

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

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

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

**Vol. LX No. 36A – 10 a.m., Tuesday, May 6, 2008**

ISSN 0542-5492

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

**The House met at 10 a.m.**

## PRAYER

## House Business

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Not a privilege, Mr. Speaker. Whew. It's House business.

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

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, just to clarify the Estimates schedule, this afternoon in the Chamber following Intergovernmental Affairs will be Competitiveness, Training, rather than Aboriginal and Northern Affairs that I believe had been indicated yesterday. *[interjection]* No? So did I correct something that wasn't in error? *[interjection]* For Friday. *[interjection]*

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

**Mr. Chomiak:** Would you please canvass the House to see if there's agreement for the Estimates sequence to be changed so that the Estimates for the Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade will be considered in the Chamber, with this change to apply permanently; that is, the change would be subsequent to the matter that's in the Chamber now. Then I'll fix everything else later.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there agreement for the Estimates sequence to be changed so that Estimates for the Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade will be considered ahead of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs in the Chamber, with this change to apply permanently? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Chomiak:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, House.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

## SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

## Bill 200—The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 200, The Waste

Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réduction du volume et de la production des déchets, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, this bill will ban the use of plastic checkout bags as of January 1, 2009, in Manitoba. This is a proven, effective measure to deal with a significant environmental problem. It is already in effect in places like Leaf Rapids, and it has been well accepted. Manitobans are ready to move on this issue and we hope the government is also ready to move.

I want to thank the hundreds and hundreds of people who have signed our petitions. I want to thank the students from Cecil Rhodes who are here and their teacher, Andrea Powell, for all the effort they have made toward a ban on plastic bags. I also want to salute the students for the award-winning video that they've produced and congratulate them on their efforts.

Let me quote a little bit from some of the petitions that people have commented on. From James Cotton: If the Premier (Mr. Doer) cares about the environment, he will support this bill.

From another: If a grocery mogul like Galen Weston gets it, why doesn't the Premier? Get with the 21st century, yesterday's NDP, and that means including the MLA for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer).

From Bryan Mintenko: Corporations need to be held accountable for the amount of pollution and waste they produce in the name of profit and greed. Plastic bags, as well as non-recyclable packaging, needs to be banned by governments around the world. This is just one small step toward the environmental revolution that we desperately need.

From Frank Goodon: Any country in its right mind would be switching to biodegradable bags. Keep our province clean for future generations.

From Peter Coroma: Let's join the MLA for River Heights to remove one polluting agent from the equation of our earth's degradation. One by one, we will continue to cleanse our earth. Congratulations for introducing this bill.

From Marvin Krawec: Banning the plastic bag will help clean up some of the debris that's seen everywhere. It's such an unsightly appearance. If we claim to be concerned about the environment, let's not delay.

From Tracy Dufault: Plastic bags are not necessary. There are alternatives to this. I myself use the cloth bags and I'm doing my part. I expect government to do the same.

From Heather Howdle: I think it's time we all recognize that the negative impact of these plastic bags outweighs any convenience they've provided. We can adjust to using reusable cloth bags or backpacks or recycling containers to pack our groceries. I hope we're successful in changing this.

And the list goes on and on.

From Stephen Berd: Plastic bags are a huge waste of energy to produce and litter the landscape. They are not biodegradable, so bags which are buried with garbage and other materials have a lifespan reaching a few centuries. It's time to enact legislation which will reduce the use of them and to promote the use of multiple-use bags, non-plastic.

From Hannon Bell: Banning the plastic bag is a good and moral thing to do for the environment and I applaud the initiative in bringing this bill forward.

\* (10:10)

I can quote many more, but let me, in the short time allotted, speak to 10 major reasons to support this bill.

First, plastic bags are unsightly. Hundreds of millions of plastic bags end up in our landfill sites every year. Far too many plastic bags end up blowing all over the landscape of Manitoba, and they are a blight on our beautiful province. My friend, Dennis Dempsey, talked to me about a plastic bag which was in a tree. It stayed there for three years before it blew down.

The Minister of Tourism (Mr. Robinson) for our province should be front and centre with me to campaign to ban plastic bags in Manitoba. I look for support from the Minister of Tourism, and I hope he speaks positively on this bill today.

