the Capturing Opportunities celebration banquet on Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at the Keystone Centre in Brandon. They received a commemorative glass award as well as a \$1,000 cash contribution to a community organization of their choice.

I am also pleased to announce that Herm was recently honoured with the Certificate of Merit from the University of Manitoba's Agriculture Diploma Program in recognition of leadership with agricultural organizations and outstanding service to the community at large.

Mr. Speaker, I would like this House to join me in congratulating Herm Martens for his contributions to the town of Rosenort, the municipality of Morris and the province of Manitoba. We are grateful for such dedication.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Glenwood School 100th Anniversary

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): This year marks the 100th anniversary of the opening of Glenwood School, an elementary school located in the heart of the constituency of St. Vital. The school will mark this historic occasion with two special

events: an open house and family barbecue at the school on May 19th, with hundreds of alumni, Glenwood staff and families in attendance, and a reception the following day at Glenwood Community Club. This is an opportunity for Glenwood students, both young and old, to meet, share memories and tour the school.

Throughout the decades, Glenwood School has contributed to the memories and life journeys of thousands of students. It has been the heart of St. Vital, a community that has seen a great deal of change over the years. Glenwood School has served our province well, preparing generations of young Manitobans to be productive members of our community. From these humble beginnings at Glenwood School, generations of Manitobans have gone on to make significant contributions as citizens of Manitoba, Canada and the world.

Glenwood School provides a wonderful example of how schools are not only places where we send our children to receive an education, but part of the very fabric of thriving communities. For 100 years, Glenwood School has brought together Manitobans, from all walks of life, to share their experiences and forge a common bond of citizenship.

I look forward to celebrating this historic event with alumni staff and Glenwood School's many families, and I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Glenwood School on 100 years of outstanding service to my community of St. Vital and to our province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Community Engagement Party and Volunteer Awards

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to attend the fourth annual Community Engagement Party and Volunteer Awards evening that was held in Warren Collegiate Institute on April the 16th. Over 180 people attended the event, representing 25 to 30 community organizations. The Woodlands Community Development Corporation was commendable in hosting the evening. This year's theme was "Volunteers Feed Community Spirit," which highlighted the significance of being a volunteer.

Since the event was focused on volunteers in the community, 44 students from Warren Collegiate Institute were on hand to assist with different aspects of the evening, including the decorations, meal preparation and cleanup.

Several individuals and groups were recognized for the role they play as volunteers in the community. Bev Stewart, Eilene Myskiw, Trevor Procter, Jody Carriere and Nancy Dumas were all recognized for their volunteer service, and Viviane Riding was the recipient of the 2011 Volunteer Service Award. The 2011 Youth Engagement Award Winners were Ashleigh MacMillan and Courtney MacMillan. Meanwhile, the Woodlands District Ladies were recipients of the 2011 Community Service Award with Warren Hardware and West Interlake Trading Company also being recognized for their efforts.

David Northcott, executive director of Winnipeg Harvest, was the keynote speaker for the evening, delivered an address that focused on the purpose of Winnipeg Harvest and the importance of volunteers in our communities. Prior to his speech, Mr. Northcott spoke with students about the importance of community involvement and significance of the Winnipeg Harvest. His message of the ripple effect and the value of continued community involvement must have resonated with the audience, as guests donated two large containers full of tins for the bins to go to Winnipeg Harvest.

Mr. Speaker, volunteers are the heart of every community, and it is important to take time to thank them for their service. The Community Engagement Party was a great way to acknowledge the many volunteers who give their time and talent to community organizations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Collège Béliveau Fashion Fundraiser

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, my wife, Raj, and I had the pleasure of attending a fundraiser fashion show at Collège Béliveau, a French immersion high school in my constituency of Radisson. I was personally invited by Mr. Ben Lee whose daughter, Katie, is on the graduation organizing committee. The aim of the show was to raise funds for their upcoming graduation celebrations in June.

"Circus" was the theme of the fashion show, and it was a wonderful opportunity for the students to showcase their creativity to their friends and family. The students' ability to blend together such an imaginative fashion show, that combined drama with humour on one stage, was really quite amazing.

There was a silent auction included in the prize donated by local businesses and committee members. I was also invited to contribute, and my wife, Raj, donated a sari and some household items for their silent auction.

One of the highlights of the evening was getting to see how well all these students get involved in this undertaking and work together. In all, 30 grade 12 and four grade 11 students collaborated to put on a magnificent and entertaining fundraiser. They were also assisted by two teachers, Michel Roy and Melanie Cloutier. At the end, it was clear that success of the fashion show succeeded even their expectations. Principal Alain Michalik and Vice-Principal Paula Meyer surely have a lot to be proud of.

* (14:40)

I would like to congratulate all the staff and students who organized and participated in this year's fashion show fundraiser for all their hard work. It was a great pleasure for—to attend this evening, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to next year's fashion show.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask leave to have the names of the staff and students who organized and participated in this fashion show included with this statement in the *Hansard*.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for names to be recorded in *Hansard*? [Agreed]

Collège Béliveau Fashion Show Fundraiser

Principal: Alain Michalik

Organizers: Elliot Sloan, Celine Peloquin.

Supervisors: Teachers - Michel Roy, Mélanie Cloutier.

Student Participants:

Advertisements and Ticket Sales: Holly Lefteruk.

Silent Auction: Katie Lee.

MCs: Paul Esteves, Savannah Olson.

Models: Cyrus Gervais-Tourangeau, Bassem Migally, Shane Gingera, Lauren Girard, Lyndon Cheys, Cassidy Yonza, Christian Samborksi, Megan Heide, Scott Desrosiers, Kristen Massicotte, Chelsea Lafreniere, Cameron Nault, Jennifer Butler, Breanna Gibson, Nicole Martin, Bromlei Daley, Mallory Trudel, Paul Blandford, Rayna Masterton, Brayden

Cline, Nick Roy, Michelle Van Wyk, Jesse Labossiere.

Grade 11 Student Participants: Alec Magnifico, Jeff Hak, Stephen Hak, Kunle Tijani.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): On House business.

In light of the flooding on the Assiniboia, I wonder if you would—Assiniboine River—I wonder if you'd canvass the House to see if you can move Estimates to accommodate staff in Water Stewardship and Infrastructure and Transportation.

Would you canvass the House to see if there's agreement to change the Estimates sequence as follows, and I'll table the new sequence for the information of the House: that the Estimates for the Department of Local Government be considered in the Chamber today, May 9th, 2011; that the Estimates of the Department of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors be considered in room 254 today, and upon conclusion, to be followed by the Estimates of the Department of Health; that the Estimates of the Department of Housing and Community Development be considered today in room 255; that the Estimates of the Department of Water Stewardship to be moved following the Estimates of the Department of Family Services and Consumer Affairs in the Chamber; and that the Estimates of the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation be moved following the Estimates of Sport in room 255.

Mr. Speaker: Is there an agreement to change the Estimates sequence as follows: that the Estimates for the Department of Local Government be considered in the Chamber today, on May 9th, 2011; that the Estimates of the Department of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors be considered in room 254 today, and upon conclusion, to be followed by the Estimates of the Department of Health; that the Estimates of the Department of Housing and Community Development be considered today in room 255; that the Estimates of the Department of Water Stewardship to be moved following the Estimates of the Department of Family Services and Consumer Affairs in the Chamber; that the Estimates of the

Department of Infrastructure and Transportation be moved following the Estimates of Sport in room 255.

Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

The Government House Leader, on further House business.

Ms. Howard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

We're prepared to move into the Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker: We will now move into Committee of Supply. And in the Chamber—Chamber will have Local Government, and 254 will be Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, and in room 255, Housing and Community Development.

So will the respective Chairs that are chairing these committees please go to the rooms that they will be chairing, please.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

HEALTHY LIVING, YOUTH AND SENIORS

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Mohinder Saran): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors.

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

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): Before I put the questions on, Mr. Chairperson, I'll put on record where the SOS, or Signs of Suicide, evaluation that was supposed to be available is, so I've put it on the record.

Basically, a very preliminary evaluation's been done, but it's got to go in front of the students and teachers and the partners that are delivering the program. Once that happens, I understand, then it's a—it moves forward and is done.

So I haven't seen the preliminary evaluation. It's got to go back to the focus groups with the teachers, students and other partners before we get it, so it shall be moved forward, but I don't have the—a specific completion date. But I assume that it's going

to be done somewhere around fall 2011, and it's in with the people who are doing the program.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Can the minister indicate to me who the preliminary groups are that are going to be working through that process?

Mr. Rondeau: The preliminary groups would be the students that were involved in the—developing the program, the parents, the teachers. You want the exact school names? *[interjection]* Okay, can I endeavour to get that to the member? I'll get you the list of the school names that actually participated in the program.

Mrs. Rowat: When we left off on Friday, I was asking some questions with regard to Triple P. I have a few more to ask in that area.

I know that there's been a significant amount of advertising for the month of January, February and March. We were able to access a freedom of information that indicated that there was around—and, I guess, a breakdown of allocation towards an ad campaign. The total was \$446,000 for January, February and March.

* (14:50)

Can the minister indicate to me how they are measuring the impact of that ad campaign?

Mr. Rondeau: The first thing that we tried to evaluate on the advertising campaign is how much take-up and how many calls and hits we did on the website. So there was 700 phone calls received during the eight-week campaign from both members of the public and practitioners seeking more information, and a desire to enrol in a Triple P group and trying to find out specific resources in their area.

In addition, a significant increase was seen in the number of visits for the Triple P Manitoba website, which was approximately 3,000 per month, which, if you take it over a eight-week period, would've been about 6,000 hits. That's up significantly, and then what'll happen is over time we will be tracking the people who have expressed interest, what the growth in number and participation is locally, and see how it rolls out.

And as we were talking about on Friday, Mr. Chair, I think it's really, really important to know that we are open to discussions on what specific criteria were evaluated in the future. We have a number of ideas and are moving forward with an evaluation of

the program and we're open to discussion with the critic or any other member.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me what type of criteria they're going to be using? He—open for ideas—the program's been out there for five to six years. Obviously, when they're going to be doing a campaign that's a half a million dollars, you would want to at least have the horse before the cart. What type of information were you looking for? What type of objectives did you have with that half a million dollars for the campaign?

Mr. Rondeau: Once again, it is—the Triple P program is an evidence-based program, and the key of this program is to get more and more people to utilize it, more families to utilize it, more families that are in distress or early distress or needing resources to utilize it.

So our whole goal is to get the program out. It's—our goal is to get it in the way practitioners and family just go about their daily business, and so you want to know—have people know what resources are out there—whatever they are.

So here's some of the anticipated things. Of the 557 trained practitioners, 81 per cent have integrated Triple P ideas or principles into their ongoing work with families since they were trained. Many have embedded Triple P strategies or resources within another parenting group or curriculum that they were using prior to Triple P, and that was about 42 per cent. And so we're measuring with practitioners, and the majority of practitioners also report providing Triple P to neighbours, friends, adult family members or someone else outside their normal work environment—that was 58 per cent.

So, again, by working with the workforce, embedding it, having people supported in the course of raising their children or their daily work, that's what we're trying to do. The program itself is an evidence-based program, so what we're now trying to do is get it out, people trained and people utilizing the actual Triple P program and embedding it, and it seems to be working quite effectively.

Mrs. Rowat: There are a number of things. He's indicated that it's an evidence-based program. He's indicated that 81 per cent of the people that are practitioners are using the program.

But, again, it almost is hypothetical, because I don't—the minister hasn't been able to provide me with the evaluation tools that you're using to indicate

that this is happening. Eighty-one per cent of practitioners are using it. How do you know that? Like, and, you know, where are they implementing it? What type of evaluation process are you using to determine that? Evidence base—how many parents are utilizing the program? Those types of things I can't seem to get an answer from—with-through this process. I want to know how many, you know, parents are accessing this program. You're indicating that there's been 700—or 3,000 hits to the website, you know. What happens when they—once that happens? Are you able to then refer them to a site within the community, that they can access the program? It doesn't seem to be a co-ordinated effort of information. There's no evaluation that I have seen, other than the 2008 report.

So I'm just, again, very confused, a significant amount of money being put into this program, so I'm going to go back one more step. I want to know—my concerns, I think, are out there and you know what they are.

I want to know, Mr. Chairperson, if the Province is actually going to be funding this—or doing any more ad campaigns past this point of March. We see ads continuing to be on TV. We're seeing, you know, the banners still on certain bench posts or buses. The minister had indicated this was an eight-week program. Obviously, it's beyond eight weeks, because we're seeing, you know, FIPPA has indicated it's a three-month program that has been funded so far.

So the long and the short of it, can the minister indicate to me if there's been any funding allocated or any costs associated with Triple P in April? And, if so, May and June, et cetera; will there be budgeted amounts?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand that it was a three-month—two- to three-month—or eight-week program. Some of the ads are still out there because they haven't been replaced as yet. But it was a eight-week program that has had a little bit of carry-over. Generally, it is in the process of winding down, and so far I see that, in our area, west Winnipeg, the ads that were up there have come down.

Mrs. Rowat: Is there funding going to be spent on ad—any type of an ad campaign in April?

Mr. Rondeau: The eight-week campaign has wound up. I can't state categorically that there's not a bill that's outstanding. But we did do the eight-week

campaign. It has wound up. There's not a desire to have another campaign going on in the future right now.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me was there any money budgeted for April for any campaign ads or any type of advertisement for Triple P?

Mr. Rondeau: I can look into it to see—make sure that there has been no spending committed.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister just check with his staff, if there was any dollars allocated in April for Triple P?

Mr. Rondeau: It was budgeted the previous fiscal year, and the eight-week campaign was previous fiscal year. But there might be some carry-over. And, when I say that that's carry-over, is that some bills—some suppliers, I am informed, might be sending us a bill that was from the previous fiscal year for our billboards or whatever and we haven't received the bill yet, and so at the end of every fiscal year there's a little bit of a—in case a bill was late it's provided to us and we'll pay it.

* (15:00)

Mrs. Rowat: Okay, and thank you for the clarification from the minister. So, just to be clear, there's no ad campaign being planned for Triple P program of an extension of a program, an addition off of Triple P program? If there is another focus through Triple P, there's nothing—no budget for a campaign that would then tie in with the Triple P?

Mr. Rondeau: I'm informed that we do promote Triple P on an ongoing basis in very specific areas. And I can't state categorically that we have no spending, because we will have some spending to promote Triple P and some things that'll happen. I don't believe—it's not planned to be as extensive as what's happened. What it was meant to be is a one-time, eight-week campaign. However, we will be promoting Triple P in specific targeted areas and specific targeted situations in the future, but not near at the same extent or financial cost.

Mrs. Rowat: My understanding is that there's some consideration being given towards a teen approach. Can the minister indicate that to me?

Mr. Rondeau: I'm pleased to let the member know that there's been lots of interest from practitioners, parents and others who are interested in exploring to a teen Triple P. It's interesting because we get this

from the field, that there's interest in moving in that direction.

I understand that we've received a federal grant from the federal—the Canadian government to test if the amount of interest is such that we should be moving in that direction. And so we've received a federal grant and right now we're exploring ways of testing the waters to see if teen Triple P should be an expansion of what we currently have out there in the community.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me what amount of money was received from the federal government to do that?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Chairperson, we don't have that at our fingertips. We'll just get it to you and we'll get it to you in the very short period of time.

Mrs. Rowat: Would—I guess my concern is that, you know, part of the challenge with Triple P is that we don't have the trainers here in Manitoba. The trainers are coming from Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland.

Would the teen program, then, have to follow that same scope because we've gone down this path with Triple P for family, the family program? Would we be having to do the same thing with the teen campaign?

Mr. Rondeau: I'm pleased to say that we're still pushing for a North American trainer base. As Triple P rolls out across many jurisdictions in North America and continues to be supported by multiple jurisdictions and implemented by multiple jurisdictions, it continues to gain favour among parents, among practitioners. And so as that rolls out, I believe that we have more of a push to have North American-based trainers. We have been making sure that our opinion has been made where we think that it would be good to have North American-based trainers, and we're very supportive of that. And so as more and more jurisdictions jump on and participate in this very valuable evidence-based program, I think that we're going to get some positive wins and some local trainers in the future, and we're part of that push to make sure that happens.

Mrs. Rowat: The evidence-based program concept—or the comments disturb me, because we don't have any evidence-based results, so—in Manitoba—so I keep hearing it and it just makes my skin crawl because it—there's nothing in the province that you're showing me that shows that this is an evidence-based program in Manitoba. It may be in Europe or in

Australia or New Zealand, but I'm not seeing any evidence-based results being offered by this government on this program.

Could the minister indicate to me—and I'm interested to know that he's indicating that other provinces have come on board, or other jurisdictions in North America have come on board with this initiative—can he indicate to me which provinces have joined Manitoba in offering a program that originates in Australia and New Zealand and Switzerland?

Mr. Rondeau: When I say it's been recognized and rolled out, I'll give you some of the list of countries and jurisdictions that it's been offered for. First, of course, Australia and New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, Netherlands are some of the countries where the program's been offered. In Canada it's been offered in Alberta, Ontario, BC, and to let you know that the centre for Disease Control in United States has said that this is an evidence-based program, strongly supports it and is encouraging its use through jurisdictions in the United States.

Now, I'm not an expert in this, but I do know that if you have a program that has been proven to be successful in multiple, multiple jurisdictions and has been recommended by numbers of experts on behaviour and population, health, et cetera, I have to say that I do have faith in many, many experts who are recommending this program and trying to move it out through many multiple jurisdictions throughout the whole world.

Now, personally, I think that if there's dozens of jurisdictions that are doing it throughout the world, I don't have to go back to step one to prove that it works if there's multiple jurisdictions that are allowing it to work. Now, so what we're doing is instead we're taking this recognized program and what we're saying about it is we believe the experts around the world in multiple jurisdictions.

And so what we then are doing is taking that data and then saying, okay, our job is to get our staff—staff in multiple organizations to adopt it and integrate it in their practice. And I've given you the data on how many people are integrating it in their practice and how it's rolling out, and so that's the stats we're collecting so far. And, as I offered to the member, we're more than willing to have chats. If you want to have specific things measured, we can listen to you and see if we can implement that in our evaluation.

* (15:10)

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me what the budget is for the Triple P program in Manitoba?

Mr. Rondeau: In the Healthy Child Manitoba program, the annual budget for 2010-2011 is \$1,367,500, but, again, what's important about it is that it's not—the staffing costs might be in Education, might be in other areas. This is actually the program delivery cost for the Healthy Child and this ministry. So \$1.367 million, and I am—by the note, it says it's currently used in 20 countries and it's talking about about 1,292 practitioners from 200 community agencies, and so it's rolled out quite well.

And, again, what we're trying to do is reach all sorts of parents to—on the campaign, to make them aware and also to get practitioners to know about it, if they're not already involved and trained up.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, so the minister's indicating that there's about 1,300 practitioners using this program and 81 or—1,300 practitioners that are trained in Positive Parenting Program, and that 81 per cent of those already use this program in some way, is that correct?

Mr. Rondeau: The data from the amount of people who used it was a little bit older, and so that was used in a different base. Because I think the data is a little bit older. What we wanted to do was make sure that the people who were trained previously were using it previously, and that's when that evaluation was done. We're currently undergoing the new evaluation which I spoke to the member about. And once we're doing that we'll find out, of the 1,300, well, almost 1,300 practitioners, whether there's still 81 per cent have incorporated it in their practice.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, was that evaluation from 2008?

Mr. Rondeau: Yes, it was the 2008 evaluation.

Mrs. Rowat: So can the minister indicate to me, of those 1,300 practitioners, how many parents are actually accessing the program?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Chair, I am informed that what happens is a lot of people incorporate the whole Triple P philosophy supports through multiple areas. I know in St. James school division, which is a partner, they do parenting workshops. And they'll have parenting workshops on a regular basis where there are some parents who participate here and there. I know that there's some—many family centres

use Triple P and the philosophy, and a lot of those are drop-in clients or people who come in. It's not where you just come in and get an appointment and you get a specific deliverable.

And I know a lot of daycare centres have it. Some early childhood centres have it, parent-child coalitions and, of course, educational facilities. So, and I don't—we don't require them to sit there and say, every time you think about using the philosophy and supports of Triple P, we want you to do a—send in a report. What we do is we train the trainers. We understand from the 2008 evaluation, 81 per cent have incorporated the philosophy and their work—into their work, and we want to continue to have that happen.

It is not where you can get a package and it is all perfect child supports. What it is, it's a series of supports for families and kids that parents can rely on. So it's not just something that you can deliver. It's not a package to say, here, here's how you support your child and have a perfect child.

Mrs. Rowat: So the only proof that you have that a community organization or service organization is providing the Triple P program is based on your 2008 data that you have in place right now? You have no tool in place to verify or prove that a community service organization is actually delivering Triple P programming?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand that there's basically 200 parent agencies that say that they work with it, deliver it, approximately. There's some checkups with the agencies, and we keep the website up-to-date, and we actually have sent out the 2008 evaluation. I would assume that, then, 81 per cent incorporate it and said they incorporate it.

I have to admit to the member we do not have staff that go up and check on the individual to see how they specifically incorporate it in their professional conduct. What we believe is when we ask the questions, and ask different proponents and organizations whether they incorporate it, we hear 81 per cent do and we have to trust them. I do not sit there and talk to every school division, daycare, et cetera, and say, how you do it, nor do we count every specific time.

But, as I said to the member earlier, I've been to workshops in St. James school division and I've watched great parental support and participation during those workshops and absolutely phenomenal

discussions afterwards. And I often think that the discussions afterwards are a critical part of the whole evaluation and program.

So I think that I do trust the professionals to do their job, and that's what we do, we talk to the almost 200 agencies, and the partners do say that they have found it valuable and they say they utilize it at a very, very high rate and so I trust them.

Mrs. Rowat: Recently, at the Women of Distinction Awards there was a woman that was recognized for the work that she's done on positive discipline and her work in working with families. Dr. Durrant, I believe is her name from the U of M.

Has the Province actually, or, has the minister been in discussion with her because she, obviously, would be providing a Manitoba solution or a Manitoba model which, you know, obviously, she's been identified as an expert in our province.

What relationship or what work have we done with Dr. Durrant and would that not be something that we would have considered as an option?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand from the department she was part of the initial consultation when we were talking about bringing Triple P into the province. She has presented to the council of coalitions on children, and I understand there's nothing inconsistent with what she's saying.

And, in fact, I think that we have some great experts. And one of the things in this whole area of children and positive parenting, and all this, I think, we will all continue to learn off each other. It's not like one person has the silver bullet.

