

**Fifth Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**  
**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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.
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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.
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DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
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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.
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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.
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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

Wednesday, May 11, 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 36—The Adult Abuse Registry Act and Amendments to The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act**

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 36, The Adult Abuse Registry Act and Amendments to The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, this legislation would establish Canada's first adult abuse registry, phase 1. It would also increase penalties for abuse and neglect of Manitobans with intellectual disabilities and establishes several new offences to better protect Manitobans with intellectual disabilities.

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

### PETITIONS

#### **PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals**

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting the—that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by R. Hanke, L. Graham, L. Graham 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 background 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 of Manitoba 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 A. Kaluzere, J. Kupczak, M. Dupont 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 C. Jarstone, K. Angers, R. Choquette and many, many more fine Manitobans.

#### **PR 160 West and Highway 16**

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for the petition:

The Department of Infrastructure and Transportation has developed a plan to close the intersection of PR 160 west of Highway 16 at Foxwarren. PR 160 would be redirected to the east to join Highway 16 at Market Street in Foxwarren.

Area residents have a number of concerns about the proposed project, including safety issues due to traffic volumes, encroachment on residential property, the loss of like-highly productive arable land and possible adverse impacts on the area waterways and insufficient public consultation.

Community members have developed an alternate proposal they believe would address the concerns while at the same time meeting the department's safety objectives.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider the merits of the alternate plan developed by the community members, which includes a raised grade at PR 160 and the removal of gravel mound at the intersection of Highway 16 and 160 and the construction of an acceleration lane on the north side of Highway 16.

And to request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider additional public consultations before proceeding with the project to ensure all 'locens'— all local concerns are heard and addressed before the work proceeds.

And this petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by B. Johnson, B. Wenitoway and J. Grabauskas and many, many other Manitobans.

#### **TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education):** I am pleased to table the 2010 Annual Report of the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund.

\* (13:40)

#### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

##### **Flooding and Ice Jams Update**

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** The monumental efforts of the Canadian Forces and provincial crews over the last two days have been successful in enhancing the capacity of the Portage Diversion and the Assiniboine River dikes. Yesterday officials indicated that a controlled release would be required as early as noon today, but due to the enhanced capacity that has been achieved, a release has been delayed and will likely now take place at 8 a.m. tomorrow.

We're making every effort we can to safely delay the controlled release to allow for as much preparation time as possible for those in the release area. We have already evacuated people and put flood-protection systems in place in the immediate vicinity of the location of the controlled release. We are working with the Canadian Forces to deploy flood-protection systems to homes in the impacted area.

We're asking everyone in the area of the Assiniboine River and the La Salle system who are on evacuation notice to remain on alert as the situation continues to evolve pretty rapidly.

I can also indicate to the House that the forecasters have now assessed the impact of the rain that has fallen over the last several days, and it will be revising the forecasted levels on the Assiniboine River upward as a result. The flows downstream of Brandon will now be in the upper range of what was forecast earlier this week, which means that a controlled release will be very likely to avoid a catastrophic uncontrolled breach. Additional details and a revised forecast for Brandon and elsewhere in the Assiniboine will be released later this afternoon.

Lastly, I'd like to note that in addition to the very serious situation on the Assiniboine River, flooding concerns continue elsewhere across the province, particularly on major lakes, including Lake Dauphin and Lake Manitoba where efforts to protect properties are under way. The recent precipitation received will also mean new crests on many rivers in the western part of the province.

As always, the Province continues to draw on every resource at its disposal to work with municipalities and face the challenges presented by this unprecedented natural disaster, and we will continue to share the latest information with the public as it becomes available.

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the latest flood update.

My colleagues and I would also like to thank the Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, for visiting the province today to assess the flood situation, as well as Defence Minister Peter MacKay for his visit yesterday. The commitment by the federal government of military personnel and other resources for the flood fight has been greatly appreciated.

The provincial government has announced today that a controlled release on the Assiniboine River dike near Portage la Prairie will occur tomorrow morning, if not sooner. This is an extremely significant development.

The importance of effective communication strategies cannot be understated as this situation unfolds. Those who will be affected by this release of water are understandably anxious about what lays ahead. Much work has been undertaken to prepare for this scenario and ensure people are protected.

There are many questions about the release of the water such as how long people would be away from their homes, as well as economic impact on key local sectors such as agriculture. Those affected will be looking to government for timely updates as the situation evolves.

The flood fight continues in many other regions of Manitoba as well, such as the Lake Dauphin basin and Lake Manitoba.

We cannot say strongly enough or often enough how much we appreciate the efforts of officials at all levels of government and the hundreds of hundreds of volunteers who are working diligently to minimize the flood impact on their friends and neighbours. 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 member have leave? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Gerrard:** I would like to thank the minister for the update and also to thank all those who are putting in such long hours, whether volunteers or the Armed Forces or provincial, municipal and other officials.

Certainly the situation along the Assiniboine River has changed dramatically over the last few days and the planning in terms of a cut, a controlled release, now, I gather, for potentially 8 a.m. tomorrow.

I hope in the announcement this afternoon the minister makes it very clear whether there's any chance that it might occur during the night, because if there were any chance, then it would be very important that people know that. And if the soonest it can be is 8 a.m. tomorrow—as the minister appears to be nodding—then that's important that people know, and it's always better if you can have it released during the day or such an activity like that so that people can, you know, see what's happening a little better.

I appreciate the update on Lake Manitoba and Lake Dauphin. I hope the minister, when he gives his statement tomorrow, or this afternoon when he releases the information, provides an update on Lake St. Martin where people are also facing a very critical flooding situation, apparently the worst that they have ever had, with some significant rise to come.

I thank the minister for that and the government for their efforts.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from West Kildonan Collegiate, we have Chris Dubiel and Devin Edwards, who are the guests of the honourable Minister for Education.

And also in the public gallery we have from Warren Collegiate, we have 45 grade 11 students under the direction of Mrs. Lee Stewart. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for the Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

And also in the public gallery we have from Pine Creek Christian Day School, we have 20 grade 7 to 10 students under the direction of Mr. Robert Plett. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Assiniboine River Controlled Dike Breaches Decisions

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** To the acting Premier, firstly, we just want to thank and acknowledge everybody involved in dealing with the unanticipated flood situation to the west of Winnipeg and all the way to Brandon and beyond, also acknowledge and thank the Prime Minister for attending to the matter today and for the rapid deployment of our Canadian Armed Forces who are doing very good work throughout the province today, also to Minister MacKay for his visit yesterday, and all of those municipal, provincial and federal officials, as well as volunteers, who are doing so much in connection with the challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just ask the acting Premier, in connection with the planned breach in the dike that is now being looked at for tomorrow morning at 8, if he can just indicate when the Premier (Mr. Selinger) would make the final decision on that matter and what criteria is used in making the decision and also how that matter is going to be communicated, particularly to those who will be directly affected.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** I want to indicate, first of all, that we are delaying the—this controlled release as

long as possible. We have had some success with the enhancements, some significant success enhancing the Portage Diversion, and we're continuing to work on other ways to even go beyond the success we've achieved.

We are continuing with the assistance of the Armed Forces to upgrade the capacity of the Assiniboine dikes, and that, in conjunction with the incoming crest, is what leads us to the point where—and I want to thank the Liberal leader for I think raising an important question—we will not be activating it overnight. The earliest it will be opened will be 8 o'clock tomorrow.

#### Flow Levels and Capacity

**Mr. McFadyen:** In terms of the decision making in connection with the controlled breach, the minister has indicated in his statement that there will be an upward revision to the projected flows in the Assiniboine River.

Can he just indicate what expected capacity they'll have in the Portage Diversion, what is the expected level of flow in the Assiniboine River, and therefore what expected flow there will be in the Assiniboine River downstream of the Portage Diversion once that situation arises over the coming hours?

\* (13:50)

**Mr. Ashton:** Our goal over the last few days has been to raise the capacity of the Portage Diversion to at least 32,000 cfs and, if possible, to 50—or, pardon me, to 34,000 cfs.

The goal in the Assiniboine dikes, and this is—this involves the protection work, the \$25 million of investment that took place over the last several months, and the—just the huge effort of our Armed Forces is to raise the capacity up to 20,000 cfs. We are currently in the situation where we have 19,000 cfs capacity in the Assiniboine dikes. The range of the forecast, as I mentioned in my statement, has certainly moved to the upper end of the range that we referenced a few days ago which was, at that time, 53 to 56.

What the numbers mean is that a risk of a catastrophic release is there if we don't act, so we are going to be finalizing the decision probably later this afternoon.

### **Flooding Information for Residents**

**Mr. McFadyen:** Recognizing that the circumstances were not anticipated and that the situation is changing quickly as things evolve, there is a significant amount of concern that's being raised by Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, just about the availability of information, and it's particularly those who may be directly impacted by any breach of the dikes, either deliberate or unplanned.

Can the minister just indicate what steps are being taken to improve the communication with those who are—who may be directly impacted, as it is those people who are raising concerns about a lack of communication presently?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, our concern in this rapidly evolving situation is to deal with a number of situations. One is the immediate need to evacuate. In fact, 14 homes in and around the exact location of the controlled release have already been evacuated. We have deployed I believe upwards of a hundred troops to protect homes in and around the Portage Diversion. This, again, has been in the area of a precautionary evacuation, which is very significant.

We're also moving into the affected areas, and we're going to be moving into the most immediately affected areas. We have at least a hundred troops, I believe—actually, pardon me, 200 troops, if you combine the work we're doing with the Portage Diversion and in the area of the proposed release.

In terms of notifications, the RM has gone door to door. We have, in addition to that, asked our EMO staff to work with the RM officials and the RCMP to make sure doubly and triply that people are aware of all of the situation that's developing.

And we're sharing the information as soon as we get it. It's really important to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. McFadyen:** And on a new question: One of the issues raised by people at the municipal level this morning is the possibility that water may move more rapidly through the affected area than is currently being communicated in light of drainage improvements and enhancements throughout that area that will provide just a little bit less lead time than may currently be forecast.

Can the acting Premier just indicate what steps are being taken just to ensure rapid notification of all of those in the potentially affected area and just indicate what steps are being taken to assist with the protection of property to the extent that that is possible in the circumstances?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, I thank the member for the question because we have assessed, in a very short period of time, not only the challenge and come to the decision that that had to be the preferred option: a controlled release rather than an uncontrolled situation.

That's important, by the way, not only for the broader area, but it's important to note that the area of the controlled release would be significantly at risk also in an uncontrolled release scenario, with much higher flows of water, and, in fact, if you look at the historic flood of 1955, which did impact in the La Salle River, there's some historical precedent for that.

It's also important to note, by the way, that one of the reasons why this location was chosen on the best technical advice available is it's important to have that release as far upstream as possible because, quite frankly, if there's any significant flows above the capacity of the Assiniboine, what that does is it puts at risk that area first and then all the way down the river.

So this was done with the best technical advice. We are working on all the hydraulic impacts. This will not be something that will impact in the entire area immediately. It will have a day-by-day effect. There are roads. There are various elevations that we have been calculating into that, and we are working around the clock, working with municipalities to deal with—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

### **Controlled Dike Breaches Decision**

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, recognizing that the government is faced with a series of options that are degrees of negative in terms of the impact, whether it's an impact—a negative impact arising from a deliberate breach or, obviously, a very significant negative impact arising from a breach that is not planned, can the minister just indicate, given the evolving situation, when he expects a final decision to be made with respect to whether or not that planned breach is going to take place tomorrow, if he can indicate when he expects that decision to be

made and when that—when and how that decision will be communicated.

The indication presently is that it's likely to happen at 8 a.m. tomorrow. At what point does he expect there will be certainty around that question?

**Mr. Ashton:** As I indicated, it was important to ensure that this decision was made in a way that bought as much time as possible.

One of the areas I want to stress, for example, is we are seeing on the Assiniboine River some significant improvement. We have the capacity up to the 19,000 cfs, and with that continued work of the Armed Forces and our technical staff, there's ability to bring that up. We then have the sequencing of that, along with the work that's happened on the Portage Diversion.

Very much this is a question of timing, but you can see already just even in the time that we've had—and by tomorrow we're anticipating that we will put flood-protection systems into the area in and around the Portage Diversion.

We have already protected the 14 homes in the immediate vicinity of the release. We already have significant resources that we're pulling in from around the province, and we've gone to the suppliers for every last remaining flood deployment system—flood protection system.

So we are working around the clock. We will make that decision really at the point at which we do not have the capacity in either the Portage Diversion or the Assiniboine combined to handle the ongoing flows.

Currently, the best information I have is that it could be as early as 8 o'clock tomorrow. It will not be earlier. It will not occur in the middle of the night and we will make sure that that decision is made and fully communicated through the emergency systems in the municipality to each and everyone of the impacted residents as soon as that information is available.

**Mr. McFadyen:** And, Mr. Speaker, in the event, which nobody would want to see arise, but in the event that they are looking at the possibility of weakening in dikes in various places and risks arising of unplanned breaches which could occur even if the deliberate breach takes place, can the minister just indicate, in terms of monitoring, how that's taking place and what assurance can he provide

about as rapid communication as possible in the circumstances in the event that something like that should arise?

And, again, it's as a result of concerns we're hearing from Manitobans over communications and a lack of communications to date with respect to this challenge.

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, I do want to stress that the RM has gone door to door. They know their residents. They have certainly informed many of the affected residents. In fact, they have made every effort. We're not assuming that that's to be the only form of communication. We have been also—as of today, I asked our staff to work with the RCMP and also with municipal staff to make sure people are aware of the latest.

We are running into situations where people outside of the affected area are saying they have not been contacted, and that's understandable. If they're not in the affected area, aren't impacted by the recent circumstances, they would not have been contacted. They would be receiving the same information that all Manitobans receive.

I do want to stress, too, in terms of the dikes, we have been not only investing in those dikes since the first crest, the ice-induced crest; we have been working to maintain those dikes around the clock. We now have upwards of 700 Armed Forces personnel with their experience and their equipment on-site at the Assiniboine dike.

I have every confidence they'll do whatever is possible to make sure that we get the maximum capacity of those dikes and respond to any challenge that occurs over the very challenging next few days. We've got the Armed Forces, our best personnel in the province, and we are—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

\* (14:00)

#### **Assiniboine River Flooding Information for Residents**

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** The controlled breach of the Assiniboine River dikes that are scheduled for as early as tomorrow morning are certainly going to have a devastating affect on people and property and livelihoods, and I had the opportunity yesterday to tour the area and certainly know the scope of the work that's going on there and the number of people that are involved in that.



But I had the opportunity to speak to people in the area and know that they do have some concerns in regard to communication and information that's coming their way, Mr. Speaker, and I would just like to ask the minister if he can indicate if all of the 150 homes that are potentially going to be inundated, if they have been informed of this, and does he have confirmation that they actually have got that information?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Well, Mr. Speaker, the RM did enact, through its emergency plan, the—their contact procedures, and they have been going door to door. They feel that they know their community and I certainly respect that.

But having said that, I did ask officials today to make sure they work with the RM and with the RCMP over the next period of time to ensure that has taken place. So we're making sure that there's another round.

I want to stress as well, by the way, that in addition to that, people should actually not only be concerned, but should appreciate that there will be Armed Forces personnel in and around the area. That, by the way, is because they have job No. 1 to protect those homes.

And I don't want to assume anything, Mr. Speaker. We're not giving up on anybody in this particular circumstance. We're taking every precaution, in terms of evacuation, but we're also going in there to make best efforts to save those homes.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** And with all due respect to the people involved, Mr. Speaker, in speaking to the municipal officials this morning in Cartier and Macdonald, they're telling me that they just don't have adequate information and virtually no communication about what is going to happen once this controlled release happens, and because they—because of this they are unable to respond to the multitude of phone calls from people in the area wondering what is going to happen. Are they in the flooded area? Will they have to sandbag? What levels will the water come to? And there's very many number of concerned families.

So I'd just like to ask the minister to indicate what information he has disseminated to municipal officials and how that was communicated, Mr. Speaker. They just want to know where they can go for answers.

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, I do want to stress, Mr. Speaker, that one of the elements of this, I know, is that often people have been asking the question, when will this happen, and the reason that information isn't there is because we have not made that final decision.

In fact, we have specifically said it's not only a last resort, but if we can delay it, that will bring extra time to protect those homes, extra time to make sure we deal with all of the elements of this particular emergency.

I want to stress as well, too, by the way, that this is a rapidly evolving situation. The first challenge over the last number of days was to make sure we came up with some other option than an uncontrolled breakout. And an uncontrolled breakout, Mr. Speaker, I want to stress, could impact on the same people who are currently dealing with an evacuation, but with flows of upwards of 15,000 cfs, not in the range of 2,000 to 6,000, which has been the planning for this initial stage. And, by the way, with the release tomorrow, we're not anticipating going to the full release level.

So we have been concerned not only about the broader situation but the people in that area as well, and that has been job No. 1 and, as information is available, we communicate it immediately, Mr. Speaker, but it is a rapidly evolving situation.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** And I think some of the information we're hearing today is really not getting out to the municipal officials because, as I said, speaking with them this morning, they're certainly not aware of some of the things that are about to happen, Mr. Speaker.

And in the RMs of Macdonald and Cartier, as I said, they're experiencing a number of phone calls from very concerned people just wondering exactly what is to happen, and one of the concerns expressed is that because of increased drainage systems in the area, the water can come a little quicker than what is projected, Mr. Speaker, and they just don't feel that they have had that information conveyed to them.

So I would just like to ask the minister to please commit to communicating more effectively with the municipal officials so that they can convey to the people in their area exactly what they need to do and when they need to do it.

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to stress one thing. Even perhaps from this morning—and I appreciate the contact that the member's had with the municipalities in her constituency. I will actually

also be talking with some officials later on this afternoon. Things have moved even from this morning. I want to just stress that as of yesterday, we could have been looking at the operation of this controlled release as early as today, and I stress again, by buying time, we also can improve our response time to get in and protect those homes.

I do want to stress, by the way, too, that we put in additional resources on the communication side. We have provincial staff that we've sent out to make sure that we can help deal with a lot of those concerns. EMO is there. We have an emergency operation centre. We're trying to do our best to get that information out.

But I want to acknowledge one thing, Mr. Speaker. I don't underestimate the stress that people are under in that area and in other affected areas around the province. We're fully aware of that and we will try our darndest to get that information to people as soon as possible. We understand the very difficult situation they're in and we will respond accordingly.

#### **Assiniboine River Flooding Information for Residents**

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** I'd like to express appreciation for having the opportunity to travel with the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) yesterday around to a lot of the affected areas, and my constituents greatly appreciated that opportunity.

I do understand from the minister's remarks that they're looking at activating the controlled release at 8 a.m. tomorrow morning. I would like, though, to ask the minister, seeing that this is significantly impacting the residents in the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie, we have heard concerns from the municipality about the level of communication that has been received from the provincial government on very serious issues. Reeve Kam Blight told CJOB this morning that he is being forced to make decisions based on very limited information.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister responsible explain what is being done to address these concerns regarding communication and what the government is prepared to do to ensure that the municipality has the information that it needs?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** I do want to acknowledge the fact that it's been a very significant and trying time for the RM of Portage because the RM of

Portage is also dealing, obviously, not just with the homes in the area of the controlled release, it's also dealing with the homes in and around the Portage Diversion where there was a precautionary evacuation.

And I don't underestimate the challenge that that municipality is facing right now, along with other municipalities, and I don't want to lessen any of those challenges either, but to be dealing with this is obviously a very trying time and challenging time for that municipality.

I can indicate that we have not only our normal EMO response teams out, we're also putting provincial staff in place because we think it's important to do that. We're enacting some of the systems we might normally use for medical emergencies in terms of phone contact as well.

We're trying to get the information out, but I want to stress one other thing. I think one of the areas of frustration is coming from the fact that this is rapidly evolving, and, quite frankly, we are dealing with circumstances in a historic flood in a rapidly evolving situation. And in many cases, if there isn't the information out there, it's because the information is not readily available to us at that point as well. But in terms of evacuations, that information is available. In terms of flood protection, we're moving on it.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're moving as fast as we can, and if there's any specific areas in communication that members can identify, I'll make sure that we follow up with whatever information we have to make sure we deal with that.

**Mr. Faurshou:** And the minister said it precisely: Because it is an evolving situation moment by moment, the—it is most critical to have a method of communication to get that information across as quickly as possible.

And this is a very serious situation that's not going to be affecting persons for a short period of time; it will be days and weeks they will be affected. We are—have a significant number of residents, farm operations and businesses adversely affected and they're at a heightened level of anxiety because of this situation.

Mr. Speaker, can I ask the minister responsible to explain how the information is being conveyed to those affected residents so they know what resources are available to them and so they can prepare accordingly with this most critical information?

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Ashton:** I want to stress that nobody that's involved with the flood response—and, quite frankly, by extension, we're probably all involved—is underestimating the amount of stress that people are going through right now.

In the affected area we're talking about right now in the member's constituency, in the area of the potential impact from the controlled release, in Brandon where thanks to some really heroic efforts by the people of Brandon working with, you know, provincial and municipal crews, now with the support of the Armed Forces, with a one-in-300-year flood—yes, it's stressful. We've had many evacuations, but we're dealing with it and those dikes are holding.

So I want to stress one thing, that we understand—I think every one of us involved with the direct flood response—what people are going through, and we will undertake to make sure that we get whatever information we have available to the affected people in that area and across the province.

It's a real challenge, but it's a really important point that the member is raising. It's a real priority for us as well.

**Mr. Faurchou:** I sincerely appreciate, on behalf of the Portage la Prairie residents, and express to the minister the diligence that he is putting forward in this effort.

However, at the present time, there is no clear conduit of communication from the affected residents and those municipal officials. I continue to receive phone calls regularly, as do my other colleagues in the affected area, because there is no advertised number to call or a communication conduit that they can rely on.

And this is what I'm asking the minister to assure the House now, that he will make absolutely certain that this conduit of communication is well known to everyone in the affected flood area.

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there are various levels of communication ranging from the website and flood liaison offices, but, most importantly, I want to stress the role of the municipalities.

Our structure in Manitoba, I think, is one of the most developed systems in terms of emergency response, because it recognizes the fact that it's the municipalities that know their area the best. When it comes to EMO, for example, we co-ordinate, we

work with, but we work primarily in partnership with the municipalities.

We have provided additional backup. I want to stress that in addition to all the resources we've put in place, we have operators and communications specialists that we've dispatched to the various areas involved. If we need to put more resources and if we have them available, we will do that.

I understand the members' point, and I can stress again, in many cases if there's a gap in communications, it really, I believe, is often related to the rapidly evolving circumstance, but, you know, if there are specifics on specific issues that aren't being communicated, I will be more than happy to meet with the member or any member of the Legislature.

I know we've had some briefings already, but I'd really appreciate it. I want to make sure we follow up on it, and any specifics that the member could pass on, I'll make sure that people get the information they need.

#### **Lake Manitoba Flooding Information for Residents**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, Lake Manitoba is being used as a holding area for a huge amount of water that is coming from the western part of the province. The area around Lake Manitoba is home to many farmers, homes, cottages and businesses that were built at a time when the levels were considered safe, places like Delta Marsh, Big Point, Twin Beaches, Laurentian Beach, the Manitoba Narrows, Lundar Beach and a host of others that are at risk due to high waters.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm for the House that all necessary communications have been made to the residents potentially affected by rising levels on Lake Manitoba?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** We've been identifying for some time now the mid- and long-term situation with flooding in this province, which is particularly applicable in terms of our lakes. Our lakes in this province, all of our major lakes in the southern part of the province are predicted to have high levels.

And not only have we identified that in a general sense, even with all the other pressures that we're dealing with in terms of the current flood situation, on Monday night, in Warren, staff from EMO and Water Stewardship presented the latest information

to nine municipalities and two First Nations on the areas that could potentially be impacted by a combination of lake levels combined with wind and wave action.

So we clearly have identified it as a challenge. It will continue to be a challenge well throughout the summer, and we're working with the municipalities and First Nations already in that area to deal with that challenge, although I don't underestimate the impact of those levels of water.