Second, banning plastic bags will help with forward-thinking economic development in Manitoba, economic development that is based on environmentally sound approaches replacing plastic bags using petroleum products from Alberta with

cloth bags or recyclable bags made from agricultural products like cornstarch grown on our farms.

The Minister for Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan), the Minister for Science, Technology, Energy and Mines (Mr. Rondeau) and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) should all be lining up in support of this bill, to ban plastic bags in Manitoba.

Indeed it is good for the Finance Minister because we will stimulate activity in making cloth bags and biodegradable bags here. We will employ more Manitobans. The NDP have it wrong trying to put an NDP tax, another tax on if they're thinking of putting a tax on. They should just join us and ban the plastic bags.

Third, this initiative is good for our health. The breakdown products from plastic bags are toxic and are not good for health or the environment. We don't want to have to clean them up later on because this government delayed. Let's prevent future health problems.

It's good for the environment. The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), if he's doing his job, should be front and centre behind our efforts, our Liberal efforts and the efforts of many, many Manitobans to ban plastic bags in Manitoba. This is a small step, but it is a giant step because it's very significant and it will make a big difference.

Fifthly, it is good for education in Manitoba. It is terrible if you have a province which is talking about being positive on the environment but doesn't support action which supports students and others in our schools who are front and centre in championing environmental causes. So we expect the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) to be front and centre in supporting this bill.

It is a proven approach. Banning plastic bags has worked in Leaf Rapids. People like it. I've been to Leaf Rapids after the plastic ban. There are no more plastic bags all over Leaf Rapids. It's time to make a difference all over Manitoba and ban the unsightly plastic bags.

We should be the leading province in Canada, and we can be if we ban plastic bags and move to support this bill today. An NDP delay will put us behind.

Seventh, if the NDP delay it will put us behind China. What a terrible thing, to be behind that

environmental powerhouse, China. You know, we need to be out in front. We need to be ahead.

I'm told that some in the media gallery are going to be following me around to make sure that I'm not using any plastic bags when I go to the grocery store. I have to admit, I'm doing better. Occasionally I forget, but if we have a plastic bag ban, then we won't have to try and remember because all of us will be using alternatives all the time.

And the tenth reason is that students around the province will endorse what we're doing. We have the Cecil Rhodes students here today. They are excited about moving Manitoba forward and banning plastic bags in Manitoba.

We hope that the NDP will be supportive of our efforts and our initiative to ban plastic bags as of January 1, 2009. The NDP want an amendment to change the date, well, let's negotiate that, but let's move today and support a ban on plastic bags for all of Manitoba.

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation):**

Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased to stand up following the Member for River Heights with his David Letterman-style approach to the 10 best reasons to do a ban in Manitoba on plastic bags. This may sound strange for a politician from this side of the House to say to that side of the House, but I want to thank him for bringing this forward. I mean I admire the ability of the Member for River Heights to put his finger on an issue that I think is an important one. I admire his ability to communicate that to students in the gallery from Cecil Rhodes School and not just Cecil Rhodes School, but many schools around this province in my own constituency who are very concerned about the environment, who are very concerned about the decisions we make in this Legislature that have an impact on Mother Earth.

I just want to take one quick second, when I was a school principal in Rorketon School during the time of the Rio conference in 1991, a group of grade 8s came to me and said, we want to start a kids for saving Earth club. I became their adviser. First thing I realized, and I think we all need to realize in here, is that those kids in that grade 8 class, much like the kids at the Cecil Rhodes School probably know more about the environment than any of us in this building, and more importantly, they will be the ones that will be making decisions in this very Chamber some day when it comes to the environment, when it comes to protecting our resources, whether they be

water, whether they be the air, whether they be land resources, whatever those environmental decisions that are coming forward, I think I'm very confident that students that I see today in our public school system and students of the age of the class that are here today from Cecil Rhodes, I'm real confident they'll make good decisions.

*Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

That means that we have to make good decisions, not just superficial decisions, but very good decisions that we can implement. This isn't such a bad idea that we're talking about today. What we need to do is we need to take this idea and we need to make it work. What I see here from the Member for River Heights is a good start. What I see here is an ability, an opportunity for us to take an idea and implement it. What's not here, what I must explain, what's not here, is an implementation strategy. How do you actually make this ban, whatever that ban looks like, how do you make it work?

The Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) quite correctly has pointed out that there are a number of different bans around the world. He quite slyly put forward the option of China in this House. I want to say he put forward the example of Leaf Rapids, and I want to put on the record, as I have in the past very clearly, the respect that I have for the mayor and council at Leaf Rapids for making that kind of a courageous decision and moving forward with a plan to implement that courageous decision. It's not quite good enough just to get that first little bit done, and kudos to the Member for River Heights for taking that first step. But the biggest part of this needs to be the implementation of a ban of some sort in our great province, and we're working on that.

\* (10:20)

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to offer to the Member for River Heights to work together with us on that because, I think, without an implementation plan, without a comprehensive view, not just of plastic bags, I think the Member for River Heights would agree with me in saying that there are a lot more waste streams in addition to plastic bags that we need to be serious about in this province.

We will be coming forward with a regulation in terms of household hazardous waste, all that stuff that's collecting in people's basements, collecting in the shed out at the back. We need to move forward

on that, too. We need to move forward in terms of electronic waste. I know that the Member for River Heights and others in this Chamber understand that we just can't do only plastic bags, that we have to be moving forward on those other things that could damage our environment.

What we've been saying all along is that we need to have a comprehensive plan that we work with industry on, so that industry can take ownership of the stuff that they produce, right from day one right through to the very end of the life cycle of that product, so that it's not all collecting in our landfills, becoming a hassle for municipalities and a threat to our environment.

I'm offering an opportunity here for the Member for River Heights to actively participate in expanding from just plastic bags, which are important, which I do agree with the Member for River Heights that we have to have action on.

We have to figure out what we're going to do with plastic bags. There's a little churchyard right across from our house. My six-year-old is learning to ride his bike and we go there every evening. I'm getting tired of pulling plastic bags out of the trees around that little churchyard parking lot. I'm getting tired of taking them out, but I dutifully pull them out of the trees, the ones I can reach anyway, stick them in my pocket and I take them home. *[interjection]* I'm a retriever, you bet. I don't mind doing that. We all should be doing that. But we need to deal with preventing those plastic bags from being blown up into those trees in the first place. I think we all get that.

A ban is a small, small first step, whatever that ban may look like. What we need to talk about, all of us together, is how we make that ban work. What is the implementation plan? How do we do that?

We can talk about if China can do it, we can do it, all that stuff; that's fine. I'm going to offer the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) a real opportunity to make this work, not just throw it out there and say we have no plan to do it. I'm saying we need to have an implementation strategy. We need to have a plan to do it.

My suggestion to the member would be to defer this bill, defer this bill to such a time in which we can put together that plan to make it work. I'm not interested in just getting the headlines. I'll leave that to somebody else. That may sound strange to some of the old-time politicians over there, but, Madam

Deputy Speaker, the NDP gives thumbs up to a plan that will lead to a ban on plastic bags. We need to have a strategy in place to implement exactly what the Member for River Heights is talking about, or, really, there's no point in going forward then. It's not good enough just to say let's do a ban. That's not good enough. I want to know what it is, how it is that we can actually do that. That's what I'm offering to the members across the way.

Actually, the Member for River Heights, quite correctly in his speech, offered a bit of common ground here when he said to us on this side, we could negotiate over the date. He very clearly said that. It seems to me that he very clearly is pragmatic enough to believe that we can work together on this to make it come forward. If we can change the date that we start to implement, then I'm sure that there are ways that we can work out a plan to actually get this done.

I don't want this to just stay here as words floating around in the Chamber. I think we owe it to the Cecil Rhodes kids. I think we owe it to the kids in all of the schools around Manitoba to not just pass something here and then let it die. I think we have to have, in all honesty, a plan to make this work.

Plastic bags are a very, very, very small part of the waste stream that we need to deal with. It's an important part but it's a small part when you look at all of the rest of the items that we collect in our blue boxes, when you look at the electronic waste and the hazardous waste.

We're going to do the whole comprehensive package. We're going to get there. We're going to get there with a plan on plastic bags. What I'm saying to the member is that—I think my advice would be to defer this bill, bring it back at the next opportunity, and in the meantime, we can put in place a plan to actually make this bill work.