But what we want to do is we want to incorporate things like Triple P, because it's evidenced-based and seems to work. We'll incorporate other things, and, I think, Dr. Durrant is amazing, and, I think, lots of people are amazing in many, many sectors. So it's not where we want to say, yours—one person has the answer. I think, what we want to do is incorporate, as much as possible, best practices, good ideas in what we do. And so I don't think it's an all-or-nothing proposition and, I think, we're open to good ideas, specifically in Manitoba, but anywhere. And we'll adopt them when we can.

* (15:20)

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me, what has the travel costs been for individuals from

Australia to train Triple P practitioners in the last year?

We also understand now that New Zealand has also been a site that has trainers that have trained practitioners, as well as Switzerland. So what I would like to get from this minister is probably a breakdown over the last three years of individuals who have trained practitioners. And I'd also like to know the travel costs that we've paid for either going to Australia, going to New Zealand or going to Switzerland, as well as trainers coming from Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland here. So, you know, the give and take both ways of individuals and the costs associated with, not only travel, but also any other costs associated with the program. *[interjection]* Yes.

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Chairperson, just to let you know, to be very specific, I have not, nor my deputy has gone to New Zealand, Australia or Switzerland about this program or any others this year. In fact, no one's done any trips since the response to you last time.

Next, in the most recent fiscal year, 2010-2011, trainers made seven trips to Manitoba to conduct training and/or accreditation. Travel costs to and from Canada were estimated to be approximately \$21,000 in total, and I can get you a specific breakdown, whether it's \$21,100 or a little less, if you need it.

Mrs. Rowat: And I'd also like the breakdown of what we would have covered in expenses, besides the travel costs. I would also like to know the costs associated with their accommodations, the facilities that were used for those training facilities, what was spent for the whole gamut of the program.

Mr. Rondeau: I can get you the trainers' travel costs and expenses, if that's okay.

Mrs. Rowat: As well as what was spent through training within the province, here, whether—you know, there would have obviously had to have been some type of a venue, and that, et cetera.

Mr. Rondeau: I've been told by my staff I can get that to you.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister provide for me how many parents were connected with Triple 3—Triple P through their involvement with the child welfare system? Is that tracked?

Mr. Rondeau: We don't have the number of children that are affected by those. We do have the amount of people who are trained in the child welfare system through the Triple P system, and I can give you the number of staff that are trained. I can't tell you how many kids that's—that touches. Again, that goes through that wonderful discussion about giving the material and letting people trust it to see what they do with their own time, and I don't know actually how many children. So, if you want just the amount of people trained in the child system, I can provide that and I will.

Mrs. Rowat: And while he's getting that information, a list of all of the organizations that have been trained, organizations as well as individuals, if that's possible: coalitions, different types of private and public agencies that have been trained in the Triple P would be most useful. He'd indicated there were over 200, so I'm expecting that would be something that could be done in a minimal amount of time.

Mr. Rondeau: I think I said about, but we'll talk on that one. I can endeavour to get the organizations, the private, public agencies that were trained and the overall number. And I'll get that to you with that wonderful package that you'll receive.

Mrs. Rowat: I'd like to ask some questions with regard to Parent Zone. This was a question that was raised by the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) during Estimates with the Minister for Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh). And there was a program called Parent Zone—it's going to be a website—that's in the development stages, and I think the costing of that was \$250,000. And there was discussion on this project or initiative, and there was a tie-in to Triple P.

Can the minister give me some background on what he knows about this \$250,000 Parent Zone website development?

Mr. Rondeau: That's actually in the Minister of Family Services' purview because it's actually budgeted out of Family Services, not out of Healthy Child.

Mrs. Rowat: But it was allocated towards the Triple P program, so I'm wanting to ask the minister if he can then share with me how that Parent Zone initiative is going to be tied in to Triple P because he's—you've indicated to me that you think the Triple P program has been developed to the state that it's at.

We've got a website which is called the parent—or the Positive Parenting website.

This is obviously, you know, based on what we understand, because we don't know a lot about it, but the way it's perceived is this is another website and there's \$250,000 attached to it.

So I would like to know if the minister can share with me, you know, what the tie-in is, and is this something to do with the teen initiative that I've heard being pushed forward, or is this something totally different?

Mr. Rondeau: I—our department—in my initial comments said that we work with others—we work with other departments. The Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet is nine Cabinet ministers that sit and work and discuss children, discuss how we can work together across departments, which departments can step up to the plate and help facilitate things.

Parent Zone is an initiative by Family Services, and they're moving forward in a partnership basis to help facilitate parenting, and I don't know all the particular details. That is, financially, in the Minister of Family Services' budget and, yes, he is—and Family Services is part of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. The minister attends the meetings and we do—we must have watched Sesame Street because we know how to work and play with others. And so each department has a role and a way of working together, and part of the role that Family Services is doing is development of the Parent Zone website.

Mrs. Rowat: Just one further question: Can the minister indicate to me the total amount of money being spent on the Positive Parenting website, your annual budget for your website?

Mr. Rondeau: It's a subset of \$1.3 million that we spend on the Triple P program, but we don't have an actual breakdown on what the website costs per year.

Mrs. Rowat: But I remember with the Spirited Energy campaign, there was a breakdown initially, you know. It indicated specifically how much it cost to maintain that website, how much it cost to develop that website, et cetera. So there has to be some type of a breakdown with regard to the website costs.

Mr. Rondeau: Rather than contracting the Triple P website out, it is part of the government website and is managed within the department.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Just to follow up on the questions on the Parent Zone initiative under Family Services, the Minister of Family Services was very clear that this was a partnership with Healthy Living, so I'd like to ask the minister: Who's the lead in his department on the Parent Zone initiative?

Mr. Rondeau: Actually, Family Services is the lead department because it's their initiative—it's in their budget, but as per any program, as I mentioned, we can work and play together so we have staff that are providing support should they need it.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But the minister didn't answer my question. Obviously, if it's a committee process and Healthy Child is an integral part, which is clear from *Hansard* in the Department of Family Services Estimates, who is the lead person in the Department of Healthy Living that works with the Department of Family Services on this initiative?

* (15:30)

Mr. Rondeau: As I mentioned earlier, family—this is a Family Services initiative. We provide assistance should Family Services request it, or any specialized expertise. We do work with them. So, if they're talking about specific best practice, we'll, of course, work with them to provide support. But Family Services is providing the budget and I'd have to respectfully request that the member talk to the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) about how the website's developed. We are working in partnership, as we do in all Healthy Living programs.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But the minister is talking around in circles. I'm sure there is a working group if Healthy Living is a partner, which the Minister of Family Services said Healthy Living was a partner. Can he not give me the name of an individual within the department that is taking the lead or is in—is on that interdepartmental working committee?

Mr. Rondeau: People who are in the working group are Steve Feldgaler and Mallory Neuman and—but I do have to reiterate, there may be working groups in—working together with different departments, but it is a Family Services initiative.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And that was pretty easy to find the answer for; I don't know why it took so long.

Can the minister indicate to me how the linkage with the Triple P parenting initiative will happen with the Parent Zone program?

Mr. Rondeau: I assume there'll be links to and from both websites, and there'll be resources that are based on that Triple P support that'll be on Parent Zone and Parent Zone will refer people to the Triple P program.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Can the minister indicate to me if there are other initiatives that Healthy Living is involved in in other departments that—and they may not be the lead, but there are any other departments within government that are looking at websites or initiatives that are going to link into Triple P?

Mr. Rondeau: I'm not too sure how many websites have a link to Triple P. I assume child care, et cetera, but we have to get back to you on that one because I'm not too specific. I can't be exact on which websites, especially from external organizations or other departments that are linked to Triple P. Again, what I would like to say to the committee is that we want to make sure that there are cross-references. So a lot of the Healthy Living topics do have links to experts, to other organizations both within and outside of government.

So we do want to communicate with partners. Over 80 per cent of our program delivery, grants, et cetera, are delivered by outside agencies, and so we actually do partner with multiple groups not only in the information provision, but we also do that in the delivery of programs.

Mr. Chairperson: Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard)—I'm sorry, member for River East.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) indicated that the Parent Zone, that website was to link and provide information for parents on any questions they might have, everything from, perhaps, bullying to breastfeeding. It's intended to be a one-stop shop website. I thought that's what Healthy Living was all about. I didn't know that it wasn't your mandate.

And can the minister just try to explain to me why, when he stands up and talks about all the wonderful things that Healthy Living is doing, why it wouldn't be his department that would be taking the lead on this initiative rather than the Department of Family Services?

Mr. Rondeau: We work with others in multiple cases, whether it's in motion, where we're talking about recreation and activities; we work with school divisions; we work with businesses; we work with municipalities; and so, although it's a program that's

delivered and supported in our budget, we actually don't deliver much of the in motion programming.

Same as in parenting: we—in the Triple P program, we work with daycare centres; we work with school divisions; we work with parent-child coalitions; we work with all sorts of organizations to get the message out. And I'm not territorial; I think that we can work with many people to get the message out, and I think Family Services, if they want to provide the material and work with us, all the better. Family Services does deal with people—children, families, and we also do, and I have to say that I don't have—I'm not territorial, if someone wants to work with us to provide the material. And I can assure the member that there will be links from the Healthy Child to Parent Zone and from Parent Zone to Healthy Child, and, hopefully, there'll be links to school divisions and, hopefully, there'll be links to multiple partners.

Again, territoriality doesn't make sense. On the Web, I think it's really important to realize that there—you can get information one or two or three clicks away. What we want to do is make sure that there's good, solid information that parents can rely on, easily accessible, and whether that's in Family Services, because the word family, or Healthy Living, I don't care.

What we want to do is get the information out, link it together so that people have access to the information and make good decisions.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chair, and I will put on the record certainly my concerns, because I think this minister's department has been criticized, and rightly so, for the amount of expenditures on PR and feel-good advertising that doesn't necessarily ensure measured outcomes for people or for families that need support. And we have seen this minister involved in many feel-good advertising campaigns that really have been criticized by the general public—maybe not only in the Healthy Child area, but in—you know, we only can just recall Spirited Energy and the mess of—the disaster that that was by government.

I question why and I would—I guess, maybe I'll ask the question: Does this minister chair the Healthy Living Committee of Cabinet?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Chair, and I'm surprised that the member continues to criticize the Premier's Economic Advisory Council and the chamber of commerce about some positive advertising.

But the, you know—we have to respectfully disagree on the public relations. I think that if a parent is challenged and a family is challenged in a tough situation, they want to reach out to get resources, and I believe that there should be no wrong door. I think that they should be multiple doors that parents and families can access information.

So I disagree. If the member believes that only one group should have all the answers, you know, it's a different philosophy. I believe that in Healthy Child, we want to work in partners and we do continue to work in partnership. And whether it's—I'm surprised at the member that's criticizing the fact that we're encouraging kids to wear bike helmets. I'm surprised the member is criticizing the fact that we're trying to get people active and in motion and physically fit. I think those things are supported by the general public and they're good, positive campaigns.

So I look at in motion and trying to get more people physically fit and active and I think that's a positive message. I look at the SafetyAid program, where we're actually trying to promote, where we have a program that goes out and makes sure that seniors are secure in their homes, feel secure and do modifications to their homes to keep healthy. I think that's a positive thing, and to get the thousand or over a thousand people to modify their houses is a positive thing, and I will not say it's wrong to promote positive programs like that.

* (15:40)

So we respectfully disagree. I think in motion is important; I think SafetyAid's important; I think the bike helmet campaign is important. So, you know, the member opposite may disagree, but I'm sorry.

As far as other things, we will continue to move forward with partnerships, and that's our plan and we will continue to do that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: My question was: Is the minister that lead minister for the Healthy Living Committee of Cabinet?

Mr. Rondeau: Yes, I'm the chair.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So, as the lead Minister for Healthy Living, would he not be looking to ensure that as requests go forward to Treasury Board through the budgetary process, that he would be the one that would be recommending—or other departments would be feeding in to the committee

and then he would be the one that, ultimately, would make the recommendations on expenditures for different programs and take that forward to Treasury Board?

Mr. Rondeau: I'm actually the chair of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, and there we talk about children and youth and we do not make recommendations to government. What happens is Treasury—individual ministries make recommendations to Treasury Board, and they move forward that way.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So none of those are vetted through the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet.

Mr. Rondeau: We discussed issues and concepts and talk about how we can work together, and, as the chair of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, we talk about lots of programs. We've talked about FASD and moving forward with FASD, which is cross-departmental. So we will come up with the strategy. But each department sends their own financial requests to—through Treasury Board through the budgeting process.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess I'm just trying to find out exactly. I mean, I know it's nice to be able to sit and talk as ministers. But, when there are new initiatives that come up from a government that deal with creating healthier children, I would hope, through Healthy Living, why would there not be some discussion at that table on how to get value for our tax dollars, for people's tax dollars through discussing? I mean, it's great to sit around and talk, and talk about all the wonderful things that maybe should happen; but there's always a cost when it comes to government supporting and implementing a program.

So I guess my question is, what value is the committee if you're not looking at putting a dollar figure to new initiatives and looking at what positive outcomes there may be? Why—I mean, is there no discussion, financial discussion, around that committee of Cabinet?

Mr. Rondeau: I think that we discuss a great deal about investment in children. We talk about how we can co-operate between departments and through departments, and we talk about, in general, how we're about to conduct business.

But, as the member knows, when you are in Cabinet, Treasury Board is the part of government that actually makes fiscal decisions, and so the

Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet can talk about strategies, we can talk about programs, we can talk about working together, but the financial part is decided at Treasury Board. An example would be interesting is that—let's say that you take the FASD strategy and I know there was virtually very little FASD expenditures. What we do is we'll talk about FASD and Education will have a component, health care will have a component, Family Services will have a component, Healthy Living will have a component, and so we'll talk about developing a comprehensive strategy and discuss who has the role. That doesn't mean that we then approve the finances. We talk about the co-operation in bringing together on the strategy. We don't actually make the financial allocation.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I understand that completely. But I think the minister is kind of missing what I'm trying to say.

Parent Zone is a new initiative to try to reach out, I guess, to families and provide information on all kinds of issues. Is this something that would've been discussed at the Healthy Living Committee of Cabinet as a new initiative that would be led by Family Services that would have a cost associated with it?

And not saying that the committee would make a decision, but is it not something that was discussed and endorsed around that committee table by ministers involved before the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) went back and took a submission to Treasury Board under his budget? Is that not something that would have been discussed and endorsed?

Mr. Rondeau: I can't tell you the precise process by which the Minister of Family Services made the decisions and moved forward fiscally on the program. You'd actually have to—I have to respectfully suggest the member talk to the Minister of Family Services—what process he followed.

We do talk about processes like working with families, start talking about the Triple P program, we talk about general initiatives, but what we want to do is we want to make sure that we have co-operation with major areas, and I'll give you an example.

If you look at FASD, again it's not a proposal from Healthy Living. It's something that we work throughout government on, through RHAs, through Family Services. Every family service has a FASD co-ordinator. We have—Manitoba Education is

involved; Healthy Living's involved; so it's across government. We will actually work on a strategy; we'll build a strategy and we'll move it forward. Each minister within that FASD strategy will take a component, and so Health will put something in their budget, Family Services will put something in their budget. The same process works in every case where we talk about initiative, talk about parenting, Triple P. And each minister then says—finds out what their department would like to move forward on, brings that through the Treasury Board process and moves forward on the initiative.

We are partners, where we talk to the ministers involved, but each minister has their own component of a strategy and we talk about strategies, co-operation in working together.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But, again, to the minister, and I know because before the Healthy Child—Healthy Living Committee of Cabinet, we had an initiative that I was the lead on. And we certainly did discuss finances around the table because, in many instances, there were programs that were being delivered by Education possibly where, in fact, Education dollars were being used to deliver programs that should have rightly been delivered by Family Services. And we were taking money out of the front lines, out of the classrooms, to do things that were Family Services related.

So we looked at that or things that were Health related, and we know that there's a significant health cost in the education system when it comes to additional supports that are needed for children that have unique circumstances or special circumstances. And so we looked at taking money from the Department of Health and moving that into the budget of Education to try to support the kids that needed extra support in the school system.

We looked at taking money from Family Services and putting that into the education system. So those were the kinds of things that we did—looked at where that money should be coming from and made recommendations on how that money could be better spent. And any partnerships that we had made sure that—and so it sounds to me like that kind of activity is no longer going on, and that the Healthy Child department really isn't looking at how we can best use taxpayers' dollars to provide the supports and services to children that need supports from government right across the sector.

So, I guess, I'm looking at this, and saying, you know, it's only \$250,000. Well, the minister doesn't

seem to know anything about what the submission was from Family Services, and yet he is the lead minister on Healthy Child initiatives. And so I question the value of the committee and sitting around and developing strategy, when and—I mean, does the minister not think that to be a good steward of the taxpayers' dollars, that when we're looking at investment in children and healthy families, that—and he supposedly is the lead in government on those initiatives—that financial accountability is important in any way, that, you know, finances really don't mean anything?

* (15:50)

We'll sit around and talk and we'll feel good about what we're doing, but we're not being good stewards of the taxpayers' dollar, and we're not looking at what the Department of Healthy Living is doing and what the Department of Family Services is doing and what the Department of Health is doing. We're not ensuring that there's a co-ordinated approach that any department can just go off and go to Treasury Board with the submission that the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet doesn't look at and say, is there a better way to do it? Is there a better way that we can use taxpayers' dollars? I mean, I just have to question, you know, what it's all about if, you know, finances aren't a part of the whole process of determining what new initiatives and what new programs are going to be brought forward.

Mr. Rondeau: You know, I find it interesting the member's criticizing the whole idea about prevention and co-operation and working with other departments. I look at it. We look at the prevention, whole concept of prevention, and that's the whole Healthy Living ministry, and remember, you guys were going to merge it with Health—with Education a couple of years ago. So I look at it where I say that we do have a co-ordinated approach; we have co-ordinated strategies. We want to work with others, and as I said, I don't want to control all the things on Health.

So here's an example. Through the Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative, which is a co-operative approach, what we do is we work with RHAs—and part of their mandate is healthy eating; part of it is exercise; part of it's smoking. We work with health professionals to deliver that. It's a co-ordinated approach. It's something we talked about in Healthy Living and we move forward on that. That doesn't

mean that I control everything in the budget, and so I look at things like the Healthy Baby program and the entire home visitors program and things like this. We work with multiple departments to deliver programs and they're cost effective.

So every young mum that we can get that is not having a premature baby or underweight baby is huge. Every young mum that we do not have that has a baby that is affected with FASD, that's huge, huge in cost, in human terms, and in financial terms. So again, I respectfully disagree that we don't get value for dollars when we come up with a co-ordinated, multi-pronged, multi-sectorial, lots-of-partnership approach with FASD or in motion, or no smoking or activity or Chronic Disease Prevention or any of these.

In fact, we work with multiple groups, and what we do is we talk about the strategy and we talk about which department is best to deliver it and which department can take the lead on things. And as I said, some programs we have school divisions taking the lead or Health taking the lead. Some others, we have Education or daycares or child-care centres. Some we take a lead like the whole coalitions where we have child-care coalitions that we take the lead on. It's a co-operative approach. We do not—and by the way, I believe that my ministry is essential. It's essential as far as prevention.

I know that I was the first Healthy Living Minister, and we were very aggressive and continue to be on prevention and now we're even into gang prevention. We're the first ministry. This year we brought a lot of the resources together into the department at the—about 15 months ago, 16 months ago, but my job is not to own every problem and make everyone healthy. My job is to co-ordinate and work forward as the chair of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet and also in Healthy Living, move forward multiple partners. It is not to own the problem and have everything that's prevention into one ministry.

We believe that it's every ministry's job to do some prevention. Now, is there cost-effectiveness on prevention? Absolutely. I believe it. I know it. So I know that every kid that doesn't get FASD saves the system thousands if not millions of dollars. That's where we're at, and so we will coordinate it, but we do not approve the finances. Treasury Board and then ultimately this Legislature approves the finances.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So, then, the minister indicates that they are the coordinating body for these initiatives. So I guess it would be safe then for me to presume, and the minister can tell me if I'm wrong or not, that the Parent Zone program was one of those programs that would have been discussed at his Cabinet committee, and it would have been something that was endorsed by his committee. He didn't have to take ownership over it, but it would have been endorsed by his committee. He would have, and his colleagues would have, indicated that, yes, this Parent Zone program is going to be a valuable program, Department of Family Services should take the lead on it, and they'll go to Treasury Board.

But it would have been something that would have been—come to the committee of Cabinet, and it would have been approved as a positive initiative. Is that fair to say? Because I think that's what he just explained to me.

Mr. Rondeau: I think that the Parent Zone website will be a very positive initiative, and that Family Services is an appropriate department as a lead.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chair, so, then, the minister is confirming that it was at the committee for discussion and it was approved at the committee that Family Services would move ahead and take the lead and do all the necessary steps to put it in place. Can he confirm that?

Mr. Rondeau: Actually, the committee's deliberations are confidential and in private. I've made the commitment that I think that it will be a very nice addition.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): To the minister, we have, as the minister well knows and has acknowledged on the government website, a major epidemic going on right now in this province, an epidemic of diabetes.

Can the minister tell me how many people in Manitoba currently have type 2 diabetes?

Mr. Rondeau: No, I can't. I'd have to refer you to the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald).

Mr. Gerrard: Can the minister tell us how many people were newly diagnosed with diabetes this last year?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Chair, I can tell the member what the Department of Healthy Living is dealing with with diabetes. What we are doing is we're doing prevention. That's what this ministry is about. I can

tell the member that we had, last year, 750 gardens in northern Manitoba—actually, 60 in Wabowden itself, which, actually, they presented to the United Nations, which was—it was awarded one of the best sustainable food programs in the world.

I can tell you that we're working through in motion, which is activity programs, opening up a lot of gym space, et cetera. I can tell you that multiple seniors groups and groups are keeping busy. I can tell the member that we've worked very, very hard through the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures task force. We talked about having Grade 11 and 12 as compulsory phys. ed. credits, and that has been very, very successful on the transition, from what I understand anecdotally, and I understand that with the new tax credit that we've expanded to 24, we're getting more kids to be physically active, which is good.

I can also tell you that through a multiple of other efforts, we now have a whole pile of trails. Because of the trails, et cetera, we have more people out bike riding. I was this weekend. It's very busy. We're also working with multiple groups where—it used to be where lots of people would have runs. And I can tell you that I attended the Physio Fit Run in Assiniboia park this weekend. Instead of having the 10K run, which traditionally was there, they have a 3K walk, 5K run, 10K run. And all those things are keeping people fit and, by the way, this weekend is Seven Oaks Wellness Centre, if the member would like to attend.