**Mr. Eichler:** We know that every day that the Portage Diversion is open it takes almost two and a half days for the Fairford Dam to drain these waters out of Lake Manitoba. The lake is very high now and is expected to get even higher over the next two to three weeks and months to come. People along the lake would like to know what the short-and long-term plans are for the Lake Manitoba water levels.

Mr. Speaker, who is communicating with property owners around Lake Manitoba and keeping them up to date on the situation, so they can plan accordingly?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, I want to stress again that we have already started that process in a very public way with a public meeting in Warren, a meeting that was attended by nine municipalities and two First Nations. I also want to indicate that we're dealing with very high levels on Lake St. Martin and that my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) is meeting with the affected communities again.

In fact, the Minister of Northern and Aboriginal Affairs, along with the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), met with the two affected communities in the area last week. I know the Liberal leader's also had a chance to visit there, and the description he referenced I believe yesterday—certainly the description they gave which is we're dealing with historic levels on Lake St. Martin as well.

We're working with Lake St. Martin already. We have agreement to raise the temporary dikes. We're working on mid- and long-term solutions, and we will be working around Lake Manitoba, including with producers, because there's a significant number of ranchers in that area, cattle producers.

This is a priority, and I want to stress again, this flood season is going to extend well into the summer.

We know that, and this will be a significant area of concentration over the next few weeks.

### Shoal Lakes

#### Flooding Information for Residents

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for the Lakeside?

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, on a new question.

**Mr. Speaker:** On a new question.

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, water, water and more water continues to flow into the Shoal lakes Interlake region. As well, we know there is no outlet for the Shoal lakes. It could breach at any time, especially if there are heavy rains or a high wind.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the minister to update the House on what steps are being taken to communicate with those families who will need to know whether they have to protect their homes, farmland or otherwise unanticipated flooding situation that could impact St. James-Assiniboia if the Shoal lakes water end up coming down the Sturgeon Creek.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** There is a very slow but steady increase in the water levels. The member's aware of that. I know he knows that area very well. I want to indicate that certainly we've been working with producers in the area. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) has been working very closely. There's a lot of livestock issues, and I know the member himself raised a lot of them in this House and also directly with ministers involved.

In terms of the potential impacts, the key impact is currently with agricultural land, but we are making sure we assess the situation on a daily basis with Shoal lakes. One of the real challenges here is the widespread geographic nature of this flood, but I do want to assure the member that the Shoal Lake situation has been very much a part of our focus.

It's why we put the KGS study in place, why we've met with all the municipalities who've identified short-, medium- and long-term options, but we're also very concerned and are watching very closely the day-by-day development as we see the increased water levels in the Shoal lakes.

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, residents and rural municipalities around Shoal lakes want to be prepared for a possible breach. EMO officials have cautioned that nine more inches of water is on its

way into the Shoal Lake area. These lakes cannot hold nine more inches of water. This will surely have an impact on whether they spill over or not.

Mr. Speaker, if there is a strong wind or heavy rains, there is a real possibility of a possible breach.

Again, can the minister responsible explain how the communications will affect property residents, will be carried out, so they are ready in case such a breach happens?

**Mr. Ashton:** I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, we've been working very closely, not only with the municipalities in the area but with the producers. In fact, again, I want to stress that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers), in addition to being out in the area, has also met with a number of the producers in the area, because there were—there are some immediate issues that have arisen even before any potential overflow in the Shoal lakes in terms of livestock, and we have been dealing with that.

I want to put on the record, by the way, too, that that's not unique to Shoal lakes and that the Department of Agriculture, under the leadership of the minister, is working throughout the province. There are going to be many impacts. I mentioned Lake Manitoba, but there are many areas throughout the province where we're not only dealing with, obviously, the prime concern, which is in terms of people, but significant livestock. We have to make sure that we can provide feed or move them when they're stranded.

So we're working on this, and our key partners, again, are the municipalities. We work with the municipalities. They have the emergency plans. We're there to support them, and we will work through the affected municipalities, who I know have been working very closely on the Shoal lakes issue for some time.

\*(14:20)

### **Assiniboine River Controlled Dike Breaches Decisions**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank all the government officials, the Armed Forces personnel and the volunteers who are doing so much in this one-in-300-year flood along the Assiniboine River.

Mr. Speaker, obviously the predictions now for the flows along the Assiniboine River are much greater than they were due to the rain last week and perhaps other factors.

I ask the Minister of Infrastructure to tell the Legislature today whether cutting the dike along the Assiniboine River, the controlled release, was in the contingency plan before last weekend.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** I think it's fair to say that that's always an option. I talk to our technical staff and I look to the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) and her staff. That's—it's something that we do on a much smaller scale when roads are cut, you know, as part of a flood control strategy.

But, certainly, is this something that is—has been used before in Manitoba? No. It reminds me very much of the challenge in the '97 flood where we moved very quickly to deal with the Z-dike, again an unanticipated situation.

And the key element I want to credit our staff with, by the way, last week we were dealing with a rapidly escalating flood situation, a one-in-300-year flood at Brandon. We're dealing with Brandon. At the same time we're dealing with unprecedented levels of water, equivalent to half the flow of Niagara Falls.

So a lot of this creative work—yes, it's happened over the last few days putting in place concepts that can be used elsewhere and other times, but they've done a lot of work to get us to where we're at today.

I can't thank them enough, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Clearly if this was in the contingency plans before, it would have been good to have some notification to people ahead of time.

In this context, Mr. Speaker, there is concern—given that the projections are up to 56,000 cubic feet per second coming down the Assiniboine River plus the Portage Diversion—that the 6,000 currently estimated as the maximum through the controlled release site might not be enough, particularly if there was another major rainfall.

And I would ask the minister whether there is a contingency plan for a second controlled release site if the first one is not enough.

**Mr. Ashton:** I thank the member for the question and I do want to indicate that there's been a number of factors at work here. The weather has not been helping, and even the most recent forecast has not helped. It's pushed the current projected flows to the upper end of the forecast. However, we've been seeing some significant success on the Portage Diversion in terms of increasing our capacity and

we're making very steady progress on the Assiniboine dikes.

I want to stress, too, that the release we're contemplating tomorrow—and that decision has not been finalized; I want to stress that again—is a release that would not involve going to a full release of 6,000. The exact amount of the release would be determined, again, by the exact situation we're faced with. It would be a gradual opening up over a period of a number of hours.

Caution is very important in this case, but we have not made any predetermined decision to release the full 6,000 cfs capacity because, again, we want to buy as much time as possible to protect as many homes as possible.

### **Compensation for Flood Victims**

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, also to follow up from one other issue from yesterday, the compensation for flood damage, the minister responded yesterday in relationship to cutting the dike along the Assiniboine River and flooding people, farms and businesses, and I thank the minister for that, but I'd like to clarify for the record how extensive the compensation will be.

Will farmers be compensated for every lost dollar of business? Will the same be extended to non-agricultural businesses, and can the minister assure worried business owners affected by the flood that every single dollar lost in property damage, loss of inventory and loss of business will be compensated?

**Mr. Ashton:** I thank the member for the question, and I think the member has identified many of the issues that we are going to be addressing through this special program. I do want to indicate that it is a special circumstance.

I want to also add that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is with the Prime Minister as we speak, and without getting into what I'm sure are going to be some significant private discussions—I know we had a full briefing with the Prime Minister and we certainly appreciate his attention to this matter and his visit—I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, that I am sure that one of the items—the most significant items on the agenda, in addition to thanking the federal government for the response, will also be us talking to the federal government about the precedent we saw in '97, where we saw a very significant compensation package in very special circumstances.

So we look forward to working in partnership with the federal government, but I can tell you one thing: We will have a special compensation, a comprehensive compensation program for any of the residents affected in the area, but we're not giving up on any of those homes either, Mr. Speaker. That's job No. 1.

### **Livestock Producers State of Emergency Declaration**

**Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk):** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, all members in this House recognize the serious situation that livestock producers are facing due to flooding and excessive moisture. Yesterday the minister declared a livestock emergency.

Can he inform the House what—how this action will protect livestock in Manitoba?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** And, indeed, so many Manitoba producers have their backs against the wall, and they need a government that's going to stand up for them, which is what we're doing, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, along with the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie), we did declare a livestock emergency. Now, this makes it possible for us to use Crown land, whether it be agriculture or other Crown land, for farmers to house their cattle and livestock, to move machinery to high and dry locations. We want to be very practical. We want to be very useful to the farmer, and this is a very helpful tool in doing that.

We also took the opportunity to open our emergency operation centre to co-ordinate all of these practical kinds of things we're doing to help the farmers. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

### **Assiniboine River Controlled Dike Breaches Agricultural Effect**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, the government has announced that it will be breaching a dike on the Assiniboine River at 8 a.m. Thursday morning or possibly earlier if circumstances dictate. This will have a significant impact on agriculture producers as the flood waters begin to spread out. Ongoing communications with these operations is essential as we—as you have a wide variety of agricultural operations and different needs.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture tell this House how many horticultural operations, grain operations and livestock, hog, poultry operations are going to be impacted by this release of water? Has his department been in contact with each of them?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Mr. Speaker, I want the member for Emerson to be very clear, my colleague made it very clear that 8 o'clock tomorrow morning was the earliest that that controlled release would take place, if, in fact, it does take place.

I was very pleased that the member for Emerson, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) and the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) joined with me yesterday to talk with the farmers in the area. We had some very good discussions, I think, with a number of producers in their constituents-constituencies.

These are Manitoba farmers who are under a great deal of stress, who needed to know and were told very clearly yesterday by a number of people from this side of the House, including the Premier (Mr. Selinger), that the special compensation package will be made available, understanding that vegetable growers may have different needs than grain farmers who may have different needs than livestock producers.

So, Mr. Speaker, we plan to be very swift with that program and very fair with that program.

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

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Bette Mueller

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate Bette Mueller of Manitou on receiving the Manitoba Tourism Volunteer of the Year Award.

The 13th Annual Manitoba Tourism Awards Gala was held on Monday, April 11th, in Winnipeg. Awards were presented for nine categories recognizing outstanding contributions to the provincial tourism industry.

Bette Mueller was nominated by Aggie Buhler, general manager of the Pembina Valley Development Corporation. Her involvement—Bette's involvement in—spans two decades and Bette has been the driving force in promoting tourism locally, regionally and provincially.

Bette Mueller assisted in creating Manitoba's one-of-a-kind attraction, the *Passion Play*, near La Rivière, which comes up again this June. She participated in promoting the event, marketing and organizing bus tours to the community.

Bette was one of the founding members of the Pembina-Manitou Log House Tourism Centre. From 1999 to the present, Bette chaired this project, applying for restoration grants and having the building designated as a municipal heritage site. Today, Bette Mueller manages several seasonal staff, maintains the museum and organizes annual fundraisers to cover operating costs of the museum.

\* (14:30)

Bette Mueller has been involved in many more organizations and committees over the last decade, attracting visitors to the region. She is the founding member and chair of the Pembina-Manitou Tourism Committee, co-chair of the Cultural and Heritage Committee and assisted in organizing both the 100th and 110th anniversary homecomings in Manitou. Bette has been very involved in the Pembina Valley Tourism Association and founded the Nellie McClung Foundation of Winnipeg, of course, which, we know, the statue now sits on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, Bette Mueller has spearheaded, researched and sourced funding for many tourism initiatives in the region. She has dedicated many hours of her time towards creating and promoting tourism in Manitoba, locally and provincially. Recently, I had the privilege of having supper with Bette at the Teachers' Institute. She is truly a remarkable community-minded person. I would like to thank Bette Mueller for her dedication and commitment to promoting the Pembina-Manitou region and congratulate her on receiving the Manitoba Tourism Volunteer of the Year Award.

### Dauphin Countryfest Community Cinema

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** I would like to draw attention to a fantastic initiative, the Dauphin Countryfest Community Cinema.

Mr. Speaker, this project is much more than just a movie theatre. The community cinema is an inspiring example of people coming together to bring a new asset to the community. About 10 years ago, the existing theatre burned to the ground, leaving Dauphin residents without a theatre and unsure of how to proceed. After weighing out the different

options, a group of community-minded individuals got together and proposed a plan to create a community theatre. The rest, as they say, is history.

Over the course of only a few years, an astounding \$1.25 million was raised from local businesses and individual donations. This display of support and generosity just goes to show how special this project really is. I am also pleased to note that the Province of Manitoba also contributed to this project through the Municipal Recreation Fund. This is truly an asset for Dauphin.

As I said, this is much more than just a movie theatre; this state-of-the-art, multi-use theatre can also be used year-round for conferences and conventions. It is a fourplex facility that boasts 3D capabilities, offers private rentals and space for birthday parties and other special events. The theatre expects 80,000 or more guests to walk through its doors each and every year.

This theatre, which opened this February, will provide a great service to Dauphin and area residents for many years to come. What's more is that the profits turned over by the cinema, in time, will go right back into the community that it serves; supporting local groups and commerce is what we like to see, Mr. Speaker. Whether it's to watch a movie, host a special event or to throw a family birthday party, I know that we will get much use and enjoyment out of the beautiful new facility.

I would like to thank the hard-working board, staff, volunteers and all of the generous donations and donors that are responsible for the theatre that we have today. None of this would've been made possible without their dedication. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Fort Dufferin**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to recognize Fort Dufferin, a monument that stands in the Emerson constituency and reminds us of Manitoba's heritage and our contribution in shaping Canada into the country it is today.

Mr. Speaker, in 1892, Queen Victoria sent British Royal Engineers to help sort out Canada's border dispute with the United States. Their first step was to build a headquarters, which they named Fort Dufferin, after the Governor General of the time.

It was at this fort that the Royal Engineers, with their American counterparts, marked the boundaries for Canada and the US across 1,384 kilometres of

uncharted land, including the 497 kilometres that now separates Manitoba from its neighbouring states.

Through the years, Fort Dufferin had served as an immigration station and a livestock quarantine station. And for Manitoba Mennonites, this fort has an entirely different significance. It was at Fort Dufferin that hundreds of Mennonite travellers from Russia were housed before making their way to their new lives in Manitoba and western Canada.

Today, the fort is a federal heritage site. Organizations like the Post Road Heritage Group work hard to keep the mess hall, storage buildings and stables in good condition. Preservations of our heritage sites must remain a priority to remind future generations of things past.

The boundary at the 49th parallel, established at Fort Dufferin, paved the way for settlement and resource development in the Canadian west.

Mr. Speaker, Fort Dufferin has played a significant role in Manitoba's past, including the creation of boundaries. The commission was one of Canada's first opportunities to influence the establishment of its borders and assert its sovereignty over the West.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Winnipegosis Fire Department**

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the dedication and hard work of volunteer firefighters with the Winnipegosis Fire Department and, in particular, two long-term volunteer firefighters with the Winnipegosis Fire Department—brothers Cornelius, better known as Corny, and George Bergen.

They have been with the fire department for an astonishing 50 years. Corny and George have been a driving force behind the fire department all these years. They do all the day-to-day work that is required to maintain the fire hall. This includes preparing for the fire department's trainee—training twice every month, attending conferences and training sessions and ensuring the fire truck and equipment are in top running conditions.

On top of that, both men are on fire duty for 24-7. But their commitment does not end there. George and Corny have also served with the Winnipegosis Ambulance Service and have been active in the community in many different capacities. Corny has also—was also the Lake Winnipegosis mutual aid co-ordinator for many years and has been



the lead on the junior volunteer firefighters program. He has received numerous awards for his work.

But, Mr. Speaker, these two men are examples of their—of our community's quiet leadership—very humble and never needing or wanting recognition. Both Corny and George are self-employed businessmen who will drop everything to attend to a fire or respond to an ambulance emergency.

While 2011 marks the 50th—50-year milestone for both George and Corny, this is not to neglect the contributions that many others have made to the Winnipegosis Fire Department. In fact, firefighting seems to run in the Bergen family. Corny's wife, Cathy, for many years worked behind the scenes going above and beyond the call of duty. A few years ago, Corny passed the title of chief firefighter—chief—fire chief to his son, Herb.

Corny and George's brother, Abe Bergen, is also a long-serving volunteer firefighter having joined in 1971. Abe's sons, Richard and Ron, have also been members.

Mr. Speaker, I know there are firefighters across Manitoba like the Bergens that sacrifice so much to make sure our communities are safe.

The Manitoba government has been a national leader in supporting firefighters. We have made many legislative changes, including ensuring presumptive cancer coverage for firefighters and retraining the firefighters throughout the province.

I would like to thank Cornelius and George Bergen and the rest of the Winnipegosis Fire Department for the hard work and the sacrifices they have made over the many years when they provided service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about cystic fibrosis for May is Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month.

Cystic fibrosis is the most common fatal genetic disease that affects Canadian children and adults. The effects of cystic fibrosis are most devastating in the lungs and, ultimately, most who die from cystic fibrosis die because of lung disease.

I want to pay credit to the many health professionals and volunteers who care for children and adults in Manitoba.

Despite progress, there is as yet no cure. Each week in Canada two children are diagnosed with cystic fibrosis and one person dies from the disease. Only half of all Canadians with cystic fibrosis are expected to live into their 40s and beyond.

I want to compliment Cystic Fibrosis Canada, our national health charity, with over 50 volunteer chapters. The organization has set their sights squarely on finding a cure and to helping people and families affected by cystic fibrosis cope with their daily fight. Cystic Fibrosis Canada is a global leader investing more dollars in life-saving cystic fibrosis research and care than any other non-governmental agency in Canada.

I'm pleased to welcome here today representatives from Cystic Fibrosis Canada, Bill Johnston, and others.

I want also to congratulate Dr. Hans Pasterkamp and others involved in the efforts which will lead to neonatal screening for cystic fibrosis starting this July. I understand the funding is just for nine months, and I hope the government will commit to continued funding after March of 2012.

\* (14:40)

During the month of May, Cystic Fibrosis Canada is organizing many activities and events to raise awareness and funds to support vital cystic fibrosis research and care. Cystic Fibrosis Canada is committed to finding a cure. Success is the only option for them. I want to congratulate them and urge everyone to pay attention to this month, which is Cystic Fibrosis month. Thank you.

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

#### **House Business**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Deputy Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you might canvass the House to see if there's agreement to change the Estimates sequence as follows: that the Employee Pension and Other Cost Estimates, which are currently scheduled for consideration in room 255, be followed by consideration of Enabling and Other Appropriations, which will then be followed by consideration of the Estimates for the Civil Service Commission, which will then be followed by consideration of the Estimates for Family Services and Consumer Affairs; and that the Estimates for the Department of Water Stewardship be moved to room 254 following Health; and that Estimates for the

Legislative Assembly be moved to the Chamber following Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, is there agreement to change the Estimates sequence as follows: that the Employee Pensions and Other Cost Estimates which are currently scheduled for consideration today in room 255 be followed by consideration of Enabling and Other Appropriations, which will then be followed by consideration of the Estimates for the Civil Service Commission, which then be followed by consideration of the Estimates for Family Services and Consumer Affairs; and the Estimates for the Department of Water Stewardship be moved to room 254 following Health; and that Estimates for the Legislative Assembly be moved to the Chamber following Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives?

Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

The honourable Minister for Innovation, Energy and Mines, for further House business.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, will you call Committee of Supply?

**Mr. Speaker:** We will now move on Committee of Supply. And in—would—

Okay, Committee of Supply: in the Chamber will be Innovation, Energy and Mines; room 255, Employee Pensions and Other Costs; and room 254 will be Health.

Will the Chairs for the respective committees please go to the rooms that you will be chairing please.

#### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

#### HEALTH

\* (14:40)

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

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

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, I want to explore with the minister the questions about the administrative costs. And I—just to have clarification, I think that the minister has been talking about the administrative costs being just under 3 per cent. Is

that for the WRHA, for all regional health authorities? Just to get the specifics on the record.

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Yes, Mr. Chairperson, we have, of course, been working diligently with our regional health authorities to always ensure that the majority of investments in Health are going to the front lines. It is, indeed, something on which we can all agree. We know that when the external review was done of the regional health authorities some months—years ago, there was a close examination of administrative spending, an analysis that was done. And we were pleased to see from—we were pleased to see that the external reviewers saw that the regional health authorities in Manitoba were in line with administrative spending across the nation; in some cases, lower.

We know that the Canadian Institute for Health Information has observed that our hospital costs are third lowest in the nation in terms of administration, as are other indicators. One of the discussions that did come up through the external review and, indeed, has come up nationally on the subject of the Canadian Institute for Health Information providing analysis of spending is the explanation of what it is that they're capturing.

\* (14:50)

What does the word "administrative cost" mean? And, in fact, when people are talking about administrative spending, are they, indeed, meaning to speak of corporate costs? And the external reviewers and other experts have said, what we really want to ensure that we do is capture what it is that's being spent on things that are traditionally viewed as corporate costs. The external reviewer said that CIHI used a very wide scope when they spoke of administrative costs, and they included in that patient-care-related functions that many might not believe to be bureaucratic spending.

So the new provincial corporate cost indicator was developed to address this very fact, to provide a more true and accurate picture of what it is that were administrative, corporate functions versus patient-care-related functions like infection control or quality assurance, doctor recruitment, that sort of issue.

And so, Mr. Chairperson, when we have spoken in the media and in committee or in the House on the subject of spending, we have asked our regional health authorities to break out those non-patient-care-related issues to capture a definition

of corporate cost. And so, when we say that the corporate cost of 2.98 that you've heard me say, that is a corporate cost and it is for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Does the minister have those percentages for all the regional health authorities?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, and I did neglect to mention before, which was an important point, it has been raised, I think, quite recently, in some debate, what exactly that corporate cost indicator includes and doesn't include.

I want to be clear that that 2.98 is not including singularly the WRHA head office cost. These are corporate costs across all sites. This is another important point and something that's been miscommunicated. We do know that that measurement is based on function, not on the singular location that was insinuated in some conversation in the past.

The corporate cost indicator on average across the province is at 3.41, and we could break out individual RHAs as best we can. We know they're getting very close to being able to have a very consistent measurement across regional health authorities, and we're testing and retesting that. We think we're very close, but we could, you know, I could read into the record for the member the numbers, if he so desires.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, I would appreciate if you could. There's just 11 regional health authorities.

**Ms. Oswald:** Just clarifying, these are—this is the summary for '09-10, because, of course, the other analysis is still in flight. And I'm reminded, and should have said earlier, these are also posted in the annual reports, but I will, for the record, go through quickly: Assiniboine, 3.95; Brandon, 3.1; Burntwood, 3.52; Central, 4.0; Churchill, 8.69; Interlake, 2; North Eastman, 4.3; NOR-MAN is listed, interestingly, 4.14 in total, that's corporate and finance together; Parkland, 3.91; South Eastman, 5.07; and, as stated earlier, Winnipeg, 2.98.

**Mr. Gerrard:** And, just to clarify, I mean, there are various, you know, institutions, hospitals, personal care homes, clinics, like Mount Carmel Clinic, which fall within, for example, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. And, just to—are the administrative costs in each case for hospitals, for personal care homes, for clinics like Mount Carmel Clinic included—access centres, included in those, you know, corporate costs?

**Ms. Oswald:** Just to confirm, Mount Carmel would not be included in that total. Access centres, hospitals, all of that rolled up under the WRHA umbrella would be, yes. PCHs not run by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority would not be captured in that.

So corporate includes general administration, acute care, long-term care, community services, administration, executive offices, board of trustees, planning and development, community health assessment, risk management, internal audit, finance and accounting, communications, telecommunications, visitor information and mail service, to be specific.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Does information technology services—are those included in—

**Ms. Oswald:** My, you know, quick answer would be, no, they're not captured in that way, but there is some discussion at the table going on about how that exactly is to be explained. So I'll commit to the member to provide a more fulsome answer to how that's profiled in—for accounting purposes.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I thank the minister and look forward to getting that in due course.

In administration related to Public Health, would that be included?

\* (15:00)

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, I'm informed that positions like vice-presidents, you know, Dr. Cook, for example, that is captured under that umbrella. The issue of a secretary in Public Health would not be captured under that, and, again, if there's more clarity that's needed on that, we can work to provide that. I'm just being sensitive about the time.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Now, in a hospital like the Health Sciences Centre in particular, you would have numerous departments and I'm just wondering whether the departmental administration would be included as well as the general corporate administration for the Health Sciences Centre.