So I like the start that the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has got. I'd like to be able to finish it off, so Madam Deputy Speaker, I'll leave the Chamber with those words.

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** After those words from the minister, I have to say that it's time, in our province, to stop playing politics with environmental issues, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Member for River Heights brought forward this bill. We could have brought forward our own bill too and so on, but we are supporting this bill because we support the principle of where it's going, and we would encourage the minister as well to support this.

If he's not going to, then why not use it as a starting point, which he has said that it is, and bring forward amendments to this bill?

Why is it that we have to play politics with environmental issues all the time in this Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker? It's time that we take this bill, that we use it as a starting point, perhaps, then, maybe we can make amendments to it. Maybe we can make it better, and we believe that maybe there are ways to make it better, but, unfortunately, under the system, unless the government allows us to bring forward amendments to a private member's bill, we're not allowed to.

So the minister has already stated today that he is in favour of—that he believes that this is a good start, Madam Deputy Speaker, and so, if he believes it's a good start, we would encourage him to use this as the base point of where we need to go with respect to this debate on banning plastic bags in our province and reducing the number of plastic bags used in our province.

The minister also said we need to have a comprehensive plan. Well, yes, we need a comprehensive plan, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it's been almost nine years and there is no plan so the Member for River Heights brings this forward, you know, and yet the minister has no plan for this particular area. I would encourage him that if he believes that we need to have a comprehensive plan, maybe he should come up with one because he is the minister responsible here.

He says he wants to defer this bill. Well, for how long? How long are we going to defer this bill? It's been eight and a half years. How much longer do we have to wait for this minister to come up with his so-called comprehensive plan? Here's a starting point. Here's a springboard. Here's where we need to go from here, Madam Deputy Speaker. Stop playing politics with environmental issues. Let's get going. Let's get moving forward. Let's start to make a difference out there. Let's start to reduce the number of plastic bags in our landfill out there. I want to commend the Member for River Heights for bringing this forward for debate in this Chamber today. I think this is a very important issue.

By some estimates, there are as many as 200 million plastic bags that are used in Manitoba annually, and consumers certainly, are showing an increasing interest in environmental issues aimed at reducing waste in our province, yet, unfortunately,

there is no comprehensive plan that has come forward by this government.

So we support this bill that the Member for River Heights has come forward with. We do believe, and I think that we need to look at other jurisdictions and what has worked elsewhere, and I think if we look at what has worked in Ireland, they brought forward an environmental levy, Madam Deputy Speaker, an environmental levy on the use of plastic bags. And again, that cut the usage of plastic bags by more than 90 percent.

So are there ways that we can achieve these goals? Absolutely. Are there different ideas out there? Yes. And should we be debating this here? Yes, we should. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for the Liberal Party, the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), has brought forward this to this Chamber to have this debate here and now, and I want to commend him for doing so, and I want to encourage members opposite that when we come to actually voting for this bill—hopefully, they will allow for it to come to a vote in this Chamber because we believe, as the minister has already stated, himself, that it is a very good starting point.

\* (10:30)

So, if it's a good starting point, Madam Deputy Speaker, then he and his colleagues, the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), all of the ministers opposite, the Cabinet opposite, all the members opposite should then support this bill. They have no reason not to because they have no comprehensive plan out there as an alternative right now. I think that that is extremely unfortunate and so I would encourage again members opposite to stand behind us. We will stand with the Member for River Heights and our Liberal friends in this House, in this Chamber and support this bill because we believe it's an excellent starting point.

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** It's an honour to speak to this bill because this is something that I've been doing for 20 years, carrying cloth grocery bags to my grocery store. It's something that anyone can do and it's nice to see that the Member for River Heights is joining me in 1986 in trying to finally integrate cloth bags into his daily shopping habits, but the thing is that a ban is a first step but in some respects is a first and a baby step and is a step that can backfire if not thought through.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I commend the students from Cecil Rhodes, a school where my

stepmother taught. I'm glad to see that they're moving forward on this, but I'm sure, as they've learned in their classes around environmentalism, that one thing is not ever the sole problem in the environmental thing. It's about an interconnection, and we have to think through all the things. Too many mistakes have been made in the past 40 years where people have tried to solve an environmental problem by banning one thing, doing one single thing without thinking of the ripple effects that it has and it's backfired and led to larger problems.