So I am working on prevention through multiple sectors with multiple partners to keep people fit. So my goal is to change diet, change exercise, change behaviour, so that there's less diabetes in the future.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, let me move on to talk about suicide, which is an important issue. And I noted that on Friday the minister said the—his No. 1 program to prevent suicide was the Roots of Empathy and Seeds of Empathy program. Can the minister tell us what organizations are delivering that program and—

* (16:00)

Mr. Rondeau: I'll tell you a few things that we're doing for suicide, and some of them are Roots and Seeds of Empathy and I can endeavour to get some of the partners—a list of some of the partners to the member.

I'll tell you some other things that we're working with. One, I think that the mentorship program will

be huge in the prevention of suicide because it works with people working with a younger people, youth, to build a physical connection and a long-term plan in the future; No. 2, we're working with things like WASAC, which is the Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre, to keep kids busy; No. 3, we're working with multiple groups like the Boys and Girls Clubs—I think their grant is \$1.2 million now—which is keeping kids busy and also providing that mentorship. And I think there's lots of groups that we're going to work with, so it's not a one-shot deal. And, finally, what I also want to do is we want to work with school divisions to make sure that they're providing appropriate programs and identifying kids that are having troubles so that we can get them the appropriate resources.

Finally, we also have a phone line that we extended just last year which was talking about suicide. And that was really good to extend the line, and I believe Klinic functions as the operator of that line.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I'm—wonder if the minister can at least commit to getting me a list of organizations that are—the full list of organization delivering the Roots of Empathy and Seeds of Empathy program.

Mr. Rondeau: I can get you the full list. I can tell you that it's delivered through INAC and Manitoba First Nation Education Resource Centre's Manitoba partnership agreements. It says 113 early childhood educators began training in September 2010—that's the Seeds of Empathy—and in the 2010-11 school year, a total of 36 Seeds of Empathy teams delivered Seeds of Empathy through 30 early child-care centres, Aboriginal Head Start programs and nursery schools to approximately 500 children.

Roots, I can say—and I'll get you the list—Roots is basically been 151 per cent increase since 2002-2003. It's delivered in approximately 240 classrooms to approximately 4,500 students, includes 25 instructors delivering Roots of Empathy in First Nation communities. It's also implemented in many Métis classrooms and school for the deaf and special needs settings, and I'll get you the list.

Mr. Gerrard: Now, in the minister's comments Friday, he mentioned two other programs: Signs of Suicide and Reclaiming Hope. Can the minister tell us which organizations are delivering those two programs?

Mr. Rondeau: The Reclaiming Hope is Health-led, and I understand the Minister of Health is next and

so she'll be able to respond to that one. SOS is a school-based program and delivered by school divisions.

Mr. Gerrard: Is the Signs of Suicide delivered by all schools in Manitoba or just some?

Mr. Rondeau: SOS is being introduced as a random control trial. If the evaluation comes through, well, then, it will be expanded. Right now, it's just the random control.

Mr. Gerrard: Does that mean it's just in one school division or in several school divisions or what?

Mr. Rondeau: It's in multiple school divisions with kids of varying economic status, et cetera. And so what we wanted to do is do a random trial, evaluate the program, see its effectiveness, and if it's effective, then we'll roll it out further.

Mr. Gerrard: And how is the minister going to measure its effectiveness?

Mr. Rondeau: I'm going to rely on experts in the field to (a) evaluate it. I'll rely on the practitioners and I'll rely on the experts.

Mr. Gerrard: Is the minister going to see if it actually reduces suicides or not?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand the valuation controls contains the following: One, the information of awareness of the kids on suicide, signs of suicide with their friends, whether they can support each other mutually, whether they know the signs—the supports that are out there, and then what we're going to do is a second survey.

I believe that we also want to make sure that we're preventing suicides, but part of that is being aware of the services and making sure that friends can identify it and support people who need assistance.

Mr. Gerrard: Let me move on to another area where mental health is critical and that would be the area of depression, and I'm just wondering what the minister and his department is doing in terms of preventing and reducing depression.

Mr. Rondeau: I think we want to do multiple things to prevent. One would be building community. The second one would be making sure that people who are socially isolated, i.e., seniors, et cetera, have available programs and supports around them.

And, I think, also, what we want to do is make sure people are active, physically and mentally, so

that would endure things like seniors 55-plus games, multiple organizations like this, that we want to work with the people to make sure people aren't socially isolated; No. 2, build community, build supports and make sure people are active, mentally and physically.

Mr. Gerrard: Just a follow-up in terms of—you know, depression can be a precursor for suicide. What is the minister doing in terms of younger people with—in terms of preventing depression?

* (16:10)

Mr. Rondeau: Two parts, Mr. Chairperson. One, we want—we have a youth strategy led by Health, and the Minister of Health is next in Estimates. She can respond to that. It's a multi-departmental strategy that (a) we discussed and moved forward, and—but each department has its own component.

The other part, as you know, young moms may get depressed and postpartum depression, and we're working with young moms with the Healthy Baby program and the home—Families First program, to (a) engage, get people to recognize it and take early action. The home visitors become very, very important on this one because the home visitors are engaged with the families. They do recognize the signs and then can get support.

Mr. Gerrard: And would ask the minister, you know, what is the minister doing in terms of measuring results to see if these programs are effective?

Mr. Rondeau: The program that's delivered through Health, it's a multi-department approach and they will be evaluating how effective they are as far as interventions. I do not measure it.

Mr. Chairperson: If there are no further questions—

Mrs. Rowat: I just wanted to, before we close, just thank the staff from Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, for taking the time and sharing the information that you've shared over the last few days. You obviously do good work. We have lots of challenges in front of us as a province, and I just want to encourage you to continue to do what you do, and I will continue to do my part in holding the minister account. So I want to thank you for your time today.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 34.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20,822,000 for Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, Healthy Living, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 34.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,709,000 for Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, Seniors and Healthy Aging, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 34.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,076,000 for Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, Youth, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 34.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$29,024,000 for Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, Healthy Child Manitoba Office, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$19,399,000 for Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 34.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,000 for Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 34.1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 34.1.

The floor is open for questions.

Resolution 34.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$860,000 for Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors.

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

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

The committee recessed at 4:16 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:18 p.m.

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Mohinder Saran): Order. 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 Health. Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Yes, I would be privileged to make a few remarks before we begin our discussions today.

I do want to say thank you to the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger). We've had a discussion prior to our discussions today, and she has, as has been the case in the past, graciously agreed to provide us with a little bit of notice should she be wishing to go through some extensive discussions of the Pharmacare program, so that we can allow some time for staff to arrive and, otherwise, leave them at their work. So I thank her for that.

And, to begin, I would like to say that, of course, this last year has been a very active and busy one in health care, filled with plenty of progress in a number of areas and we're very proud of that. We know there are challenges remaining and are committed to work diligently to address those challenges. But, certainly, there are successes to be noted and there has been much progress.

Right now, of course, we know the central concern for the majority of Manitobans is with the flood. We know the flood this year has affected the province quite broadly, and I really want to take this time to recognize the dedicated officials at Manitoba Health and, specifically, in the Office of Disaster Management, those working in the regional health authorities, and the many, many health professionals across the province for all the hard work that they have done in preparing for the flood situation, to ensure that vulnerable patients were prepared for potential evacuations when—and that the health-care system really was ready to accommodate them when evacuations did occur.

* (16:20)

Further, I want to recognize the dedicated team from STARS in Alberta, who have offered continued emergency medical response with their ambulance helicopter to families that have been affected by the flood and, indeed, others. We know the rapid response in rural areas is very likely making the difference between life and death for patients and, indeed, is improving patient outcomes. We, of course, have committed to establish a permanent ambulance helicopter in Manitoba to complement our existing land ambulance and Lifelight programs. But, again, in this particular situation we really commend and offer our gratitude to those from STARS.

Members will, of course, recall that at this time last year in the face of a global economic challenge we launched a five-year economic plan that really worked hard to protect front-line services in Manitoba while charting a multi-year plan to go forward, grow the economy and return to balanced budgets. And we know that a multi-year approach that was put in place is really one that is helping us keep resources on the front lines; and we note that it's one that Manitobans appreciate and, indeed, respect.

Our continued support for health care, along with a focus on innovation, has allowed us to make further strategic investments to improve health services and bring services closer to home whenever possible, even during challenging economic times. It really is this approach that, combined with strategic investments that we've made since 1999, that really have allowed us to launch two major provincial health commitments over the last years. The first significant commitment, of course, is that, by 2015, all Manitobans who want a family doctor will, indeed, have one. We've made a lot of investments since '99 that a physician does to take this next step. Manitoba, of course, is training doctors at record numbers. Doctors are staying in Manitoba at record numbers, and we're very pleased that, since '99, we've been able to see a net increase of 405 more doctors in the province.

We've introduced nurse practitioners and now have 100—I think it's 101, technically, in the province in a variety of settings. We've been introducing a variety of primary care initiatives to improve care, including implementing the Advanced Access model and the Physician Integrated Network.

According to Stats Can, roughly 85 per cent of Manitobans now report that they have access to a family doctor; but we know that more want a family doctor. For those that already have one, we know that many would like to access him or her more quickly. Last year, we took that next step. Our family doctor and primary care plan includes several components to meet this goal. We're going to continue investing in training and recruitment, including a new initiative starting this fall to offer free medical school to students that agree to work for up to two and a half years in under-served communities.

Five new quick-care clinics will be introduced to offer access to nurse practitioners for more routine primary care concerns like immunizations, colds and flu. Mobile primary care clinics will be piloted to bring services to small and remote communities, and expanding the use of Advanced Access to health clinics schedule more efficiently and to reduce wait times for patients. We got good advice from key partners, including the Manitoba College of Family Physicians, the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba and other regulatory bodies, and the Nurse Practitioner Association in support of this plan.

Manitoba launched a renewed long-term care strategy, as well, to help meet the needs and offer choices to seniors today and in the years to come. The renewed strategy was triggered by updated demographic and bed projections released this past year, and builds on many investments we've made over the last decade in supportive care for our mothers and fathers and grandmothers and grandfathers. These investments have seen over 900 PCH and supportive housing beds added across the province, as well as added capacity in home care and supports for seniors in group living for thousands of additional seniors.

The renewed strategy includes a \$200-million construction fund to add hundreds more personal care home beds across the province. We know that already Holy Family Home in Winnipeg and the PCH in Lac du Bonnet will see additional beds as part of this plan, building on the already announced expansion for Tabor Home in Morden.

The plan also includes additional hours for Home Care clients who want to stay at home longer and a new innovative rehab program to focus on quickly helping seniors regain their functioning after an injury or surgery, so they can live independently and stay longer in their own homes, if they wish to.

There were a number of other major steps in health care over the last year, including construction starts on new dialysis units in the community of Russell, which is nearly complete. Construction also began on new units in Berens River and in the Hodgson area, and a new dialysis unit opened in Gimli. Manitoba became the second province in Canada to introduce a new fertility tax credit, and a launch of a provincial electronic health record and a new program to help introduce electronic records into family doctors' offices was also key.

Key investments in drug coverage care, developing research for patients with multiple sclerosis, celebrating 10 years of regulated midwifery in Manitoba, being on the brink of opening Manitoba's first midwife-run birth centre in south Winnipeg. Also celebrating, last year, as Manitoba saw a record-breaking net increase of 60 doctors and a record-breaking net increase of 498 nurses.

All of these investments have positioned us well to move forward on commitments that we have been making through Budget 2011, including a major commitment to CancerCare Manitoba in the development of a new building that will offer world-class diagnostics, Canada's first colorectal cancer centre of excellence, a genetic and molecular testing centre, an Aboriginal cancer centre of excellence. This will build on increasing services for maternal care with the birth centre, as I mentioned, in south Winnipeg, a new maternity ward at St. Boniface, and starting construction on the new women's hospital.

This and so much more that, regretfully, I don't have time to speak of in the time allotted for opening remarks, really helps us move Manitoba forward and focus on the things that really matter to Manitoba families. Again, we know that there is always more work to do in our health-care system and we accept that challenge and look forward to our deliberations ahead to discuss how, together, we might meet those challenges.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments. Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Chair, I just have a few comments to put on the record and I want to indicate a very sincere thank-you to all of the professionals that work on the front lines of health

care. I think we see an incredible amount of dedication, an incredible amount of commitment and an incredible amount of concern for patients.

And, in speaking with many of them over the last year, they all want better care for patients. They all have a sincere focus on improving patient care. And I have to say that most of the time, you know, when you talk to people, once people can access the system, they are very pleased with the care that they receive within the health-care system. The challenge for a lot of people is accessing the system, and that's where the bottleneck seems to be. But, certainly, once patients get past the challenge of access, they have a lot of very good things to say about the health-care system.

In the last year, I have heard from many, many front-line health-care professionals, probably more than I have in the last 10 years. And they do have some very serious concerns. They think there are some significant challenges out there. They see some critical issues which they feel need to be addressed, and some of them do involve patient safety. And a lot of them feel that there are some changes that could be made that could improve the health-care system.

In speaking with them, I certainly feel that we need to continue to move in the direction of giving a stronger voice to front-line professionals. I think they deserve that. I think there are significant concerns being related to me from a variety of health-care professionals, that they feel disenfranchised and demoralized with regionalization. And I think that has been one of the negative aspects of regionalization, although we may have seen some good things happen with it. I think there is a significant challenge in what it—in terms of what it's done to morale along the lines of front-care professionals.

* (16:30)

And there is a significant concern about the morale, I think, along the lines of those on the front lines, and I really can't say this strongly enough, but I think that needs to be addressed; I think particularly in the area of physicians. I think we have a very disenfranchised group of physicians at many, many different levels. They feel that they've been shoved to the side with the regional structure, and I don't think that's good for health care. I think they've been marginalized and disenfranchised. And I've talked to a number of doctors lately that aren't even sure they want to stay and work in the system in Manitoba

anymore just because of how the system is set up. And I don't think that that has been properly addressed in the last decade in terms of what we have to do to address that.

I very much appreciate the work of the staff in the Department of Health. I think that they have put forward a stellar effort. I think we see some great innovations happening. I know that Manitoba, on a number of occasions, is known to be a leader in certain areas in health care, and I think we probably need to recognize those positive efforts more often and more publicly. There always is a tendency, I think, in health care to focus on just the negative things, but I think that we have to find those opportunities in health care to focus more on some of the good things that are happening as well.

As the minister also indicated, I, too, would like to, you know, thank the department's staff and all front-line health-care professionals for any involvement they have in dealing with this flood. It's hard to imagine, you know, how to take on a, you know, a challenge of nature, and when you see the waters out there, you realize that it is a significant challenge. And to all those, whether it's people in health care or people in the government that are also involved in dealing with this issue, it's a huge job, and it's a time-consuming job. And it's one that I think we feel a lot of gratitude for to those people that are out there trying to protect everybody from the flood.

The STARS ambulance, too, I think has an impressive track record. I look forward to the time when Manitoba has a regular air ambulance service. I think that we can address some of the challenges in northern and rural Manitoba that we see with the, you know, comments people have about health care. So I think the ambulance could—the air ambulance could make a significant difference.

And, again, I would acknowledge the efforts made by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), trying to make patient care better in Manitoba. I think she's got the right intentions. I don't always agree with every decision, and I wish she wasn't always so political, but I do know that she is trying. And health care's always going to be a challenge, I think, no matter which government is in place, no matter who the Health Minister is, and I've said that every year. I think that we're never going to find the perfect answer to the many, many challenges in health care. And, you know, I think we have to appreciate the efforts that any government is making, and health

care is always going to be a priority for any government; it has to be because it matters to everybody.

And I look forward to the next many hours of asking questions of the government in terms of some of the decisions that they've made and some of their comments in terms of the challenges that they see and look forward to the next number of hours asking questions.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic from the official opposition for the remarks. Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of the line item 21.1.(a) contained in the resolution 21.1.

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 once they arrive.

Ms. Oswald: I'm pleased to introduce to the committee Deputy Minister Milton Sussman and assistant deputy minister of Administration and Finance and chief financial officer Karen Herd.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

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

Mrs. Driedger: I think in the—I think the best way to probably get through this is likely just to have a global discussion and it'll move the Estimates through much more quickly.

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the Minister of Health tell us who all the political staff are in her office? If she could go through them one by one and indicate who they are, what they do and when they started.

Ms. Oswald: Yes, currently, in my office, the following folks are employed. Breigh Kusmack is the special assistant. She started in 2007; previously, she did work as intake co-ordinator. Keir Johnson, project manager, started in 2007. Ben Wickstrom, project manager, started in 2008. Katarina Cvitko is

the intake co-ordinator, '08. Brad Hartle, project manager, started in 2010.

And, I believe, I'm also required to name my executive assistant, who works in the constituency, Colleen Siles; she started in '07.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister just repeat what Brad does?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, broad is—broad—Brad is a project manager.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us what these three project managers do? Do they each have specific projects that they are responsible for, or how does their work get distributed?

Ms. Oswald: All the staff that work in a project manager role have under their responsibilities various files. Each of them manage casework in a variety of areas.

So, for example, Keir Johnson, as a project manager, would deal with a variety of groups and organizations concerning capital projects and development. He has very close relationships with the department in dealing with those kinds of issues and also meeting with groups that have ideas about capital development and listening to their concerns and so forth.

So there are a number of files that are distributed in broad areas to the project managers, but they also have a responsibility for the, you know, day-to-day issues management, as necessary, and they all have a focus responsibility on intake and casework, as appropriate.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate what projects Ben is involved in managing?

* (16:40)

Ms. Oswald: Well, I mean, each project manager has a variety. I certainly, you know, did not provide a comprehensive list of, you know, everything that Keir does. I was just giving that as an example, just to be clear.

Ben works on a variety of items, including the Aboriginal health file, which is very broad in nature, you know, ranging from issues of prevention and promotion to capital developments and relationships with, you know, interagencies, you know, federal government and so forth. That would be a very large file for him for example.

Brad certainly manages issues of the day, in addition to working with us on Health workforce. He shares that with other managers so, I mean, there are broad envelopes for each of them to be dealing with, but they also, as I said before, share elements of intake and casework as well.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate what Breigh would do as a special assistant?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, her role as special assistant would not be unlike the other special assistants that exist across the government. She works directly with me on issues of scheduling, of managing meetings, preparing for meetings. She does lots of intake and casework. She manages work in partnership with other members of the team concerning procedural matters, question period, committee of supply. She works on developing and organizing events and announcements. She—I think I could go on for an hour about this. I think you get the flavour for it. She does it all, actually.

Mrs. Driedger: And can the minister indicate what Katarina does as an intake co-ordinator?

Ms. Oswald: Again, she—Katarina works probably most directly with incoming calls to the office, correspondence to the office. Katarina is actively involved also with regional health authorities concerning their inquiries or dreams and aspirations about boards and board appointments. She works with people that are interested in becoming part of boards and can direct them, you know, to the appropriate areas to make their wishes known. Katarina, also, in speaking with members of the public, is able to assign a project manager that can return calls and perhaps have further in-depth conversations with individuals or groups concerning particular files that they wish to seek more information on. So she is the point person for receiving inquiries from members of the public, but she also shares the work with others in the office.

Mrs. Driedger: Out of these five political staff in the office, is there a pecking order in terms of, you know, who might be in charge of everybody, or how do you manage all five of them and then break up your workload?

Ms. Oswald: Well, we really do try to take a shared approach in our meetings and in our dealings with the public and with one another working with the department, regional health authorities. We, quite frankly, try not to have a hierarchical approach in the office; just hasn't generally been a style that we have

adopted. Having said that, there certainly are issues and times where those with the longest institutional memory would more frequently take a lead role. Breigh has been in the office the longest and, certainly, you know, by delineation on the page, might be seen as having, you know, status that is, you know, lower than, perhaps, project manager, but, indeed, she knows everything, to put it bluntly, and can offer a historical perspective and detailed information about previous meetings.

I would say Keir certainly takes on that role as well, having been around longer than other members of the team, but, you know, I can say quite honestly that it is a collaborative approach, really. And though somebody, perhaps, like Ben, who may not have been on the team as long, but has spent more dedicated time in certain files, depending on the issue that's being addressed, the problem that's being solved or, you know, the dream that's trying to be fulfilled, he would take a lead role. It really does depend on the topic area and the circumstance.

Mrs. Driedger: What happened to the special assistants that used to be in the mix—or, sorry, special advisers?

Ms. Oswald: Just clarifying, are you speaking about specific people that used to be in the office and have they moved on to—which jobs have they moved on to, just to clarify for the member. Is that what you mean, or is it why has the title of the role changed?

Mrs. Driedger: Just the broader question: a number of years ago, there were no project managers, there were special advisers, and I'm wondering how things changed. Did one morph into the other? What happened to the special adviser? Did they become project managers or did that position just become obsolete?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, certainly, we did change the titles of individuals to more accurately reflect the work that was going on and, frankly, to take a less, perhaps, hierarchical approach to how we were working on different projects and on initiatives that we were trying to move forward. So it is a name change, essentially, but it's just how we, as a team, prefer to work.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate what happened to Katie Findlater? I note from the—oh, I see she was appointed as a policy adviser to the Minister of Health on October 20th, 2010. What happened to that person?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, we—Katie Findlater did work in the Department of Health in the position of policy adviser. She did leave our office over the last year and she is working in another department as of now, and her role was taken over by Brad Hartle.

Mrs. Driedger: The—OIC indicates that this person—well, the order-in-council is actually dated October 20th of 2010, and it does indicate that the starting salary, effective August 3rd, was set out in an employment agreement. So it looks like she was just very, very recently hired, and within a few months, now, she seems to have been taken out of the job, or whatever happened. So can the minister indicate how many months she was in the position?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, I will have to endeavour to get back to the member about the exact number of months that she was in the office. It was more than a couple of months. So, if there is an issue with the OIC or how it is—how it's currently being presented, I'll endeavour to follow up.

* (16:50)

I believe that Katie was with us for close to a year, but I need to determine that in exact months. I can't remember off the top of my head, and we don't seem to have it in here. But I'll get back to the member and let her know.

Mrs. Driedger: So was it after Katie left, then, that the position of policy adviser was changed to project manager?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, I'd have to check the timing on that. As I say, you know, as this team developed, we certainly did want to take a new approach and a new, less hierarchical, more collaborative approach and we did change the names of these positions. You know, there hasn't been a net increase or a net decrease in bodies if that's part of the question. But the exact timing of when we amended the title, I—honestly, I can't recall. I'll have to look back into it. I do think it was perhaps earlier than that, but I would want to double-check and make sure.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us where Katie went in her next job?

Ms. Oswald: Katie is working as part of the policy secretariat, I believe, now. I'll want to confirm—I'm not sure I got the wording right, to be honest. I know that she does a lot of work within the context of Water Stewardship but, again, I'll get an exact description for the member and get back to that—to her on that.