**Ms. Oswald:** I'm informed that the corporate cost, you know, underneath an institution like HSC would be rolled up into that cost. An administrative cost in a department of medicine would be found under the department costs, so not in the corporate.

**Mr. Gerrard:** And I presume in a nursing department it would be the same thing. Would that be correct?

**Ms. Oswald:** It would be similar in the sense that a chief nursing officer would be captured under corporate. An admin secretary in the department of medicine would appear under department of medicine.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Okay. Now I have a question about the situation with people with multiple sclerosis. Since the funding for the trial has received the go-ahead I had a concern raised by a patient with multiple sclerosis that she was no longer able to get follow-up on a liberation treatment that she had had out of province and that—I think it was the scanning or the imaging—but it may have been other aspects of follow-up as well, and the explanation was that, since this was now going to be covered under Manitoba Health—she would not be—and she was not in the trial, that she would not be able to get such imaging in Manitoba. She would have to go out of province. I wonder if the minister can provide clarity on this situation.

**Ms. Oswald:** I can say to the member that the circumstances that he presents to me about this case do not seem to ring true to what I know to be the process and what has been happening with MS patients. So I would be very interested to hear more details, if the individual is comfortable or if the member has consent and is comfortable to share more. And the reason that I say that is that it has been my understanding that scans, imaging and so forth on the specific issue of CCSVI and the liberation therapy is not being done and has not been done by professionals in Manitoba and their issue with that has been concerning the debate about what is the appropriate training and what is the appropriate imaging and what is the appropriate test and is there any consistency amongst providers about what it is that they are to be looking for and not looking for. And it was certainly my understanding that this particular kind of follow-up, if you will, or even preliminary work was not, indeed, being done. Now, of course, I couldn't speak for, you know, an individual doctor that might be doing something that we don't know about. Of course, that's always possible.

So, with the understanding that this isn't testing that has been going on, it seems, then, illogical that someone would be refused follow-up on something that purportedly wasn't being provided in the first place. So that would be the first issue on which I would be pleased to seek more clarity with the member.

The next thing that I would say, you know, in speaking to medical professionals is their very significant concern about being asked to do follow-up on the so-called liberation therapy procedure, when really there has been no agreement across the profession about what that follow-up is. There has not been definitive research established, and medical professionals that I have spoken to are, you know, in the main very reluctant to engage in treatment that has not been tested, approved and so forth.

So, again, I would want to learn more from the member if there were issues of follow-up outside of the imaging question that the individual patient was raising that would indicate that she—I think you said she, I don't know—she wasn't getting the kind of support that she felt that she needed.

What we have been very clear about and would continue to be clear about is that regardless of circumstance or regardless of what intervention has been sought outside of Canada, if a patient presents in an emergency situation, they are going to be taken care of. There is no tolerance for people not being treated for an emergency development, and we have the commitment of our physicians, in whichever milieu, to be dealing with urgent situations.

I would also say that the claim that because there has been funding committed to a joint research project with Saskatchewan would have no bearing on what people can and cannot have in Manitoba. There has been no such directive, no relationship, no instructions—certainly of which I am aware, and I would be very surprised to hear that there are—from the Manitoba Health Research Council that would indicate that any sort of attention would be withheld as a result of the announcement of this funding.

So, in the case that the member has presented to me, there are a number of puzzling issues that are being raised that, you know, we'd be happy to pursue further if he so desires.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I think that the specifics related to the provision of follow-up imaging by the Maples Surgical Centre, as I recall, and the Maples Surgical Centre had made that commitment to do such imaging partly because they were connected to a clinic in British Columbia which has been doing that for some time, and that the Maples Surgical Centre has said that they will no longer be doing that because the—there is a clinical trial, and it is, therefore, a provincial service and not something that they can provide.

Now, I don't know the details, but that was the rumour that I heard.

\* (15:10)

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, again, certainly, I heard—through the media, might I add—that the Maples Surgical Centre was contemplating providing ultrasound and so forth. I asked Dr. Godley about it in a meeting and he said it was something that they were considering and that he would keep me posted. But I have not had any further information from the centre on that subject.

I know that there was interest expressed, in, you know, a general sense, from the group at the Maples Surgical Centre when Manitoba came forward and said that the Manitoba Health Research Council would be accepting proposals. Perhaps, you know, there'll be a proposal submitted by that group; I can't honestly say. But I think that the member would need to direct the question to the Maples, because certainly there has been no issuing of a directive or a cease-and-desist protocol from Manitoba Health on that front, so that might be a better place to pursue that answer.

And, again, we want individuals that are living with MS, that may or may not have sought the liberation therapy elsewhere, to feel like they are getting the best care that they can in Manitoba. And if they're not and the member wants to raise some concerns about that, I would be very pleased to look into that further.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I thank the minister.

In the Healthy Living Estimates, I asked about, you know, diabetes and the efforts to prevent diabetes, and I also asked if the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) had the latest numbers for the number of people in Manitoba with type 2 diabetes. And he said, oh, that's under the Department of Health and I would have to ask the minister. So I am now asking the minister.

**Ms. Oswald:** I'd like to thank the Minister of Healthy Living for this opportunity, and I would certainly go on the record to say that, of course, we believe tracking and monitoring of diabetes and the rates is very important, as I know the member does as well.

We have, indeed, added it to the manual—the Manitoba Health annual report. Page 117 shows the '09-10 rates at 76,608 patients with diabetes. It shows

the five-year average of new diabetes cases, 6,390 per year.

We know that the member has suggested that reporting diabetes—that we could consider reporting diabetes cases perhaps like communicable diseases. There may, indeed, be some concern with that. You know, real-time tracking of communicable diseases like HIV or TB, of course, is important because of, you know, issues with immediacy of follow-up. We know that diabetes, of course, is important to track, but we want to ensure that we're building our capacity for doctors and front-line professionals to be providing that wraparound care and even more time with chronic disease than perhaps they spend in tracking in such an immediate way.

It is a subject for debate; there's no question. Now, I believe that the member specifically cited type 2. Is that correct in his question?

**An Honourable Member:** That's correct.

**Ms. Oswald:** I think this number does, indeed, represent all—both, so, you know, I will endeavour to provide more information, if I am able, on the specific subject of type 2 within the context of the annual report or elsewhere. But those are numbers for him for the purpose of this discussion now.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes. Just in follow-up, you know, since diabetes is not, at this point, a reportable disease, just how are the numbers generated?

**Ms. Oswald:** It's my understanding that the reporting is likely done through data that's collected through billings, but I do want to double-check to see if it is augmented from other sources as well, which it could be. I just want to make sure. So I'll get back to the member on that fact.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I mean, if it is collected through billings, then, I mean, there may be a question of how well it completely it captures, you know, areas where people don't directly bill, where there may be, for example, many First Nations communities with many, many cases—people with diabetes—how well are all of them captured, because they're not all subject to billing in a standard fashion?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, and, again, I will commit to the member to provide a more fulsome answer, and I would agree wholeheartedly that across the spectrum of chronic disease and general disparity between—in health status between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, that we all have much work to do in capturing data in a respectful way, but capturing it in

a way that provides us with a real ability to work together to intervene and stem the tide of chronic disease.

So, you know, certainly he will not hear me saying that I think that methodology for gathering data for illness among First Nations—and, indeed, Métis people—is as strong as it needs to be. And I do believe that there is a huge opportunity for us to collectively improve our surveillance with a view to really improving service and improving our prevention initiatives—not with a view to stigmatize in communities, which doesn't serve anybody very well, but to really being able to drill down into information in a variety of communities across our province and being able to intervene with perhaps not a one-size-fits-all approach, but a more local and even grassroots approach, similar to what you'll see in many of the successful projects that exist within the Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative.

There have been remarkable successes with that program and that has largely been because there has been a driven from-the-ground-up approach in the communities, and, I think, with that approach we may be able to improve our tracking of this kind of information.

\* (15:20)

We also know that the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy has offered some good advice on this. Their recent report, in partnership with the Métis, was extraordinarily good, and I think we have a lot that we can learn from them about improving data collection, breaking out type 1, type 2, and most importantly being able to do something about it.

But, again, I want to ensure that I'm giving the most fulsome answer about how that number is calculated, the 76,608 that I put on the record and as I said I'm committed to provide that to the member at our swiftest convenience.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I wonder if the annual report also includes figures for the number of people diagnosed with depression in Manitoba.

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, I—I'm going to need to check to see if and how that is presented, you know, just general reporting on issues of mental health I'd want to review. I don't know it off the top of my head or in my—on my fingertips at the moment.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I want to thank the minister, and I'm going to pass to the MLA for Charleswood.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** I wonder if the minister has some of the information that she committed to bring from yesterday's Estimates.

**Ms. Oswald:** I believe I have lots of it. I might not have every one. We're still working on some but I will try to let the member know. With her consent I'll just—if I could finish off where I left off yesterday on the issue of IMGs, specifically in Brandon.

We have done some preliminary work at the suggestion of the member and we do understand that there may have been an issue, perhaps ongoing specific to Brandon, about IMGs during their assessment, not being able to work in two locations.

We talked yesterday about this being a requirement from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba to ensure that there is appropriate consistent supervision during this transitional assessment and mentorship period. I can also inform the member that there is also a requirement to have a specific work location on one's work permit which is a federal government requirement.

So there was an additional element that I neglected to mention yesterday as well. We are working though with the college and the Faculty of Medicine to see where these kinds of flexibilities might be able to be built in so that the supervision can be as fulsome as the college wishes, but that we can get the best possible work out of these individuals who really want to be working in settings that are very nearby, and as the member said yesterday, perhaps even down a hallway.

So, again, we'll—we're going to keep working with those two entities and look at what flexibility, if any, exists within that federal government requirement, and see if we can, in general, enable these international medical graduates to work to the fullest capacity.

Going back to the issue of Premier's travel, I did say yesterday, and I can confirm that there was no out-of-province travel by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) expensed to Manitoba Health from my office. And I did want to clarify—when we talked about this yesterday I did quite swiftly leap to the fact that you were asking me about out-of-province travel. There are expenditures, I think, posted online for travel that I've done within Manitoba and there's lots of that, but I said no travel yesterday, but I was talking about in the context of outside of Manitoba, you know, aside from the FPT meeting—so just to be clear on that.

Also, I did want to add information on the record for the member further to our STARS conversation. We were able to confirm that on the issue of patient fees, STARS does not charge patient fees for flights in Alberta. And the operations that exist that aren't with STARS, but are helicopter operations in BC, Ontario and Nova Scotia also do not charge fees for the helicopter transport. It—which is, of course, consistent with what we do with our Lifeflight program here in Manitoba as well. So that's what I thought was true, but now I can confirm that it's true.

Further, the flight crews for STARS do include a nurse and a paramedic working side by side. The nurses, generally, are those that have experience in emergency and/or ICU care, and the paramedics are advanced life support paramedics. There is also a pilot and co-pilot on the helicopter. The pilots work full-time and are highly experienced flyers; I think it's a minimum of 3,000 helicopter hours flying. And the STARS captains are air transport licensed, and all pilots are instrument-flying rated.

When it is needed, there is capacity for a critical care doctor to accompany that crew. As I mentioned yesterday, our own Dr. Robertson has done that. That's very similar, not completely identical, to the Lifeflight arrangement now. Lifeflight would—this crew would include a pilot, flight nurse and, generally, a critical care physician as well.

And you did ask me a question about reading in the names of the 15 executive support. The list that I have here is incomplete. It only includes my office and not the deputy's, so I can just read it in next time as a fulsome list, if you wish.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And if the minister, when she does read it, can just indicate the position that that person has.

**Ms. Oswald:** Sure.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The—we did have some discussion about secondments yesterday, and I wonder if the minister would be prepared to table a list of all of the WRHA employees that are seconded to Manitoba Health, and vice versa as well. If any Manitoba Health employees are seconded to the WRHA or seconded to any other RHA, if she could provide that information, including the details of, you know, name and their current position that they are in now, and that position that they left from the area from which they've been seconded.

So, if she would be prepared to do that and, maybe at the same time, provide a list of all

employees paid by the WRHA that happen to be working in Manitoba Health, and vice versa.

**Ms. Oswald:** Mr. Chair, we will endeavour to get that list together for the member in the fashion that she so wishes it to be.

Certainly, in some further discussion about secondments, I've been informed that there are positions that are being shared, and so there, you know, there would be an effort to articulate how those positions are allotted and how those payments are being made. And so we'll work to get the member that information.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate where—whether there are any WRHA employees working in any other branch of government, or is it just secondments to Manitoba Health?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, I can let the member know that we will check at the same time.

\* (15:30)

**Mrs. Driedger:** And can the minister tell us how these WRHA employees that come over here and are seconded over to Manitoba Health, can the minister indicate who pays their salary?

**Ms. Oswald:** I'm informed that in the case of a secondment from the WRHA to the department, the WRHA would pay—that's what the paycheque would be, but, of course, Manitoba Health would be invoiced and Manitoba Health would be paying that back. So what's on the paycheque and who ultimately pays the dollar at the end of the day is a little bit different, but apparently that's how it works.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Does the WRHA, though, not have higher salaries than normally would be paid out of Manitoba Health?

**Ms. Oswald:** Certainly, there—as we discussed at some length yesterday, there are situations where individuals are asked to come and assume a position at Manitoba Health, and a secondment arrangement is set up that will maintain their existing salary if, you know, indeed, it was a greater salary than what would be typical at Manitoba Health, all being part of the context of recruiting really excellent people and sharing their expertise in these contract arrangements.

So, yes, the secondment arrangements often have salaries from the WRHA that are higher than the Manitoba Health positions. I'm going to go out on a limb and suggest they probably wouldn't refuse

the salary if it were larger in Manitoba Health than in the WRHA, but, again, it's—it isn't a routine arrangement. But, as part of recruiting the best possible people into the right position at the right time, a secondment arrangement is one that has been pursued in order to secure that expertise.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister explain, though, when somebody is seconded over here, they're coming into a totally different job than what they had over at the WRHA, are they not? Like, they would have a separate job description here that may not be the same as the one they had over there. They may bring a certain area of expertise, I suppose. But can the minister just confirm that it is, indeed, a separate job here within the civil service that has its own job description?

**Ms. Oswald:** So, I guess, what I would say in response to the member's question is, no and yes. Yes, an individual would come over on secondment from WRHA to a position that would have a different description, like, for example, an individual that's been brought over with lots of expertise in primary care and did lots of work within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority on developing, you know, primary care renewal, and—but it would have been a Winnipeg focus. And she would be brought over on secondment to Manitoba, and the job description would, in large part, be similar in doing that renewal but would now have a provincial context and would have a wider perimeter and view.

So, I mean, the reason that people, you know, in—for the most part, are seconded is because of that expertise, and so they may be doing a job that has, you know, a number of differences to it. All regional health authorities versus one regional health authority but may, in fact, have at the centre focus a very, very similar role, you know, in terms of leadership and development. And again, as I said yesterday, the secondment agreements are very, very clear about to whom that person would report.

Again, it's not a routine arrangement. There are times when these secondments have to do with highly technical areas that require that technical expertise, and we have, as I said yesterday, used over time the arrangement of the secondment to get the best possible person with the best experience and knowledge at the right time. And we spoke at length about this yesterday, I believe. I suppose, length is a relative term; it seemed lengthy—about the fact that you know, we're open to exploring alternative methods of contracting if there's a way that is

superior to using the secondment. We wouldn't be adverse to looking at a new way of arranging these kinds of positions or arranging these kinds of contracts.

Our real goal, of course, is getting the expertise, technical, front-line care, medical, whatever the case may be, so that we can help moving forward with our initiatives in the best way that we can. We know that a number of these individuals are tapped on the shoulder by other jurisdictions, indeed, other jurisdictions that are paying far heftier remuneration than we see in the context in Manitoba and it's about striking a balance, being able to not only recruit people, but retain them and being very aware that, you know, there's so much excellence in Manitoba that we have to work very hard to do what we can through secondments or otherwise to keep these really blockbuster people here with us in Manitoba.

**Mrs. Driedger:** In these seconded positions, does the WRHA still pay for their benefits?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, I'm informed it's the same scenario. They would pay. Manitoba Health would reimburse.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And would you generally say that their benefit program is better than what is offered here in Manitoba Health?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, again, I'm informed by my experts that it's quite different, actually, and the evaluation or assessment of better, one better than another, I think I'd have to do more analysis to come up with that value judgment, but I can confirm that it is quite different.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate whether or not the job at the WRHA then is left unfilled, or how does the WRHA manage with the loss of these positions that have been seconded to Manitoba Health?

\* (15:40)

**Ms. Oswald:** Again, I'm informed that oftentimes the positions that have been vacated will be backfilled with other people. They're—you know, usually these are pretty important people and they need to have that position filled, whether it's temporarily or, you know, in the longer term. So, for the most part, I believe that's true, perhaps not every time.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister just confirm—I think she said yesterday there might be 15 people on secondment now. I know in the past, the deputy



minister was, there was one ADM and I think one other person that has—was seconded from the WRHA. It seems to have increased substantially if we're up to 15 now. Can the minister just confirm what that number might be?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, we can certainly double-check that, particularly in the context of the other answers we're going to get for the member.

I do recall being asked these questions in Committee of Supply in the past, and I'm not sure that the answer that I gave then, which I think was with a narrower context or focus—if I'm remembering correctly, that is. I think it was a question concerning ADMs or senior management that had been seconded. And I believe when I answered this time, it was with a more fulsome accounting. So I'm not sure that I would want to compare one year to another, in case I didn't read all the names in because I wasn't asked to read them in that way.

In any event, we will be, you know, in this context of providing answers to the member about job descriptions and who's gone one way and who's come back the other, we should be able to round out that number in a way that will be satisfactory for her.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Does the minister have any sense of whether or not this is common practice across all departments in government, to second people from other organizations and entities that they're closely aligned with?

**Ms. Oswald:** I would have to check. I don't particularly know about what might happen with Education or, you know, science, technology. I'd have to—I'd really have to look. I'm not aware.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Is there a dedicated unit in her department for ministerial correspondence?

**Ms. Oswald:** There is a correspondence unit for Manitoba Health. I'm not sure that I would describe it in terms that it's only for letters that come to me. I think, you know, it would be through the department—I'm getting nods, yes, that's right.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate how many people are working in that particular unit?

**Ms. Oswald:** I'm tempted to give the same answer as one of my colleagues as to how many people in the unit—how many people are working in the unit: all of them are working.

But, in all seriousness, and not to hold up time here, we'll confirm for the member what the precise

number is. I just want to check if there's a vacancy or not and not give you incorrect information.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Is there a specific budget set aside for this particular unit?

**Ms. Oswald:** I can inform the member that there isn't a specific cost centre for the correspondence unit per se. It would be captured under—I forgot the term—management services.

**Mrs. Driedger:** If the minister would be able to, I would appreciate a little bit more information about that, in terms of how many people are working in that particular unit, who they are—and does the minister have any idea of how many letters?

I know I get a lot of letters of complaint from patients about the health-care system. And, I mean, I then send them to the minister, and she obviously has somebody do the research and then respond back. So I'm sure this is probably one very, very busy department. And I certainly, you know, appreciate their efforts, because I know how much work that my one assistant has to handle, in terms of all these letters of complaint that we get from the public. So is there any sense of how many letters go through that department in a year?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, lots is for sure, and the member is, you know, neglecting to mention the letters of commendation that we have to deal with, as well. So I think that that would be an important point to raise.

But, when you combine, you know, formal letters that are written, email letters that are written and phone calls from which correspondence is generated, yes, there is no question that there are plenty of contacts. And I can endeavour to get an estimate for the member.

We know that letters come in, requesting meetings. Letters come in with really good ideas, actually, and those usually come combined with meeting requests. We know that we get letters, you know, asking questions about navigating the system, and we certainly do endeavour to measure trends in letters, you know, because, of course, this would indicate that the information that is out for the public, which we, you know, we really try hard to provide as much as possible decreased red tape, open doors, open portals.

But, if we see trends in letters, people asking the same question about something that we had thought we communicated very clearly and obviously had not, it's a very instructive piece of information. And

individuals in the correspondence unit are really helpful, in many ways, helping us drive policy because of communications that they're noticing and trending.

I can tell the member that the correspondence unit is currently comprised of Gail Wiggins, who co-ordinates the unit; Julie Thompson; there's a vacancy for a writer at present. Judi Petricig and Laura Truman are also working in very close partnership, might I add, with staff in my office as well. They work together to try to help manage the load. Some of the letters that—certainly working together to deal with correspondence.

Some of the correspondence we get is, you know, almost exclusively political in nature, and we, you know, want to be able to be responsive to that and leave, you know, departmental kinds of details and responses for this unit to work on approximately 1,200 letters annually from the public. And this unit also co-ordinates the other kinds of letters that we have to do and, in fact, wish to do, like recognition letters for staff and co-ordinating letters that are routed through to regional health authorities.

So 1,200 just from the public, and then all of the others on top of that as well. They work hard and I appreciate them. And you have one person and I've got a few, so—but you aren't getting those letters of commendation as I said, so probably that would cut the volume in half.

\* (15:50)

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister brought forward some information about the IMG program in Brandon and has indicated that there is some effort being made to try to resolve some of these concerns. Is there a time frame put on that in terms of when or how long this might take for resolution?

**Ms. Oswald:** It's my understanding that this is ongoing. It has—perhaps, not specific to Brandon, but specific to the concept that the member raised, it's—has been tried to be amended for a while now. Perhaps, the specific case of Brandon is going to, with luck, help us unlock some of the logjam. I'm sorry that I can't commit a date to the member right at this time. But, certainly, we would want to see a swift resolution and, if possible, amendment to the process that would in no way compromise the requirements and the standards that are being put forward by the college but, indeed, would help the ongoing operations and daily work happen in a more expedient way, if possible.

So, certainly, I can commit to the member that there's every effort being made to try to come to a swift resolution.

**Mrs. Driedger:** In the budget speech, there is a mention that the salaries for senior management in the regional health authorities have been frozen. Can the minister indicate the length of time for that freeze?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, I can confirm for the member that this has been in place since February of '09, and these are yearly asks and requirements. And we have, indeed, just as of this February—or, I should say, in recent funding letter information to the RHAs—reconfirmed that that will be sustained for the coming year.

**Mrs. Driedger:** How many senior management positions does this affect?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, I can have my staff count up those persons and give the member a total, hopefully tomorrow—not tomorrow, Friday, I think.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister actually provide a list of all senior management in all of the RHAs?

**Ms. Oswald:** Just to go back to the last question, I can just confirm that the—that freeze would apply to the CEOs and their direct reports.

And, I believe, in reference to the question that the member just asked, that that information would be in the compensation reports. And, I mean, we could compile that for the member if she so desired, but I think it is out there and existing now, if she wanted to check in that way.

**Mrs. Driedger:** If the minister would be prepared to provide it, that would probably be more helpful. I don't want to make assumptions and put people's names into that list that don't belong there. And I think it would be probably much more helpful to know who the people are and what their positions are.

And can the minister explain what constitutes or what's the definition of senior management?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, I can inform the member that the senior management, as defined to the individuals that would have received the correspondence and their—the aforementioned freeze, would be the CEOs and those that report directly to the CEO.

**Mrs. Driedger:** What's confusing in all of that though, is who actually reports to the CEOs. There are no clear—there is no clear information out there in

terms of who those reporting entities are. You know, certainly we know the vice-presidents but, you know—and you could look at an org chart and assume that vice-presidents, executive directors, you know, other entities like that, but who knows, there could be others that are just not put on org charts that actually do report. So that's why I think it would be helpful to see the list of and who these people are and their positions. Beyond senior management, then, in RHAs, what are the other levels of management?

**Ms. Oswald:** And, again, to go back to one of the previous questions, I will, for the member, endeavour to, you know, provide that information for her about names and positions if she would view that to be a more expedient way to get that information.