This is what we have to consider with this bill. I think, if anything, the students from Cecil Rhodes should take pride in what they've done, and they should be disappointed in the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for offering, a forward to them a bill that does not think things through completely. He's offered them half of something rather than something complete, comprehensive and that really will do the proper job. So he has done a disservice to these students by offering them a flash in the pan, a headline. He hasn't thought things through. If he's going to model behaviour for youth, he should teach them to think through critically for all of the implications.

I spent, again, 20 years ago when I was first starting to use cloth bags, you know what I was also doing? I was a university student involved with environmental groups, and I was teaching young people, students this age about environmental activism. It is about thinking globally and acting locally, and the first steps you take are ones as an individual. So you start as an individual to use cloth bags. You model that behaviour for other people. You walk into a store, and when a merchant offers you a plastic bag you say no, I have my own cloth bag.

So really it's about modelling behaviour. Bans can serve a purpose, but they can only serve a purpose when they are part of a larger holistic package, a larger holistic package that looks at the fact that how many people take those grocery bags out of a retailer and then turn around and use it for their garbage. So if they don't come out of that store with a plastic bag, what are they going to use for their garbage or picking up after their dog. They're going to probably go out and buy a plastic bag that's of a thicker grade and biodegrades even worse. So we have to think about the ripple effects.

So a ban can have its place, but if it is the only thing that is being put out there by the Member for

River Heights, then it is a disservice to these students and it is a disservice to the environment. We do have to come up with a comprehensive package that lays out all of the options, that shows that we've thought the situation through to all of the implications so that people aren't wondering what they're going to do when they scoop poop as responsible citizens, that they don't have to worry about what they're going to do to dispose of their garbage. It has to be integrated with composting. It has to be integrated with other forms of recycling.

Again, I say the Member for River Heights has done these students a disservice. He has dangled a carrot in front of them without thinking through things to its logical conclusion. He has not thought things through and all the implications. So he's giving them the opportunity for a headline. That is not good environmental thinking, Madam Deputy Speaker. Good environmental thinking is about the long term.

Those of us who for 20 years have been using cloth bags know that it's not about today and you making a headline as a member supporting a bunch of teenagers. It's about all of us on a daily basis changing our activities, and some of us have been spending 20 years trying to tell people, you know what, your groceries will get home safer in a cloth bag.

So, nice for you to have joined the party that some of us have been at for 20 years, okay? So, if we're going to put this forward again, standing with the Member for Dauphin-Roblin, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), if you're going to do this, you do it once, you do it right the first time. You don't throw a half-thought-out bill out there and then try to see how you're going to implement it and patch it up later. It takes five minutes to draft up what you did there, and I appreciate the effort and the fact that you're finally coming to the party, but do these kids the service they deserve and let us put together a proper comprehensive package that will really make a difference in the long run. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I am truly amazed with the mentality and the arguments that are being put forward by the government of the day. She talks about good environmental thinking. Let me suggest to the Member for Kirkfield Park, good environmental thinking would ban the plastic bags. Madam Deputy Speaker, you do not have to be a scientist to discover that fact.



In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, you have seen that there has been wide support of banning the bag. It goes beyond this legislative Chamber. It's good for the environment. It's pretty simple: hundreds of millions of plastic bags would disappear from our landfill sites, from our mesh fences, from our environment virtually overnight by passing this legislation. I question why it is the government has so much fear to allow this bill to be voted on so that it can go into committee so that we could hear presentations on the banning of the bag.

I don't believe for a moment that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) or the previous speaker, the Member for Kirkfield Park, have any idea in terms of what it means to take a first step. This is an important step. I applaud individuals that take the initiative. We have in the gallery students from Cecil Rhodes School who should be applauded for their action. Watch the video. See what they've done. They've taken an issue and they've simplified it to the point in which it reflects what is being said in this particular bill. It's very simple. It's a very simple, important step. We don't need the gobbledygook coming from the government as to why it doesn't need to be passed at this time.