Mrs. Driedger: With the individuals that are project managers, do they have a direct relationship to the staff in Manitoba Health? Is—are those the people that they work with on a regular basis, or do they not have very much to do with Manitoba Health and more—are more connected to the public, for instance?

Ms. Oswald: I think it would depend on the situation and circumstance. Certainly, the staff in my office work directly with the deputy minister in the meetings that we have to discuss issues and raise challenges that we have, and it would be through the deputy minister that connections would be made with department staff, where appropriate, in order to seek clarity or more information about initiative that was going on.

So, really, it's the deputy minister that assists us in quarterbacking the right points of contact, so that work isn't being duplicated or questions aren't being asked more than once. And, then again, depending on the given circumstance, frankly, in a given day, there may be more direct contact with the public, with groups or individuals or organizations that are bringing forward ideas and challenges, and sometimes in those meetings, department staff will offer support. Sometimes those meetings, you know, at the request of the community groups, may initially have no department staff involved. So it really does depend on the situation, but the individuals that are working on a variety of files will seek guidance through me and through the deputy minister in terms of who the best people are, even within regional health authorities on occasion, to offer advice on a given topic or to get information about operational issues so that they can assist me in developing policy and moving programs forward.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister just confirm that the five in her office, along with the EA, are all political staff?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, they are.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate why her department felt they needed to double the number of political staff from what was in place in 1999?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, I think we had a discussion about this last year at some length, as I recall. And, certainly, it was developed and decided, I think, before I took the chair that a different approach would be taken in endeavouring to be responsive to the public and to try to return email, letter correspondence, phone calls to the public in as timely a fashion as possible. And there were

decisions made along the way about increasing access to the minister's office and to be able to expand on the ability to take meetings with people that wanted to raise concerns or that had innovative ideas.

And so the development of the complement of staff in the minister's office did evolve over time. And, again, as I said to the member that when—a little while after I took the chair and worked with staff members and tried to find exactly the right, if that's possible, exactly the right job description and the right combination of responsibilities and duties, it came really as a consensus that we wanted to take an approach that really was more team oriented and a little less hierarchically driven. And we did change names to project managers versus special advisers and so forth, and it is the approach that we feel is working best for us.

Probably—we know there's room for improvement, as there is with all of us, but we think that this is a system and a team that is working in a way that is in the best, you know, in the best interests of Manitobans that are seeking clarity. I do believe that we'll continue to look at the model and see if there are different ways that we can do things but, you know, at the present time, and certainly as was the case at the time I took the chair, this was the complement of staff that it was felt would be appropriate to address these challenges.

Mrs. Driedger: I understand that the Minister of Health made a comment to one of my colleagues as she was leaving the Chamber one day, and she indicated that perhaps if we had had more political staff in 1999, we might not have lost the election.

And it makes me a little bit cynical just in terms of her doubling up on political staff, you know, rather than, you know, finding a non-political way to deal with some of the workload in health care, you know, in terms of departmental staff taking on some issues. Instead, now it looks like you've got project managers, you know, overseeing a number of issues, probably, you know, overseeing what's going on in the department, having a better sense of control from the Minister of Health over the department. I don't want to use the word, you know, "political spies," but, you know, when you double up on your political staff, it's certainly sending out a pretty cynical message, especially with the challenges that we've got in terms of funding in health care and the, you know, the dire warnings that are going out right now from a number of people. And yet I see that this

minister hasn't worked very hard at bringing down the political control over health care by doubling up on her own political staff. And I'll just leave it at that. Perhaps she might want to comment on this.

Ms. Oswald: First of all, I know the member would find it hard to believe that I would ever be that cheeky to one of her colleagues. It inspires one to wonder what that person might have possibly said to me to evoke such a cheeky response.

But, in all seriousness, I actually didn't double the staff. This is the staff that was there when I arrived and I think that it's a salient point. And as I say, we had this conversation last year and it was a good conversation then, just as, you know, it can be a good conversation now, and it is about taking a different approach, endeavouring to be responsive. And I think, because we label in these kinds of discussions, for reasons I—that I understand, we label staff as—

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

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

* (14:50)

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Sharon Blady): 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 Housing and Community Development. Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): I am pleased to present to this committee for its consideration the 2011-2012 Expenditure Estimates of the Department of Housing and Community Development. I look forward to engaging in discussion regarding the direction our government has set out for the department in these Estimates.

On April 12th, 2011, our government outlined its funding commitments for this fiscal year in the provincial budget. Our province's most important resource is its people, and Budget 2011, putting families first, moving Manitoba forward, builds on our progress to deliver on the priorities of families.

This year's budget provides \$82,326,000 for the Department of Housing and Community Development. This represents a net increase of

\$10.6 million or 14.8 per cent over the 2010-2011 Adjusted Vote of \$71,730,000. The department will maintain its commitment to providing access to quality affordable and suitable housing, neighbourhoods that are socially and economically inclusive, and to creating healthy communities where Manitobans live, work and play.

As the province steadily recovers from the global economic downturn, activities carried out within the Department of Housing and Community Development will continue to serve as an important vehicle to achieve stimulation and recovery not only in the housing sector but in the larger provincial economy as well.

Investments in Housing and Community Development programs and initiatives play an important role in strengthening local economies and providing a foundation for healthy and positive outcomes for communities, families and individuals. They promote an inclusive, collaborative and service-orientated approach that is necessary for continued social and economic development in Manitoba.

There are a number of key areas in investment in the 2011-2012 fiscal year. In order to continue to improve the quality of life of households and create healthier communities, it is vital that we continue to significantly invest in the renovations of the existing social housing stock. In 2011-12, \$86.3 million will be invested in social housing projects across Manitoba to upgrade roofs, windows, increase fire safety and to improve heating and ventilation systems. As part of the renovation activity, we will continue to provide skill development, training and employment opportunities for residents by partnering with social enterprises such as Building Urban Industries for Local Development and Brandon Energy Efficiency Program.

This renovation activity will also address environmental concerns, support green initiatives and reduce energy consumption. Building on a series of renovation initiatives that have improved the conditions at Gilbert Park and Lord Selkirk Park over the last several years, Housing and Community Development will be investing in the similar renovation strategy to improve the physical and social conditions at family social housing projects at 182, 184 and 186 Beliveau Road and at the Weston Park Blake Street project in Winnipeg.

The provision of good quality housing has a positive impact on the health of people in

communities and is key to reducing poverty. In 2011-2012 we will move forward in our provincial housing strategy and continue our commitment to add 1,500 new affordable rental housing units and support 1,500 new households with rent-g geared-to-income assistance within five years.

We have surpassed our two-year target of achieving 600 units of affordable and 600 units of rent-g geared-to-income housing. Currently, we have achieved 707 new affordable housing units and 628 households with rent-g geared-to-income assistance. In 2011-2012, the third year of the plan, we will add an additional 300 new affordable and 300 rent-g geared-to-income units towards the 1,500 commitment.

In 2011-12 the department will be partnering with Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors to move forward on the development of the River Point Centre at 146 Magnus centre. The River Point Centre will be developed to provide affordable housing and addictions treatment facility. The housing component of this facility will provide temporary housing to individuals and families from rural and northern Manitoba receiving medical care in Winnipeg.

It's important that we continue to provide communities with the support they need to renew neighbourhoods. Building on success of Neighbourhoods Alive! the 2011 Throne Speech announced the introduction of a new funding program, the localized improvement fund for tomorrow, LIFT, to support community revitalization projects in five targeted pocket communities over the next four fiscal years. This program will improve housing, create jobs, and increase education and recreational opportunities for more Manitoba families.

Securing housing for homeless individuals and persons with mental health issues remain a priority for our government and of the department. The HOMEWorks! homeless strategy includes various initiatives, including new beds and stabilized funding for shelters, the adoption of new shelter standards, and staffing for homeless outreach program.

The 2011-2012, \$52,000 has been allocated to fund an additional homeless outreach mentor position in Winnipeg, to help link homeless individuals to housing and social and health services. We will also reach the full 600 approved-to-date portable housing benefit supplements, which will help low-income individuals with mental health issues obtain access to safe, adequate and stable housing in the private rental market.

As part of our commitment to support homeless individuals and persons with mental health issues, we will be providing funding to renovate 87 housing units at the Madison Lodge, which will provide a range of supports. Support services have been introduced, and planning is under way for the transition of management and ownership of the facility to Siloam Mission.

We will continue our commitment to building healthy communities and improving the social and economic well-being of Manitobans by supporting volunteer and non-profit organizations in their activities. In 2011-12, we will be increasing our support to the United Ways of Manitoba, operating support programs to assist these volunteer organizations and meeting the needs within community and enhancing the capacity of the voluntary sector.

I'd like to express my appreciation of Housing and Community Development staff for their ongoing work on behalf of the department, their dedication to continuous improvement, and their commitment to providing high quality service to Manitobans.

I look forward to this committee's review of the Department of Housing and Community Development Expenditures Estimates, and welcome all comments of committee members.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Blady): We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments? Seeing none, okay, we thank the critic for his brevity and allowing things to move forward, yes.

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 30.1.(a), contained in resolution 30.1.

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.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We are joined today by Darrell Jones, the chief executive officer of Manitoba Housing and Community Development; Craig Marchinko, the assistant deputy minister of Community Development and Strategic Initiatives;

and Brian Brown, Comptroller and Financial Management.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Blady): Okay, does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department chronologically or have a global discussion?

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Yes, if it's the will of the committee. I think our preference would be that we would just have a global discussion.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Blady): All in agreement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Schuler: Thank you very much, and we certainly want to get right into the questions. Certainly want to thank all of those individuals who, over the last year, have worked very hard in working with some very difficult times in the city of Winnipeg and around the province. You do work—the department does work with great professionalism, and I think in a lot of cases, probably most cases, a great love for the individuals who inhabit the suites that are owned by the people of Manitoba.

It's, I'm sure, often very challenging and difficult and, you know, certainly, at no point in time should be taken lightly. A lot of lives depend on the housing that is owned by the public, and it's important that what we do, you know, protects and takes care of those individuals, families, parents, grandparents, that they have a safe and healthy environment within which to live.

So we'd like to thank all of those that are—have joined us at the table and all of those that are in the gallery and even those that aren't here today who do all the inspections and do all the work. We thank all the public servants who are actively involved in this department.

My first question to the minister is: Could she please provide a list of the political staff within Housing and Community Development?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, we have a special assistant, Kate Sjöberg, as well as the executive assistant, her name is Ellen Pile; and we have a constituency assistant, who is Natasha Opazo-Ceicko.

* (15:00)

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister provide a list of any individuals hired or brought in to the department on contract since last year?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: There are no one that's employed on contract.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Schuler: How many staff are currently employed by the department?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: In Housing and Community Development, the department, there are 34 positions.

Mr. Schuler: Was staff hired—the staff that was hired from 2010 to 2011, were they chosen through a competitive process or by appointment?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Now, are you referring to these 34 positions?

Mr. Schuler: Yes.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So there were five positions in Housing and Community Development in that fiscal year. Two were by competition and three were by order-in-council.

Mr. Schuler: Within that time frame, have any positions been reclassified?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: In Housing and Community Development, there were two new positions that were reviewed and two went up in classification.

Mr. Schuler: Are there any staff vacancies that exist in the department?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: There are six vacancies in Housing and Community Development.

Mr. Schuler: Are any of those positions currently being posted?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Not at this time.

Mr. Schuler: Have any projects been delayed as a result of the vacancies?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: No.

Mr. Schuler: Have any positions been relocated in the 2010-2011 budget year, for instance, relocated from rural or northern Manitoba into Winnipeg, or relocated around the province?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, there was one position in the co-op branch. At the employee's request, she transferred from Brandon to Portage la Prairie, but services the same area, provides the same quality of service.

Mr. Schuler: During, obviously, 2000 and 2011, could the minister give us a summary of the travel that was paid out of Housing and Community Development, and any pertinent details in connection with the travel in terms of location, purpose, delegation membership, et cetera?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We'll have to take that under advisement, and we'll provide that to the member as soon as possible.

Mr. Schuler: Has any of the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) travel been paid for by this department or agencies under the control of the minister?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: No.

Mr. Schuler: Has any of the Premier's travel been paid for by this department, agencies under control of this minister, which included the minister or any of her departmental staff?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: No.

Mr. Schuler: How many retirements or new vacancies within the department are anticipated over the coming year?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: There are no anticipated retirements.

Mr. Schuler: Has the minister taken any travel outside of Manitoba? If so, where did the minister travel?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: No. Sorry, I'm so boring.

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister explain the increase in expenditures of \$10 million for Manitoba Housing from the 2010 Estimates?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So, the \$10.6-million increase includes increase of \$712,000 to establish the four localized improvement funds for tomorrow, LIFT, for Neighbourhoods Alive!; increase of \$25,000 neighbourhood development assistance to the Elmwood-Chalmers neighbourhood; increase of \$65,000 to support the United Ways of Manitoba; and the remainder is the expansion of three staff for the Housing communication centre—it's our call centre to accommodate the increase in calls; salary and benefits of one additional outreach mentor position at the West Central Women's Resource Centre; increase of \$1.1 million for grants in lieu of taxes due to property tax increases; increase of \$3.2 million for debt servicing, primarily due to the significant capital improvements currently being performed by MHRC-owned housing stock; increase of \$2.6 million from insurance premiums; increase of \$2.2 million resulting from the annual reduction in federal funding under the social housing agreement; an increase of \$532,000 for information technology contracts for existing systems and desktop costs.

* (15:10)

Mr. Schuler: If I could take the minister back a few moments about some questions I had in regards to vacancies within the department. I just want to be very clear. Is there any intention to fill those six vacancies?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes.

Mr. Schuler: However, they are currently not—you're not advertising currently for any of those positions to be filled?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We're currently not advertising any of those six positions, but there'll be two that will be, you know, being advertised in two weeks—two to three weeks.

Mr. Schuler: Any of those six positions—are they—are any of those six positions going to be a direct appointment?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: No.

Mr. Schuler: So four of the positions are currently going to—that are currently there are going to stay vacant?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The four positions will be filled this fiscal year.

Mr. Schuler: Again, will those four positions be posted or are they direct appointment?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: They will be posted.

Mr. Schuler: Can the minister please detail how the \$86.3 million invested in the renovation of the social housing portfolio will be used, and I know she referenced it a little bit in her opening statement. Could she give us a little bit more detail on that?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The \$86.3 million will be used to do capital upgrades to our social housing stock, as well as deep refreshes, so we have—there's hundreds of projects across the province in which we're making those investments to ensure that we're sustaining the quality of the housing that we're providing for Manitobans. So I think three of the larger projects that we can talk about are Blake Gardens and Beliveau, as well as Ircom too.

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister please give us a list of all the projects that are going to be worked on and are the projects identified by need—like, how do you identify where the money's going to go? What's the criteria?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So I can tell the member that we have capable staff that go throughout and inspect our property and come up with the strategy and the plan

about where we need to invest our money. And, yes, we can provide you with a plan, but we need to tell you that sometimes that plan shifts because sometimes there's issues that arise if there's structural and health and safety, so, we have to amend the plan just for cash flow reasons, but—

Mr. Schuler: So, basically, there's \$84 million or—pardon me, \$86.3 million, and once it runs out that's as far as you get and that's it.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, we have \$86.3 million which we commit to provide these capital upgrades and deep refreshes for this fiscal year.

Mr. Schuler: Is any of this work done in-house by the department?

* (15:20)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: For these projects that we're talking about, related to the \$86.3 million, the in-house cost is project management and all projects are contracted out.

Mr. Schuler: Are the projects contracted out by building or are there contractors that do the work for government? Like, how do you choose contractors? Because, is there—for the \$86 million, is there one HVAC company that does all the work or is it per project or per building?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So, yes, it's always done by a competitive bidding process. You have to realize, sometimes, our jobs are really, really of large focus and, then, sometimes, we have a housing unit, maybe in Water Hen, that needs work, so we have to always use the competitive bidding process. But we, sometimes, through that process, will identify standing service purchase agreements for specific work, and a really good example is sometimes roofs. So we continue to work with local—one of the initiatives, as we're moving forward in our purchasing practises, is looking at the economic spinoff that can happen for small rural communities and northern communities, so, looking at local hiring and local purchasing policies, as well, to ensure that some of that money is staying within their regions.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, and that was going to be one of my next questions. Is there any weight given to local contractors or is it just purely the best offer?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So there is—well, it's complicated, this answer, so I'll do my best.

So we have different processes when we're going out for bidding, and when we're going out for

bidding for some initiatives, we will ask—we will give a ranking for local hiring or of a local contractor, but not all of them. We'll also go into communities and we'll break down the contracts, so then that allows and permits the smaller contractors to put in bids.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, because one of the concerns is there was a project in St. Claude and a company from The Pas came down and did the work. And obviously there was some concern, how is it that a firm from The Pas could come down to work in St. Claude?

My question to the minister is: Where are the tenders posted? Where do trades go and find out where these tenders are?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So, projects that are over \$100,000 for construction, they will be on MERX. And then we'll also put smaller projects—advertise them in local papers, just so we can make sure that the smaller contractors are aware of them.

Mr. Schuler: Of course, everybody here would know what MERX is, but just in case those individuals who aren't here don't know what MERX is, could the minister explain what MERX could possibly mean.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: MERX is the tool in which we use to publicly tender, and all departments have access to it, and that's—contractors throughout the province and even beyond the province know that that's where they go to look for the possibility of contracts and how to apply for them.

Mr. Schuler: And what is MERX an acronym for?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We'll find that response—or that acronym for you, but it'll take us a few minutes, so if you'd like to ask some more questions, we can proceed.

Mr. Schuler: And if the minister could provide for us the website where individuals would find that.

There are 300 new units being added in 2011. Could the minister tell us where those are going to be located?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We are very fortunate in the province of Manitoba there are many proponents from across many regions who approach us on a daily basis with innovative ideas about providing housing for Manitobans.

So right now we're not able to tell the member exactly where those 300 units are going to be. We're

reviewing proposals. The focus will be, as in our HOMEWorks! document that targets seniors, Aboriginal housing, people with mental health issues and families. And you'll have to stay tuned for those announcements that we'll highlight where those housing projects will be, but you can trust that there will be—they will be based on need, as well as regional representation.

Mr. Schuler: Will these units be directly or indirectly managed by Manitoba Housing?

* (15:30)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: There will be a mixture of projects—will be directly and indirectly managed by Manitoba Housing.

Mr. Schuler: How many, if any, of these units will be new construction?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The majority of these 300 units will be brand new. One of them—what might happen with some of them, though, is there'll be construction of housing that will be based on renovation of non-residential or commercial property.

There's some exciting projects out there: the Massey Building in Brandon is one of those, St. Matthews Church is another example here in the city of some really innovative people coming together and identifying a housing need and being creative.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, I was just listening to the minister talking about the church on St. Matthews that was just the—and the McGee Street, my alma mater. That's where I grew up and remember that church and, you know, of course, we would all love to see it stay as it is, a house of worship, but if the numbers just don't warrant it, then, a hybrid kind of a building is then the best use of that space. And I would caution the department, who is here in full force, please be careful with that building because churches that are renovated often burn down, and that was what happened with St. Boniface Basilica that was—workmen were in there and were repairing the St. Boniface Basilica and that's how it burned down.

So the church on St. Matthews is just a beautiful facility, beautiful building and very good to see it get a new lease on life. We don't want to see those buildings deteriorate and end up having to be ripped

down, so one of those projects, of course, we think is a great idea.

Did want to ask the minister about those projects—could she provide a breakdown of the number of single family and multi-family units?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: From the 300 that we haven't yet assigned, okay.

It's really hard for us to give the member an exact number about the breakdown, what's going to be multi-family and what's going to be single-family dwellings. You can be assured that the majority will be multi-family based on the need across the province and land availability, and just efficiencies of building. So that's—so we would say that about 90 per cent, approximately, 90 per cent or more would be multi-family units.

Mr. Schuler: Will affordable housing for seniors be funded out of that pool as well?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Which pool are you talking about?

Mr. Schuler: Of the 300 new units being added in 2011, will any of those be affordable housing for seniors?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes. Yes. We're working with stakeholders in Dugald about a seniors' housing project.

Mr. Schuler: I thank the minister for that answer. That is definitely a much-needed project.

As with all communities and neighbourhoods, it's important to have individuals who grow up someplace, in fact, lived there all their life, a lot of them born in the homes where they reside right now. They were born there. And being able to retire in your own community is a big benefit. And the Kin Place Personal Care Home in Oakbank, where individuals have sort have done the different stages in life; they go from being born in their own home, raised a family, they then end up going into some kind of an apartment, then into Kin Place. And it just gives a real holistic approach to growing up in a community. So, the home being planned in Dugald is very important, and certainly look forward to it proceeding.

Could I ask the minister, how many Manitoba Housing units are currently awaiting assistance from the repair and renovation programs?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: May I clarify the question? That was a very broad question you asked. Are you talking specifically about RRAP or are you talking about our own direct-managed housing stock?

Mr. Schuler: Waiting for RRAP. How many are currently waiting for assistance?

* (15:40)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So, as the member knows, the rental RRAP is an extremely important project or opportunity for homeowners to get additional funds to provide—to improve their home.

So just for the record, the maximum assistance for homeowners in the southern area is \$16,000 and in the northern area is \$19,000.

So we also have a program for landlords where they're allotted \$24,000 per unit or \$16,000 per rooming house bed or unit.

Ms. Sharon Blady, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

In the south and in the north, it's \$28,000 per unit and \$19,000 per rooming house.

Right now, we don't have the statistics for you about how many people are waiting. I'm also anxious to share with you how many people have been served by this project or this initiative. So we will work to get you that number.

We have the numbers coming; they're approaching the table now. One moment, please.

Hopefully, by the end of this process, we'll have it for you.

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister tell us how would priority be given to the 400 units that will be assisted in 2011?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Now, are you speaking about rent geared to income? Or are you talking about rental RRAP again? *[interjection]* RRAP. You're back on RRAP. So how will we decide who's going to be eligible? Eligible? Are you listening? Eligible for the RRAP grant?

Mr. Schuler: Well, I'd have to tell the minister that maybe it's her Estimates book that isn't entirely clear.

So, page 32, Expected Results, they talk about, and I will quote from here, as soon as I find it: Build strong, sustainable communities—blah, blah, blah.

Through the delivery of their Repair and Renovation Programs, the target is to provide assistance to 400 households in 2011-2012. Ongoing new home ownership opportunities, and so on and so forth.

So the question is, how will priority be given to the 400 units that will be assisted in 2011 as compared to any others that might be coming forward on top of that?