Each regional health authority in their annual report endeavours through an org chart to show what other levels of management might be. It is true that we do not dictate to the regions what their organizational structure must be. We have had much dialogue with the regional health authorities about uniqueness of their regions and a desire to have their managerial complement organized in a way that would best serve the unique needs of their region.

So, in the case of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, when I look at their organizational chart, we see the board of directors; the president and CEO; and then around the president and CEO there's COO of Pan Am; ED, Research and Applied Learning; regional director, Communications, Public Affairs; a director of Internal Audit; an ED of Planning and Corporate Services; general counsel and corporate secretary; director of Media Relations; and executive director of Joint Medical Staff Division. And listed underneath that structure there are various vice-presidents for areas ranging from Clinical Services and the chief medical officer to chief nursing officer, financial and VP in charge of Aboriginal Health.

And, again, at the risk of wasting time and reading the whole chart, in each RHA would show what other management would be, in my view, through their organizational chart. And, indeed, it is not consistent across RHAs and that's actually quite a deliberate decision in endeavouring to allow regional health authorities the opportunity to construct that management structure to meet the needs of their own region.

\* (16:00)

Certainly, if we saw a regional health authority, you know, growing in an unfettered way at the management level with no clear rationale for the programming that they were purported to be managing, we would have questions about that. But, as the external review of regional health authorities showed, and, certainly, as the—as CIHI has shown, Manitoba is not out of line in its administrative levels, and, indeed, those corporate costs are trending down, which we believe to be a good thing.

**Mrs. Driedger:** One thing that CIHI did indicate, that, along with Québec, Manitoba had the highest percentage of nurse managers. I think it was something like 13 per cent compared to other provinces which don't have that many managers at that level. So, when one looks at management levels, it's, you know, one thing to look at org charts and be able to make some, you know, assumptions based on org charts, but there's probably many other levels below that.

And we're certainly hearing it from front-line professionals that feel—you know, in Toyota you have four levels from the top to the bottom, and one physician actually said to me he feels like, in Manitoba, it's 200 levels between, you know, the top and the bottom. And that's the kind of feeling that is out there in terms of trying to—you know, for these front-line people trying to work with this system, they feel that it's very, very top heavy and takes a lot in terms of decision making.

So, when the minister was reading out, for instance, with the WRHA, those, you know, levels of senior managers, where does the—where do the program managers fit in there? Because you've got medical program heads, nursing program heads. I think there are, you know, all the allied professions; there's a head of that too. And so, you know, there's a whole another level, and then, beneath them, there's another level of management. Like, how many levels of management do—you know, is the minister really aware of within this system?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, yes, and certainly the issue of relationships in regional health authorities between front line and management has, I think, since the very beginning of regionalization, has been an ongoing dialogue. There is no question about that. It has taken a variety of different forms and, you know, has sometimes been an us-them and sometimes less so, but it is really something that requires, I think, ongoing observation and study and nurturing, really.

Interestingly, the external review of regional health authorities talked about administrative costs being in line with other jurisdictions and also made mention of the fact that efforts were made—were being made across regional health authorities to hold the line on administrative funding—or spending, I should say. But one of the recommendations that they did make, and an observation that they did make, was that there weren't enough middle managers, which, you know, is not something you often hear, are people leaping up out of the bushes saying, we need to have more middle managers.

And so it was a curious observation to us, but they did articulate an argument about the fact that there have been a number of new and very important initiatives brought forward in regional health authorities. And people working on the front line were telling the external reviewers that they not only appreciated and welcomed but, indeed, demanded more connection with someone in a leadership role to help roll out some of these initiatives. And it was their recommendation to us to actually work to increase the level of middle management.

And we have, for the most part, resisted fulfilling that recommendation. But we continue to listen to those working on the front line that also want to find a balance between having too much administration—and, in some people's eyes, any administration is too much, let's face it, but, in other people's eyes, they want to be able to have direct, frequent and daily contact with someone in charge that can, indeed, manage and effect change in an expedient way. And in situations where perhaps the external reviewers noted that these kinds of managers were not in an abundant enough supply, there were concerns from front-line workers that they felt disconnected to those that would be in more senior roles.

So we're working with our regional health authorities, with members of the board in endeavouring to strike the right balance, the right complement of leadership, and the kind of leadership we know—or I should say I know that when I speak to those on the front line it's—the managers that they appreciate most are really the servant leaders, those that are in positions of control, command and control, but really would not ask anyone on the front line to do anything that they wouldn't be prepared to do themselves, rolling up their sleeves, working at the bedside.

And so I would acknowledge the member's comments and say that we know that we have to be ever vigilant in finding exactly the right balance of those in leadership positions and those working on the front line every day, making sure that there's connectivity between those in the highest level of decision-making scenarios and with those that are working on the front line, and that it needs to be seamless and responsive and that's something that we're committed to work with our RHAs to help them achieve.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The newspaper through rural Manitoba in the fall had indicated that a lot of the RHAs across the province were going to take a major hit for expenses, but Treasury Board stepped up and provided funding for each year. It was referenced as bailouts in the rural media.

Can the minister tell us why bailouts of RHAs happened and whether or not this was across the board and what this is all about?

**Ms. Oswald:** And, again, we work with our regional health authorities through an extensive process, and people at the RHAs work very, very hard through their consultation process with the public in developing their health plans, doing their health assessments and making sure that we can budget and develop increases to RHAs, not just for price in volume, but for the initiatives that they want to develop.

And, certainly—I mean, we would, to be frank, never say to the RHAs, you know, go forth, don't worry if you find yourself in a deficit, we'll pay for that. It would be fiscally irresponsible, and I believe the RHAs to be responsible. But in situations where they do experience pressures, whether it is with volumes or other issues, Manitoba Health has always, over time, worked with the regional health authorities to get them to balance and to ensure that they can be providing the services to people on the front line as they need them.

I mean, I don't believe that the term bailout is at all accurate for the kind of work that goes on. I mean, a bailout is a billion dollars in Alberta and what happened there, that was the mother of all life preservers. These are ongoing dialogues with regional health authorities being responsive to patient needs.

\* (16:10)

**Mrs. Driedger:** It's actually some of the board members of RHAs that did make reference to them as bailouts, you know, so that's where the term came from and so that's how, you know, a number of the RHAs actually responded to this.

But can the minister explain, you know, what Treasury Board—how much money they actually provided for, you know—and I'll call it bailouts, as the—some of the RHA board members have called it—but why did Treasury Board step up and provide funding for each region? Like, why would you have done that?

**Ms. Oswald:** Just as I confer with my officials, if I could get clarity from the member. I'm not sure if I heard her say—which year is she talking about? I mean, of course the year-end issues are still being worked through the department and that analysis is being done. Is she talking about this fiscal year, this one just past?

**Mrs. Driedger:** I had indicated to the minister that it was written up in the—a number of rural newspapers in the fall.

**Ms. Oswald:** That's helpful. I appreciate you refocusing on that.

It is true that Manitoba Health did assist regional health authorities with some issues that developed concerning pre-retirement costs because of some very adverse effects from the market and, you know, what was happening with the economy. So it's possible that that might be the reference that these people are making.

You know, naturally I would be a little concerned if board members, those charged with financial stewardship of the region, are, you know, speaking freely about bailouts as a routine behaviour.

You know, I'll have to, you know, look into that, but certainly I can say that that issue on funding for that pretty grave scenario with pre-retirement was something that did come through Manitoba Health. That is correct.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Would that amount of money then have been built into the baseline funding so that it goes forward year after year? I know the government in 2000 covered deficits right across the province and that money was put into baseline funding.

Is that what has happened now with the government making these bailouts? Has it been built into the baseline?

**Ms. Oswald:** It's so great to have the CFO sitting beside me.

Okay. So the money was one-time money. It is routine that actuarial valuation of these funds is done every single year, and there's funding that is provided at the outset for that, but this valuation allows an analysis and evaluation of whether or not that amount was appropriate. And, certainly, in the case of the downturn, the number wasn't what it needed to be and that's why that money flowed at that time.

So it does happen every single year and the estimates and the provision of monies is generally, you know, quite close, but, you know, this was a pretty jarring circumstance that required this correction.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister explain what changed in the Swan River situation that she decided to finally after, I don't know, four years, fund the cataract surgery program? She was adamant and is on record a number of times saying there weren't enough patients there and it wasn't needed, and then, all of a sudden, she changed her mind. Can the minister indicate, because the numbers haven't changed in terms of patient volume, and I have tracked that, so what specifically changed in this scenario that she would decide at this point to go ahead now with the cataract surgery program in Swan River?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, and just to be clear, you know, we said not yet. We didn't say no way, no how.

And we know that we are presented with very creative initiatives and, you know, hopes and dreams of communities daily. I don't think that that's unfair for me to say daily. A request for a new program or a new initiative or an expansion, you know, would come into our office. And, of course, we do analysis on the ideas, and many of them are very, very good ideas. Some of them are duds, from time to time; I will admit that. And there's no particular business case or even foundation in patient safety for some things.

But this was always something that we looked at very closely. We did look at patient volumes and it was our view that, you know, not yet needed to be the answer. We saw, you know—and again if the member has, you know, different numbers, of course, I'm interested in seeing those. My data shows, '05, about 100–101, I think it was, Swan River patients were cataract surgery—I was going to say candidates, but they did have the surgery.

In 2010, we saw volumes up about 65 per cent, and we looked at the business case and, you know, looked at the analysis of costs for out-of-province. We looked at the, of course, extraordinary generosity that was presented and maintained by the Lions Club, and we were able to put all of those pieces together and say yes to the program, which we hope will be starting, you know, as soon as possible.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate, because certainly in the comments that she's made and we've tracked over the years, there wasn't a whole lot of: we're not going to do it yet. Her comments, if, you know, they were all recorded accurately, was an adamant—all through the years—that this program is not a go. Did the upcoming election have anything to do with the change in her decision?

**Ms. Oswald:** Actually, it was people needing cataract surgery that had an impact on our decision, and listening to the people from the Lions Club.

You know, there's no doubt that during challenging economic times, it is more difficult to announce every single program that is a good idea. And one needs to, you know, do thoughtful planning and analysis, and certainly the climate is one where you need to make your best possible business case for every new initiative.

Layered on to that, you know, most importantly, is endeavouring to bring the kind of care that you want to bring to people as swiftly as possible. And, certainly, it was our approach to move initiatives forward, to prioritize and to find every possible way that we could to bring services—new services and new initiatives into the province whenever we could.

\* (16:20)

You know, people make choices all the time about what you're going to do during times that are tougher than others. You know, we know that we wanted to continue to invest in Swan River. We couldn't do it immediately, but we know that we wanted to. You know, we didn't cut money from the hospital. We just couldn't say yes to a new initiative. We didn't halt capital—or, capital development. You know, there are lot's of things that we didn't do, but we couldn't say yes to everything at the precise moment that it was asked. And we worked hard, and I really commend the regional health authority for the work that they did in, you know, decision making about the best possible locations for programs, and providing services to patients, you know, across the Parkland Regional Health Authority.

And I give the Department of Health a lot of credit, who worked and reworked and worked again the numbers in the business case doing analysis for those who were travelling outside of the province, and the work that they did to enable us to be able to take away the fee that existed for the soft lenses and being able to combine that into a package and go forward with an initiative was really important to us.

It's no great mystery around here in the current climate that anything that government does, right now, is going to be called by its opponents an election maneuver. And, you know, I hope that we don't have to descend into you know, pervasive, cynical talk that that's all that we're doing. The fact of the matter is our record is pretty clear on bringing initiatives to communities, continuing capital development, bringing more health professionals to the front lines, and we're not going to cease and desist in making those investments and announcements for fear that we're going to be accused of electioneering. It just wouldn't be fair to people.

And, you know, I'll strap on the protective gear and brace myself for the inevitable comments that will be made, and that, frankly, I'm sure were made in 1999 just prior to the election. It's just the way that things go.

But we aren't going to stop working with the citizens of Manitoba to give them the best possible health care just because we're going to be accused of pre-election maneuvering. That's not what this was; it's not what the announcements in the coming days are going to be about; it's about getting the job done.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister also flip-flopped on the decision on multiple sclerosis trials, and I'm hearing from a number of people and they're really concerned that there isn't any information out there in terms of, you know, when this is going to move forward, that, you know, it's a good sound bite right now. But can the minister provide more detail for these people that are waiting for information in Manitoba?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, it wasn't a flip-flop. I was consistent all the way through in saying that we would support research for multiple sclerosis when it was safe and ethical to do so. I said that from the very beginning. I said that we would need to take our lead from medical experts. I believe that really bad things can happen when politicians make decisions that medical professionals and researchers need to be making, and I will not waiver from that position.

There is no doubt, however, that this has been a very complex and fascinating, I will say, journey from a political perspective. I know that there probably are very few people that anticipated what kind of an explosion would occur, you know, whether it was through social media or, you know, general advocacy of the multiple sclerosis community, if you will, when news of Dr. Zamboni's theory came forward. We know at that time there was much enthusiasm that went round the world, and medical professionals called out at that time for caution, you know, because of the small sample that was involved in the initial test, and people really wanted to say, hold on, let's not put multiple sclerosis patients through the same kind of torment that they've been put through in the past. You know, whether it was, you know, concerning bee stings, or removing all of their fillings, or other such trauma, really, that people went through that never did see the dreams come true.

The MS Society, of course, called on the federal government to come forward and fund—I think they asked for \$10 million for clinical trials—and, with the medical information available at that time, there was a reticence on the part of people at the national level to go full speed into something that had—that was so far away from being proven or having the kinds of evidence that would give medical professionals comfort. And the MS Society, for the first time in their history, agreed to fund studies across the nation. These were mostly regarding diagnosis. And the federal government and many provinces, I would say most provinces, said, okay, this is a plan and we're going to follow that plan and get the results from those studies.

We were told in September, last September, by the federal minister and the Canadian Institute for Health Information, that these studies would not, as had been reported, take one or two years to be completed and, then, and only then, would a clinical trial be contemplated. We were told at that meeting, no, that was wrong information and that, indeed, we would see some preliminary results in some months. It was even, I think, insinuated it would be six months, maybe less, and, for the most part, jurisdictions were encouraged by, okay, it's not going to be that long, we're going to get some good evidence through multi sites on diagnosis, and away we would go.

And it was just prior to that meeting that I sent a letter to my counterparts, saying, let's get together, learn from the past, as I'm informed by doctors that

we need a multi-site approach. Pan-Canadian would be, certainly, the ideal; but, at minimum, a multi-site approach. Can we put this on the agenda? The ministers agreed. We spoke about it at that meeting. We agreed that we would work with the Canadian Institute for Health Information, wait for these results to come forward in the name of patient safety, but, at the same time, at our urging, agreed that we would begin to set the table, if you will, for a multi-site clinical trial, so that, if and when, the evidence came forward from CIHR studies that it was safe and ethical, we would go forward.

It was, regrettably, a couple of months after that that news came back from the group on which Manitoba was sitting that, indeed, it would not be months. The total of time that these preliminary studies would take went back to one or two years. And, while we were glad that CIHR agreed that we needed a multi-site co-ordinated approach, what we disagreed with was the time. And, in the intervening time, with information that had come through the international community and with comfort from our own well-respected Manitoba Health Research Council, we knew that it was time to make a move.

\* (16:30)

Saskatchewan had, of course, announced that it was seeking a trial to occur within its province, and so we worked with Saskatchewan in endeavouring to achieve the goal that we had cited all along was the one that we were informed was the best one, that we would build a multi-site trial. And, with more comfort from the medical community, and I can certainly say not all, because there are still some very vocal opponents to the enterprise—Manitoba came forward and announced a matching amount of money to nurture the sharing of results between a study that will be funded through MHRC, Manitoba Health Research Council, and with Saskatchewan. And this particular arrangement, I think, is going to help us get to the finish line much faster than a patchwork approach.

So we believe that our approach has been consistent. We believe that as the ground shifted underneath us, with being told one thing at one time and another at another time and with emerging evidence coming forward, that we, in fact, have taken a consistent approach. The Premier of Saskatchewan, you know, confirmed that we were always interested in partnering if it was multi-site. The quote is: Manitoba was always keenly interested.

So, you know, I respectfully disagree with the member on the characterization of flip-flop. We have always said we wanted our approach to be swift when it was safe and ethical to do so. And I believe that we have been true to our word on that. And we hope that other jurisdictions will join us in building this multi-site approach, because I believe that's how we're going to get to the answer to this compelling question, and I believe that that's what MS patients truly deserve.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Well, with all due respect to the minister, not a whole lot changed. In fact, I still recall her saying, well, Saskatchewan really isn't doing anything, they're just talking, nothing's moving forward. And I remember her saying that in the House. And, you know, not a whole lot has changed other than she's changed her mind on the eve of an election.

Can the minister indicate, again, why she waited till the eve of an election to announce funding of insulin pumps for kids?

**Ms. Oswald:** And, again, I spoke a little earlier about, you know, the cynicism that exists in a pre-election period but, you know, I realize that the member and I are going to have differences of opinion, but, you know, right out of *Hansard*, December 2010, I said, and I quote: "Now the members opposite make the suggestion, regrettably, that Manitoba's not interested in partnering with Saskatchewan. This is patently untrue. I've had a number of conversations with Minister McMorris, a stand-up individual if ever there was one, who says clearly that their process will not proceed unless the evidence shows that it is safe and ethical to do so. If the project—or the study that they are setting up has the qualities in it that fulfill this multi-site approach that the medical researchers are asking for, absolutely, Manitoba will be involved, as we have said all along in our discussions."

I think it's incredibly important for me to say, on the record, I remain really worried about this. I believe that there are so many compelling stories out there from individuals that have sought the liberation therapy in a variety of venues. It's almost impossible, once you speak with these people, not to believe every single word that they say about the improvements that they're feeling in their lives, and I'm so glad for that, for those people. I have also heard doctors and researchers who are so passionately convinced that everything that's being said is placebo effect and that there's no real benefit

to this therapy. And there is what can truthfully be described as a war going on, and it's hurtful to people on both sides. And I worry about this all the time, because on the margins of this very real and passionate war are people that want to make a lot of money and people that have virtually no training from anybody that's reputable, and that have had no particular education that medical experts can show me—maybe they're just not aware of it—are, in various jurisdictions, performing this therapy on individuals who are hoping for their lives. It's exploitation, and it terrifies me.

And I have said all along consistently that I really, truly hope that this is the silver bullet because of all the people that I've met, because of people that I love that are living with MS, and because there has been such courageous advocacy on the part of people that just want to have profound and meaningful change for people living with MS.

But I'm afraid that tensions have run so high in this discussion, that the focus has been taken off of the value of getting a clinical result. A clinical result that, by the way, might come back very well, with an answer that says, no, this isn't it, and people's dreams are going to be dashed. But even if that answer is no, which I hope it isn't, patients deserve to know. And if there was some way that the two sides could come together and use that energy to go forward in a good, clinical, reputable trial that can answer this mystery, then I think we're all going to be better off.

And I believe that's why, in partnership with my colleagues, we were able to come to the conclusion that we had enough at our fingertips from medical experts that we trusted, that yes, we could go ahead and have the Manitoba Health Research Council have this call for proposals to really try to leverage our provincial counterparts into engaging in this multi-site clinical trial that may ultimately dash the dreams of people living with MS, but at least we'll know. And I believe that Canadians and people around the world are owed that and I believe that Canada is well positioned to be a leader in this area. And, frankly, I would hope this could be one place where we could lay down our swords, and we could come together, and say, okay, game on, let's figure this out together.

Insulin pumps: we have worked, from the outset, to provide more services every year to expand funding and coverage for items every year. You know, in non-election years, you know, we've announced new initiatives like the fertility tax credit,



the caregiver tax credit, you know, our family doctor plan. I could go on and on but it will annoy the member and so I'll respect her and not do that.

And we certainly have worked in negotiations, you know, through our units in Manitoba Health, to achieve costing for coverage of insulin pumps for pediatric patients. And it has been, I admit, a longer negotiation than we would have wanted but an important one.

And we're—we indicated, in the budget speech, that we are going to do this and that the coverage is going to start this year—and I commend the people in my department that have worked so hard to enable us to be able to have this within the context of our budget.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister be more specific in terms of when that program will actually begin? And, well, I'll leave it at that.

\* (16:40)

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, we believe that this is going to be happening in the coming months, hopefully earlier. We're working with partners, including folks at Children's Hospital, to solidify what our process is going to be, so sooner rather than later is our hope. There's still some work to be done.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And I'm—I was really happy that that was our first election promise in 2009 was to fund insulin pumps for kids. Having met a lot of those kids at our news conference, it was very compelling. I am happy that this government borrowed that idea. I think it's the right thing to do because I think, you know, for the kids that need it or want it, and with a doctor's advice, and the family's willingness to get into it, you know, it could be the right thing for a lot of kids. And down the road, too, besides improving their lifestyle and the quality of life, there will be better control of diabetes and therefore, you know, could end up saving the system money as well. So I think it's a win-win all the way around.

Going back to the issue of clinical trials for MS, you know, I agree with the minister that it's a very passionate issue out there. Clinical trials, I think, are needed in order to find out what the answer is, and it might not be that this procedure is working. You know, you hear now that people are thinking maybe the, you know, MS itself leads to narrowed veins, you know, versus narrowed veins are causing MS so, but that's why I think the clinical trials need to be done. And when you meet people with MS you—and

you see how they are forced to live, you can appreciate why they're doing what they're doing.

That's why I think the clinical trials are important. I don't know what the answers are going to be but at least we're doing it—you know we would do it here in a controlled environment. As the minister said, it could prevent exploitation. We could ensure the environments are safe and that's why, I think, that you're not going to stop the wave so I think we need to do the clinical trials, in order to find out if it is something good or not. But that's why I feel, with Manitoba having the numbers of people in this province with MS, we were a very capable province of doing the trials.

I'm glad to see that we're partnering with Saskatchewan, and since then I've heard that Yukon has joined in as well so, you know, I'm not sure I agreed with the minister that we necessarily needed a pan-Canadian way of looking at it when Manitoba and Saskatchewan certainly had the compelling numbers to be able to, I think, do a good clinical trial. You know, certainly the input from the other provinces is going to be helpful but we certainly have the, you know, the number of patients here that could provide us the information that we need.

Can the minister indicate, again, why they waited until the eve of an election to announce cochlear implants? I recall asking about cochlear implants a number of years ago. It would be so beneficial, I think, to have it done here.

Can she indicate why it took so long, again, for this program to be, you know, put into place?

**Ms. Oswald:** There are a few issues in there that I'd like to address, and I didn't realize 2000—that that was the beginning of your election platform, the insulin pumps. I know that the member said—I think it was, you know, last year around this time that in the coming months we'd be seeing their health platform. And, you know, one might say she's, you know, broken a promise to make a promise, but I look forward with bated breath to, you know, what that platform is going to be.

But, if I can say respectfully to the member—and, you know, I've listened to members opposite, you know, crowing from their seats about, you know, stealing their ideas—I would say that, respectfully, our decision on insulin pumps came from the families. We meet with them too, and the Diabetes Association, you know, has advice for us, doctors that are dealing with patients that require insulin,

particularly pediatric patients. We get good advice from these families too.

And I would just caution the member on the issue of taking credit for, you know, providing government with ideas when, you know, there are a variety of sources and people that we speak to that offer us good advice. And I think that I have been, you know, pretty forthcoming with my appreciation and I'll go right out there and say praise for the member on issues where, you know, I believe she deserves a lot of credit in bringing something forward.

I know that when the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) and, you know, the lovely Mrs. Koley came forward and told the very compelling and sad story of the loss of her husband to colorectal cancer, and the four of us—one, two, three, four of us—sat together and really talked about how we could work together to move forward in more testing, FOBT testing for colorectal cancer, and as a result, you know, Manitoba has become a leader in that area.

And I hope that I've always been, you know, quite forthcoming with the fact that I believe that the member from Charleswood was a partner in that. Mrs. Koley, I mean, deserves a lot of credit in sharing her story. You know, I don't always agree with the member, but I think that, you know, I've said on the record—it's got to be three or four times now—that I believe she deserves credit for bringing that forward and driving it forward, you know, helping shape the idea. And, you know, I give myself some credit too for being able to further shape how we would go forward.