The government knows full well that if it has concerns it can move it forward in committee and make the necessary amendments. There is no need to delay the passage of this particular bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, unless, of course, you do not support good, sound, environmental policy. This bill will go a long way in protecting our environment and there hasn't been a speaker, I believe, that would be able to articulate as to why this bill would not be good for Manitoba's environment.

I can appreciate sometimes government tends to not want to do things unless it's the government of the day that has the idea and has it on paper or brings in the bill itself. You know, we're not that fussy in terms of political ownership. I am sure, even though it's a great privilege of mine to be the seconder, that any member of the Chamber, the government, can second the bill. In fact, if the government wants to bring in a bill prior to the ending of this session that will do the same thing, we would applaud that action.

What we're interested in seeing is action on the environment. We're tired of the talk. The government talks about the environment a lot. Here's an opportunity for them to demonstrate clear, concise action at protecting our environment. People are watching. People are concerned. People want the

government to do the right thing. What is the wrong thing is to allow this bill to die on the Order Paper. At least have the political courage to stand up and vote the bill down. If you don't support the legislation, then vote it down.

I believe that if this bill was to be allowed to be voted on, that most members of the NDP caucus are friends of the environment and would support this bill. Most members of this Chamber, I believe, see the merit of passing this bill. There's nothing wrong with passing this bill. At the end of the day you could take a look at Leaf Rapids. The Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), I'm sure, could attest in terms of how it has been successful.

\*(10:40)

There might be some problems, and we'll acknowledge that there could be some problems when you implement a ban of this nature. We're not that naive, but nor are we that naive to believe that the bill does not have the merit that would make a positive difference. That's the reason why we believe the most important thing that we could see here this morning is, at the very least, the opportunity for every MLA to vote on the bill. Let the MLAs collectively decide whether or not this bill should be moving forward so that we can go to the constituencies and say that I voted in favour of banning plastic bags, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know that that's what I'm going to be telling my constituents. That's what I'm going to be telling the surrounding areas; that it's with pride that I was the seconder of the bill. It was a privilege to be able to be the seconder, but the most important thing is I want to know where people inside this Chamber really feel on this particular bill. Allow for the bill to be voted on. Too often we'll see a member adjourn it or it will be spoken out only because the government doesn't want to vote against something, and I think that would be wrong.

I believe that it's important. It's time now for us to walk the talk. You talk about doing the right things on the environment. Well, let's see if in fact you'll walk the talk on this and support Bill 200. A vast majority of Manitobans support, I believe, this type of legislation. We have seen the generational gaps filled. Madam Deputy Speaker, individuals from all ages recognize the impact a bill like this could have on our environment; hundreds of millions of plastic bags all over the province, and the positive impact.

The alternatives are out there. As one member has pointed out, multiply it by eight years and you can do the math. It's a lot of plastic bags. If we look into the future, it's an important step. It doesn't have to be deferred. There is no justification in terms of, let's hold off, let's wait till the fall time, let's wait till next year, let's wait until we have a comprehensive plan. Madam Deputy Speaker, the time is now. The time is now. Either put up or shut up on the issue. It's either you're going to support the public ban on plastic bags and you want to do something healthy for the environment, or you're going to sit on your hands and do nothing. Nothing in terms of real consequences for the environment.

If there is a bill that is simple and effective, I would suggest to you—and good for the environment, I should add—this is one of those bills. The question is, we know that the opposition, the Conservatives and the Liberals are now on side. We would like to see the support of the third political party inside this Chamber getting behind this bill. They've got nothing to lose. Nothing at all to lose by allowing to, at the very least, go to committee, Madam Deputy Speaker. It doesn't mean that it becomes law, it just brings it to the next level. There is nothing wrong with allowing this bill to go to committee, because I'll tell you, if it goes to committee, what really happens is it then opens it up for public debate. The public then can come before committee and express what they think about the bill. They can then be afforded the opportunity to express their opinions, both good and bad. So why would the government fear members of the public coming to the Legislative Building and voicing their opinions on this particular bill?

I trust and I hope that the government would see the merit in allowing this bill, at the very least, to come to a vote, and if it's a question in terms of more people want to speak on the bill, well I could suggest to you that the political will would be here in the Chamber to allow leave so that we could have as many people that want to speak to the bill, speak to the bill prior to its passage into committee.