How are you going to 'prioritize' the 400?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Sorry. Put on the record that it's hard to predict where the member will be going, so that's why I find it important—I mean no disrespect, but I need to clarify so I'm providing him with the correct answers. That's all.

So for a RRAP, it is application based, and we also have a rating system and which we apply and we use—it's also needs based as well. So we have some very excellent people within the department that work with homeowners to evaluate the proposals and to decide what's the best way to use the money.

Mr. Schuler: Well, I'm disappointed in the minister. She knows I'm a linear thinker, so I'm always going straight ahead. So just in case the minister is wondering, I'm always going forward, straight forward.

So the next question I have for the minister is, could she please outline the strategies that will be used to improve access to social housing for high-needs populations, for instance? And that comes out of page 32 of her Estimates book, in case she wanted to know where she should look for the reference. And that would be Aboriginals and seniors, who are some of the most vulnerable populations in terms of housing. What program strategies will be used to assist these groups?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The member's referring specifically to our homeless strategy, which we have a multi-layered strategy. One is making sure that we're providing emergency shelters, increase funding and capacity to shelters, making sure that we're applying some shelter standards, working with the Salvation Army project, looking at a cold-weather strategy, and also looking at outreach. So having homeless outreach team members and reaching out to the population, trying to find out what are their needs and partnering them with potential housing objectives. We also have Project Breakaway, which

is a partnership with Main Street projects, Winnipeg Police Service, and the RCMP in looking at who are some of the—and Health as well—looking at who are some of the people with the most needs that are out on the street and how do we wrap around those services and best meet their needs and provide them with appropriate shelter.

We also have housing with services that I referred to in my opening remarks. Portable housing benefit is one of them with people with mental illness and making sure that they have a benefit that is up to \$200 so that they can acquire housing within the private market, and if they choose to move or relocate, that goes with them. And, as well, there's wrap-around services with that.

We have the Community Wellness Initiative, which is within our own—with our own blocks that we directly manage and that, again, is service providers on the ground, knowing who our tenants are and providing them with the necessary services. And then mental health housing projects as well. A good example which I'm most excited which will be opening, hopefully, in the summertime is the Bell Hotel project, which will provide those necessary services to very vulnerable Manitobans.

And then we're talking about prevention programs as well. What we have adopted in Manitoba is the HOUSINGFirst model, where we provide shelter for individuals, and that gives us an opportunity to stabilize their physical needs and then look at how do we address their emotional and psychological needs.

So those are only a few examples, and you know, I think the investments—I know that the investments that we're making with our direct managed projects is ensuring that our housing stock is—will have some more life left with it as well as development of new housing stock across the province to ensure that there's more access, that we work very closely with many non-profit organizations to deliver, whether it's direct housing or those support services, and we need to acknowledge the work that they do.

Mr. Schuler: To the minister: How often are tenants put up in hotels instead of Manitoba housing?

* (15:50)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: For Manitoba Housing, you know, it's not a practice that we use often, putting people up in—or families in hotels. What I can tell you is sometimes in a crisis situation, whether it's a fire or

whether there's work being done on their units, where they temporarily have to be placed in a hotel, happens very, very seldom and very short-term. Our goal is always, if there is an incident that happens in their family unit and they need to be relocated, it is our goal to make sure that we find housing in their community that they're already living in to provide that support for them, that roof.

Mr. Schuler: What is the current vacancy rate in Manitoba Housing?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: As of February 28th, 2011, there were 822 units or 6 per cent vacant. And then we also have 815 units or 6 per cent that not—are non-available. And the non-available ones could be because of the deep refreshes that we're doing and we have to create vacancies in order to accommodate the renovations that need to happen.

Mr. Schuler: And 822 vacancies. Why would there be that many just sitting vacant?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: That number can be attributed to, in some areas, where the demand is reduced in the community, as well as a number of bachelor suites, which—tenants right now, in this time and age, are not interested in bachelor suites, so we are working with community partners as well as real estate agents to look at how can we best use that—the stock that we have and redevelop it.

Mr. Schuler: How many security guard positions are there currently in Manitoba Housing?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, I'd just like to just inform the member that they're not—they are security positions in which we have in-house in Manitoba Housing. There are 37 positions. There was a recent increase of 17 positions for the fiscal year '10-11-'11-12; 17 in '11-12. And, you know, these are individuals who are working tirelessly with our tenants and doing some really innovative work. They're also involved in, you know, protecting our tenants and our property, but they're also involved in social development initiatives of engaging community and mobilizing them.

A good example is, in two of our larger units there will be July 1st celebrations this year that will be led by the security personnel to support community and mobilize them.

Mr. Schuler: So the 37 actually includes the 17 new positions to be added in 2011?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes.

Mr. Schuler: So, de facto, there's 20 right now?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'd like to confirm, for the record, that all 37 are in place.

Mr. Schuler: And these security positions provide in-house security?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes.

Mr. Schuler: And all—and I take it that means all the new positions as well? They're all for in-house security?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes.

Mr. Schuler: How many security positions are on contract?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'm going to have to take that question about the number of contract security positions under advisement at this time. We'll try and get the answer before we rise today, for you.

Mr. Schuler: In 2010, five of Winnipeg's 22 confirmed homicides happened in Manitoba Housing blocks. So far in 2011, there have been at least four incidents in Manitoba Housing, including three homicides. Could the minister tell us if any strategy has been developed to prevent further tragedies from occurring in Manitoba Housing?

* (16:00)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I don't have to tell the member that safety of our tenants is No. 1 for all of us at Manitoba Housing, so that's why you'll see the increase of security staff that have been put on to provide that support to the community members. I think it's important that we put on the record that we have a very strong eviction policy, if there is individual that is involved in harm to our communities, that there are evictions that happen. I have the number for 2009: there were 174 tenants that were evicted for security and safety. And then this year, well, 2010, there was 247 individuals that were evicted. So that's one example of how we are committed to safety and security for the tenants of Manitoba Housing and the surrounding communities.

I've talked about expanding the number of staff that we have. We've also expanded security cameras and card access to 14 of our existing buildings. We have provided new training of property managers and superintendents in crime prevention. We're aggressively enforcing our policy to evict tenants within five days of learning of any criminal offence

and also looking at minimum security measures such as installation of deadbolts, peepholes and adequate lighting.

We're dedicated to safer communities. We also—our security staff hosted 66 security forums with tenants and community groups to engage them in improving security and share information about initiatives. We are partnering with Manitoba Public Insurance on Citizens on Patrol and we have groups that are operating in Gilbert Park right now, and we're working in Brandon, Elwick Village, Portage la Prairie, The Pas and Thompson to establish more Citizens on Patrol.

You know, there's prevention campaigns that we're doing. We're looking at graffiti removal. We're looking at engaging the non-profit organization and providing activities for the young people as well as for their families that are enriching their daily living and will ultimately reduce crime, we believe.

Mr. Schuler: And I understand that this is a sensitive topic. I would point out to the minister that 23 per cent of all homicides in the city of Winnipeg last year were in Manitoba Housing blocks, and that's a very sad statistic. And I'd like to ask the minister, I mean, other than, you know, other than peepholes and hiring 17 more security personnel, what is it that the department is doing for those individuals who are clearly living in some very difficult residences?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: That is a challenging statistic that we are addressing head-on, and I explained to the member about the initiatives. You can't undervalue the addition of 17 more security staff, and security staff that take evictions very seriously but are also engaging community and mobilizing community in a positive way. We've continued to increase the resources, and I think you have to be very careful when you look at that statistic that it's not always our tenants that are involved. The land that Manitoba Housing encompasses in the community can be quite large and incidents are happening on that property.

We work very closely not only with our in-house security but with Winnipeg Police Services and RCMP, when necessary, to address these issues. We're committed to providing safe, affordable housing for our tenants and our families in our surrounding area. We'll continue to work with non-profit organizations. We'll continue with our tenant forums. We will continue to make sure that we're educating our tenants on their safety, making sure that we're educating the staff on how to support people.

I think we got to take a few minutes and talk about Lord Selkirk Park and Gilbert Park. These are two of the largest Manitoba Housing complexes in the province, who have had their share of difficulties. But we have to acknowledge the good work that has been happening with the renovations. Local individuals are being hired to renovate the units, and through that we can see the positive things that are happening, the pride that's happening in the community. Same thing happening in Gilbert Park, the non-profit organizations that are coming in and supporting our tenants to address the issues of poverty and making sure that there's positive activities for people to get involved in.

The people that are living in Manitoba Housing come with many, many skill sets, abilities, dreams and visions, and we need to ensure that we provide them with an environment that they can continue to flourish. And that's why we are enhancing our security services. That's why we are partnering with non-profit organizations to provide them with lots of opportunities to better themselves and, ultimately, their families and also make contributions to their community, as many of them already do.

Mr. Schuler: And I'm listening to what the minister is saying and she talks about safe and affordable. Unfortunately, in 2011 there already have been four incidents in which there were three homicides. And, absolutely, the 37 security positions are going to make a difference; the added 17 will make an impact.

However, at the same time that they were added, there's a lot of violent crime in Manitoba Housing projects. And I was looking for something a little bit more concrete from the minister, and I don't think the committee got that. And there's a quote—Manitoba Housing Director of Security Kevin Gamble was quoted as saying that Manitoba Housing tenants live in fear of violence.

And, again, to the minister, what is being done to ensure tenants can feel safe and secure in their homes? And, yes, I appreciate, you know, we're going to paint the units and renovate them and, you know, they probably need new windows and there's a lot of renovation that has to be done. But that in and of itself doesn't make people feel safe in their communities.

And I guess, you know, the minister's been there for a while; I thought that we were going to see something a little bit more proactive than the same

old, because I think you're going to have to look at these communities and you're going to have to be far more innovative than what we're getting today at committee.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'd like to put on the record concrete actions that we're taking, and 17 new staff—concrete—17 new people that are out there supporting our tenants, ensuring the security and safety; 247 people evicted in 2010 from Manitoba Housing; as well as training sessions for property managers and tenants; as well as looking at security cameras, implementing better lighting, looking at installation of security cards and peepholes. Those are actions; those are making a difference.

We're not turning a blind eye to what's happening in those communities. We're working with the community members. We're taking concrete actions to support them and make sure that they have safe place to live.

Citizens on Patrol are also one very concrete thing that's happening and will—I said that before—that will continue to happen, and we'll work with MPI to ensure that.

And you can't undervalue the importance of making investment in housing. There was a young man that was interviewed on TV about six months ago who talked about the pride that he had in moving back into his unit which was newly renovated and said he finally felt like he was at home, because we made an investment, told them he was a valuable person, he had to—a right to live in an environment that was positive.

* (16:10)

Mr. Schuler: And I'm sure he felt really good moving into a newly renovated suite, and deservedly so; it's something very nice to move into. However, at the same time—as Director of Security Gamble said, at the same time as they move into these wonderfully new renovated suites, the tenants live in fear of violence. And the minister talks about making a difference with all these things that she mentioned, and yet we've already had this year four incidents of which there are three homicides, which, you know, isn't a big difference from the previous year.

I'd like to move on to Neighbourhoods Alive! and ask: Why did the salary expenditures for Neighbourhoods Alive! see a significant increase compared to other divisions' branches?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The increase was related to the expansion of Neighbourhoods Alive! into five new pocket communities.

Mr. Schuler: And where are those communities?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: They're five pocket communities in Winnipeg.

Mr. Schuler: And they are?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: To be announced.

Mr. Schuler: Are those going to be announced this summer, or are they just within the next year?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Within the next couple weeks.

Mr. Schuler: Can the minister explain the new \$38,000 administrative expenditure for Neighbourhoods Alive! in 2011?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: It is related to the expansion to the five pocket communities.

Mr. Schuler: Has that individual been hired?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Not at this time, but it will be advertised in two weeks.

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister please account for the decrease in expenditures for Supplies and Services for Neighbourhoods Alive!?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Last year was the first year of this—of the new Department of Housing and Community Development. The decrease will bring the budget more in line with anticipated costs directly related to the office space rented. So there was an alignment that needed to happen between last year and this year.

Mr. Schuler: How are the increased funds for neighbourhood support in the Neighbourhoods Alive! initiative being used?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: That would include the LIFT program that I've referred to before, as well as the \$25,000 for Elmwood and Chalmers community.

Mr. Schuler: Are there currently any fire alarm certificates that are out of date?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Manitoba Housing has committed \$5.3 million for the modernization of fire safety systems. Housing is working with the contract fire safety system inspectors to improve the scheduling of inspections and reduce the number of certificates that have expired. Right now, we're not—I don't have the number on the top of my head, so we'll take that under advisement and we will provide the

information. But we've been working very, very hard to make sure that they are up to date.

Mr. Schuler: I thank the member for that, if she could let us know how many are out of date.

I happen to have had the misfortune of a furnace melting down about four months ago. And I had installed all new smoke detectors and I didn't realize that just your common smoke detector expires between five and seven years and I had one beep and I've hard-wired and found out they expire, had put all new ones in and it was a good thing because without them, the family and I wouldn't have been here. We slept. We slept through everything until the alarm went off and it is surprising how you can sleep through that much smoke. And it is not to be trifled with; very, very serious business and I unabashedly would say I thank God that one happened to go six months earlier and I looked at it and I realized to my surprise that all smoke detectors have an expiry date on them. I never knew that. So if the minister could let us know, I think that's an important piece of information to have out there.

Could the minister tell us how many elevator certificates in Manitoba Housing units are currently out of date or expired?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We'll have to take that under advisement and get that information back to you as soon as possible.

Mr. Schuler: I would appreciate that. And both of those numbers, I would make the argument, should be readily at hand. That should be a number that should be easily available, simply because of how serious those issues are.

The third question I have is boiler inspections. Are they all up to date? If not, how many are not up to date?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We do have department staff that monitor both fire inspections as well as boilers and elevators but we don't have those numbers with us right now. But we will get them to you as soon as possible.

* (16:20)

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister tell us how much has been received by the Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper government in federal contributions to Manitoba Housing last year?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Under the CEAP funding, we received just under \$40 million.

Mr. Schuler: How much is anticipated to be received next year—or the 2011-2012 budget year?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We have drawn all of our CEAP funds that have been allotted to us.

Mr. Schuler: So they ran out last year?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We committed all of the money through the Canadian Economic Action Plan that we received from the federal government.

Mr. Schuler: Last year I asked some questions of the minister about the Middlechurch renovations. Are they all complete? Did they take place? Middlechurch Home in West St. Paul.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: May I ask for clarification? Would this be a Community Places grant that they received in Middlechurch?

Mr. Schuler: I'm not too sure where the funds came from. I just know that there was a great problem and I had asked the minister about this not just in Estimates but, I also believe, in question period, in that a lot of the rooms, they were having great difficulty with the washrooms, with the size of the washrooms and the way the lifts work, and the minister was going to get back to me on those. I just wonder how we're doing with those renovations.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We'll forward that response with the other responses that we've taken under advisement. We don't have it at our fingertips right now, sorry.

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister please provide an update on the efforts to put in place a bedbug strategy?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So, as we have found out that bedbugs are a widespread problem across North America, we're very fortunate in the staff that we have at Manitoba Housing who've taken it very, very seriously. And since 2008 we started the integrated pest management group, and we actually have around 20 employees that are working in there in the department right now. They're looking at gathering—they're doing inspections, they're treating, they're providing consultation to sponsored management buildings as well as treating our own buildings. We're inspecting and treating 100-plus buildings, including suites, common areas—15-meal programs—for bedbugs and preventative pest control, scheduling and monitoring pest control services from contractors for an additional 30 to 35 buildings across Manitoba.

We are having to ensure that we are giving our tenants appropriate entry information, also educational presentations. We are scheduling removal of bedbug-infested furniture from tenant suites. We are always researching and developing alternative pest control techniques, steam and heat and green pesticide treatments, and, as I said, we are always working with our tenants to see what we can do to improve our services.

We also are involved with the Department of Healthy Living in looking at developing our bedbug strategy beyond Manitoba Housing. The director of our pest management group is also the chair of the provincial bedbug strategy. They have been working on—they have been developing strategies such as making sure that we're getting the appropriate information out to all Manitobans, also looking at a grant program for non-profit groups so that they can access treatment services if they need to.

So that's an example of what we're doing specifically for Manitoba Housing, acknowledging that there is a bedbug problem, looking at how do we prevent it, but also how do we treat it and continue to provide that support to our tenants and then also taking our knowledge beyond Manitoba Housing and using it with other individuals across the province.

We also have a pest hotline in which people can make phone calls and report any concerns that they have.

Mr. Schuler: Was the Toronto model taken as an example?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, thank you for reminding me of that. Bug and Scrub is one of our initiatives that we're doing as a provincial initiative, and that is looking at the development of the social enterprise that will go into Manitoba Housing or to the private market as well as non-profit organizations and move furniture, provide that necessary support for seniors or people with families or people with disabilities.

Mr. Schuler: So was the Toronto model taken as an example?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: If the member is referring to the Bug and Scrub program, I can say, yes, it was. We are always—our super—our director, Dave Funk, is travelling to Chicago to—he went for a conference there. It was identified that Manitoba Housing is one of the leaders as far as addressing the issue of bedbugs, and, you know, like I've said before, it's a problem that is across North America. We are working diligently to address this issue not only

within Manitoba Housing but taking our expertise beyond and into the province to assure that we're providing the necessary service.

Mr. Schuler: Is there a bedbug registry in place that allows the department to track bedbug infestations in Manitoba Housing?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, in Manitoba Housing we internally have that data so we know where we need to deliver our services.

Mr. Schuler: What about in other commercial facilities, for instance. Is there any plan by the minister or her department to start looking at tracking where they might be outside of Manitoba Housing?

* (16:30)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: That's really not up to this department to decide whether there's going to be that type of service available. I know that it's been raised. I'm sure that our committee, our provincial bedbug committee will continue to review that as an option. Really, our focus right now is providing that necessary support and education to Manitobans to prevent bedbug infestation.

Mr. Schuler: Then who should be looking into this? Because the public needs to be protected, and there's no value in just looking after one small component of this. If it's something that's going to be spreading, and the minister says it's a North American problem, then it's something that should be looked at, also in commercial facilities.

Who should be tracking bedbug problem in Manitoba?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I can—today I can speak to the responsibility of Manitoba Housing and our commitment to being aware of what the issue is in our properties that we operate, and continue to provide treatment and prevention strategies.

Mr. Schuler: How much has been spent so far on bedbug eradication?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The last fiscal year was \$2.2 million was spent on our pest management group, but that would not be just specifically for bedbugs. That would be all pests.

Mr. Schuler: I have an individual who sent me an email from 400 Stradbroom and, I mean, they had an issue of bedbugs, and they were spraying all the suites on a monthly basis. And as of March, his unit, after being inspected, was found to be bedbug free.

And the last inspection was April 25th. Then he receives a notice that his unit will be sprayed as a precautionary measure. Wording of the notice is particularly concerning. Note: Please be advised that your unit has been noted as attached to another unit that potentially has insect activity.

And basically it says that either he complies or he'll be kicked out. And his concern was that his traps have been clear for the last four months. And he checked with his neighbours next to him and she is pest free and has been for at least six months. And he says, I've been threatened with eviction if I do not comply. And he said, how about evicting the tenants where they have sprayed month after month and continue to be a problem.

So his question is: Why are you spending money on spraying suites that are bug free and not concentrating on where the problem might lie? And that is on behalf of Ed.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So that's a question that we receive often from tenants. We are bug free; why are you spraying us? Because it is, it's a huge inconvenience to individuals. I don't know if you've ever heard about the process that has to happen. You have to pack up all your belongings in Rubbermaid containers, get everything off the floor, everything out of the cupboards. It's an onerous task, but an important task. Why we are doing that is because, as we read in Ed's letter or email to you, that there are adjacent units that are infested. And in order to ensure that the infestation does not spread, we need to keep spraying.

And, yes, you—we ask that people let us into their units. We give them the appropriate notice to get in so they can prepare for it, and then we go in and spray.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Just a few minutes ago, the minister indicated that the cost of all the bedbug eradication and all tests was \$2.2 million for last year.

I'd just like to ask: What is the total cost of running the department now that you have 20 employees, each one of them has a vehicle, I'm assuming, and—or at least some of them do—and they rent office space and have computer systems and, as well, have to buy the Heat Assault unit. So I'm just wondering what the total cost has been to the taxpayer to run this new department?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The \$2.2 million that I referred to is everything included, the operating money as well as

the money to have contracts to do the necessary treatments. It's all-inclusive.

Mrs. Taillieu: Then it was a little bit misleading to say that \$2.2 million was spent on bedbug eradication. So how much was actually spent on doing the testing and the eradication?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'd like to correct the record. What I did say was \$2.2 million was used for pest management, and in order for us to do good pest management, we also need the operating and the support of staff to do the necessary steps. Whether it's notification of tenants, whether it's scheduling, whether it's negotiating contracts, those are all necessary and important steps to ensure that we're addressing the issue of pests.

Mrs. Taillieu: Of the—okay, let me just put it this way. How many units—I'll use the term "units," whether that's a house, an apartment unit or a building—have been treated for bedbug in the last year?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We're right now—while we're looking for that specific answer for you, I can tell you, and very proudly tell you, that 95 per cent of our housing stock is bedbug-free. On a monthly basis, we will actually go out and inspect up to 3,500 units, and—but I can't tell you on a monthly basis how many we are treating, because I think that number changes. But we will take that under advisement and get you that information.

Mrs. Taillieu: Okay, then you probably can't tell me the answer to the next question either, because I want to know, as well, of those treated, how many would require re-treatment within that year?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: What we've learned, as we've gone down this road of dealing with the issue of bedbugs, that one treatment does not eradicate bedbugs. And we're having to use multiple different treatments, and I'm not the expert, so I'm not going to put on the record what is the best treatment. We are being very innovative. We are using the Heat Assault, which seems to be the most effective, but that, too, requires multiple treatments in order to be successful.

And it's—when we're—people, you know, without any intent, will be bringing in bedbugs through some of their furniture that they may bring into their homes, people that are visiting them. It's a very transient population in some of our housing blocks, and—you know, but as I said earlier, 95 per cent of our direct-managed stock is bug-free.

Mrs. Taillieu: I realize this might be a little bit technical, but I'm asking these questions on behalf of other people. When—if you're using Heat Assault, then, is that not a pretty much of a—an eradication? It works very well. I'm told it does work very well and it shouldn't need to be reapplied.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: That's why we keep inspecting our units, because you can't assure, whether it's chemical or Heat Assault, that you're going to get all of the bedbugs, whether they're adults or eggs. And that's why we need to continually go in and inspect and be aware of it.