But it's, I think, just a little self-congratulatory by half to say government wouldn't have done this but not for the Conservatives in Manitoba. It's—it just doesn't acknowledge children with diabetes and their parents that have come to us and talked to us. And so I offer that up as a friendly caution.

I would also say on the issue of MS and the, you know, disagreement between us on pan-Canadian or multi-site trial, of course we considered the option of a Manitoba-Saskatchewan partnership exclusively. And certainly at that time the advice that we were getting from medical experts in terms of, would this be a sample that the rest of the world or the rest of the nation would buy into once the results came forward, and the advice we were getting was, no, it might not be sufficient, which is why we worked hard to try to develop a multi-environmental trial.

And we still believe that this would be the best way to go.

And so, again, I would say to the member that we pursued as many options as we could in trying to push the agenda forward, always trying to bear in mind that patients had to be safe, the constructed studies had to be ethical and, indeed, we wanted to make sure we were doing what was right by patients.

\* (16:50)

So, finally, I believe, the member also made mention of the issue of cochlear implants. You know, and, again, you know, we have been working with our partners in the regional health authority, getting advice from people at Central Speech and Hearing, advice from Partners in Education, advice from experts like Dr. Leitao, getting advice from adults who live with hearing loss and, of course, parents of children who are hearing impaired.

And we have paid very close attention to the development of a program and the costs therein, and we certainly found that we were now at a time where the business case for doing cochlear implants was very, very strong right here in Manitoba. There was a time when there were fewer people seeking the procedure and paying for out-of-province travel did not compare to the costs that we would incur here in Manitoba. But now we are well able to say there's not only a very strong business case, but we have spectacular professionals—as I say, Dr. Leitao, Dr. Harding, you know, really terrific and skilled people that are ready for the cochlear implants and the bone-anchored hearing aids.

So we have come forward with the announcement that this will happen here in Manitoba. It's not for the cynical reasons suggested by the member opposite, but because we want to do what we can to move programs forward for Manitobans. We're not going to stop pushing forward on initiatives on which we have worked for some years because we're going to be accused of ulterior motives. You know, give me what you got; I can take it. But for the families, for people that need cochlear implants, this is a good announcement.

**Mrs. Driedger:** You know, just to be clear with the minister. We're actually happy when she takes our ideas, and we're actually happy when she flip-flops if she's flipping to a better policy. So we don't mind it. I don't believe I used the word "steal," because I'm happy that the government thinks that our ideas were good, and we've got lots more of that coming from

where these came from. *[interjection]* You will. I see the NDP are anxious to hear our health policy. I think they'll really like what they finally hear. Well, there's lots there, believe me.

Can the minister indicate: Is there or was there a current review related to regionalization going on or related to the administrative structure and regionalization? Was there a particular study that might have been going on in the last year or two?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, again, you know, I don't want to get entirely cranked up on the issue of flip-flop, but, yes, I'm getting there.

The issue on MS, I think we've spent, you know, the better part of an hour talking about how our position was always clear and it was on the side of the safety of patients—not, you know, invoking Tommy Douglas on the front steps of the Legislatures or going on radio sounding like, you know, one might go into the operating room and perform the intervention himself, as I've heard from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). It's irresponsible and opportunistic; there are no other words for it.

You know, when we talk about flip-flops, I heard recently and read the Leader of the Opposition and the member's party suggesting that no nurses were fired in the 1990s and that they simply transferred there to new positions; you know, not a body was lost. And I just actually can't believe that these kinds of claims can be made—again, the mother of all flip-flops, there's so much evidence available to the contrary.

In March of 1999, the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that the Conservative government had eliminated 1,100 nursing jobs over the past six years. Again, that's March 12th, 1999.

In '98, the Manitoba Nurses Union—*[interjection]* Well, now she's calling the *Winnipeg Free Press* a liar; you know, let the minute reflect she—oh, she said that they had no proof—*[interjection]*. I will correct the record to say that she's not calling them a liar, it's just that they printed something with no proof.

In 1998, the Manitoba Nurses' Union reported that already 1,000 nurses have been laid off by government. That was the Health Care in Manitoba Report, Manitoba Nurses' Union, April 1998.

And when the nursing colleges responsible for licensing nurses, not for running in election

campaigns, when they got together and had counted all the bodies, what they found that the numbers of—the number of nurses that had been practising had dropped by 1,573. In 1999, there were 14,092 nurses practising in Manitoba, which was a steep decline from 15,665 in 1992.

So, if we're going to talk about flip-flops, saying, oh, we never fired a thousand nurses, on the eve of an election, one might wonder. And, just yesterday, just 24 hours ago, we got into a discussion where there was a backflip on the subject of what the Conservative Party's views are on the subject of privatization. There was a claim made that, we've never said anything other than publicly funded surgeries being potentially done in a private clinic.

I read into the *Hansard*—re-read the quotes from her leader, the quotes from her colleagues indicating that there was a vast openness to looking at a two-tier system, and, again, I have to say that, you know, in the last weeks before we're coming to an election campaign, for the Conservatives to cuddle up to the NDP and say, golly, we love what you've been doing all along, and that's exactly how we would do it. And, my goodness, you know, isn't that—I mean, this, by definition is a flip-flop, I would say to the member from Charleswood. If you open up the dictionary, look up the phrase "flip-flop," you actually see photographs of members from the Conservative Party on health policy.

So, again, you know, I gave her one comment on flip-flop; I gave her two—but if we're really going to dig in here and talk about who is changing their position, I think, on the broad issues of, golly, we didn't fire any nurses, say the Conservatives, or gosh, we don't really think private insurance or private health care is anything we've ever believed in, I think that, you know, we need to really take a very close view at who's zoomin' who on the subject of the flip-flop.

And I think that we could have a healthy and lively debate on this subject. And I—and the member opposite, you know, promises that their health platform is coming. You know, it was comin' last year at this time; it was comin' round the mountain when she comes.

But, Mr. Chairperson, we still haven't had an up close and personal view, and I think there's a reason for that. I think that there's a reason that the Conservatives in Manitoba don't really want us to look under the hood. I think it's because they are quite concerned that Manitobans have long

memories. We can still see the visceral reactions in people when you just utter that—those two little words: Connie Curran. People bristle, bolt upright in the night, even, when they think about what health spending review really means.

And I think that there's got to be a reason that we have—*[interjection]* I'm bringin' it home, don't you worry. We have got to really ask ourselves why we haven't seen that up-close look at the platform that the member for Charleswood herself promised would be coming, you know, in the coming months, so very long ago, coming soon, you know, to a debate near you.

And I welcome the opportunity, Mr. Chair, because we know that if we want to really drill hard—

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

### EMPLOYEE PENSIONS AND OTHER COSTS

\* (14:50)

**Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to some semblance of order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of Employee Pensions and Other Costs.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** No, Mr. Chairperson, I think that most everybody is aware of what goes on in this division, that it provides a—that what we will talk about is an overview of employee pensions and costs, and I'm prepared to answer questions from the member.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you very much for that.

Does the honourable opposition critic have an opening statement of sorts?

**Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie):** No, I do not at this time. We can perhaps invite, now, the staff to the table and we can get started with the questions. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Sounds good to me.

Honourable staff, if you'd care to join us at the table. And maybe when they're settled, Minister, you can be kind enough and provide us all with introductions.

And just for the committee's information, as there is only one resolution, and thus only one piece

of this department to consider, there's no need to discuss whether or not to have a global discussion.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, I'm joined by two staff, Rick Stevenson, who is the ADM of Labour Relations, and Larry Grant, who is the director of Compensation.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Faurchou:** I do appreciate the opportunity to ask questions as it pertains to the civil service and by the role that they play in providing the services to all Manitobans.

I would like to ask the department as to when there was last a comprehensive review of additional benefits, and as they are described in the supplemental Estimates afforded the civil service, including the dental, vision, prescription drug, long-term disability, ambulance and hospital semi-private, and that particular program as it exists today and, how, if any change has been made over the past year.

And I would also like to ask as to whether or not the minister and her department is considering any renegotiation of contract with, I believe, Blue Cross. And when was the last time it was open to competitive bid for these particular benefits to civil servants?

\* (15:00)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairperson, there was a review and a renegotiation of the contract about four years ago. And what was—it was—when we hired a consultant to do the review, and it was determined that there would—that no benefit would be gained for what it would cost to change companies that we're working with.

And the other question the member asked, was there any increase in benefits in this last year—no, there was not. The increased cost would be just—the increased costs are just, you know, changing fees that happen every year, and so there is no real change in it. There was no benefit to changing to look at—there was no benefit in cost, was what the consultant advised.

**Mr. Faurchou:** Then the further question was, when is the next anticipated review?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The Treasury Board and the Compensation Committee have directed that there be another review, so plans are in place, and they're

putting in place the framework for this review, and it should happen within the next year.

**Mr. Faurshou:** I thank the minister for her response.

And perhaps my first question should have been as to the number of civil servants currently covered by the civil service pension plan, as we are studying at the present time?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Everything? *[interjection]* The plan covers 32,000 employees. That includes the Crown corporations like Manitoba Hydro, Liquor, Lotteries, all of the Crowns are included as well, and there are about 16,000 retirees drawing a pension now. *[interjection]* In addition to—yes, there's 32 active members who are working now, contributing to the plan, and about 16,000 retirees.

**Mr. Faurshou:** Could perhaps she enlighten the committee as to the changes over the years as far as the number of individuals covered by the pension plan as it relates to the last page in our supplementary Estimates book? There has been significant reduction in number of dollars allocated to—as the government portion—to the pension plan and other related costs over the last five years.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** This does not reflect less employees. What it reflects is the way we have decided to fund employee pensions and the share—government's share of the pension. Member's aware that we established a trust account to cover some of the liabilities, and now the funding for the pensions is coming out of that trust account too, and that's why you see a decline in the amounts of money on that chart—amounts that are paid, because it's just been set aside in a trust account to—and now the money comes out of that trust account.

**Mr. Faurshou:** I still would like to ask the minister, though, in reflection of the particular chart which is on page 18, could the minister give me the respective employee numbers for the five years that are referred to by the chart?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** You know, if you—I said earlier there was about 32,000 employees, and in the direct civil service there hasn't—over the last few years there's been very little change in the number of civil servants. There could have been a little bit of change in the corporations, but these numbers reflect about 32,000 employees that are in the pension plan right through because it's what it was a few years ago; not much changed so the numbers are pretty much the same.

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Faurshou:** Yes, and the number of retirees, also if it is stable we, as a civil service, evolves with new hirings and because of retirement is that number remain fairly stable as well?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** We average about 500 retirees a year and so over the five-year period that would be about 2,500 people. At the same time as those people retire there will be people coming into the plan and so, again, there will be some increase. There's about a thousand more in the plan and about 500 a year that retire, so are in the plan but a different way.

**Mr. Faurshou:** Where I was going with the question I was wondering whether or not the number of retirees engaged in the plan is continuing to grow. Obviously, persons do pass away, and whether or not there is more in persons now being served by the plan in the retirement component than there has been in years past.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The ratio has changed. I think we all recognize that life expectancy is changing. People are living longer. They're drawing on pension for a longer period of time. The ratio used to be about four to one. The ratio now is about two to one, so it has changed. There is about double the people working in comparison to the number that are drawing on the plan.

**Mr. Faurshou:** That is a substantive evolution of between those working but, again, it is definitely a trend across the nation, not just here in Manitoba. Following up on the minister's answer to the chart on page 18 about the expenditure historically from—to serve the pension plan, it is, as I understand it, substantive monies were placed into a trust fund to cover off the government's liability. What is the current government's liability as it exists today in relationship to the pension plan?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, our net pension liability is \$1.716 billion.

**Mr. Faurshou:** So the unfunded portion from the government contribution at the—stands at this juncture in time is \$1.716 billion. Is that correct?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** That's right. Our net pension liability is \$1.716 billion, and that is an amount that has built up over time because the pensions have not been funded.

But, if you look at the previous year, in 2010-11, the amount was \$1.778 billion, but we have put in place a policy where we are now funding the

pensions in each department. So the—each year the amount is reduced. So you can see a reduction over the past few years and—because of the changes we have made to fund parts of the pension.

**Mr. Faurshou:** Well, I do appreciate that the government liability is being reduced and, without question, is positive information. I would trust, though, that it's for reasons of wise investments and that the additional monies has been put into trust through good return on investment, and that is going in the right direction for certain.

Now, as it pertains to the pension plan, do you see at what juncture in time has a projection been done as to when the pension will be fully funded or is it—have the minister not done that calculation?

\* (15:20)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Just for the member's information about where the net pension liabilities are, in 2006-07 it was \$3.493 billion and it has slowly—each year we have been funding it, and that's how we came down to 1.7 that I mentioned. So there is a plan, and we're working to pay it down.

There was a consultant that looked at the pension plan, and that consultant's recommendation was that governments should never fund their pensions more than 75 per cent. That is the recommendation from the consultant, because it is different than a private company. But also I think there's been experience that have shown that when there is surpluses, when pensions have extra money in it, people want to, perhaps, reduce their premiums or draw more on it, and so we've taken the advice of the consultant. So the member's question is is it ever going to be funded to 100 per cent; that's not the recommendation of the consultant.

**Mr. Faurshou:** And so could the minister continue? How far away are we from the 75 per cent target?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairperson, \$1.7 billion. I mean, we've been making progress on this file, and there is a ways to go. You have to remember, for the number of years that this was an unfunded liability, this is not something that can be addressed overnight. We are making progress on it. But I would say we are about halfway there—or better than half way, my staff tell me.

**Mr. Faurshou:** Okay. I'm glad we clarified that because, when I wrote down the 1.7, I thought that that was to 100 per cent, whereas it's the 75 per cent

target is reflected in the 1.716. I thank you for the clarification.

I think, Mr. Chair, we can move to the motion. I will, though, leave with one comment that I promised I would share with the minister from a dedicated civil servant of 35-plus years, who had a necessity of repair to a crown—dental work—that it was found that it did not qualify under the current plan. I know that these are negotiated and that they're under contract with the civil services; however, if it had not been for his spouse that was covered by a charter bank pension plan, they would've had a great deal of difficulty in affording the repair.

And it is, I think, incumbent, not only for those that are negotiating on behalf of the employees, but that of government, to do a comprehensive evaluation as to the fairness of the allocated benefits afforded to our retirees. And I have the utmost admiration and respect for those that serve Manitobans through their working careers. It is a very noble profession in the civil service, and I do believe that we as elected officials should bear some responsibility towards making certain that our civil servants, upon retirement, are treated fairly.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairperson, the issue that the member has raised is about crowns being covered, and they are for civil servants when they're working. However, retirees have their own plan, and I believe that they have—the retirees have a Blue Cross plan. So, once they leave government, they are in a plan that we do not determine and do not fund. It's their plan. So that is the difference. But, for civil servants who are employed by the government, that kind of dental work is covered. But, when they retire and move into the retiree's plan, that's—the government has nothing to do with that one.

**Mr. Faurshou:** Well, then, perhaps, the minister could enlighten the committee as to what does transpire. How do the retirees negotiate their benefit plan? Is it done independently? Do we afford counsel? Are the retirees left unto their own to negotiate collectively or independently? Could the minister enlighten the committee as to the actual procedure as it exists at the present time?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, once the individuals have retired, government doesn't fund their plan and they don't make any decisions on it. But my understanding is that there is a liaison committee with MGEU, that works on these issues and they negotiate what the contribution will be and what the benefits will be. But they are no longer government

employees. The government doesn't pay for it, so the government doesn't have any say in those pensions. But they continue to work with their union, with the MGEU, to negotiate a plan for their members. But that's no different than a teachers' plan. The teachers have a plan once they retire; civil servants have a plan, and they work through that with their organizations.

**Mr. Faurichou:** Well, I thank the minister for her answers. So I do have an answer to this retiree's inquiry that he should take it up with his union as to the particular package which has been—they've assisted in negotiating.

Mr. Chair, I'm prepared to move to motion.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable Minister, any final answer to the comment?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** No, I'm fine.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, I thank the committee and the staff, who will now read to the reading of the one and only resolution.

Resolution 6.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,817,000 for Employee Pensions and Other Costs, Employee Pensions and Other Costs, for the fiscal year, March 31st, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This concludes these Estimates.

**ENABLING APPROPRIATIONS AND  
OTHER APPROPRIATIONS**

**Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer):** Moving right along. Honourable member for Portage.

**Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie):** As moving towards Manitoba Enabling Appropriations supplementary information, the minister can call and introduce her staff—if she please.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Just before recognizing the honourable minister, I've been reminded we do have a set process to go through. So, for the sake of the good folks in *Hansard*, let me inform us all that this section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of Enabling Appropriations and Other Appropriations.

I'm also obliged to ask if the minister has an opening statement.

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** No, Mr. Chairman, I'm prepared to proceed on this.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Very good. Thank you.

Honourable opposition critic, do you have an opening statement to make at all?

**Mr. Faurichou:** Not at this time, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay, thank you very much. Now we'll ask the minister to introduce her staff, if she pleases.

\* (15:30)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I'm joined at the table by Lynn Cowley, co-ordinator of financial reporting, and David Woodbury, associate secretary to Treasury Board.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Very good. Thank you for that.

Another quick item for the committee's consideration, do you wish to proceed in a chronological or a global discussion?

**Mr. Faurichou:** If we could, in a global fashion, please.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Global fashion's been requested.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** That's fine by me.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All right. It is officially noted that we'll proceed in a global discussion. Thank you very much for that, everybody.

Floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Faurichou:** I would like to ask the minister, as being that there is substantive change from previous years in as it relates to a reduction in anticipated expenditure from last year's \$112 million down to \$42 million, perhaps the minister could give a little more specifics as it pertains to the line items in the various departments. I'll leave it to her discretion as to what line she would like to highlight the reductions.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** When you look at the document, the member is accurate in indicating that there are some significant reductions. These reductions are related to the elimination of the two-year federal stimulus fund, and that is the infrastructure—that come to an end in '10-11. There is infrastructure renewal, which is \$29.7 million, and the labour market agreement of \$17.2 million. Both of those are related to stimulus.

And then we have a decrease of \$25 million and this is the wait time reduction program. There was a five-year commitment of \$155 million from the federal government to help with reduction of waste—

wait times, and there's a decrease of \$25 million because that fund has been fully expended.

So those are the major reductions, the reductions that were put in place to address specific issues, specific programs. They've expired now, so that's why we have that kind of reduction.

**Mr. Faurshou:** I thank the minister for highlighting those two particular programs and, yes, indeed, that is the majority of the reduction that is detailed in the supplementary book.

As it pertains to the Canada-Manitoba agreements which the minister referred to specific programming, we do have agreements with the federal government in relationship to treaty land entitlements. They—we've all learned over the past year of substantive treaty land entitlement settlements, and yet the figure is—remains constant.

Is the reflection in the Estimates that of the lands going into reserve status, away from previously taxable municipal and provincial land? And, if it is, then I would like to ask the minister as to whether or not there should be an adjustment to this figure. Basis that there will be many more acres, if you will, hectares if you're referring to the new metric system of—it should be increased because there will be a fairly sizable number of hectares going into Crown reserve status, and no longer eligible for provincial and municipal taxation.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The \$500,000 is not a change, and it reflects planning expenditures, and completion of land transfers to reserve status expenditures related to administration and co-ordination of the TLE, and memorandums of understanding and compensation to municipalities for tax losses.

And there is—that is—no—there's no change because that's anticipated that there will be very similar costs that will be needed this year as far as those negotiations and transfers are completed.

**Mr. Faurshou:** Perhaps I'm not understanding clearly, but as more land is transferred into Crown reserve, this figure, as it relates to compensation to municipalities, in my calculations, should be 'concreasing' year over year. It's a continuous addition, rather than deletion from.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The responsibility of this framework agreement on treaty land entitlement is under the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, and that's where we would have to get a little bit more detail. But this is the amount that the department has

identified for what they will need for the existing year, for transactions that will happen within the year.

**Mr. Faurshou:** I thank the minister for her clarification.

I'd like to move further to the projected requirement of Labour and Immigration. There is a substantive increase there year over year. Are we going to see a greater number of persons applying for residency here in Manitoba through the nominee program or other—various other immigration channels?

\*(15:40)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** As the member knows, immigration—our immigration is increasing in this province and we're working very hard to get more immigrants here, and this appropriation reflects expenditures of 6.285, and this money will be offset by anticipated revenues associated with interest earned from the federal immigration investor program and the Provincial Nominee Program. Funds will be allocated to projects to support the provincial's Growing Through Immigration strategy, and these funds will be used by various departments to help with the settlement and long-term retention of immigrants.

So there's funds that will be used by Labour and Immigration, funds for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, and funds for Advanced Education and Literacy, obviously, to help people with their settlements, to help people with their language, particularly English as a—English language training, which some of them may not have. So all of these funds are used in those areas, and there's an increase because we anticipate that—and our goal is to have more immigrants coming to this province.

**Mr. Faurshou:** Could the minister perhaps elaborate as to last year's number versus the anticipated number of immigrants this year?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** For clarification, is the member asking on the increase of numbers of immigrants that we're anticipating? Our goal is—I—we would have to—in this appropriation, what we're talking about is the additional dollars for immigration projects, and that's an increase of 615, but—\$615,000—but the actual number of targets—but—what is targeted is—it's not here, not in this department.

**Mr. Faurshou:** I appreciate, as I mentioned earlier, that it is for—detail is in Immigration and Labour.



I'd like to move on to—another substantial line is in Emergency Expenditures. We see a substantial increase and was this very forward thinking on behalf of the government? Being from Portage la Prairie and seeing the substantive investment in improved flood-control structures over the past couple of months, and, most specifically, in the last few days.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, we knew very early on that we were going to have a flood. Nobody knew to what extent the flood would be, but we made investments in the previous year in preparation and started the work early on in equipment. And then we looked at the number we had for expenditures in 2010, and that was 28—2010-11 we had the expenditure of—we put in—had \$28 million in there, then, looking at it and comparing to what was—what we thought would be needed if we had a flood similar to 2009, we made the change and we put in place \$58 million for this year.

Obviously, things have even changed more than what we had thought they would, so that is—that increased number that we see in the other appropriations is what we anticipated might be the costs if we had a flood at the 2000—about the 2009 level. So that's a fairly significant increase. Obviously, there's going to have to be additional money put in there as well.

**Mr. Faurchou:** I would concur with the minister, as the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) has already alluded to an excess of this figure just on the Assiniboine in and around Portage la Prairie. So I appreciate the minister recognizes that.

Is there further comment the minister would like to make in relationship to anything else in the appropriations. I do see that there is a constant figure on the East Side Road Authority, and is that figure remaining, in her anticipation, as accurate?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** These are—this is our share of the administrative cost and for the East Side Road Authority, and it is—the projection is that the costs will be very similar this year as they were to last year and that's why the numbers are the same.

**Mr. Faurchou:** Within this section, we do have a second supplement Estimates book as it relates to the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund. Is there additional staff the minister requires to discuss the elements within this document?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** No, I'm comfortable with the staff here at the table that they can answer these questions.

Again, when you look at the book that's been tabled, the numbers are very similar, and what happens is that the Department of Conservation puts in place a list of proposals that will be funded under this category and that—those—that proposal may vary slightly from year to year if additional projects are added in or some projects may not be in for a following year and—but it is—the number that's proposed for this year is the same as it was last year.

**Mr. Faurchou:** I thank the minister for the information as programs do have life expectancies and do—new ones added and old ones retired, however, I'm wondering about the minister's flexibility in this particular category. Outside of the last two years, has there been additional allocations to this particular fund or has it been—remained fairly consistent? The booklet does indicate that there has been some variations, but if the minister—where does the minister see this particular fund going in the future?

\*(15:50)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The numbers, over time, have stayed fairly consistent. As a government, we see value in the programs that are funded through this fund. But there is—we see a number and then there's programs that are designated, and there is some flexibility when the—within those programs. There's an open category that has money in it that's flexible, and then there might be programs or projects that Conservation has identified that may not be able to be carried out in that particular year or something may happen with the program.