I would conclude, Madam Deputy Speaker, by making the statement that I challenge all members to recognize the efforts of the public—in particular, Cecil Rhodes School—and many other young people. Follow their lead. Do the right thing. Acknowledge that this is an important step. The government can measure it however they want, but acknowledge that it is an important step forward in terms of protecting our environment. In a day and age when the

environment is so important to each and every one of us, let's not lose the opportunity to do the right thing. I ask the government to have the courage, the political courage, at the very least, to allow this bill to go to committee and the leave would be granted if requested, to allow for any member to speak on this bill here this morning.

Thank you.

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with respect to the proposal from the Liberal members. If the member's sincere about the notion that this is not a political issue, that we should be working together, then the member should take it under consideration the offer that has been made to defer this bill and work with us on a more comprehensive plan.

This is not an easy-button issue. This is not an easy-button solution. The members are familiar with that advertising campaign; you just press the easy button. That's the proposal that we have in this particular bill. I hear the member from—*[interjection]* Maybe the Member for Portage (Mr. Faurichou) would like to speak to this after I'm finished. But this is not an easy-button solution. Members opposite, the Liberals, profess to be the environmental stewards and they stood up and produced a bill that watered down the water act essentially. They said no, you don't need to remove phosphates and nitrates—just phosphorus, that's fine, just remove the phosphorus. As somebody who lives by the lake, I would much rather stand beside a government that's prepared to go and—*[interjection]* I would much rather stand on this side of the House as part of a government that's prepared to take all the necessary measures to address both phosphorus and nitrates as pollutants, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Members opposite also proposed a bill that dealt simply with phosphorus in detergents and that's not enough. You don't water down that act either. We went further when we looked at issues of fertilizer and items that were being applied on lawns and our legislation took it a step further.

But I will have to say, I should have started actually by saying, as the Minister of Education, how pleased I am that we have the students from Cecil Rhodes here because as my colleague from Dauphin, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) said, students know a lot more about environmental issues than we did 20 years ago, 25 years ago, 30 years ago when we were students. They've been tremendous

advocates for our environment, and they need to know that we are working and committed as a government to do what's best for the environment.

We also have to have a very balanced approach in this, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have to make sure that there's a plan in place that works. Now, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I did agree with one thing he said. There could be some problems. He said there could be some problems with this legislation. They didn't assess what those problems would be, but he did recognize that there could be some problems. I would be curious to know what type of consultation the Member for Inkster had engaged in with industry and with retailers and other organizations that could have some impacts on this particular legislation by hitting the easy button. That just won't work.

But our commitment is to work with industry, work with the partners, consult. We consider the members opposite as partners in this process, if they're so willing to put politics aside, as they said they are. They said put politics aside. Well, put it aside and work with us. The offer's there. Defer this bill and work on a more comprehensive plan.

Now, as Minister of Education, I'm absolutely pleased with the work that our department has been doing that's been recognized not only nationally, but internationally, on the file of education for sustainable development. Education for sustainable development is one of the key components of our education renewal in Manitoba. It is a basic component through all the curriculum that's being developed in the social studies area, in language arts area. Education for sustainable development is now on the agenda of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada because of the fine work that our department is doing, because of the fine work that Deputy Minister Gerald Farthing has been doing. We have been speaking nationally and internationally about education for sustainable development.

Education for sustainable development deals with the idea of making decisions in life that are sustainable and that are environmentally friendly. As I said, we're seeing the impacts of this at the kindergarten to grade 12 level. Students are engaged in this notion. Students have embraced this notion. Students have become wonderful environmental stewards.

\* (10:50)

So, to come out and say, it's easy, ban the plastic bag, does not do service to all the work that's been done in the school system for education purposes. It does not do service to the industry. It does not do service to the community. I, for one, as a dog owner—it has been referenced, the idea that these bags are reused, and I certainly reuse plastic bags, as a dog owner—I'd be quite concerned with the options that might be presented or available with respect to cleaning up after my dog.