* (16:40)

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister indicate what it is going to cost to cover the bedbug covers that the government has announced?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We don't have the exact dollar amount right now to share with the member, but we'll take that under advisement and provide it.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, I'm told that in certain treatment, whether it's chemical treatment, I guess it is, that people have to be out of their suites for a certain amount of time, and so applications cannot be done after a certain time of the day, to allow people to be back in their home at a reasonable hour in the evening. So are staff staggered, then, or do staff just work to a certain time of the day, or how does that work?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So our staff is primarily working 8:30 to 4:30. If necessary, they are flexible in some ways.

And the other, you're right that there's a—for the maximum, for some treatments, people have to be out of their units for four hours, but we do have a policy that we ensure that families can be back into their units when school is out so the children can return home.

Mrs. Taillieu: So, then, all applications would have to be done before noon?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: That applies for the chemical application.

Mrs. Taillieu: In terms of the—I think there was an announcement of \$700,000 which was allotted for an education strategy. Can the minister outline what that education strategy was, if it was an advertising program, where it was done and what are the results, measurable results, to say that this has actually worked?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: That is the provincial bedbug strategy, and that is not in our Estimates; that's in the Estimates of Healthy Living.

And I can tell the member that there will be—it will be the provincial committee that develops the education strategy, in consultation with other stakeholders to make sure that it—get the information out that needs to be given to Manitobans.

Mrs. Taillieu: So I'm to understand, then, that that \$700,000 will be coming out of the Healthy Living Estimates books. It'll be budgeted and it will line item in there?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, that's my understanding.

Mrs. Taillieu: Last question: Do you know if the—Toronto had shut down their bedbug program that they were running through the government there?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'm not familiar with the status of that program and, well, obviously, if you know something about it, we welcome that information and we'll investigate it ourselves, what's happening in the other jurisdiction.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): To the minister, just to start with a couple of questions about the Manitoba Housing units that were built in Brandon near the 18th Street, and I guess the first question, one of the things that people asked me was why the units were built in the flood plain.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: That was the land that was given to us for this bill as we developed it with our partner, which was the City of Brandon.

Mr. Gerrard: And the second question was: The cost per unit was approximately \$270,000 per unit, and this seems a pretty high cost, and I wonder if the minister would comment and give an explanation.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: As we discussed in the House with the member, that these were—these are large units that have been built, three- and four-bedroom units, and so that makes your cost go up. If you're comparing to a one-bedroom unit, it's very much different.

It also has energy efficiency that's built in it, and there was also, when we did build on the land, that there was some work that we had to do to level out the property to ensure that we could build the housing on top of it, so that also drove up our costs.

Mr. Gerrard: In a similar concern about cost, when I was in Camperville they showed me some units that were built by Manitoba Housing and some

comparable units that were built not by Manitoba Housing funded, and the ones that were built with Manitoba Housing were about \$300,000 per unit, and the ones that were not built by Manitoba Housing were about \$150,000 per unit, and I wonder if the minister, you know, could provide a comment on this.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The housing in Camperville, we just announced. We have just put that out for tender. It hasn't been built yet, so I'm not sure what the member is referring to.

But we're committed to providing good quality housing to Manitobans, and that's another one of our projects where we're going into a smaller community such as Camperville and made a commitment to seven housing—I think it was seven units that we committed to, and we'll ensure that there's some economic spinoff for that community with a local hiring and local employment strategy attached to it.

* (16:50)

Mr. Gerrard: The—I think the units that I saw had been built probably about five years ago, okay, through Manitoba Housing. And one of the concerns that there was in terms of the latest units was that, you know, there are some excellent, wonderful contractors in Camperville but they weren't—I mean the bidding was done in a way that they were excluded, and people were very frustrated about, you know, having the local contractors excluded. And in one of the explanations for the high cost in the previous homes was that the, you know, it was an outside contractor and there was a lot of extra travel and housing costs while people were staying in the community to build the homes, and so I'm just wondering if the minister would comment on this.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The latest tender we had received, some local contractors did put in a bid and it was very clear on this bid that we—the tender that we put out that there would be a local employment component, so the successful tender has made that commitment that local people will be hired on-site to provide the necessary trade to ensure that these houses are built.

Mr. Gerrard: The—I mean, was there an effort to consider the local contractor or was there—what's the situation here?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Of course there was. You know, we have to do a bidding process, ensure that it is fair and equitable, and you know, I was pleased to see that local contractors were able to apply for it. We will,

you know, offer to continue to work with them so that they can be successful in the future but they were not on this tender and—but what we did ensure is that there was local hiring for, you know, community members to ensure that that service can be provided and local sub-trades as well.

Mr. Gerrard: Are we talking 10 per cent of the people doing the work locally or 90 per cent? What are we talking?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We—there is no specific target attached to this but you can assure—I can assure the member that we will be evaluating and seeing how many people are employed, and I know that the community members of Camperville will hold us accountable to the commitment we made for local employment.

Mr. Gerrard: Okay, well—we'll watch it very carefully and that's my last question and last comment, so I'm going to hand it back to the member for Springfield.

Mr. Schuler: I believe we are done with questions. We are now ready to proceed with the rest of the process.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much everyone. We will now proceed with resolutions.

Resolution 30.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$66,453,000 for Housing and Community Development, Housing, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 30.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$14,237,000 for Housing and Community Development, Community Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 30.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$170,000 for Housing and Community Development, Costs related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 30.1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 30.1. Are there any questions on this matter?

Seeing none, we will proceed to a consideration of the resolution.

Resolution 30.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,466,000 for Housing and Community Development, Administration, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

What is the will of the committee at this time?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

An Honourable Member: Call it 5 o'clock.

Mr. Chairperson: Call it 5 o'clock? Very good.

The hour now being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

* (14:50)

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): 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 Local Government.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Yes, I do, thank you. I do; I'll be very brief, but let me say, first of all, I want to thank the opposition for being very flexible in allowing us to move my Estimates of Local Government in co-ordination with other departments. I really appreciate it. I want to thank my critic, if he had any role to play in this, and I want to thank the two House leaders for doing this. As we all know, it's an urgent time right now with flooding happening in different parts of the province, so I just want to say thank you for that. It shows a great deal of co-operation; we appreciate it. And I know ministers of Water Stewardship and MIT appreciate it as well. So thank you for that.

Let me just make a couple of brief comments. I know my critic would like to have some questions—more time for questions, so I'll really be brief. I'm really pleased to make a few comments on the Estimates and on the department.

I guess I'd like to begin by acknowledging the hard work of Local Government staff and the work they do with the 197 municipalities and important—they are important stakeholders, such as the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and others.

And, as part of my opening statement, I'd like to highlight some of the positive changes that our government has made to support the municipalities overall. And I really believe that these changes will last a long, long time and be extremely positive for the province.

Let's touch on, just quickly, the funding support for municipalities. Manitoba provides generous funding support to Manitoba municipalities. I believe that's been acknowledged by the leadership of AMM, and Budget 2011 is strengthening our government's commitment to municipal infrastructure and transit investments.

Starting this year, the Building Manitoba Fund—the BMF formula will be changed to provide municipalities with infrastructure and transit funding equal to 1 per cent point of provincial sales tax, PST revenues, which is about \$239 million province-wide. Moving to the PST revenue sharing is going to provide improved predictability. Doug Dobrowolski and the AMM have been asking for predictability in funding. They want to have something that—to provide more growth and as well as greater accountability in the end, to show their constituents or ratepayers and Manitobans on how that money has been spent.

And, after all, what we've been hearing over the last number of years is that infrastructure is hugely important for municipalities across the country, as well as transit. And that's where they wanted the dollars directed to and the monies provided for.

Improved predictability is tying the grants to the point of PST. It gives municipalities predictable growing source of revenues each and every year for transit and infrastructure. More growth—well, municipalities will receive a share of a larger, faster-growing revenue source and PST revenues; as Manitoba's economy grows, so, too, will our investments in municipal infrastructure and transit.

And the greater accountability, quite frankly, is—our government will report each year on the investment made in municipal infrastructure and transit. Manitobans can be assured that these funds are being used to support the priorities and, as a province, we are going to be the first province in

Canada to bring in legislation to ensure that municipalities are getting one point of PST and I believe this is a great step forward. No one said it's perfect. We certainly have never done that. But we believe that the infrastructure deficit that is being faced by municipalities and provinces, quite frankly, all across Canada, this is a great step forward to ensure that they've got some revenue growth.

So, with that, I just want to say, in conclusion, that not only has provincial funding for City of Winnipeg, but Brandon and municipalities across our province increased, 5 per cent increase in funding, which, I know, is very much appreciated but will be put to good use by the municipalities on many of their projects related to infrastructure and transit. And I know that this funding to municipalities in the province will support municipal transit, infrastructure, and capital asset renewal. Throughout, the Building Manitoba Fund will also increase by about 4 per cent or thereabouts.

So, with that, I just want to say thank you to the department, all the hard-working men and women within the Department of Local Government that work each and every day with local governments to ensure that anything they can do to help them, any challenges that they're facing, the expertise that the department has is there for the municipalities. So, with that, I just want to say thank you once again to my critic and to the opposition for being flexible on moving times around on Estimates. And, again, thank you to the staff, the hard-working men and women in local government, for their dedication to providing better service to all Manitobans, and I know they work tirelessly to try to reach that goal. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Ste. Rose, have an opening comment?

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'll keep my comments brief, too. I do want the minister's comments on our flexibility put in bold type in *Hansard*, but, beyond that, I do want to go into a little bit on the Building Manitoba Fund. There's some aspects on it that I do want to touch on with the minister today along with a number of other issues in the department. And I do want to add my thanks to all the staff that are involved in local government in the department. They've been very co-operative in my dealings with them and very open

about answering questions and helping me understand some of the things that are going on internally in the department.

And, as the minister has, I will certainly lend my thanks and my congratulations to the job that all our municipal people across this province do. Last fall there was a municipal election and there was a considerable turnover. I think some of them have been there a little while now and are starting to realize some of the things that do hit a council chamber, a council table, and I think some of them are starting to realize that the flooding conditions right now are more than any of them anticipated. So I do want to just make sure we acknowledge all the efforts that those municipal people put in across the province. They're our first contact with the people of the province and how very important they are to the governance of this whole province. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: I thank the critic for those comments.

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 and, once they are seated, we will ask the minister to introduce the staff in attendance.

* (15:00)

Mr. Lemieux: Joining with me today is Laurie Davidson, assistant deputy minister of Provincial-Municipal Support Services, and she's acting deputy minister today for Linda McFadyen, who's the deputy. She—Linda has got her rubber boots on today out by Portage la Prairie, inspecting the dikes because she is also a deputy minister that has a lot to do with Emergency Measures, and we thank her for that.

Also, Denise Carlyle is the executive director of Municipal Finance and Advisory Services. And I don't know if a lot of people know, but Denise is retiring at the end of June and this is her last Estimates. And this is a resource, regrettably, throughout the province and throughout the civil service we are losing a lot of great people because they are looking to so many positive other things in their life and they want to move at that direction. But Denise will be sorely missed, I can tell you. She is so knowledgeable and, again, I know I just want to

thank her personally for all her great work, and I know the opposition would feel the same way. I'm not sure if they know Denise, and—but, if they know of her—I know the municipalities around the province know of her and know of people in the department, how hard they work on their behalf. So, with that, I thank Denise publicly for that.

Brian Johnston is the chief of Financial Services that's here today, and Lindsay Robinson is our Human Resources Services consultant. And I thank them for being here. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: The floor is now open for—oh, sorry, excuse me. Does the committee wish to proceed through these Estimates in a chronological manner or have a global discussion?

Mr. Briese: I would prefer global, if it's all right with the minister.

Mr. Lemieux: Global is fine. It's just that—and I'm sure my critic doesn't want, you know, 50 staff sitting in the gallery waiting to be called on different issues—so all I would like is, if possible, just to let me know over the next short while, at least, what areas he plans on covering, because maybe all the staff don't be—don't have to be here today. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: I can do this almost any way the minister wants to do it. I have a number of standard questions. I do have a few flood-related questions where they pertain to the municipalities, and then I have things like planning and policy and I do want to talk about the Building Manitoba Fund. So I'll ask first the standard—kind of standard questions that I have, and then I would prefer probably going to the flood-related questions, and then we'll get into things like assessment.

And, well, I actually don't have any questions here on assessment, unless I dream up some myself as I go along; but I probably can have some. But wherever you want, I—

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, well, I thank my critic for that. That's very helpful and we'll be able to work with that. That's fine.

Madam Chairperson: The floor is now open for questions. Oh, it's agreed that we are going global? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Briese: First off, I'd like a list of the political staff, their position and whether they're full time.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, the political staff. I have this one special assistant in my office, and I also have an executive assistant that works in my constituency.

Mr. Briese: Could I have their names and whether they're full-time positions? I presume they are.

Mr. Lemieux: Excuse me, yes, they're both full time, and Eric Plamondon is my special assistant here in the Legislature, and Amy Pouliot is my full-time staff in my constituency office in LaVerendrye.

Mr. Briese: And would you provide me with a list of all the staff in the minister's office and in the deputy minister's office, please?

Mr. Lemieux: Just to clarify, those aren't—I mean, they're not political staff, but if the member—sorry, if the member wants the staff names, I can certainly put them on the record—in the deputy minister's office as well?

Mr. Briese: Yes, please.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, the assistant deputy minister is Linda McFadyen, and Erin McCleery is one of her staff; Sherry Nelson, Debbie Goodfellow and Susanne or Susan Welsh, and that's in the deputy minister's office.

Mr. Briese: I take it you've already covered the minister's office? I asked for the staff in the minister's office too, please.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, I'm sorry about that. I thought he was just interested, sorry, in the political staff in my office. But the civil servants that are in my office are Ann Tardiff, Jennifer Nicolson and Margaret—just a second. Ann Tardiff, sorry, in my office, and Margaret Richards are in my office here.

Mr. Briese: Could the minister tell me the total number of staff employed in his department and whether that's an increase or a decrease from the last fiscal year.

Mr. Lemieux: It's—the number of staff are 246.4, and that's up by one and a half staff.

Mr. Briese: Were any of the staff directly appointed and, if so, I would like to know which ones they were. Were any of the staff directly appointed or was there a competition for all the positions? And I would like to know if there were some that were directly appointed and which ones they were.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, there was 22 competition and then there was three direct appointments.

Mr. Briese: Could the minister please tell me what those three directly appointed positions were?

* (15:10)

Mr. Lemieux: Yes. One staff person was my executive assistant in my constituency, and the other two is—one person is a—in the deputy minister's office and the third person was in Assessment Services, and this has to do with our succession planning. Employee was an assistant clerk for a couple of years and then took some courses and so on and became, you know, was able to upgrade their skills, and this person is in Assessment Services—so, in my constituency, in the deputy minister's office, and in Assessment Services.

Mr. Briese: Could the minister please tell me how many vacancies there are in the department at the present time and, possibly, a percentage in relationship to the whole staff?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, the vacancy rate as of March 31st, 2011, is approximately 12.5 per cent in the department.

Mr. Briese: Is that—are those vacancies scattered throughout the department, or are there some areas or branches of the department where there's a higher vacancy?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, the quick answer is, I mean, vacancies happen for a variety of reasons. I know the member opposite knows that. I'm not probably saying anything he doesn't know. But there is some due to retirement, some people go to other positions, some people have received a—promotions to different departments, and people do move around within the civil service. And so a lot of them are due to many of the reasons I just gave, but my understanding is that, at least what I've been advised, there's no particular area that has a higher vacancy rate than others. But I'll certainly endeavour to check and if that's the case, I can certainly address that. But I know that I believe—I'm going by memory—but the majority in Assessment because most of the staff in Assessment—most of the staff—there's competitions under way right now, I believe, for about nine or 10 positions, I believe.

But, having said that, there's one area in the department, the assessment area, has the majority, I would say. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: Were there any positions relocated in the province—in the department, in the province, and I'd like to have some sense of what type of relocation

was, for instance, from rural Manitoba into Winnipeg, or from northern Manitoba into southern Manitoba, or vice versa. I'd like a sense of where relocations may have been made in the department.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, I think I can—thank you. I can say with confidence that there was not a, certainly, a huge move from rural Manitoba—if I can use that term—to urban Manitoba. But one thing I will say, though, is that—I'll give you an example out of Deloraine. There were a couple of staff in Deloraine that ended up moving to Brandon. So we were—and the department, through the deputy minister and others, were cognizant of the fact that you want to keep them regional. They were still doing some work with regard to planning services out of that office, out of the Brandon office, so they were still dealing with the issues in that geographical area.

In other words, they weren't taken from Deloraine and then moved to Beausejour or moved to Winnipeg, and I know that was a concern of many. And I understand that the staff were quite—they are doing a good job out of Brandon. In other words, this is something that they had wanted, I understand—at least, that I'd been advised. So it suited their lifestyle and what they wanted to do, and also they were able to continue doing the work which they did previously out of Deloraine, out of Brandon, and it has worked out very successful. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: Was there any travel done by the minister outside the province in the past year, and I'd like to know some of the details of that.

Mr. Lemieux: Besides all the trips that I've taken internally in the province, going to municipalities, going to AMM, going to many municipal meetings, there were a couple of meetings that I went outside of the province. One was to attend a provincial-territorial ministers' meeting in Ottawa, ministers of local government or municipal affairs or intergovernmental affairs.

And, also, I attended—I was a guest speaker at Global Cities Forum in Toronto. It was attended internationally by many individuals dealing with local government and dealing with all the issues important to large cities, and it was a real pleasure to meet the former president of Argentina and—at this conference—and having a great exchange on the importance of local cities, local governments and the kind of role they play, whether it be dealing with greenhouse gases or just the fact that cities are becoming larger and larger now and also with that comes a number of challenges. But those are the two

outside of the province and aside from the many, many different trips I take within the province dealing with municipal issues.

Mr. Briese: I can assure the minister I make a lot of those trips within the province too. I would like to know who went with you on the out-of-province trips, staff or—that went and if all the costs were paid out of your department and what the costs were.

Mr. Lemieux: On the trip with the provincial-territorial ministers' meeting in Ottawa, I believe my deputy minister, Linda McFadyen, as well as my special assistant went on that trip to accompany me to provide support. And, also, on the Global Cities Forum, I believe my special assistant attended that as well.

They're all paid out of the department, but my special assistant attended because he is quite—not only is he bilingual but—a Francophone—but he's familiar with other languages, and so it was a multi-language conference, and he attended at that time. But I can double-check on that, but all of them were paid from the department's budget. And I have to say, if I could, and if my critic wouldn't mind if I take a couple more seconds to add this, that for the first time in Manitoba's history, our government posts ministerial expenses, and they're online. They're accessible to the public. If people want to see how much is being spent on a trip or how much on meals on—how much on transportation and so on, those are listed publicly for Manitobans to see.

* (15:20)

And I believe this is a step in the right direction and is a very proactive way to be more transparent and open to the public of Manitoba. It's taxpayers' dollars that are paying for this, so it's a—it's certainly—it's something that we're very proud of doing. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: Were there any other, for instance, travel by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) or any other delegations that were paid for out of your department—out of the Department of Local Government?

Mr. Lemieux: Once again, just to comment, the Premier today is in Portage la Prairie and area, and he does a fair bit of travelling around the province of Manitoba as well as outside, and I know the member from Ste. Rose is certainly not begrudging the Premier for highlighting and doing what's great in Manitoba outside of our borders.

And certainly inside the province of Manitoba, I know the Premier travels a great deal to many different corners of the province because in—I believe he's requested almost in every town and city in our province to attend an event or two. And that is something that we have been able to attend with him and have gone to a number of different events and doing, of course, the Province's business. And that is something that I know the member opposite would not want any premier of any political stripe to stop doing—promoting our province.

Mr. Briese: My question was specifically to outside the province and if any of those out-of-province trips were paid through the Department of Local Government.

Mr. Lemieux: No. I've been advised not, but I have to say that there are occasions where the Premier has, I'm sure, travelled outside of the province that I'm not aware of where, but I—certainly out of Local Government, my understanding is that there has—his trip has not been paid for.

Mr. Briese: Could the minister provide me with details on the annual advertising budget of the department?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes. There is no—well, I've been advised that there's not a lot of advertising done for the province other than to specifically address the services that are provided by the department or by the minister or essentially the department itself through different brochures and magazines and that's the extent of our passing on information to the public. I know that we've tried to assist with AMM, I believe, in the past, whether it's dealing with their AMM convention, but not a lot of money has been spent on that.

Mr. Briese: So does the department have a specific advertising budget or not, I guess, is the question?

Mr. Lemieux: The answer is no.

Mr. Briese: So how are ads that are run by the department in newspapers and such in the media, how are they paid for? How are they costed? Who are they charged to?

Mr. Lemieux: They'd paid for within our operating funds, but if there's a specific activity of a different branch within the department, that they're doing something, that's where these, that's where an ad would take place within a local newspaper or newspapers, so that it's within our operating—part of our operating budget. It's just—it's passing on

information to Manitobans or to elected officials, possibly, or others on the kind of service that we do.

Mr. Briese: I don't want to get into a debate here, but I still don't understand why there wouldn't be a separate budget on the advertising costs within the department, whenever they're running department messages, basically, in newspapers and the media across the province.

Mr. Lemieux: Each branch has a line, if you want to call it that, under Communication. I'll give you an example, which Municipal Finance advertised about the municipal election that was held a year ago, last fall, in 2010. A large ad went out informing people that the municipal election was happening. I believe it was encouraging people to get out and vote, to participate in municipal affairs, and that is truly a positive thing. They're trying to increase the participation of the public getting involved more so.

So, under Municipal Finance and Advisory Services, there is a line there that talks about communications. Part of it is telephone, but also advertising publications dealing directly with municipal officials' directory, statistical publications. It's really information to the public. It's not—I mean, that's the best way I can describe it.

Mr. Briese: So, in that line on Communication, in each department, that's where any advertising would show up, but there's no further breakdown on that. It's just lumped into the Communication section of each department, I take it, then?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, it is broken down into postage, telephone, forms or career advertising. There is—it is broken down, you know, specifically how the money was spent, but it doesn't just say communications and a number. It breaks it down into, you know, ads that were put out, the type of ads, postage, forms and career advertising, those kinds of things, so it's fairly basic communications.

Mr. Briese: So is that information available to me? The breakdown?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, we can endeavour to get that, dealing with postage and telephone and—at least give you the number what, you know, what was spent in each. But I think it's small amounts, like it's around, I think, \$20,000. I realize that might be a large amount for a family, but in government \$20,000 for trying to communicate with the public is quite small. I mean, maybe my critic is saying that I should increase that amount, much larger, and do more communicating with the public.