So there is money there and, in addition to that, there is the ecoTrust fund that's also identified here that allows for flexibility for different projects.

So I think the question was: Is there some flexibility in the program; can money be moved? Yes, but the amount in the fund stays quite consistent to what it has been over the last few years.

**Mr. Faurchou:** I thank the minister for her answer. And the budgeted amount versus the actual amount has been very close and consistent over the years, and so I understand the accounting.

I will, though, look, in one particular program, for committee's information, that is no longer mentioned in this category, is that of the Environmental Farm Plan program, which was a

fully prescribed, as former agricultural minister will know, and that was not renewed. I would like to express to the minister's attention, that, as she's well aware, was a very positive program just simply because of the fully subscribed nature, and I wonder whether or not the minister has knowledge as to whether this program will be reinitiated, because the farming community is anxious to continue to subscribe.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairperson, the member is accurate when he says the Environmental Farm Plan's—has changed. The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives is working on these. They have become more focused. The original Environmental Farm Plan was quite broad, and a decision has been made to be—make them more focused on specific areas.

And the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Mr. Struthers) is in his Estimates or getting ready to start his Estimates very soon, and I would encourage the member to ask that question of the minister and obtain more details.

But I can indicate there are still environmental programs for farmers, but they have become much more targeted than the previous program was.

**Mr. Faurchou:** Well, I thank the minister for her response, and, indeed, it does morph into a more targeted specific area as we want to guide those that are looking to make the environment a more important element within their operations, and look forward to seeing that continue.

The other portion in here that has changed as well is the recyclable support. Again, industry has taken a more substantive role in the recycling industry.

I would like, though, to ask the minister: Has there been any guidance given to our Crown corporations, i.e., Manitoba Liquor Control Commission, on the recycling side of things to engage more than they are currently on the recycling component?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** There has indeed been a change in the recycling program and it has shifted over to the industry to take responsibility for more of the containers that they use, and I think that that's the right way to move. The industry has to have more responsibility, and we're working through that. All the details have been announced and certainly there are, just as with anything, there are—there was a little

bit of growing pain, but we seem to be working through that and the industry is leading on it.

With regard to the Manitoba liquor commission, I would encourage the member to raise that question with the minister responsible for the liquor commission. I am not privy to that—to information that he is requesting.

**Mr. Faurchou:** Mr. Chairperson, I believe we can move to motion.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Minister, any further statements?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** No, I think I'm fine on this one, thank you very much. And I want to thank my staff that has been at the table both for this and for the employees' pension plan for providing me with the information, and I thank my critic for his questions. They are important questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you all. We have a number of resolutions to consider, which I will now read out.

Resolution 26.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$22,030,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Enabling Vote, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 26.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,400,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 26.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,250,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Justice Initiatives, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 26.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$14,625,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Internal Service Adjustments, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 26.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20,555,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Capital Assets—Internal Service Adjustments, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Moving now to section 27.

Resolution 27.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$58,000,000 for Other Appropriations, Emergency Expenditures, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 27.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$500,000 for Other Appropriations, Allowance for Losses and Expenditures Incurred by Crown Corporations and Other Provincial Entities, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 27.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,651,000 for Other Appropriations, Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This concludes the Estimates for this section—sorry, the Estimates for the—for Appropriations and Other Appropriations.

\* (16:00)

### CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

**Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer):** And we will now move this section of the Committee of Supply to consider the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission):** Mr. Chairperson, I'm not going to take much time for an opening statement, just to take this opportunity to recognize the civil servants in this province for the tremendous job that they do. In particular, I want to talk about the civil—I want to recognize those civil servants who have been working diligently and putting their very best efforts forward on the flood.

And I would like to recognize them; I'd like to pay tribute to them for the work that they are doing to—and I don't think it can be understated. So I point out the flood, but there have been other occasions when emergencies have hit us or something unforeseen has come up, and our civil servants are

always there to take up the charge, to make sure that programs are delivered, to ensure that the best possible service can be provided to Manitobans, and I would just like to say that.

I also would—so with those few comments, I'm prepared to move ahead and I can introduce the staff after the member from Portage la Prairie makes his opening comments.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the honourable minister for those opening remarks.

Does the official opposition critic have an opening statement?

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** I would like to echo the minister's statements as it relates to the extraordinary effort that the civil service provides to Manitobans. It—we think concurrently of the flood because we are the focus of the nation as we speak, with the flood waters of the Assiniboine River being managed out in Portage la Prairie and along the river channel east and west from that point.

But every single day of the year the civil service provides Manitobans with outstanding service, and I believe that there's always room for improvement, and there's always individuals that are having a bad day. But on the overall, I do appreciate the—and respect the civil service and those that dedicate a career to Manitobans.

As it relates to the supplemental expenditures pertaining to the civil service, I would like to ask the minister as to the changes within the Civil Service Commission. Has there been restructuring, reorg, over the past year, as it is described in the organizational schedule 2, page 5, of the supplemental book?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairperson, I'd like to begin by introducing my staff that's here with me here at the table. We have Nish Verma, who is the assistant deputy minister of Corporate Human Resource Operations; Nancy Carroll, assistant deputy minister, Corporate Human Resource Services; and Rhonda Bistyak, director of Finance and Comptroller for the commission.

The member asked about restructuring, and there is—there's one new position, and that's the Financial and Administrative Services that's been added, but this restructuring that we've got here took place last year, so there—other than that one position, it is the same as it was last year when the rest of the

reorganization took place. We have—and the reason for this additional position is the additional responsibility that the commission has taken on.

**Mr. Faurshou:** I thank the minister for her response. It's—you try and think of everything when you're doing the major reorg and sometimes you find, after things are all said and done, that there needs to be a little bit of twiggling here and there.

We do have two vacancies as indicated in the reorg chart, our Respectful Workplace advisor and Corporate Program Audit. Is there vacancies at those positions or is it just currently an error on page?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Those positions aren't vacant, but as the org chart is laid out, we only put the names in of the directors and the ones that fall below that. We don't put names in, so the Respectful Workplace advisor and the Corporate Plan Audit are filled positions, but their names aren't listed on the chart.

**Mr. Faurshou:** Is—so how many persons are we referring to and is the minister prepared to add that to the record?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** There's one person in each role. Yes, in the corporate—the audit position is Ramon Khan, and in—the Respectful Workplace advisor is Anita Thompson.

**Mr. Faurshou:** The change in staffing is perhaps not reflected in the accounting component in executive support. Would perhaps maybe the minister provide to the committee where this is accounted for?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I'm not sure if I'm going to answer this question exactly the way the member wants, but if it isn't, well, he can repeat his question. But I think what he's asking is if you've added another position, how can you keep the same number? And what had happened was that there was one position in an office manager position that was then changed, and that FTE was put over and used in another position.

\* (16:10)

**Mr. Faurshou:** In the reorganization, as it's taken place, I do believe that the charting, then, of the Civil Service Commission over the five year, it is noted that the bar graph has been adjusted to reflect the actuals. Am I correct in reading that?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Are you—can you tell me, Mr. Chairman, if the member is referring to schedule 7?

When the reorganization took place, there was new responsibilities that came to the department, and

that was reorganized to reflect those new positions, and, if you look at it, this chart reflects when the numbers came—when the new additional responsibilities came in, and the dollars—the change in dollar value of salaries and expenditures related to those changes, and that's—when you look at this chart, it says all funding and FTEs relating to Human Resource Services have been transferred to the department of the Civil Service Commission through the '09-10, and the adjusted vote reflects that.

**Mr. Faurshou:** I thank the minister for her response, and I believe that it does, indeed, reflect accurately the growth that has taken place in the salaried positions, as she explained.

I really wanted to just make a clarification on that in that the growth that's indicated in the plan is accurate, and I know it would've been a lot of work to put together this graph, and I compliment the staff for doing so, because it accurately accounts for historical when there's such a substantive reorganization.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The department did do a lot of work when they took over these responsibilities, and, if you look at the chart, this went back, as well, reflecting what the costs were when the positions were in other departments, and this really does compare the actual costs that were there when it was in other departments and the costs now.

So it is an apples-to-apples reflection of the responsibilities where they were and where they are now.

**Mr. Faurshou:** I do not want to understate my respect and understanding for those engaged in the reorganization and bringing it up to current data that is accurate that we have before us this afternoon. I really understand the amount of work that's gone into it.

I would like to ask the minister, as it pertains to the civil service, we are trying to engage young people and do have various internship programs. Could the minister perhaps enlighten the committee as to the uptake of the internships, managerial and other positions of what we believe will be the deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers of the future?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Currently, the department is running the Management Internship Program, and the member is right; these are very important programs that people come in and work in various departments

of government. They get a chance to work in more than one department to get the experience.

There's a lot of interest in government. We're going to fill six positions on this Management Internship Program; there was 550 applicants for that program, a huge interest in working for government.

But there is also another internship program that's a new initiative, and it's an internship program for persons with disabilities. It's one that we feel very strongly that we have to move forward and get more people with disabilities in the civil service. So there's 12 positions that have been identified, and this involves all departments. So, over the next couple of years, as these positions become vacant, then people will come in and positions will be advertised. But there is a tremendous amount of interest in these, and we will make our best efforts to have them filled, but they won't all happen at once. It will be over a period of time.

**Mr. Faurshou:** Mr. Chairperson, that is overwhelming: 550 applicants for six positions. Is the minister, then, considering an expansion of this program as to allowing this opportunity to be more broadly available to others?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The member has heard me say, many times in the budgeting process, that there are—we when we are putting this budget together during this five-year plan there are priorities that we are focusing on: front-line services, health care, education, training, security, crime—and there are some departments that aren't getting an increase.

\* (16:20)

And in this case, there—if there—as the economy turns around and as we have more dollars available for these kinds of things, certainly I would like to see more money put into this internship program. But for now, we are working with the six that have been identified. That's within the budget, to do those. But we also, as I said, have the internship for people with disabilities and an internship program for Aboriginal people. So there are a few programs there, but on the Management Internship Program, for now, that's the money we have in this department to—and certainly my hope would be that, as revenues improve, as we come back into balance, that we—and our economy grows and we have more money, we will be able to put more money here.

**Mr. Faurshou:** I concur with the minister related to—she anticipated my next question on the disability

of—in that, unfortunately, some persons have to accommodate.

The minister did enlighten committee two years ago as to a target. And the minister reached this target? How has the progress been on hiring of persons with disabilities?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The government has a—in 2004 set out a benchmark of what we wanted to get to, and for persons with disabilities it was a 7 per cent. Within that we have an internal benchmark to get to 5 per cent by 2012.

Right now—when we started we—right now we are at 3.7 per cent for persons with disabilities, so that takes us to 586 individuals who have identified themselves as somebody with a disability. And so that number continues to grow, but we still have some—a ways to go to reach the full benchmark.

But we're—when you look at 3.7 per cent and a goal of getting to 5 per cent by 2012, we are moving in the right direction.

**Mr. Faurshou:** The minister is correct; we do have a ways to go.

I would like to move on to the Employee Assistance Program and ask the minister, there is some increase in resources in that direction, but I'm concerned about the Respectful Workplace initiative. It—I still believe that there is situations within the civil service where those individuals that bring forward concerns about the—either management practices or other employee-to-employee relationships, that there ends up being some retaliatory actions taken.

Is the minister working in this direction to see that more resources are allocated? It's minor, but I'd like the minister's comment in that respect.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Just before recognizing the minister for a reply, the honourable member for Portage has a suggestion to make, I believe?

**Mr. Faurshou:** I'd just like to perhaps leave to staff the preparation. I have two more questions before we leave this section. I would like the vacancy level within the civil service at the present time; that can be described by department or globally, if they prefer. And I would like to also dovetail on this question about Respectful Workplace with a question on the number of contacts the whistle-blower officer has had for—not quite correct terminology, but that's—I'm sure the staff understands.

\* (16:30)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** There's a couple of issues that the member talked about and there is—when there is a variety of supports for staff and—that are in place—and under this employment assistance program, it's about confidential counsel and there could be different areas. If there's—there could be short-term support that's offered free, if the individual has issues like issues with their work, issues with their family, things that they have to deal with on a short term.

And then there is the—when there is a concern about appropriate action in the workplace, then there is all the human resource staff, the professionals there can investigate those issues. The member talked about the Respectful Workplace advisor. The Respectful Workplace advisor trains all the managers, works with everybody in ensuring that the—there is a respectful workplace but there is—it crosses various departments.

In addition to that, the Labour Relations Division of the—of Treasury Board also works on the issue of a respectful workplace, and there—as I say, there's training in each of—with each of the departments and human resource people that are trained in this area to address concerns under the Respectful Workplace advisor, and it's all done very confidentially.

**Mr. Faurchou:** So the bottom line—is the minister satisfied that her department is doing enough to preserve good working relationships as they are today? Or—because I believe she is aware of a particular situation we discussed last year and that situation is yet to be resolved.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I believe so. The human resource counsellors know that this is a priority for us and we work very—they work very—there's a lot of training both at the staff—individual level, at the corporate level to ensure that this—that there is respect in the workplace.

We also work very closely with the unions, and I believe that we are addressing the concerns and this has been a change and there's much more work being done in this area. Other questions?

**Mr. Faurchou:** And as I mentioned to the minister, this dovetails into the area of The Public Interest Disclosure Act and the commission that operates under this legislation. Many concerns have been registered in the past year. Has her—is the minister aware?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The Public Interest Disclosure—or better known as the whistle-blower act—this is to facilitate disclosures and investigate any significant or major wrongdoing of a person's rights in the public service and it's to protect persons who want to make disclosures from having action taken against them. The act is intended to complement other protections that are already in place under existing statutes, agreements, policies and procedures.

The member indicated that there was many, many cases of—that were investigated. In actual fact, in 2010-11 there was no disclosures received within the government. To date there's been none. In '09-10, only one disclosure was received within government and the departmental investigation was concluded in February of 2011 with an outcome pending.

In 2008-09, no disclosures were received within government and in '07-08 only one disclosure was received within government. The department reviewed the disclosure and determined the matter raised did not constitute wrongdoing under the act. However, the department continues to review the matters raised within existing departmental procedures.

**Mr. Faurchou:** Mr. Chair, the—this act, I understand, covers our Crown corporations as well. Could she confirm that?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** If I could—we—according to what—a note I've got here, I'm not comfortable giving the answer that I've got here, so I would rather take that under advisement from the member and get back to him, okay?

**Mr. Faurchou:** The—further to that, I would like to ask the minister to also investigate as to whether the legislation, as it currently exists, covers those under contract to the government as well, and we can—if the minister wants to respond at a later date.

And the last question is the vacancy by department, and that could be provided at a later date, too, if she wants.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The vacancy rate of the Civil Service Commission is 3.4 per cent. I do not have the number here for the whole government. I can provide the member with that specific number.

That's in the Treasury Board division. We should have asked it in the last section when we had that staff at this table, and they would have given us an accurate number. But I will endeavour to provide that number for the member.

**Mr. Faurschou:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and staff. We can go to motion.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you very much, everyone.

We will now move to consideration of Resolution 17.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$21,615,000 for Civil Service Commission, Civil Service Commission, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 17.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$41,000 for Civil Service Commission, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

***Resolution agreed to.***

This concludes consideration of the Estimates for this department. I thank the minister and staff for their time with us. We will have a brief recess while we change the headlining acts at the front table here and reconvene in a moment.

*The committee recessed at 4:39 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 4:44 p.m.*

**FAMILY SERVICES AND  
CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer):** The committee will now come back to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates for the Department of Family Services and Consumer Affairs.

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

**Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie):** Perhaps the minister could introduce the staff at the table before we go any further, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Absolutely.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs):** I'm joined at the table by Grant Doak, the deputy minister, and Alexandra Morton, the assistant deputy minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs division.

**Mr. Faurschou:** Mr. Chair, for the record, it would be unfair for staff to come back at another date, and, currently, under the emergency measures situation that my constituency is under at the present time, this will be very short and direct and perhaps we could discuss at a, you know, at a later date and a briefing that—any other information.

So I will just hit a couple of highlights here at the present time. I'd like to jump right to the Claimant Advisor's Office as it pertains to MPI.

It is of grave concern regarding the lengthy wait that is in front of anyone entering into the appeal process at the present time.

Could the minister please advise as to what his department is considering to address this grave concern?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** The most recent update on this one shows that the cases have been significantly reduced in '10-11. There were 136 appeal files that were open there in February 2010, backlog appeal files reported in February 2010, compared to 30 files at the time of this report. So that—that's up to date, yes, as of April 16th.

So it's anticipated that we'll see this improvement reflected in the numbers as we proceed into '11-12. So when you look at what the work is that has gone on—well, I should just say the backlog represents files where significant appeal investigation work has not begun.

But the—this office started with four staff in '05, and we've now been able to increase it to nine regular FTE positions. And I understand the director, he's conducting file progress meetings quarterly with each advisor, looking at progress and strategizing on how to move ahead.

It should also be noted that it's not just the numbers. They don't just treat the numbers like every case is the same. I understand the director triages selected files for action plans and looking at, of course, whether the appeal has merit, and so it looks like it's moving in the right direction now.

**Mr. Faurschou:** Perhaps the minister could enlighten me as to the time frame. I've understood that there are some in that backlog component that are exceeding two years. Is that accurate information?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes, there could be varying times or time look-back periods for the different files. The member is accurate. It depends on the nature of the

file, the complexity of the file and what medical information is needed. As the member well appreciates, some of these claims can be very sizeable and complex, looking at issues such as, you know, lost wages where—and medical information where there's considerable conflict.

So every case is different, but the timeline, the look-back or the delay can vary significantly from case to case, but there may be some where there are—some that are two years or more.

**Mr. Faurshou:** I know the minister and I have chatted on this topic before, and it's just not a file, those are real people there. And I think it—we have to do what we can, and the minister, in initiating this office, I can't compliment him enough, because it allows persons the resources to do that.

\* (16:50)

I just wondered, is—the minister promised last year that we would be looking at The Prearranged Funeral Services Act updating. Can he perhaps enlighten committee as to where that legislation is?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** That's a good question because there's been some considerable work done by the Public Utilities Board in reviewing the prearranged funerals act. There were some concerns that have been raised over the last two or three years in particular. The Law Reform Commission—or the Public Utilities Board did some consultations, and we're looking at legislation for this session. It's our expectation that we can get a bill in in the next couple of weeks at the outside, perhaps as early as next week, but there's still some approvals that lie ahead with my colleagues. Yes.

**Mr. Faurshou:** Thank you very much. I look forward to addressing that issue, as has been noted.

I want to mention to the minister in regards to recent headlines about paid shopping time. Did he ask the department as to how much was this going on before it was discovered? Like, are we talking very substantive numbers of individuals that participated in this—opportunity, shall I say?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes, I remember the day I was advised of the FIPPA, so when I—they got me off the ceiling. It was bad judgment and not acceptable, and a clear directive has gone that this not ever be done. You know, in the private sector, sometimes employers who do this kind of thing for the purpose of loyalty or morale sometimes get awards and recognitions. In the public sector, it's not acceptable.

You have to pay attention to the interests of tax dollars, the investment in public services and how they're delivered. It becomes a lightning rod, too, for I think many people in the public who too often think that public servants don't work hard and that, and we know in this office they do. But it was entirely inappropriate and just unacceptable, so that practise has been stopped, and we understand there were 28 individuals at Vital Stats that had been given this right to take some time.

**Mr. Faurshou:** That segues right into my question in regards to Vital Statistics office. They're—we discussed about some of the delay from application to receipt of various documents and also the online services for genealogy search. Are we where we want to be in regards to all of the time frame for response and online services?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I understand that there's been a transfer of older records to online access or availability. In terms of processing times, I'm advised that it can fluctuate significantly over the course of the year, that there are some times of the year, I understand, with Christmas or perhaps wedding season, is it? Travel seasons, actually, I'm told, where there can be increased pressures, but I can get the information to the member in terms of any measure that is available on processing timelines. We don't have any here at the table right now.

**Mr. Faurshou:** The reason I was asking the question, because we'd had concerns in the past and we were behind, but I think they were all being addressed. I just want to know whether or not we've achieved the targets that were laid out here in—by the department.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I'm told that there have been improvements, that they're on target, but there could be some variations in high-demand periods. But there has been progress, I'm assured.

**Mr. Faurshou:** I hope staff and minister appreciate that I have many, many more questions, but we do have to move to a motion here very shortly.

I do, though, would like a response to a letter that I sent to the minister's office a number of months ago as to the renewal of insurance plans. When we passed legislation last year about automatic renewal and the negative-option marketing legislation, perhaps we inadvertently prevented the insurance companies that operating in Manitoba under our law from effectively renewing automatically a homeowner's policy insurance. And I asked the



department to investigate by a correspondence a number of months ago, and I haven't heard back. But if it's still not yet legally determined as to whether they are operating outside of the legislation or not, we can take that up at a later time, too.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes, we'll make sure that the member has a formal response as quickly as can be rallied here. The department has looked into that concern, and we'll provide a response.

**Mr. Faurschou:** Mr. Chairperson, we can move to motion.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you very much, all. Now, moving to the resolutions for this department.

Resolution 9.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,157,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 9.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$850 million—\$850,597,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Disability Programs and Employment and Income Assistance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 9.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$383,958,000—[interjection]—it's a start—for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Child and Family Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 9.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$127,095,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Community Service Delivery, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 9.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,071,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 9.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$415,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, 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 9.1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 9.1.

At this point, regrettably, we must ask our hard-working staff to vacate the head table.

And here you thought your salary had already been agreed to.

And the floor is open for questions. Seeing none, we will move forward to consideration of the motion.

Resolution 9.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,539,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

**Resolution agreed to.**

All right. I have been asked to repeat one number, just to make sure we got it right. It is somewhat large.

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$850,597,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Disability Programs and Employment and Income Assistance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012. And that was resolution 9.3.

That resolution passed by the committee?

**Resolution agreed to.**

Thank you very much. I think I got it right the first time, but now we got it right twice.

And the hour now being 5 o'clock, committee rise. Thank you, all.

## AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL INITIATIVES

\* (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 for the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** And a great department it is, Madam Chairperson.

I want to begin by first acknowledging my critic across the Chamber from us here this morning, and I appreciate the advice that he has given me since becoming the critic for Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

We have had many opportunities to get together, as we did just last evening, and tour in areas of Manitoba. All too often, our tours are centred around very tough, very stressful times that Manitoba farmers and rural Manitobans go through.

I appreciate the critic's vast areas of experience in farming, and I know he always gives me free advice, and one of these days maybe I'll take some of that advice, Madam Chairperson. I know he always gives me a hard time for not taking that advice and putting it to good use. But I appreciate his role and his knowledge in agriculture.

I also want to acknowledge a couple of very fine gentlemen who have retired just recently: Dr. Allan Preston, a long-time veterinarian and assistant deputy minister in the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. Allan Preston's advice was always right on the money. His experience in agriculture showed in the briefings that he gave to this minister and many ministers of agriculture throughout the—his illustrious career in our department.

The other retiree, recently, was Lorne Martin. He was an assistant deputy minister. He was in the department for somewhere in the area of 24 years, if my memory serves me correctly. Lorne, again, in the area of policy was always up to snuff on his areas, and he advised this minister and many other ministers before me very admirably.

Lorne had the job of trying to teach this minister a little bit about all of those business risk management programs that we have in place, and some of those can be very complicated, complex issues. And Lorne was very patient with me when I—especially when I first became minister in this portfolio. So I appreciate both the work of Allan Preston and Lorne Martin, and I wanted to make sure I mentioned that at the outset of my—these Estimates.

Since we last met, just to speak of the Estimates of this department, we've been through quite a bit. I

think we've had some very good announcements. I think we've had some very good co-operations with the agricultural sector. But there's no doubt that these have been challenging times in our province for our farmers, for our ranchers, for all of the producers connected to agriculture. It's been tough in many ways for rural communities as we deal with things like excess moisture.

Last year, in the month of April, all I heard about was the heat units, how early people were out seeding, all of the—those—that positive kind of start that we had. And then, through the course of May and onwards, the skies opened up, and we were—found ourselves dealing with a lot of water running through our system from the rains that we received. And it wasn't just us in Manitoba; it was Saskatchewan, Alberta, but the difference in Manitoba was that this wasn't the first year that we faced some challenging times in terms of excess moisture, especially in the Interlake and northern Interlake region of this province, who, in some cases, three in four years were dealing with those rains.

I thought that the federal government and my colleagues in Alberta and Saskatchewan and here in Manitoba dealt very quickly at the outset with a \$30 top-up, excess moisture insurance top-up. And we persisted through to December, when we did actually make an announcement on the grain side to help cattle ranchers who were dealing with loss of pasture land and abilities to feed cattle.

As people know, we are faced with that again this year. We have some flood conditions in this province that are very much challenging our farmers and our ranchers. We have been very clear that we're not going to leave our farmers hanging. We've got some challenges that we face, and we've been meeting with producers.

I'm very proud of the work that our department has done in hooking up with individual farmers and ranchers to look for very practical solutions to getting out on the land or to feed cattle or move cattle to where the feed is. Throughout these, I think we need—we have been and I think we need to be committed to the concepts of adding value to our agricultural activity and diversifying the activity that we have in this province. And I see every day good examples from very innovative farmers—working with our staff, of course—in terms of moving agriculture forward.

\* (15:00)

And we also know that we have a review of the business risk management programs. We're doing that co-operatively with the federal government and other ministers from around the country. It's our premise that farmers want to get paid, through the market, a fair price. They want to be paid fairly through the market for their produce. Failing that, for whatever reason, I think they want us to have a good, solid insurance plan there for them to move forward on, whether that be what we offer already on the grains and oilseeds side or on the livestock side, and, then, if that fails, if that still doesn't cover it, we need to have good, solid programs in place funded through the federal-provincial formulas. And I do want to say that I've been very pleased with the kind of co-operation we've had at the federal level in moving those files forward.

A couple of specific things I want to mention: I'm very proud of the work that goes on at the Food Development Centre, and I'm very proud of the expansions and the support that this government has been able to direct to the Food Development Centre, who I think does an amazing job of connecting good rural ideas to the market and providing opportunities to commercialize those ideas.

I also want to identify the Buy Manitoba Program that we've put in place as something that I'm proud of and I think will pay off for the farmer and for the consumer. I think we have a local market here in Manitoba that we should be taking advantage of in addition to the traditional markets that we have and upcoming markets in places like Brazil, Russia, India, China, those opportunities that we have.

And, finally, I want to speak just a second about an approach to agriculture that I really am excited about, and that is the portrayal of agriculture as a solution. I think we know that all too often agriculture gets dubbed as the bad guy. I think we get dubbed as the group that causes the problems when in reality there are so many examples out there of agriculture being the solution. Whether you talk about health care, energy, environment, the economy, I think that agriculture plays a huge role in providing solutions that our Manitoba society can take advantage of.

With those few comments, Madam Chairperson, I look forward to the advice that I will receive from the member for Emerson and others who want to participate in the Estimates this year. Thank you.

**Madam Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Emerson, have opening comments?

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** I do have a few comments that I would—or an opening statement that I would like to put on the record.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank the honourable minister for the opportunity that he has presented in the flooding situation that we have here in the province, both for the tour up through the Shoal lakes which, until you see it, you can't really—you cannot really understand or appreciate the plight that the agricultural producers, primarily the ranchers in that area, are going through and the severe losses that they're faced with. The stress level cannot be translated in words to anyone. You have to actually see what is happening up there. I thank the minister for the opportunity to participate on that tour.

And, of course, yesterday, the minister offered the opportunity to tour the flood area through Portage and a number of municipalities to view the controlled breach that is being proposed at the Oxbow, at the Hoop and Holler, and also the Portage Diversion that leads into Lake Manitoba, and another—and meet with a number of the producers up there that are directly affected. And so for that, Mr. Minister, I thank you.

I also want to say a few words about the retirees. Dr. Allan Preston, who I've known for many, many years and worked with over the years as a member of the St. Pierre vet board and when Dr. Preston was the chief veterinarian, we had a good working relationship. He was always a very steady hand at whatever he did, he did with a full hundred per cent participation, and when BSE broke out, I have to say that the then-minister of Agriculture could not have picked anyone better to advise her of what was necessary and to do the necessary negotiations that went on at that time. So my hat's off to Dr. Allan Preston. I wish him well in his retirement and I certainly hope—and I know that he will surface and be involved in agriculture in the province of Manitoba.

I also would like to congratulate Lorne Martin on the years of service that he provided to the Ministry of Agriculture. I don't know that it will be simple to replace Lorne. He had a great command of all of the agricultural policy that was necessary in the funding of support programs. I know that I have worked with him for many years on different programs from different angles, whether that was

from the cattle producers or whether that was from the grain sector, but he was well versed on all of the aspects of the policy and so I certainly wish him the best in his retirement. I know that when I talked to him, he said that if we ever needed advice, we could ask but give him a little breathing room. So I think that meant: Leave me alone while I'm relaxing.

But, at any rate, enjoy your retirement, to both of you. You—you've certainly deserved it.

And to the other staff that worked with the department, I have to take my hat off to them because, as the minister has pointed out, he has had a lot of free advice from me, and I'm sure that there were some of his staff that gave him advice that he didn't pay attention to either. I will say this, though, that he has, in the last year, has gained quite a handle on his portfolio that he probably didn't have at our last meeting here.

So, again, with those few words, Madam Chairperson, I'm prepared to go into Estimates. Thank you.

**Madam Chairperson:** We 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.

**Mr. Struthers:** Madam Chairperson, we have before us Dr. Barry Todd, the deputy minister of MAFRI; Dori Gingera-Beauchemin, the assistant deputy minister in charge of Policy and Agri-Environment; we have Leloni Scott, acting assistant deputy minister, Agri-Industry Development and Innovation; and we have, new to her position, Ann Leibfried, executive financial officer.

\* (15:10)

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

**Mr. Graydon:** I would prefer a global discussion.

**Mr. Struthers:** I would, too, Madam Chairperson.

**Madam Chairperson:** We will proceed globally then.

The floor is open for questions.

**Mr. Graydon:** I'm glad to see that some of my colleagues are here to help me today. They've been very helpful earlier today, as some of you know that were in the House.

My question for the minister—and we'll probably do the normal list of questions. So, Mr. Minister, the list of all your political staff, including the name, position and whether they are full- or part-time, can I get that from you, please?

**Mr. Struthers:** These are all full-time positions: my scheduling co-ordinator, the very capable Monique Rosen; correspondence assistant, Anoosh Shinnan; administrative assistant, Chloe Loris; my special assistant is Chris Sanderson; and my executive assistant in Dauphin is Rosalie Pshebylo. Madam Chairperson, that's Pshebylo with a P on the front, P-s-h-e-b-y-l-o, and that's it.

**Mr. Graydon:** And there are no part-time staff, Mr. Minister?

**Mr. Struthers:** No, these are all full-time.

**Mr. Graydon:** Could I have a specific list of all the staff in the minister's and deputy minister's office?

**Mr. Struthers:** I have that here. We have the deputy minister, who I've introduced. Kelly White is the administrative officer in that office; Maven Baltazar, administrative assistant; and the secretary to the deputy minister is Sharon Seddon.

**Mr. Graydon:** And the number of staff currently employed in the department?

**Mr. Struthers:** This number includes the Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation, 613.23. Don't ask me who the 0.23 is.

**Mr. Graydon:** Is it possible he could name the other 613 then? No, I'm sorry. How much has this increased or decreased over the—from the end of 2009 to 2010 fiscal year? Has there been an increase or a decrease and, if so, how much?

**Mr. Struthers:** That number is unchanged, same as it was last year.

**Mr. Graydon:** So the number of staff hired in 2010-2011, could you give me the names and the positions of those hired through direct appointment?

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, we could do that. We have, in my office, Chris Sanderson, appointed since we last spoke; we have the Financial and Administrative Services, Elaine Buchanan; the Crops Knowledge Centre, Bruce Brolley; the deputy minister's office, Sharon Seddon; deputy minister's office, Kelly White; the GO Teams branch, Shauna McKinnon, and I understand that is—went from term to being permanent; and the same term to permanent for Nasir Shaikh at the Crops Knowledge Centre.

**Mr. Graydon:** Well, thank you for that, Mr. Minister. Could you tell me if there's been any reclassifications for any positions?

**Mr. Struthers:** I understand one of the positions that the member's looking to have a reclassification of is my position, and I—I'm not so—I'm not going to be so accommodating on that, but, anyway.

**An Honourable Member:** We're patient.

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes. Time will tell.

We have: administrative secretary to the deputy minister; financial analyst in Finance and Admin Services; a virology supervisor within Livestock; an administrative officer in Economic and Rural Development; Chris Green, a veterinary biometrician, Epidemiology.

**An Honourable Member:** Can you repeat that?

**Mr. Struthers:** Probably not. I've asked them to do this in English for me.

That's a CVO/Food Safety, Susan Kernatz, agri-food inspector, Food Safety; Neil Jardine, agri-food inspector, Food Safety; Wilf Kachurovski, agri-food inspector, Food Safety Branch; and Greg Steele, agri-food inspector, Food Safety.

**Mr. Graydon:** The food safety inspectors, what were they—what was their description before?

**Mr. Struthers:** They were previously dairy inspectors.

**Mr. Graydon:** So now they're food inspectors. Does that enlarge their field or are they in a different field now, or a different barn now?

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, there's been an expansion of their capabilities, from milk to the broader food inspection responsibilities. These are folks who we considered had the skills that were appropriate to

make that kind of a transition, so they are dealing with a broader range of issues.

**Mr. Graydon:** So could the minister maybe expand on what that broader range of responsibilities are, and where that employment would be?

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, so we have a couple of different ways that we do this. Any and all of the provincial licensed facilities these inspectors would work in. The exception to that are where we have a contract with CFIA to do that work in meat plants. The—so these folks have got transitioned from milk inspection to more of a general food safety inspector role. They're located in our provincial licensed facilities outside of CFIA meat plants. They're located—well, the member can almost answer that question because he knows, too, where the facilities are. They're southeast Manitoba; they're in Winnipeg; they're in that Brandon, Portage connection.

We're also responsible for—these folks would be responsible for and have authority from—right from the farm gate to the back door of the processing facilities. So that—so I think that—oh, I'm sorry. Yes, from the farm gate right to the back door of the retail, that's an important clarification, and I'm glad my deputy minister caught that.

**Mr. Graydon:** I'm sure that he's saved you more than once, Mr. Minister.

However, I'm thinking that—and I'm just trying to get my head wrapped around this. Now, they were dairy inspectors before and today they are inspecting—I'm not exactly sure what facilities, but it seems like it's all production from the gate to the plate type of thing. But I just don't know what type of facilities they would be at, and, then, I guess, this would be—this would have created new positions. This would have created a new position for an employee, obviously. Is that—would that be how one could explain that?

**Mr. Struthers:** Many of the facilities that these inspectors would work in are—would be members of the Manitoba Food Processing Association. An example would be best cooking pulses. The—any of those kind of provincial facilities would be where these folks would be found. We didn't have to hire new positions. These were folks that already had the basic skills that they would need in inspections.

We did recognize, though, that we would need to provide some internal training opportunities, professional development opportunities, if you will,

for these folks, given that they were given a broader range of capabilities and a broader range of issues to deal with. So that skill training was provided. But I do want to stress that these were folks with those basic skills to begin with, and we were simply, through professional development, upgrading those skills. In my opinion, it works very well.

These are folks that have the experience that's necessary. I think they've—not just with these staff but others, we've developed a good relationship with the people that we work with. And, in that way, I think that makes inspection, the role of the inspector a lot easier, and probably—no, not probably—but I'm certain, makes the role of the inspector more effective as well.

**Mr. Graydon:** Well, thank you for that. I can understand that you've—what you've done then, is you've expanded the inspection process to cover other fields. And because of the faith that you had in these inspectors, they qualified for some additional training to take on that added responsibility. Do they still maintain their responsibility, then, in the dairy field as well?

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes.

**Mr. Graydon:** Then just one last question on that, Mr. Minister, then. Because the inspection has been expanded and the level of qualifications have risen for these four individuals, is that also reflected in their pay?

**Mr. Struthers:** I'm very pleased to note that, as a result of the training and the increased level of responsibility, that those individuals would have been—in their reclassification—would have received an increase of just under \$2,000 a year per person.

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you for that, Mr. Minister.

Does their staffing level identified in a departmental budget reflect a full staffing complement, or is there a certain percentage of vacancy rate?

\*(15:30)

**Mr. Struthers:** The budget recognizes an 11.1 per cent turnover rate, and a 13.8 per cent vacancy rate.

Yes, I mean, we're at 13.8 per cent right now.

**Mr. Graydon:** So, being at 13 per cent vacancy right now, what are the intentions of the department in the short term?

**Mr. Struthers:** My goal is to bring down that 13.8 vacancy rate. I want to do it in—of course, as the money in the budget allows us to do that, I want to do it on a priority basis. And one of the very useful ways that we get to set those priorities is the meetings that we have with commodity groups. A whole number of commodity groups have come to talk to me about different, very key positions, within our civil service staffing complement. And with that kind of information, with that kind of advice, then we're able to 'priorize' the positions that we know need to be filled on a priority basis.

I want to make clear, and I want to say clearly on the record, that the staff that we have in MAFRI quite often pull double duty. They do more than—we ask them to do so much with the time that they have. I know the member for Emerson appreciates this as well and appreciates the work that MAFRI staff do. It's my opinion that there's more work to be done than staff that we have. So we have some staff that burn the midnight oil. Quite often we have staff who go that extra mile to be in contact with our clients, with farmers, with ranchers, with processors, with people that we come into contact on a day to day basis in agriculture.

I wanted it to—I want to be very clear on the record that we have very good staff throughout the department who have worked very hard. And I want to say when Mother Nature throws some of the curve balls at us that she has over the last year, year and a half—I've been in the position now for a year and a half—I've noticed and I've appreciated many of the late hours, working weekends, those sorts of things, that this staff does in order to work through—work towards solutions, and work through challenges, that farmers and producers face in Manitoba. So my appreciation to the staff that we're talking about here today.

**Mr. Graydon:** I can well appreciate what the minister has said about his staff. I've had—I've certainly had a good working relationship with the staff over the many years, and I don't have—certainly don't have any complaints.

What I did hear the minister say, though, that he was looking at priorities, positions that needed to be filled, and after my opening statement, I'm wondering if the two assistant deputy ministers would be classified as priorities? And what type of process is the minister looking at going through to replace two very, very difficult people to replace?

**Mr. Struthers:** It's interesting. The pulse growers came in to talk to me and, you know, along with a whole lot of different issues, they wanted to talk to me specifically about a specialist position that we had a vacancy because of a—I believe this is the one, if my memory serves me correctly—a mat leave that we were dealing with. There was an oilseed specialist, as well, that we were lobbied to fill quickly, and we're moving forward on. The forage people came in to talk to us and wanted to talk about a forage seed specialist position that was open, and so we 'priorized' that and we moved forward to try to fill those positions.

That's kind of the one way in which we get to set our priorities, hearing from people actually out there in the landscape. And I've always been impressed when a—like the canola growers came in and say, we want so and so who is very good at her job; we want her replaced quickly, and get on it, Minister. And so that's very valuable information that we can glean from people coming in to meet with us.

As far as the, I think, two very key positions at the assistant deputy minister's level are concerned, Dori Gingera-Beauchemin, who we met earlier this afternoon, had been in the Agri-Food and Rural Development portfolio and has moved over to the position that I introduced her as here earlier, the policy and environment section. Essentially, it was the position occupied by Lorne Martin up until his retirement. The position, Dori's former position and the position that was occupied by Allan Preston, we're in the process of recruiting. It's going to be an open competition. I like the idea of casting a wide net because I think there's a lot of very talented people out there and these are key positions within our structure and I want to make sure that we're thorough in obtaining the very best people that we can.

\*(15:40)

**Mr. Graydon:** Well, thank you for that and congratulations to Dori for taking on the extra responsibility. It's certainly not an easy portfolio to deal with and it does have a lot of complaints from time to time, but I know that Dori's quite capable of dealing with them. So congratulations Dori and my heartfelt condolences when things go wrong.

However, the other position when you were talking about—or there were two positions now because Dori's is not filled, and when you're casting that net are you casting the net for two people? And are you doing that within the system, or are you

doing that within government, or are you doing that outside of the province? How far is your net thrown, Mr. Minister?

**Mr. Struthers:** That net will be cast both within government and outside of government. We—I think within the department we have a lot of very good folks who could step up and compete for the job. We have people within the civil service of Manitoba who could, and I think we have people outside of government who would be interested in these positions. And we want to be able to—at the end of the day say that we've done everything we can to make sure we have the best possible qualified and experienced person—persons are put into those positions.

**Mr. Graydon:** So, then, would it be correct to say that the minister and the department are advertising? Or how do you go about—do you advertise publicly and in papers or how do you go about your getting the word out there?

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, a couple of things on this. We will be advertising in print and we will be advertising electronically. We will be contacting other provinces, other jurisdictions, getting some advice whether there are some people that are particularly suited for these two positions.

I do want to also say that the positions right now are very ably being covered—as you met earlier today—and Leloni Scott acting in the position formally held by Allan Preston, and Gerald Huebner who is acting for the position formerly held by Dora—Dori Gingera-Beauchemin. And I have a great deal of confidence in both of those folks.

**Mr. Graydon:** I thank you for that, Mr. Minister. I certainly agree with you that they're both very, very competent individuals. I really don't know Leloni that well, but I do know that she was sitting in a chair one day that I talked to her and I asked here if she was comfortable in that chair, and she thought she was. But that was off the record, I believe, wasn't it, Leloni? Yes, sorry about that.

I have worked closely with Gerald in the past when we established the PESAI organization in the eastern region, and so I got to know Gerald fairly well, and I know that he's quite a capable individual. So, in saying that, then why would the minister be advertising?

**Mr. Struthers:** Like I said, we want to make sure that the best possible candidate step forward. The competition is open to everyone, including the folks

who are acting in those positions today, and I'm really very confident that, at the end of the day, we will have those positions filled with very capable, very bright and experienced people who will do a bang-up job in performing in this department and advising the deputy minister and myself.

**Mr. Graydon:** So are there any other priorities that come to mind, Mr. Minister? And I don't apologize for putting you on the spot, either, in that last question.

**Mr. Struthers:** Do you mean priorities in terms of which positions that are not filled?

**An Honourable Member:** Of filling up. Any other positions that you—

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable member for Emerson.

**Mr. Graydon:** Sorry about that. The positions that you consider top priorities that would be filled in the near future that you feel that are important, either dealing with the flooding issue or—I'm not exactly sure what positions are vacant, but do you have any other immediate priorities that you would want to see filled in a short term?

**Mr. Struthers:** This is one of my priorities, but I don't want to say that as if it was all my idea from the beginning, because this department, for a number of years, has put a priority on making sure those positions that are most directly connected to the front lines—and I think that the member can understand which positions those would be—out on the landscape dealing with farmers and dealing with ranchers and dealing with people in our GO offices and our GO centres, those are the positions that, I think, quite sensibly, get prioritized quickly, and we move on them.

I'll draw the attention to a couple in particular. One would be the—we have a vacancy at the agricultural meteorological position, ag meteorology. You understand. Don't ask me to do that one again. Given the conditions and given the wet cycle that many think that we're in, and given the reliance we have on weather forecasting and understanding what's coming at us, I can see where—I know that the member would see that that would be a logical position for us to move quickly to fill, which we are attempting to do. I see that as a key position.

\* (15:50)

Farm production advisors, I think, again, that connection to the client, to the farmers and ranchers

and people out there on the landscape, positions like that we 'prioritize.' Farm business management positions, someone who can, again, work closely with people making those decisions on their, you know, from one farm site to the next, you know, business decisions that are so key to the future of their operations. That's also a position that would get priority.

Extension co-ordinators, in the department, you know, if we have positions there that we need to fill. I think it makes sense to make sure that we're solid there so that we can provide information to people, on a timely basis, out in our communities. And we do have people in communities, from Thompson to The Pas, and all throughout southern Manitoba, including in the city of Winnipeg.

So my priority is to make sure that we have people right on the front lines in positions to help farmers and ranchers and others who are interested.

The other source of advice that I do get once in awhile are from municipalities who point out positions that come open. I'll use one as an example: In the—up in the Ste. Rose area, where the member probably knows Roger Sheldon who, in the old days, was an ag rep for a number of years and had many years in Ste. Rose. When Roger retired, the mayor of Ste. Rose was on the phone right away, talking to me about how important that position was in our region up in the Parkland area, and made a very good case in terms of how important the cattle industry is in the Ste. Rose, Rorketon, Cayer, Eddystone, Laurier, Ste. Amélie, Ochre River, kind of an area. So the—so we did move forward on that position. And it was good to hear from the mayor, whom—and I should give the Reeve, Maurice Maguet, a plug there too, because he talked to me about it as well.

So there's lots of different ways that we get to keep our finger on the pulse of what's being talked about out there and what the needs are. And we try our best to accommodate that, knowing we have a budget to work with, knowing that there's retirements happen and maternity leaves happen and all of those things occur. And we need to be fleet of foot sometimes to make sure that we can have people in place to respond and to disseminate information and be in contact with those people, the farmers and ranchers and others out there, in working so hard in the agricultural sector.

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you for that, Mr. Minister. And you're absolutely right about Roger Sheldon being a gold star individual. He was well respected



within the province and outside of the province, and when he retired, he was—certainly would have been missed in that area. I can well appreciate where the people there were coming from. I had a number of opportunities to work with Roger. So I hope he's enjoying his retirement.

And one last question on that particular area. I'm wondering, you said there 11 per cent of the staff that were being replaced. Was that because they moved to a different position, or was that because retirement, or—

**Mr. Struthers:** That turnover allowance, the 11.1 per cent, that is accrued through a number of different avenues. Certainly, as the member pointed out, one would be retirements that happen. And, you know, when you think about retirements and you think about all of us baby boomers working our way through, whether it's agriculture or any other federal, provincial department, whether it's nursing, teaching, you know, the list goes on. It really is a challenge that people in decision-making positions need to struggle with. And I think one of the things we had going for us in MAFRI is a—we put a lot of thought into succession planning and having people with a lot of skills sitting with people moving into those positions and learning from the retiring civil servant.

We said that that allowance sometimes reflects the people moving to other positions. Sometimes that reflects people moving from MAFRI—sorry—that could be people moving from MAFRI into other positions and other departments. It could be people moving from MAFRI to positions outside of the—of our government.

A good point is that when we have a position that's open and we fill it with somebody in the department, whether that be a competition or otherwise, that person moves into the position and then creates a domino effect, because then we have to fill the position that that person moved from.

So those sorts of things are what constitute that turnover allowance.

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you for that.

And you brought up a good point, that sometimes people move outside of the department or into private life. And so when they do, there's times that they understand that there are—that they have skills that are valuable to your particular department or other particular departments for that matter.

And so I'm just wondering if there—if you have let any types of contracts, if they've been ordered—been awarded directly and does that happen in your department?

**Mr. Struthers:** We don't have any staff on contract. What we do—what we have done in the past in—on, I think, some rare occasions, is we've had people come back. Let's say they've retired. They come back to fill a specific need within the department—somebody with specific skills and experience and background to help on—in that position or on a project. And part of the goal there would be not only to fill that position, but also to train somebody who's stepping up into that position.

The one position that comes to mind is a veterinarian pathologist that we did do that for. It was on a time-limited basis—I'll say 18 months, but I'm pretty sure that's accurate. So, in that case, the person might come back and fill that position for a short period of time, and part of the goal there would be to pass those skills on to the next person who's stepping up into that position.

\* (16:00)

Our preference, though, is to recruit into these positions. And I know sometimes there's challenges, and especially if you need a certain set of skills, a certain background, it does make that job a little—that recruitment job a little more difficult. But our preference is to recruit, and I think bringing a set of skills in from out—from—new to that position, and, again, I think, we all—well, I keep thinking of ways, since we are, you know, I guess, as a society, there's a lot of us baby boomers around who are looking at retirements, and we're—and that's going to be a sustained pressure on us for a number of years, and we need to be able to have good succession planning processes in place. So that's what we work towards.