Mr. Briese: Yes, I would probably concur with the minister. It's probably quite small numbers. I'm looking at the Municipal Board here, where I believe it says \$22,000, and I would anticipate the Municipal Board to have a fair number of communication issues, so—I'll move on to a number of flood-related questions that will basically tie into the department somewhat.

Has the minister received any preliminary estimate of damage to municipal infrastructure in the province? Like, what's the feedback you're getting from municipal organizations across the province?

*(15:30)

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I wasn't expecting a question on flooding because it's a, you know, MIT and Water Stewardship and others are certainly dealing with that in a very proactive and commendable way. The extent that I've been involved with is communicating with municipal leaders and talking to municipal officials. And, I have to say, this particular flood, I had the experience, of course, of being present but not only that, but helping people in the '97 flood, moving furniture and things out of their home in Grande Pointe and other communities. It was absolutely terrible.

In 2009 we had a great deal of water in the province, the second-largest flood in a—certainly in a hundred years, next to '97. And then this year it's a different type of flood. Being an MLA that represents a constituency south of Winnipeg, communities like Ste. Agathe, which is south of my constituency, and St. Adolphe and Grande Pointe and communities like that, we were anticipating, certainly, around 2009 levels, but we—we're very fortunate that when the peak came through it was just this less than 2009. But still there's a lot of infrastructure and municipal infrastructure as well as provincial infrastructure, primarily roads, that are impacted by floods like that.

Anecdotally, all I've heard is that there's a number of municipal roads that are affected. And, generally, I would say, well, most days the media publicizes the types of roads and where they are located that are either out because of damage or out because they're covered in water, asking people to take precautions when they're driving on them.

But to answer the question directly, no, I don't have—I certainly have not been provided with any kind of numbers from any municipality as to how many roads they've lost or what kind of dollar

figure's attached to them. But what I know that when you take a look across the province, it's unbelievable, quite frankly, of how many municipalities and the type of geographical flood we've got this year, that one media source said it's, you know, in—using the term biblical proportions, it's, quite frankly, there are areas that haven't seen any water and flooding are now encountering water and their dikes that haven't been tested for a number of years.

And so I can see the urgency for a lot of communities and the concern that they have. And every single member in this Chamber is really concerned about their fellow Manitobans or other Manitobans and that kind of experience. And I know, Madam Chairperson, you being the MLA for St. Norbert, know the kind of—what I speak, because people and the kind of anxiety that people were facing, even as much as a month ago, not knowing what was going to happen.

But just to allow the member to ask another question. Sorry for being so long-winded. But the answer is I don't have a total accumulation of roads and I don't have a dollar figure. But I know that when the dollar figures are added up and the roads and the kind of damage that's there, that EMO and Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation are certainly tracking this and monitoring this. And I know that they'll have to take a close look at the kind of infrastructure damage that's taken place. And I'm sure that the federal government will step up, as they have most recently with providing Armed Forces assistance to us, and I know the Prime Minister, recently elected, will do everything he can to help Manitoba out. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: I'm certainly not trying to push the minister into a corner on some of these things. It's—there is a role, in my view, and I am the critic for EMO too, and that's a different minister and I understand that. I need to go there with some of the questions, but, in my view, because the municipalities are the front line, that there is a role in Local Government in this.

And I had a call on Friday just from a municipal councillor in the RM of Westbourne, and you could just hear the stress and the depression in his voice. He said they have over 200 road cuts in that municipality alone already. And they've been in a disaster financial assistance situation in nine out of the last 10 years. *[interjection]* Municipal roads. And it's—he says it's like the wild, wild west out there. There—people are cutting roads to protect their

properties, and he says he doesn't blame them. But he's—it's just the, you know, our municipal councillors and mayors and reeves are notoriously low-paid across the province. And I was a councillor for 20 years so I know roughly what the salaries are, and you can just sense the stress. And I hope that the department is putting a few resources out there and kind of helping them through that kind of situation, that it—I think it's really important that they do that.

Mr. Lemieux: While I thank the member for the comment as well as the question and statement, we take certainly this role very seriously, and there is a role, and I've certainly played that role in a number of meetings that we've had internally as well as communicating with municipal officials.

I would say that, just to your comment about, you know, what does the department do, I know that many of our officials within the department have received a number of phone calls, but the Emergency Measures co-ordinators in each municipality, they're the ones with their feet on the ground. They know what's happening in their municipality. So, without having people to go through many numerous individuals and story changes from person to person, we're trying to direct people to go to their Emergency Measures people and their staff who have dealt with these issues many times before. Deal with those people, because they know what's going on in their backyard. To have a citizen phone from, let's use Westbourne as an example, to phone one of our staff, out of Neepawa or out of Brandon, is not really helpful, even though the person will try to do whatever they can to help. There are people who have Emergency Measures co-ordinators right in, for example, Neepawa or other communities, that know what's going on and they can—they're far better able to help them. So we try to pass people on to the best source, where they can get the most accurate information.

And I have to say that the member's comment about cut roads is truly important, because it's so dangerous. People will take a backhoe or a farm-piece of farm equipment, cut a road to let that water through, but when people are driving on that road—you may have drive-driven to work or to the store in the morning, and then when you're coming back at night and it's dark and that road—you're expecting that road to be in the same shape as it was when you left, and someone has taken their equipment, and cut the road to let the water through. You might have a cut that has eroded to being five feet wide by 10 feet deep, and then your front wheels are going to hit

that, with your vehicle. So it's extremely dangerous, really, taking the initiative on their own to try to better their situation. I understand why they're doing it, but it's extremely dangerous. They should be thinking of their neighbours, friends and neighbours, who might be running into a hole like that with their vehicle.

Just to maybe end my comment, just to—the comment made by my critic is an extremely important one about cutting roads and being, you know, being really careful on people trying to address flooding situations on their own.

Mr. Briese: I understand that there's been some negotiations going on and, once again, I expect it's led by Emergency Measures, but some changes being discussed on disaster financial assistance arrangements, and I would just ask the minister: Does your department play a role in that? Are you taking part in some of the recommendations that are going on in disaster financial assistance arrangements?

Mr. Lemieux: When I was introducing the staff, I mentioned how my deputy minister is involved with Emergency Measures. She was before for a long period of time, and she, of course, in conversation with the minister responsible, the MLA for Thompson, may be involved in those discussions. But I'm certainly not privy to those. I certainly haven't been asked by municipalities to try to enhance disasters financial assistance in one way or another or any way, shape, or form, so that's—I don't want to pass the buck on to someone else to answer the question, but that's probably a better question for the MLA for Thompson, the Minister responsible for EMO (Mr. Ashton), to address, because I'm certainly not privy to a lot of that information.

* (15:40)

Mr. Briese: I'll just give the minister some insight into why I'm making those remarks. For quite a few years, and back when I was involved with municipalities, too, disaster financial assistance only kicks in after a disaster. Mitigation or prevention work done prior is not covered. And they have started to make a few small changes where there would be some funding for prevention works. That's very much involved in Local Government because of who is doing the prevention work, and that's where I was going with this. It's the municipalities that are wanting to do the preventative work, being told they can't do it.

Let's say, for instance, a few years ago, I believe, the City of Brandon spent \$200,000 on preventative diking. Not eligible for any funding, they did it on their own. Now, if they hadn't had done that diking, there may well have been \$5-million damage done, but that would be covered, and they do it year over year.

And that was kind of my reference to the RM of Westbourne, too, is nine out of 10 years, they've been in disaster financial assistance situations.

Maybe some of the preventative work is a lot better way to go. And the only reason I was going here, Mr. Minister, is the fact that it's the municipalities that are on the front lines on this. And, I think, probably the department should be involved somewhat in the negotiations on disaster financial assistance.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I think people have heard stories in the media and elsewhere about how the federal government and the provincial government are always discussing issues around disaster financial assistance and what's covered and what's not. And, for years, if you had put up a dike, you were expected to take the dike down afterwards. I mean, you build a dike that might cost the municipality or a city a fair amount of money and then you're asked to take that dike down after. Like, in 2009, and then, 2011, two years later, you have another flood of approximately the same height, the same level and then you're asked to build that dike once again.

So I know there's a number of conversations happening around that. And why would you want to? It makes absolutely no sense to the public. You know, let them flood, let the flood happen, and then the federal government some high-how will step in and they'll cover, you know, a portion of whatever is damaged.

But isn't it better to be more proactive? I think that's what my critic is saying. Be proactive in a sense of building, you know, flood mitigation or flood proofing so you avoid the damage that it takes and have the infrastructure left there and build on it, as opposed to removing it and starting all over again the next time there's a flood.

So we're in a wet cycle. I think we all know that. We've experienced it and, regrettably, there's going to be high water into the future. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: I would just mention that it's not just the federal government to the Province; it's provincial

government to the municipalities, too, so that has to be part of the consideration.

Is the—I don't presume it is, but is this department involved at all in the program for the sump pumps and backwater installations and stuff that was announced not that long ago?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes.

Madam Chairperson: I just have to remind everyone that you need to wait for me to recognize you so that your comments will appear in *Hansard*.

Mr. Briese: In that case, the answer was affirmative. So how much money has the provincial government provided to these programs?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, this is an initiative that I'm very, very, really pleased with, but proud of as well, as taking to the initiative, you know, a proactive initiative. And the Premier (Mr. Selinger) should be congratulated on this. He wanted to ensure that Manitobans were protected in a proactive way. When you take a look at sump pits, sump pumps and also backwater valves, this is the basic protection that most need and have for their homes. I believe in 1990 or 1991, under the building code, new homes had to have sump pits or sump pumps or backwater valves in their homes. So it really was addressing homes that were older than 1990, at least I've been advised.

But the Province initially provided \$500,000 for rural Manitoba, and that was to be over—that was for three years, and I know that the uptake has been fairly good. And the City of Winnipeg, initially, we put—to announce the \$500,000 amount of money going towards this initiative initially, the uptake was so huge that we felt that—we kept telling Manitobans: don't wait; get it done; contact a plumber. They're—you know, they may run out of sump pumps or backwater valves. Like, get on it and do it. Well, the public came back and said, we agree. And it was an overwhelming success in the sense the uptake was huge.

So we then announced an additional—excuse me—an additional \$1 million to that program, and we have committed to providing \$500,000 for the next couple of years over a three-year period.

So this is something that we're very pleased with the uptake. Manitobans and people in the city of

Winnipeg and Brandon have really latched on to this program. It's an initiative that, you know, the City of Winnipeg can be proud of, the City of Brandon and other municipalities that are looking at this, as well, should be proud of this. It's a great way to help their citizens in a proactive way to deal with back up water, and so on.

Mr. Briese: So, initially, there was a half a million dollars into rural Manitoba is my understanding. What's been the uptake on that?

Mr. Lemieux: I will—I know that there's a—the uptake is—people—communities are going through it right now. They're determining whether or not they want to get into it and how much they're going to get into it. But we have about roughly 20 communities, 22 communities so far that are wanting to participate in this program on a cost-sharing basis, and that's something I didn't mention when I was talking about the financial part of it. It's 50-50 cost-shared with the municipality on providing assistance to their taxpayers in their communities. So it's something that—and we're pleased to cost-share it with cities and with municipalities.

Mr. Briese: Are you prepared to increase that commitment if the—like, you talk about 22 at the present time—I expect almost every community in Manitoba is going to want to come in and take advantage of that program.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, the question's a little bit hypothetical. We're not sure exactly how and what the uptake will be, but we are monitoring. I mean, if Manitobans know—if they want their government to be there, we will be. That's why we increased Winnipeg's from \$500,000 to an additional million dollars to increase it to a million and a half; that's the Province of Manitoba's contribution.

So I believe Manitobans know we will be there, if the uptake is there that we will be, and—but, right now, I can't say absolutely that that'll happen. But I just want to say that when it did happen, we increased our amount of support.

* (15:50)

Mr. Briese: I'll move on to some other areas now. One that I want to ask a couple of questions on is the livestock operation policies and the land-use planning—or in the municipal development plans. How many municipal governments have actually filed their livestock operating policies?

Mr. Lemieux: At this point, one of the other staff, another staff person from the departmental will—would like to come down. It's in a different area, and I'll wait until the assistant deputy minister gets down here for Community Planning and Development division. And if there are going to be a number of questions on livestock operations or development plans, in general, it would be a good thing to have the assistant deputy minister here. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: Yes, I'll stick to a series of questions on planning issues then.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, much appreciated. I do appreciate that, on behalf of the critic, because, as we mentioned before, people have to come in and out, depending on their expertise, so I'll be pleased to introduce the assistant deputy minister shortly.

What I'd like to do, though, is I'd like to make a comment on provincial land use policies. This is something that has been a relatively sensitive issue, and I'll say—I'll use the term "sensitive" because the environment is sensitive. Our rivers are sensitive. Water is a sensitive commodity in the sense that you don't want to be polluting rivers and lakes and streams as a result of improper planning.

To let a whole development take place, and I certainly know what I—what have I—what I—I have experienced this directly, in the sense that where I live, there has been so much development taking place in the last number of years, in a way that the planning should have happened. And I don't want to look in the rear-view mirror, but I will comment on when the previous government was the government of the day, there was a lot of development that happened, and many people felt that—and the municipalities felt this was a real great thing to do; this was an initiative that should happen; let people develop, let people have only one acre lots, let them have half-acre lots, septic fields on rivers, wells all over the place. And I've been a rural Manitoban my whole life, and I don't believe there are many Manitobans that want to see development take place in a holus-bolus way, just slap buildings and homes and—all over the place without any kind of planning, proper planning taking place. So I really appreciate the question, because it's important.

And I know the member, as former president of AMM, he knows how important development is. But he also knows how important protecting the environment is. And also being a rural Manitoban, as I am, I think we're both cognizant of the fact that we

have to be really conscious and cognizant of the kind of development that takes place.

And, at this point, I'd certainly look forward to his questions, but I would like to introduce Ramona Mattix, who's assistant deputy minister of Community Planning and Development division. And Ramona is relatively new to the province of Manitoba, and we really appreciate her expertise and all the guidance she's provided. So thank you to my critic for allowing us to take a couple of minutes to have a new person come and join us.

Mr. Briese: And I just mention to the minister that, in a previous life, I was the chair of a planning district for 14 or 15 years, and I—one of the last things I did as chair of that planning district was parade the livestock policies through our development plan in our municipality. And it was a major undertaking and, yes, we do realize the importance of good planning in the municipalities and I like to believe that, under my watch there, we had good planning.

But, back to the question: How many of the municipal governments have actually filed their livestock operation policies?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you. Again, as I've been advised, that The Planning Act, which came into force in 2006, requires every planning district board and municipal council to adopt a development plan for the planning district and municipality. And a development plan must also include a livestock operation policy that guides zoning bylaws dealing with livestock operations. So, when you take a look at where we stand right now, in Manitoba there are 88 local planning authorities, and when you take a look at right now, the current status is that who is—who completed theirs are 59. And livestock operation policies adopted in force under review is 22 and limited progress is seven, for a total of 88.

But, again, I wasn't, certainly, pointing the finger in any way at the member opposite about how he was a poor planner or the municipality that he represented was terrible and was a polluter and so on. I hope he didn't take it the wrong way. But he understands the importance of planning and the importance around livestock operations and the role that municipalities play in this without trying to hinder, in any way, progress. But there have to be—it has to be good planning in place, and I know he understands that.

Mr. Briese: Those livestock operation policies were supposed to be in place by the 1st of January 2008. And I'm just wondering if the ones that aren't in place yet—I know there was a practice of giving them extensions before. Is that the status they're under right now? Has—they been given extensions?

Mr. Lemieux: I just want to comment quickly that a number that have not, let's say, provided even a draft, for example, by board or council, some of them are challenged financially. So, for them, there is a cost factor involved in this. But we do have a Community Planning Assistance Program that helps pay—it's a flat amount—and it helps pay for part of their assistance towards planning. And some, quite frankly, don't see the need for it, because they're feeling—they feel they have no challenges right now. There's no issues for them related to livestock operations and so on. So they just feel like it's not a big deal for them to be providing one or to move on it quickly. But the ones that have not completed even a draft, for them some of it is financial, but we're trying to assist them by telling them there is some money to help you to do your planning and it's important that you get it done. Thank you.

*(16:00)

Mr. Briese: And it was legislated so it—there is a requirement for them to do it. And one of the problems we ran into when we were doing ours was disagreement between various departments of government, which caused us to have an extra hearing and go through the whole process a little further. We had three departments agreeing with the policy we came up with and one disagreeing. And I always felt that was somewhat unfair to the planning districts—and I'll ask a question on this—but somewhat unfair to the planning districts because of—it felt that the government departments should've had their differences ironed out before it went—the municipalities shouldn't have had to be—been having to sort out the government department's differences of opinion.

I hope that that's been remedied somewhat because we certainly let them know, but there was some real problems around it which entailed extra costs to the municipality, and I'd appreciate some comments on that.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I thank the member for the question. And it's an important one because there are many municipalities that want to do the right thing in the sense that they want to have the proper plans in place, and there's an expectation that the Province

work with them to make sure that happens. And, in some cases, the member is correct where some departments may disagree with another department.

I know I experienced this in Infrastructure and Transportation where you may have had some development wanting to take place by a couple of departments, but, then, the highways department, for example, were really concerned about development on a particular road. They felt that the access to the road was—may cause some accidents and there would be some real traffic problems. So there had—different department have different—they come at it from different perspectives, which I think everyone understands.

But what we tried to do when we introduced Bill 11 was really to try to make sure that, when we took a look at technical review committee regulations, that, essentially, it was to answer the question: What is government doing to improve the technical review committee process itself? When a technical review committee's supposed to be there to help municipal officials, what exactly is happening to help them?

So the government committed, in principle, to implementing the recommendations of the Clean Environment Commission. And that was in '07, I believe, late '07. It was the environmental sustainability and hog production in Manitoba. That was the comment or the report at the time, and the CEC recommended a new technical review process for the proposed large-scale livestock operation, and under The Planning Act.

So we introduced Bill 11 hoping—not hoping, but we were feeling quite confident that to ensure the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council has a clear authority to make regulations respecting the process and procedures to be followed by the technical review committee—I know the member opposite, as critic, was in committee when we talked about this and discussed this. At least I'm trying to recollect—I think it's a—I can't remember, but it's a while ago when we had discussions over this. And we'll be coming forward shortly with a technical review committee regulation to implement the CEC's recommendation, after consulting with the stakeholders.

So government has recognized that government departments come at it from a different perspective and they, rightfully so, they are taking a look at highways issues. They're taking a look at conservation issues. They might be taking a look at water issues and agricultural issues. So you have

different departments coming together. So we're hoping by changing and—what the technical review committee and the information it'll provide and make sure it's online so the municipalities really have some good information to make decisions on—we're hoping that this will make a positive change to the whole process. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: I want to assure the minister it wasn't his department I was pointing the finger at. He was one of the three that was being very co-operative.

The—I'd like an update on the activities with respect to the Capital Region. We don't seem to hear much anymore about the Capital Region initiatives, and I was just wondering if you can give me a—somewhat of an update on the Capital Region's issues.

Mr. Lemieux: I just wanted—I thank the member for the question. This is truly an important one, because the kind of growth we're going to be seeing in the next while in Manitoba, and I don't want to use the term "booming," because every time you say Manitoba is booming, often, people make negative comments about that.

But I'll just say that we're working our way out of the recession and Manitoba is really well-placed for growth. We have a huge influx of people from different countries in our immigration program, and Manitoba is really at the crossroads for huge growth. And we're trying to do everything we can to enable that.

But let me just address the Capital Region in my quick comments. The city of Winnipeg: Yes, two-thirds of the population live in Winnipeg. We understand it. It's going to grow even further, but all the communities that surround the city of Winnipeg—we call it the Capital Region—are also going to grow.

So there is a working group, an organization headed up by—currently by Gord Steeves, a City of Winnipeg councillor, who is the chair, I believe is his title, has been working with my department, but, certainly, working with me, taking a look at how we can improve the Capital Region, taking a look at their land-use policies, taking a look at the kind of growth they're expecting and taking a look at how the Capital Region can really grow in a very positive way, really in step with the city of Winnipeg, because we know that the growth is going to take place in the Capital Region as well as in the city over the next number of years. And we want to ensure that

happens in a very positive, productive way. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: I thank the minister.

There was—I know, at one time, there was one of the department's planners specifically placed to the Capital Region. Is that still the case?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, this is something that, again, that the department provides a great deal of support, and I appreciate the comment that the member made about how the Department of Local Government was not one of the departments he was pointing the finger at, because I know the department works closely with municipalities in trying to assist them in every way.

In fact, I often hear that the Department of Local Government is looked upon as an advocate for municipalities, and they count on the—and Local Government to speak on their behalf and, which, to a certain degree, there is some truth to that.

But the Capital Region funding support that's been provided over the last while, it's been done not only in staffing, but in financial—in a financial way. There was a staff person associated, because they were looking at a framework, basically a framework agreement or a framework that they were trying to put together on how they're going to make the Manitoba Capital Region partnership work. And so, over the last number of years, there's been operating costs which—just under \$100,000 has been provided to help in this partnership. But, also, when you take a look at this, at what was being done, a vision framework for the Capital Region, there was a report respecting the membership and the organization and governance structure overall and a three-year business plan for the partnership.

And I know I attended a meeting in Headingley, approximately about a year ago, which was attended by the mayor of Cochrane, Alberta, I believe where he's from, but he talked about the growth that was happening in Calgary, but, yet, there was no real consultation with the cities and mayors outside of their ring road or outside of the Capital Region.

*(16:10)

So we wanted to make sure, by listening to this gentleman, that we know we were not going to follow the same path; we're going to try to do things where we could consult the municipalities surrounding the capital and make sure that this partnership was a true partnership. Where the

Province played an important role in it, yes, but, also, the City of Winnipeg and with the cities and the communities around the Capital Region working together, making sure everyone was pulling in the same direction.

So, in 2009, there was a partnership submitted. It was a vision framework that was endorsed by 11 out of the 15-member municipalities. And this vision framework, which was amended and endorsed by other four municipalities—this is truly important because where we're heading with this governing structure that we want to have is really important to where we're going in the future. And I just want to say that the department's played an important role, the staff in the department have played an important role in this, not only financially but also giving assistance. And I know the deputy minister has attended many of the meetings, not where I was present but other meetings. And I'm not sure, Ramona, if you've attended any of those, but I know that staff have been trying to be there to hear what is going on at the municipal level with regard to this partnership. And I know there are many different issues that often come up, but we want to make sure we're at the table listening so if there's anything we can do to help we really want to be there to make this work.