**Mr. Graydon:** So, then, if I understand the minister correctly, at this point in time that he has no work contracted out.

**Mr. Struthers:** That's correct. We don't have work contracted out.

**Mr. Graydon:** Then do you have some term positions such as you've outlined? Do you have some term positions like that that are being filled on a short term, and is there a term length on those, and are they being advertised at the same time?

**Mr. Struthers:** We do have a number of term positions. We have—for example, we have about

50 students, STEP students, that we have in place. Those are the short term; could be—I suppose seasonal would be a, I suppose, another adjective to describe that.

We have what's known as the gate—Career Gateway Program where we deal with new Canadians, people who would be interested in working in our department.

We have a number of mat leaves every year we deal with that are, again, short term. The one thing I—that I should make clear is that anyone who then fills these positions can apply to come on as permanent. And—but the member talked about kind of a—how the time frame, in terms of the short-term positions—the majority of these are about one year. Some could stretch into two years.

But, again, I've often thought that this—these kind of programs, these kind of terms are good ways for people to get their foot in the door, see what they think of the job, see what they think of the department, see what they think of the area that they're working in, and then make some decisions as to whether they want to look for something more permanent, or if they want to take the skill set and take the experience they've used and add it to their resumé and look elsewhere for work. But, yes, we do have a number of term positions that we deal with every year.

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** I think the minister probably knows the question that I'm going to be asking him, but just to refresh his memory, this goes back to the 2009 corn crop claims that were out there, and I guess some of the commitments that were made by the staff of MASC regarding that crop, and so I'd written several letters to the minister. I know he and I have talked about it, as have I with the deputy minister, but I'm just wondering if he could give me an update as to where they are with dealing with the crop that was lost in '09.

**Mr. Struthers:** Madam Chair, I do admire this member's consistency, he's been—whether it be dating back to before last year's Estimates, during last year's Estimates, in the House, in the hallway, wherever he can flag me down, he's been advocating on behalf of his constituents and the corn growers. I want to start by saying that I'm really glad 2010 went better than 2009 in terms of dealing with mouldy corn. I do want to say, too, that I have a great deal of confidence in the ability of MASC, Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation, to deal with not just this issue, but all the issues that that organization deals with. We did in

December of 2010 put together a committee consisting of corn growers and MASC. We asked them to review this situation. They've come up with a report, which is in draft stage.

*Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

The corn growers have asked us for a little bit of time before we move forward with the—with recommendations, and that's where it stands right now.

**Mr. Dyck:** I guess just to elaborate on that somewhat, as I've indicated to the minister previously that the producers buy insurance with the intent of not—and, hopefully, they don't need to use it. On the other hand, in this case, they did need the assistance of Manitoba Crop Insurance and a directive to that was sent out in September of '09, and I will refer to it again, but it says what happens—and this is sent out by crop insurance, MASC, it says what happens if I harvest poor quality grain corn. The answer that they give is the guaranteed grain—grade, rather, for grain corn is No. 2 CW. Market prices are determined to determine the relative value of all grades compared to 2 CW, and I think the minister is aware of that as well.

\* (16:10)

Now, this was a memo that was sent out to the producers. They were aware of that directive when they took out the crop insurance, and so I guess when you, at the end of the day, the producers that I have talked to who did go out and—in fact, I have an email here from a constituent who indicated that he'd saved crop insurance many, many dollars because he went out and took the risk of harvesting it, but, in the find end, sold it as a sample product.

Now, if you go according to the directives that are out there for Manitoba Crop Insurance, that would have all graded as sample. And yet, though, it appears that crop insurance is not honouring that commitment that they have made. And I'm just wondering whether the minister could respond to that. Like, how do they know, and what directives can they follow, if when in spring they sign their crop insurance forms, which they have to, they send them in and, of course, October 1st the premiums are due. They pay their premiums, and then MASC goes ahead and does this and makes an arbitrary opinion on—which is different from the information that they sent out. And I just don't see the correctness in this. In fact, I think it's wrong, I think it's misleading.

So I would just ask the minister to take that into consideration. And I know, also, that the minister has said numerous times, and I do respect that very much so, that these people would be treated fairly. And I guess the information that I'm getting back is they feel that they are not treated fairly where they tried to do the right thing.

But when you look at the information, and the information would be the same today, I believe, if you would look at crop insurance and the quality form that they sign regarding the type of product they are to market. If it's a 2 CW, of course, it loses grade as it goes on, and mould would do that.

So I'm just wondering if the minister could respond to that and take that into consideration.

**Mr. Struthers:** First of all, my experience in dealing with MASC isn't that they mislead people. I think MASC is a very professional organization. I think they—I've seen examples where they go out of their way to be fair with producers. When you look at the participation rates that we have in terms of crop insurance, in the magnitude of 85 per cent, I don't think a corporation that misleads people ends up with that kind of support and that kind of participation.

Having said that, I don't think the corn growers grow up—get up every morning thinking of ways that they can put it to MASC either. I mean, I've met many of the corn growers, many of this member's constituents. I think that they, I don't know, they get up every morning looking how they're going to, you know, put food on their table, and work and grow corn and other products in Manitoba.

So that's why I wanted this committee to get together and review. I want them to take a look at everything. I want MASC to have a fair chance to put their cards on the table, and I want the corn growers to have a vehicle by which they can put their concerns forward. I do not want—there's a part of me that says that this has dragged out too long to begin with, and I think both MASC and the corn growers need to have some conclusion brought to this. And I do intend that conclusion to come as quickly as we can, good, bad or otherwise, maybe. Maybe there's some recommendations that one or other of the parties don't agree with or don't like. I'm willing to—once we get these recommendations, to move forward on that and turn the page on this issue.

As I said, I think it's gone on long enough and we need to bring it to a conclusion.

**Mr. Dyck:** And I thank the minister for his comments. I guess I would just ask one more question on that, and that is, can the producers for this year, then, count on the fact that the directive and the information they get from crop insurance is that the guaranteed rate for grain corn is No. 2 CW?

I mean, obviously, if you go back to '09, they didn't live up to that commitment. They arbitrarily changed the grading system. And I'm just—I guess I'm really wondering how that can be done. Like, you can't go make changes on an insurance program midstream. It's either the way you said it was when the producer signed it or it's not. I mean, like, how do we know that there's going to be any consistency in the program?

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, the one thing I can say very definitively is that the corn growers can count on the terms of the contracts that they sign.

And I think the member puts his finger on one of the reasons why I asked for this review. I think he just laid out one scenario contending that MASC didn't live up to their commitments. He's not going to be surprised about this, but I don't think MASC agrees with him and I wanted MASC to have an opportunity, through that review, to be very clear on what their position and what their actions were. And, as I said, my experience with MASC is that they don't mislead people. But I'm going to be very interested to see what comes back through that report. I want to move forward with it and do that quickly.

If I remember at the time, in terms of the quality of that corn, I was very pleased that Husky stepped in and actually did determine that they could take that corn and provide a market for it. And there's—and I think part of that scenario was that MASC, in some ways, went over and above what they could—what they were, I suppose, obligated to do in terms of the grade of that mouldy corn.

Those are the kind of things that I want to hear from this committee on. I know what the position of the member is and the position of the corn growers. I—it very much seems to me there's two sides of this issue that I need to hear from, and that's what I'm counting on when this report comes forward.

**Mr. Dyck:** Well, it will be my last question, or comment rather, but I do want to thank the minister for taking a good hard look at this.

And I guess I would just, you know, at the end of it, indicate that, you know, 2 CW corn is

2 CW corn, or any product, whether it's wheat or oats, or it doesn't matter. I mean, there's a grade that the, you know, Canadian Grain Commission comes up with, and that's the one that they follow.

And I do agree that crop insurance or MASC, has, you know, always lived up to their obligations, I won't argue that. That's why, I guess, the growers are somewhat surprised that, in this case, they made some arbitrary decisions, midstream, which didn't follow the directives that they were given in the memos that were sent out, and they sent out several memos.

And one was November of '09 and then there was another one in January, which were very clearly indicating that, you know, that if it was—it needed to be a 2 CW product; and, when they went to the Canadian Grain Commission to get this checked out, it was not. So that's why I say, there is some scepticism in there, whether there was tampering with, with this grade, and why they would subsequently do that.

\* (16:20)

And I think also the minister is aware that it seemed that there was not a fair treatment within the system, you know, those who were told to destroy it. And every, you know—most of these who harvested were given that option, but they were given the option. I think it's very important to remember that and told that they would, in all fairness, be treated fairly.

And then there were those—and I know you and I have had that discussion, Mr. Minister—where those who cobbled it, and it's a 'coblage' that they use for feed, and they were given extra compensation. And so these producers who went out and harvested just felt that they were, I guess, misled in the process, and that's why they are appealing the decisions that were made.

So I guess there's several points, and one is: If you want to take it on the 2 CW basis, which is a Canadian Grain Commission grading system, which, I think, is followed by crop insurance ongoing, or if you want to take the other one that was made—the promise that was made and commitment made, that, you know, you could go out there and harvest it but would be treated fairly. I think that there was an element of confidence, that they would be treated fairly, and that's why they are appealing the situation.

And I know, as you've indicated, Mr. Minister, you're taking a good hard look at it but, in the final

end, you know, you'll have to make that decision, and I trust that will be one of fairness and equity that will prevail.

**Mr. Struthers:** And that—all of that correspondence that the member for Pembina references will be part of the—what's analyzed in this review and included in the report. But I do want to be very clear that I'm not the appeal mechanism when it comes to decisions that MASC makes. I don't want MASC to think that I don't trust their work. I don't want MASC to think that I'm looking over their shoulder all the time at everything they do.

I saw this as a exceptional circumstance that needed to have somebody take the review of the correspondence and the chronology of this, but I don't—I do not want to send a signal to a very successful corporation that there's people out there, including the minister, who don't trust what they do. It would—I think that would send totally the wrong signal and, throughout this, I wanted to make sure that the corn growers knew that I understood their concerns, and I wanted MASC to understand very clearly that I trust what they do and that I'm not going to micromanage into the organization.

They know far better than me their programs and the benefits that accrue to farmers. So I'll be taking a look at the—what comes forward from that review and I'll be moving very quickly to make sure that we don't have to deal with this again next year in Estimates. I want this file to have a big "closed" stamped on it, and—however that comes about.

**Mr. Graydon:** And thank you for the answers to that very important question, Mr. Minister.

I've had many, many conversations with the corn growers, and one of the particular ones that is well versed on this was one of the members that—former members—that sat here, and it was the former member for Emerson, and they certainly didn't feel that they were treated fairly. And so I think my colleague from Pembina was—has expressed his position very well and certainly hope that the outcome is favourable.

Going back to positions in your department, I'm wondering if there were—how many were relocated, and whether any were relocated from rural or northern Manitoba into Winnipeg, or from Winnipeg to rural or northern Manitoba, and/or relocated around the province, and the reason for that. Perhaps you can give me an answer to that.

*Madam Chairperson in the Chair*

**Mr. Struthers:** We didn't move anyone from rural or northern Manitoba into Winnipeg, and we didn't move anybody from Winnipeg into rural or northern Manitoba. And the movement that I can think of would happen within—you'll have a team in rural Manitoba, and they'll work out of the same—in the same region, and they may request to work out of a different office within that region, but they'd still be part of the same GO team. So we quite likely would agree to that kind of a—of movement, with—just within that area, within that geographic area. That would still mean they were part of that same regional team, but they would just work out of a different office in a community within that regional team.

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you for that. So, if my understanding is correct, then there was no movement within regions, only within regions, not from region to region.

**Mr. Struthers:** In terms of making permanent moves from one region to another, the answer would be no. But, like I said in my previous answer, there could be, within that regional team, a request to move to just another location, but still be part of that team. And those sort of requests, we would say yes to.

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you. And was there any travel by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) or a delegation led by the Premier that was paid for by Manitoba Agriculture? And, if so, the pertinent details of that travel: location, purpose, dates, costs, all the—all of the above.

\* (16:30)

**Mr. Struthers:** We didn't—we weren't asked and we didn't pay for any travel on behalf of the Premier. But I do want to say that if—I would be happy to pay to get the force of the Premier's presence and the knowledge that the guy has in terms of Manitoba and the Manitoba advantage, if it was to pay off in results in terms of markets for farmers or jobs for adding value to products. If we can work with the Premier and use his influence for the betterment of Manitoba Agriculture, that would be great.

**Mr. Graydon:** And the ministerial travel, how many out of province trips has the minister taken in the past year, and the pertinent details of these trips—such as the purpose, dates, who went, who paid and what were the costs?

**Mr. Struthers:** I can report to the member that this minister took four trips out of the province. The first one was on June 25th, 2010. We went to Toronto.

We met with Maple Leaf Foods and Manitoba pork producers at a cost of \$512.96.

The second trip was in July 6 to 8th. We went to Saskatoon for the annual meeting of the federal-provincial-territorial ministers and deputy ministers of Agriculture. That cost \$1,167.39. A very good use of money because that's the meeting where we hammered out a \$30 top up excess moisture—to excess moisture insurance, which I know was very greatly appreciated by farmers in the constituency of Emerson and Dauphin-Roblin and the rest of Manitoba too.

Trip No. 3 took place in—the third trip took place on February 11th. It was again a federal-provincial-territorial ministers of Agriculture meeting that was in Toronto as well. The member from Emerson's going to be astounded at the fiscal responsibility of this minister when I tell him that it only cost me \$180.50 to go to Toronto and back that day. I must have been flying on points or something. Whoever this travel agent is, I'm going to get together with them. The—that—I think that about covers it—three trips.

**Mr. Graydon:** And did the minister travel alone or was there staff?

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, just to clarify a little bit on how we got such a good deal for that trip to Toronto for \$180 that—I'm told that we had booked a previous flight that was cancelled and used it as a credit, so that's why that number was lower, and I'm told it was actually a meeting that the member for Emerson did attend. We had booked to Phoenix for the legislative meetings that I in the end wasn't able to attend so that, then, became a credit that we used to save the hard-working Manitoba taxpayer some dollars, and that explains the hundred—the good deal we got on the \$180.

When we—when I travelled to the federal-provincial-territorial meetings in Saskatoon and in Toronto, we travelled with my special assistant, who you met earlier, Chris Sanderson, and the deputy minister of agriculture, Barry Todd.

In Saskatoon, Allan Preston made a very good presentation on food safety to all of the ministers, so Dr. Preston was there and Lorne Martin was there as a policy ADM. His responsibilities are to make sure we have our act together at these FPT meetings. And I think that pretty much is standard for any of the federal-provincial territorial meetings that I've attended or that I reported here just now.

**Mr. Graydon:** So, if it's at all possible, Mr. Minister, I'd like to have the total costs for these trips. I know what your costs are and your \$180 as you indicated. There was also a credit and that credit was—had to have been paid at some time previously, so it would have—the trip probably would have been around \$500, but I would like to know the total cost of you and your staff attending these meetings and the number of staff that attended every meeting. I would really appreciate that.

**Mr. Struthers:** I think I'm pretty accurate in the answer I gave just previous to this about not just the number of staff, but who the staff were that attended those meetings. I think I covered the bases on that, but we'll endeavour to get a final number, total number for the amount that we spent travelling, and I'll ensure that gets to the member.

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you very much for that, and I would appreciate that. I understand that it's not something that you would have at your fingertips.

I—perhaps you could provide me with some details of your department's annual advertising budgets for the year 2009-2010.

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, we'll have to get back to the member with more specifics on this. I do want him to know, though, that there are different forms of advertising that we're involved with. Some could be federal-provincial advertising. We have all the programs that we—the Business Risk Management Suite of programs, that we do some advertising together with our federal counterparts in order for farmers to know what the programs are and deadlines and those sorts of things.

There's advertising with the Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation. We want to make sure that farmers know their options when it comes to insurance. We advertise—we spend money advertising for positions. We talked earlier about the two ADM positions, for example. There'll be a cost associated for advertising for those.

And I want to be sure that I got the right—the correct fiscal year that he's asking about. Is it '09-010, '010-011, just if he could clarify that for me.

**Mr. Graydon:** Madam Chair, '09 and '10 is what I asked for.

**Mr. Struthers:** Okay, we'll endeavour to get that for the member as quickly as we can.

**Mr. Graydon:** Well, while you're doing that, then perhaps what we could—what I would like, then, is the detail of the campaigns, whether that was—what the campaign was and if it was cost-shared federally or provincially and a detail whether it was advertising for positions, along with the costs, and then if there were any campaigns that were run, strictly provincial campaigns that you advertised for, then the costs for them. And, if it could be broke down in that fashion, I would really appreciate that.

**Mr. Struthers:** We can do that, and I'll ensure that that is done as quickly as we can.

**Mr. Graydon:** The other thing, Mr. Minister, is the—does the department sponsor—do any sponsorships at all?

**Mr. Struthers:** In it's—I'll take a minute to explain it, not so much in terms of sponsors—sponsorships, but what a couple of things we do do is hospitality grants. That would be a grant that we can—we pay for for a dinner if there's an event on that has a particular connection to agriculture, if we have a request that we can consider from one group or another. In the time frame that the member is asking, I believe there were no hospitality grants that we agreed to, but that is something that we've done in past years.

The other angle on this is that sometimes we do purchase display space. For example, if a commodity group has a—have meetings in Winnipeg, we may—well, it doesn't have to be Winnipeg, we could do, you know, Vita or Dauphin or wherever in the province. We've—we rent display space if a commodity group is in conducting meetings, if it's particular to agriculture, if we can justify that kind of a connection, we do that.

Maybe it's a national or an international group that's meeting in our province, and we could purchase display space to put Manitoba's best foot forward at these national or international events. I think that that makes good sense, because we do a lot of very good things in this province, and our producers do a lot of very good things. There's a lot of good things happening in Manitoba, on the agriculture scene especially, so we need to let others know what we're up to. And I do believe we need to brag a bit about it. So we do purchase display spaces up at these kind of events.

**Mr. Graydon:** Well, I certainly appreciate that, and I agree that we don't brag enough about our province or the products that we produce in our province. When I was thinking of sponsorships, and I know

that you do have display booths, say at the spring fair or—but I thought I understood or I thought I heard an announcement in Brandon that MAFRI was sponsoring a horse show or something. Was that something that I heard there?

\*(16:50)

**Mr. Struthers:** The—I think what the member is referring to is the Royal Red Arabian show that is—that we're working with the city of Brandon to host this summer, and what we've agreed to there is a grant of money to provide stalls that the show can use for their animals. This is in this coming fiscal year. This is money that we've agreed to put in place so that they can actually host this event and, hopefully, down the road, sign a longer term agreement, because the member from Emerson probably knows better than I the value of a show like that and the impact that that would have for not just Brandon, but the south-west corner of our province, and, through that, a positive impact on our provincial economy.

We do sponsor—the member has been to the Royal Winter Fair and, you know, I know is a good supporter of the Winter Fair, and on the Tuesday night, there's a dinner and a horse show. My understanding is that we do provide support for the horse show. I thought it was great. I get to go out and put the blanket on the horse that wins and present the trophy. And so, that, I think, probably would fall into the definition of what the member is looking for, those kind of examples.

Another one that he might be thinking of is—and it appears to be sponsorship that the Manitoba Association of Agricultural Societies gives—but we provide a grant to a whole number of ag societies around Manitoba, and they use that money to purchase infrastructure and education opportunities for all—a whole host of little fairs that take place all throughout Manitoba in the summertime. And sometimes they, the ag societies, will give us credit for that, and so that does look like a sponsorship but, in reality, that is a grant to help them do those fairs and put in place the infrastructure that's necessary for those fairs. I know, in many cases, they've rebuilt stands that they need to have in place to accommodate crowds that come and see the fair, those sorts of things that little fairs need in order to survive. So those are some examples, I think, of maybe what the member was getting at in his previous question to.

**Mr. Graydon:** And thank you for the answer. It does answer some of the questions, but the—when we talk about the grants to the ag societies, are those grants all—are they all for hard infrastructure or are some of them for other purposes to—on a yearly basis to the ag societies, and could we perhaps get a list of what they are and what they—how much they were?

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, we have 59 ag societies altogether in Manitoba. I believe the member asked me for a list of how much financial support for each of the ag societies, and I'll endeavour to get that to him. We don't have it just at our fingertips here. Generally, I can give him an idea of financial support to these agricultural societies. In our '10-11 budget we helped pay for some association assistance grant, some operating expenses for the—from MAAS, Manitoba Association of Agricultural Societies.

A big portion, in terms of infrastructure grants, that I've mentioned just earlier, and that's grants for maintenance of ag society facilities. The hard grants that he was mentioning there a minute ago, the biggest chunk, \$225,000, are for education grants that ag societies use. Many ag societies have special education projects that they undertake, and we provide a good deal of our money, our support, through those education grants.

Here's two administration costs, \$28,000, that we pick up, but that we include in that. And we pay judges fees for 4-H, interclub and livestock shows, that's 13 grand. So that's one, two, three, four, five different areas that we contribute to. Some of them are softer kind of grants, some of them are harder, infrastructure-type grants. And I'll endeavour to get the rest of that information for the member.

**Mr. Graydon:** Well, I certainly thank the minister for that, and I think that money that flows to the ag societies is money that's well spent. I believe that that's the grassroots participation and provides a venue for—to connect between urban and rural is so terribly, terribly important as we—as our society has matured, our rural society has shrunk and our urban society has grown. But the disconnect has got wider and wider. And so I believe that that type of an investment is one that's certainly, I think, is a great investment and would certainly hate to see something like that be cut back.

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, I agree, and I appreciate those comments by the member for Emerson, and I wanted—I want to put a plug in here for a project that the ag societies has taken on. Two years in a row

now I've been out to Brandon to participate. It's a quilting program they do every year. The winner of the best quilt—these are people with a lot more talent than I have—the year before last I believe it was, the quilt that won was hung in the Manitoba House at the Olympics in Vancouver. So I agree. I think it's a good connection, rural to urban, and it's a way that we can show our spirit in little Manitoban towns. But we can do things on a big scale, too.

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable member for Emerson, for a short question.

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you for that. Perhaps rather than a question, and I will just pat the minister on the

back for the initiative that he has taken here, and certainly hope that he will enlarge that budget.

And, if that will take us to 5 o'clock, I'm satisfied that, Madam Chair then, I'll do that. Thank you.

**Madam Chairperson:** 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

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>			
<b>Introduction of Bills</b>		Lake Manitoba	
Bill 36–The Adult Abuse Registry Act and Amendments to The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act		Eichler; Ashton	1841
Mackintosh	1833	Shoal Lakes	
		Eichler; Ashton	1842
		Livestock Producers	
		Dewar; Struthers	1844
<b>Petitions</b>			
PTH 16 and PTH 5 North–Traffic Signals			
Briese	1833	<b>Members' Statements</b>	
		Bette Mueller	
Auto Theft–Court Order Breaches		Pedersen	1845
Goertzen	1833	Dauphin Countryfest Community Cinema	
		Struthers	1845
Convicted Auto Thieves–Denial of MPI Benefits		Fort Dufferin	
Pedersen	1834	Graydon	1846
		Winnipegosis Fire Department	
PR 160 West and Highway 16		Wowchuk	1846
Derkach	1834		
		Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month	
<b>Tabling of Reports</b>		Gerrard	1847
Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund, Annual Report, 2009-2010			
Allan	1834		
		<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>	
		<b>GOVERNMENT BUSINESS</b>	
<b>Ministerial Statements</b>			
Flooding and Ice Jams Update		<b>Committee of Supply</b>	
Ashton	1834	(Concurrent Sections)	
Briese	1835	Health	1848
Gerrard	1835	Employee Pensions and Other Costs	1866
		Enabling Appropriations and Other Appropriations	1869
<b>Oral Questions</b>		Civil Service Commission	1873
Assiniboine River		Family Services and Consumer Affairs	1877
McFadyen; Ashton	1836	Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives	1879
Taillieu; Ashton	1838		
Faurschou; Ashton	1840		
Gerrard; Ashton	1843		
Graydon; Struthers	1844		

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