Mr. Briese: So pardon me for not knowing this, but you just referred to the regional vision framework. Is there—and I know this whole discussion about Capital Region has went on for more years than most of us have been around here, but is there an actual document, a reasonable vision framework document that I'm not aware of? But I may be wrong.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I thank you for the question. And because we're talking about a partnership and because Manitoba, the Province of Manitoba, is ultimately responsible for development in the province in partnership with municipalities and others, this is something that this document or recommendation will eventually come to the minister's office to have Local Government look at what is the recommendation coming from the Capital Region as to where they want to go into the future.

And I know that not only City of Winnipeg, but other councils will pass resolutions, and so, on to this fact. But we're waiting—I'm awaiting into the future—I'm not sure when that will be—recommendations coming forward. So to answer the question directly, no, I've not seen a paper or a document out there yet. But I know that part of what the Capital Region

partnership is working on is trying to put this together, to get some consensus from everyone. I think that was the breakdown.

What I heard in Headingley, there was a bit of a breakdown between municipalities, and I know they have their own cases to be made as to where they want to go in development. They don't always agree with their next door neighbour, or possibly another municipality on the opposite side of the city, but this is to try to get some consensus, majority accepting the long-term plan and where they want to go. And certainly the Province of Manitoba is interested in that because we want to make sure that we're setting the—I guess setting the direction as to where we want municipalities as well as local governments to go going into the future, especially around the Capital Region. Manitoba is somewhat unique where you have two-thirds of the population living in one centre and then you have—I don't know—I guess arguably another one-third living just on the outskirts of the capital, and then the other third of the population living further out.

So it's a unique situation, but we want to make sure we get it right. And I know that the municipalities in the Capital Region want to make sure we get it right because it's really setting the framework for the future. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: I thank the minister for his answer. The—my concern is that I—there was a Capital Region review done, probably eight or nine years ago, at least, it was completed. I think maybe Paul Thomas was involved in that, if I remember right, and now we're into another document and we want to get it right. But we also want to see it done, and I wonder what the timelines might be, what the expectation timelines might be on this.

Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Lemieux: I don't think anyone would want to force or to put extra pressure on municipalities coming forward in any way, you know, to—because we're trying to get not only a consensus of the communities surrounding the city. I mean, we'd like—and not only a majority supporting it, but we want it—we'd like to see it unanimous. Now, we know that may be impossible, but, you know, if you have to wait an extra month or a number of months to get it right, I think that's the goal. You know, maybe it won't happen, but that's what we're trying to do is get everyone in the tent and everyone to see that there's some real positives for them. There's something in it

for each municipality surrounding the city, and we'd like to make sure that that happens.

But I understand my critic's point is that—it's well taken—that, surely, you can't just let it drag on for decades and decades because you've got more population, the—coming in or more people coming into Manitoba. The population's growing and you don't want this to overtake your—a good plan. So you want to make sure you have something in place that deals with that and deals with growth before it's upon you. So your point is well taken, and I know that the department is doing everything we can at our end to try and ensure and try to nudge people along to get moving on this particular framework or on this agreement of where we want to go.

Mr. Briese: Can you provide me with some update on the provincial land-use policies? Have any of the changes been finalized, and if so, what—which ones?

Mr. Lemieux: Just maybe—and just a couple of brief comments because we've talked about provincial land-use policies before, and I was making some comments. But they were meant—I hope they weren't taken that they were flippant comments, they weren't, when I talked about the seriousness about water and rivers and proper planning. And I know the member opposite understands this because he was part of an organization dealt with planning and wanted to make sure they got it right.

But why do we take a look at changing a regulation, and what was the importance of it? And last time we looked at provincial land-use policies, it was in 1994, mid-'90s. And a number of trends and issues at that time—climate change, protecting water and legislative changes—were being, you know, we needed to look at it. And so—and the direct relationship to land use and how you plan around it was important. So we felt a new, modernized provincial land-use policies regulation is needed to address a lot of those issues and trends that have changed since that time, approximately 15 years, 16 years. So we need to address it.

* (16:20)

Now, there was a—there was consultation that took place with regard to provincial land-use policies, and it was completed in 2009, and so to get this in place, again, speaking of getting it right, you want to make sure that you do get a regulation like this right and I know that it's being drafted, as I understand it, and we're certainly looking at that coming forward in a positive way. So we anticipate it

to be completed shortly. By that, we mean that the regulation will be adopted sometime late this spring, early summer, and the requirement of municipalities and planning districts to develop a plan reviews will be required in a set time frame. For example, existing development plan bylaws will continue to be in force after the new regulation's in effect. As existing plans are amended, they will be reviewed in the context of the new provincial land-use policies regulation.

A question that has often come up, and I believe—I think my colleague asked this question: Will the new regulation impose additional costs on planning authorities? I believe it was the MLA for Arthur-Virden or the MLA for St. Rose raised this in committee and asked about what kind of supports will be provided to municipalities from the government, and so the department does not anticipate any significant cost increases to planning authorities resulting in a new provincial land-use policies regulation. But, however, the department is currently reviewing existing funding criteria to our community planning assistance grant program to allow funding for studies in support of provincial land-use plans, compliant development plans—our compliant, sorry, development plans.

So provincial land-use policies, because when you take a look at when people look back to see, you know, when they were last revised, a lot of things have happened in the past 16 years that tells us that you have to take a serious look at this and do the proper due diligence when you're looking at planning and what is going to happen in municipalities and what's going to happen throughout the province of Manitoba. Everyone wants some clear guidelines so they know what the rules are and so there's no changing the goalposts in the middle of the game. So, with that, I thank my critic for the question.

Mr. Briese: I thank the minister for his answer.

Certainly, I'm—it is of some concern and some—to me at least—that on the provincial land-use policies—because they—obviously, just at the overall framework, but it does then proceed through The Planning Act and through the development plans of municipalities and may well not think there would be too much cost to the municipalities but it depends on how far-reaching the changes are to the land-use policies, because every time you open up your development plan and start through that process, you end up with public meetings and public advertising and all the other things that go with it. And, definitely, there's a cost and it's an imposed cost from

government onto municipalities rather than the cost of the planning district just doing business and advertising on land-use changes or zoning changes and things like that, which are required under the act. But whenever a municipality or a planning district has to go in and revise their development plan, that can be quite costly. So I would encourage the minister to keep the tabs on the cost to municipalities as the provincial land-use plan changes come into being.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, as again, you know, I don't want to qualify too much, but we're feeling that there won't be a dramatic increase in costs in any way, shape, or form, but we'll certainly keep—but we'll keep watching that to ensure that there's not an overdue burden put on municipalities—but just to maybe put a not too fine a point on it, municipalities also want good provincial land-use policies. I mean, in the time I've been minister, a lot of municipalities, whether it was at AMM, they want to know that the rules that apply to them apply to their neighbour, and they have some confidence that there's—that the good rules are—good rules are put in place or good laws that are put in place for them.

And they want to make sure that everybody's abiding by them, that it—that there's not a—you know, a wild-west approach taking place where people can do whatever they want, anywhere they want. And, yet, some people are trying to do the right thing for the environment and for other reasons. And, yet, you've got someone in another part of the province that may not be adhering to any kind of environmental concerns.

So they just want to know that the provincial land-use policies are going to be the same for everyone and that people adhere to them. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: I'm not sure whether these fall under land use planning or where they fall, but can the minister give me a little bit of an update on the Winnipeg Regeneration Strategy and the types of initiatives that are being undertaken under it?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, it's—what it is, it's really a—it's a five-year strategy to support the revitalization of Winnipeg's inner city. You know, the—really, the Winnipeg Regeneration Strategy represents a successor to the past tripartite agreement to end urban development agreements such as the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement. The tripartite umbrella agreement is no longer an option with the federal government's post-Winnipeg planning agreement

decision to end its participation in urban development agreements.

So how is the Winnipeg Regeneration Strategy different from the past? Unlike past tripartite initiatives, the WRS is a provincial initiative that reflects Manitoba's priorities for renewing the inner city. And so, if you take a drive down Portage Avenue and other streets in Winnipeg, one can easily point to the real successful—the Manitoba Hydro building, MTS Centre. Those are, you know, those are kind of iconic things to point to, but there's a lot of other things that can happen in Winnipeg, and there's a lot of different priorities that should take place.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

So some of the priorities in the Winnipeg Regeneration Strategy were really dealing with Aboriginal capacity building, downtown renewal, developing inner-city resiliency and to improve, really, the physical and social-economic environment conditions and outcomes to the city—inner-city resident.

So this regeneration strategy comes from the federal government now no longer having involvement as they used to in the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement. They're no longer there, so we as a Province felt we really had to take a strong initiative to ensure that the downtown was dealing with important priorities, not only the Aboriginal people of Winnipeg and Manitoba, but also downtown renewal and developing inner-city resiliency.

So we think this is great potential, and with this initiative, and we're waiting to continue building on what we've done thus far.

Mr. Briese: Could the minister expand on—does the Winnipeg Regeneration Strategy tie into the Urban Development Initiatives, or is that—are they separate programs? How—what initiatives would be taken under the other program then?

* (16:30)

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you for the question. Even though in *Hansard* it doesn't show that there's a gap in time, but there has been. So I appreciate the patience of my critic.

We just wanted to get it right, and because it's an important initiatives and we just want to make sure that funding sources and so on are attributed to the right place. But, again, it's—a number of great things

have been accomplished with this particular initiative, and we signed a five-year memorandum of collaboration with Canada and Winnipeg to improve the social and economic circumstances of Winnipeg's Aboriginal people in residence. So there's a number of different collaborative initiatives under way, but that's just one area that we're looking at.

And this 2011-2000 budget, we're looking at allocating just about almost \$3.5 million that primarily will be used to continue different transitional support for priority programs formerly under the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement, but they are consistent with the Winnipeg Partnership—or Winnipeg Regeneration Strategy priorities that have been passed on to us. So, in our particular budget, as I mentioned, there are—there is \$3 million, almost \$3.5 million, put in for under new initiatives. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: I thank the minister for the answer, and I presume tied in somewhat to the last two initiatives we talked about is the tax incremental financing. And I would just ask the minister how many projects have been undertaken under TIF, under the TIF component.

Mr. Lemieux: Just the term, tax increment financing, and connected with Downtown Residential Development Grant and the programs in Winnipeg, is confusing to some people. Tax increment financing for a lot of people—well, means different things to different people.

But when we pass the act, it really gives the Province the authority to use tax increment financing to support significant projects that are in the public interest which would not ordinarily occur and so, without public investment involved. So this, in co-ordination with the Downtown Residential Development Grant, we're looking over the next three years anyway, offers different initiatives for developers to build mixed-income and mixed-use residences in the downtown.

So, in part and parcel of this, we're talking about downtown renewal and Downtown Residential Development Grant Program is the key component to Winnipeg's Regeneration Strategy and—downtown renewal strategy—sorry.

So tax increment financing, as we see it, is another tool in the toolbox for municipalities or for the Province of Manitoba to see more and more activity and revitalization taking place not only in our inner city, but certainly in different locations.

One would—may ask what has been accomplished to date other than the passing. But I believe it's already proven its effectiveness, as I mentioned, as a tool for revitalization by 'incenting' new, affordable residential development in downtown Winnipeg. The legislation provided the basis for Downtown Residential Development Grant Program, and the joint program has been expanded by \$20 million to provide up to \$40 million in grants to downtown housing developers funded by tax increment financing.

And I believe it was Justin Swandel and others have commented in the *Free Press*, the *Winnipeg Sun*, how important this is to the downtown and how to have—important it is to have residential initiatives taking place downtown. And the tax increment financing part, as well as the Downtown Residential Development Grant, is really important. And I know that we're in the process of designating an additional 10 properties or 10 projects and the developments of the 16 projects are going to result in 741 new rental and condo units in downtown Winnipeg. And we're estimating to increase the value of the properties in the downtown by approximately around \$110 million, \$111 million.

So there's about roughly 16 projects, about 135 residential units, over 600 condominiums. So that's where I get the total number of 741 from. And there's affordable units, affordable housing units, about roughly 470; units targeted to low-income persons—73 units; targeted to people with disabilities—57, and this is truly—really truly important for downtown Winnipeg, but important for the city overall. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: I'm not quite clear, Mr. Minister, on the—like I asked—my question was, how many actual projects have been rolled out under the TIF component? Now, is this all one project that you're talking about on the housing, and one agreement with the Province on the TIF financing, or is every one of these an individual agreement? I'm not quite clear on that.

And my question was also, what other developments have taken place where a TIF agreement has been set up with the Province?

* (16:40)

Mr. Lemieux: I mentioned before that there's seven properties or six projects that have been designated to date under the program, and some of them, including 155 Higgins Avenue, Neeginan housing,

that's phase 2; there's 92 Princess Street—it was a former Penthouse Furniture building; 110 James Avenue, that's a street-side phase 1; 128 James Avenue, the James Avenue Holdings; 662 Main Street, the former Bell Hotel; 261 Portage Avenue, the Avenue Building; and 271 Portage Avenue, the Hample Building.

So we're in the process of designating an additional 10 projects or properties, mainly because the uptake was so good. That's what I was referring to when Justin Swandel mentioned how this is unbelievable the amount of uptake this is take—this is providing because, without public-private collaboration, many of these projects may not take place, but because there's provincial money and provincial incentive in this, that it wouldn't happen. So to hear Justin Swandel and many others—I stand to be corrected, but I think it was Justin Swandel that was commenting in the paper: We need to move on this and we need to move fast. You know, get it done while there's a lot of people looking to invest.

And the downtown is really taking a new look and is really being reshaped by part of the TIF money.

Mr. Briese: I'm pleased to see the minister made that slight correction from provincial funding to a provincial incentive. It's rather important, I think, when we're talking about tax incremental financing.

If I may, I'm going to move to a series of questions on the Building Manitoba Fund, and I don't know whether that requires some changes in staffing or not. All right, I'll go right into it and I'm very aware of the announcement that the minister—that was made in the budget of the equivalent to 1 per cent of sales tax, not the asked-for 1 per cent of sales tax that the municipalities wanted but the equivalent of 1 per cent, and I'm somewhat curious about the overall makeup of the Building Manitoba Fund, what is actually in it that might not have been there before or what is—well, for instance, I should—for a long time in this province had provincial-municipal tax sharing, which was a growth tax to the municipalities. Now, with this announcement of 1 per cent, equivalent of 1 per cent of the sales tax, I'm wondering if that provincial-municipal tax sharing will still go in to the Building Manitoba Fund the same as it did before. Will it still be a growth tax? Will it still be 2 per cent of personal income tax and 1 per cent of corporate tax?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, we are changing the formula, as I mentioned before on other occasions, to be the equivalent of 1 point of 1 per cent of the provincial sales tax, so whatever was in place, we are changing that. Now let me just state that increasing municipal infrastructure and transit grants to the equivalent of 1 percentage point of existing provincial sales tax and dedicating future revenue growth to municipalities for infrastructure funding is really important.

We've talked to municipalities about this before. We talked to Doug Dobrowolski and AMM, and as I mentioned to Doug, the president, that we are not overstating this. We're not saying that this is the be-all end-all. I don't believe anyone has ever said that, but the fact that we're going to be putting it into legislation and making sure that 1 point of the percentage, the provincial sales tax, 7 per cent, is really important. The importance of it, as I mentioned in my introductory remarks, is that they wanted some predictability with regard to funding. They wanted some growth with regard to their funding, and they wanted to make sure that there was some transparency as well to the ratepayers and to Manitobans to ensure that the monies were going to transit and to infrastructure.

Now, if the member opposite has ever heard the quote, or the phrase, our cities, towns, communities should share in growing Manitoba economy, this is truly important. We should build upon where—on each other's successes. And what we need to do is to move and provide a steady stream of revenue and empower municipalities to do better and dealing with their challenges in roads and recreation and infrastructure.

If the member's heard that before, he should be quite familiar with it because that came from the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition, those were his exact words when he said in 2007 that he was going to introduce a half a point of one percentage point of PST. Now that was approximately \$93 million. So right now, I can tell you that that's far below what we're talking about. And not only did he say that we'll give you half a point, but he said that the flow of the PST will be offset by the equivalent reduction in existing grants so that there will be no net loss of revenue to any jurisdiction. So what he wanted to do was give a half a point in 2007 but then he was going to reduce that. He was going to take that back from other grants.

Now, you know, we heard—now, I mean, the initiative sounded great at the time but when we started talking to municipalities, they kept pushing for the 1 per cent, or one point of 1 per cent of PST. So what we did is, in consultation with them, we said, what we're going to do is we're going to ensure that you have that equivalency or that amount of money, that 1 per cent, so and then it's going to grow by 5 per cent or 4 per cent, depending on how the economy grows, and that's exactly the commitment that they made.

So, with respect to Jim Carr and others who saying, we want to raise the—and Manitoba should raise the PST from 7 to 8 per cent, we're saying, no, we're not going that way. We're not going to raise the provincial sales tax by 1 per cent, and I don't believe that the member opposite wants to raise the provincial sales—maybe he does. Maybe that's—I shouldn't answer the question for him. But maybe I'll throw that question back at him that do you what to raise the provincial sales tax by 1 per cent of one point to address funding to municipalities? I don't believe Manitobans want it, and I don't know whether or not the opposition wants to do that but we certainly don't. But we're certainly willing to make sure that they have 1 per cent where there's a growth tax for them and that we know that there'll be some consistency in the kind of funding they receive.

So, without politicizing this too much that we believe that this will be truly successful in years to come. You know, there's a lot of funding provided to municipalities which we have not cut back on. We didn't cut back the half per cent and we're not cutting back the 1 per cent. We're saying that the one point of 1 per cent is there and we're quite sure that as the economy improves, so will the funding improve and it'll provide a great deal of stability for them and predictability for municipalities.

Mr. Briese: And if the minister's going to throw out quotes, I'll throw one back at him and that is, the truth is that the province is replacing one tax sharing formula with another which it claims is more lucrative over time. Now, I—my next question, I guess, goes to—and I know it was in there in the Building Manitoba. The former funding—the funding that used to come from PFRA to rural water lines was rolled into Building Manitoba and I'd just ask the minister if this is a—being as how it's in Building Manitoba, is it part of the equivalent to 1 per cent that the government is talking about?

* (16:50)

Mr. Lemieux: The short answer is really that municipalities and others would apply the same ways they did before. And because it's tied to the new formula one would argue that it is going to grow, and there will be more money there to grow. And where we're certainly not only hoping that, but we see some growth there for the Manitoba Water Services Board application process, if that's the proper way to put it, but—because it's a grant application. So we're hoping that that will grow.

It's not like where the federal government introduced the Building Canada Fund, and then they got rid of, essentially, the monies through PFRA for water services and water lines. And I know the member opposite and my critic of the day, from Arthur-Virden, I remember we had a good discussion about this because PFRA water lines and water assistance was taken away from farmers. And I know my colleague from Dauphin, MLA for Dauphin, Roblin-Dauphin, Dauphin-Roblin, soon to be the MLA for Dauphin-Roblin-Ste. Rose, he's very familiar with this. I'm sure he's hearing it from the agriculture community about PFRA and how they were—that really set them back. But we're not going to do that, and we see this as a real growth fund.

Mr. Briese: Well, it's—there's certainly been a lot of smoke and mirrors on that one, because the federal government says very clearly that rural water funding money was rolled into growing Manitoba. And now I see the government of Manitoba taking credit for that in their equivalent 1 per cent of the sales tax. And there's so much misdirection on this that I—and I talk to the municipalities on a regular basis too. And if you think they're thrilled about the equivalent of 1 per cent of the sales tax, I don't know who you've been talking to. But it certainly doesn't appear to be that way.

And I've also heard the mayor of Winnipeg's comments on the 1 per cent equivalency. It certainly comes nowhere near to what they were asking for. And I saw them the morning of the budget day, and the rumours were floating out, and they thought something really good was coming down. And I saw them afterwards, and there's a lot of dejection there.

In the provincial budget the government also promised to introduce a new four-year capital infrastructure program for recreational opportunities. Could you explain how that's going to work?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes. Well, first of all, to the member opposite—you know, no one, certainly I have never made the comment—I don't believe I have—that this is the be-all, end-all, the one percentage point of PST and making sure that municipalities would have that would put into law. We know that this is a step in the right direction, and but—we don't want to raise the PST to get there. We don't want to go from 7 per cent to 8 per cent and dedicate one. And it's something that the member opposite didn't answer the question whether or not they would raise the provincial sales tax from 7 to 8 per cent. I'd like to hear him on the record say that they would not.

And you know, as I mentioned, the last election, provincial election, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) stated that basically he'd be doing the same thing as what we did with our funding announcement, the 1 per cent, but only sharing half a percentage point of PST and offsetting this by the equivalent reduction existing municipal grants. So that was the commitment, and that, you know, so ours may not be perfect, but I can tell you it's far greater, it's far better than what was being proposed. There's no clawbacks, what the Leader of the Opposition was proposing. In fact the opposition committed \$95 million in unconditional funding. Our general assistance grant this year is more than the opposition promised. Just the general assistance grant is more than what they were committing to in 2007. So we've committed to provide a full 1 per cent of PST, not a half per cent and we're not going to raise the provincial sales tax.

So I know that member opposite—I know how he'll answer the question whether or not he wants to raise the provincial tax by 1 per cent, but aside from that, recreation in this province is truly important. We know the facilities that were built in the province of Manitoba. Many were built in 1967 at Canada's Centennial. Many were built in 1970, Manitoba's Centennial, and yet a lot of facilities are slightly run down and they need some work, so this particular recreational grant and this announcement that was welcomed by many, many communities.

Mr. Briese: That completes my questions.

Madam Chairperson: Are you ready—is the House ready for resolutions—committee ready for resolutions? *[Agreed]*

Resolution 13.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$33,199,000 for Local Government, Community

Planning and Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,558,000 for Local Government, Provincial-Municipal Support Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$259,880,000 for Local Government, Financial Assistance to Municipalities, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$53,000 for Local Government, Costs related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the department is item 1.(a) the Minister's Salary contained in resolution 13.1. At this point we request that the minister's staff leave the Chamber for consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions. Are there no questions?

Resolution 13.1: BE IT RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,862,000 for Local Government, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 9, 2011

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		Red River Floodway	
		Schuler; Ashton	1676
		Portage Diversion	
		Maguire; Ashton	1676
		Lake Manitoba	
		Schuler; Ashton	1677

Members' Statements

eChart Manitoba

Saran

1677

Herm Martens

Taillieu

1677

Glenwood School 100th Anniversary

Allan

1678

Community Engagement Party and

Volunteer Awards

Eichler

1678

Collège Béliveau Fashion Fundraiser

Jha

1679

ORDERS OF THE DAY**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS****Committee of Supply**

(Concurrent Sections)

Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors

1680

Health

1694

Housing and Community Development

1701

Local Government

1716

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>