There are going to be impacts by an outright ban. The members opposite, again, thanks for acknowledging there could be a problem, but what problems have you identified? Have you even consulted industry? Have you consulted with the retailers? Have you consulted with anyone who would be impacted by an outright ban?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Bjornson:** Well, I haven't seen any suggestion that that has indeed been the case. The member says yes, but the other thing is that, when we had hearings on the whole notion of resource conservation in Manitoba, the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), at no time did he ever suggest that a plastic-bag ban would be a part of that discussion. So it's rather interesting after those consultations that now, in the Chamber, in a non-political way—he's saying this isn't political, it's about the environment—comes forward now and introduces a bill when that was never raised as a part of the consultations that we've been engaged with Manitobans with respect to a comprehensive plan.

Yes, there have been some jurisdictions that have gone forward with some of the bans. I know the member referenced China. I think the member should be cautious in that comparison given the environmental record that we see in China. Sometimes necessity is the mother of invention when you consider the densely populated areas of China and the impact that that would have. Consider the amount of coal energy in China, consider some of the other very profound environmental challenges that that jurisdiction has. I would caution the member on using that as a comparison. *[interjection]*

Yes, I hear the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) talking about Leaf Rapids. Yes, I commend Leaf Rapids for showing that initiative. Again, this is an NDP constituency, as I have been reminded by the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen). They certainly showed a lot of foresight in that effort. This is just part of it, though. As I said,

this is just part of a bigger-picture issue and it has to be addressed in a more comprehensive manner.

There are a number of issues that we have to look at. We have to look at compostable bags. We have to look at what this impact would be if it was strictly paper bags. Certainly we can talk about the benefits of using paper over plastic but there are some other issues that the member has to consider. To eliminate the billions of plastic bags that the member is suggesting this bill would address, the member also has to be aware that this would mean a significant increase in paper. A significant increase in paper bags would mean cutting down more trees. I'm sure the member's put that math together with respect to how many trees would be required for the paper industry to address the need for paper bags.

Certainly we have to take a more balanced and sustainable approach to how we manage this particular issue, Mr. Speaker. If they're truly concerned about the environment and they're truly suggesting that this is not a political issue, then the members will do the right thing and work with us on a more comprehensive plan. The offer's been made by the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) to defer the bill until a implementation plan is able to be worked out and make the bill work.

As a government we introduce legislation. We have to examine all angles of the legislation. You have to take all factors into consideration. You have to consult with all members who would be impacted by this legislation. That will include the industry, that will include the retailers, that will include Manitoba residents who have some concerns about this issue and how to appropriately manage this issue.

Again, the offer is there. Work with us in a non-political fashion. If you're truly concerned about the environment, work with us to see that this bill can be part of a comprehensive plan, a manageable plan and not a plan that is simply an easy-button solution. There are no easy-button solutions because if that was the case, all these things would be done already. Is that not true? All these easy-button solutions would be done, we'd be moving forward as environmental stewards and we'd be doing what is best for our environment. The offer remains for the members to work with us in a non-political environment and ensure that we do what is right, what is balanced, what is manageable, what is sustainable. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** I just want to say about this bill, I'd like to commend the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for bringing it forward, and, really, unlike the Member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady), I don't think this does a disservice to the students of Cecil Rhodes. I think that it's a very good thing to learn on a step-by-step basis. We don't take children into kindergarten and throw the grade 12 curriculum at them. We teach them in steps, and I think this is what we're doing with this bill. We're doing it in steps.

So we have a bill that we support in the principle of this bill, and, you know, as private members, we bring forward pieces of legislation to this Chamber, and we're told repeatedly, oh, it's not comprehensive enough; oh, we can't do that; it doesn't include this or doesn't include that.

The Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) talks about working with them. Why not work with this bill? The bill is already here. Why not work with the Liberal Party on this bill? It's simple. It's right here, and I've had experience with bringing private members' bills to this Chamber before, Mr. Speaker, and I actually brought quite a comprehensive bill, a bill written like this, which was protection of personal information and prevention of identity theft act.

When I spoke to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) on the bill, he went, well, that's far too much. That's far too much. Private members' bills are supposed to be just ideas and that's far too much. You have to start small. You have to start small. That was the argument then. Now the argument is, oh, we can't start small. We have to be all-encompassing. I would suggest that this is just government double-speak here, Mr. Speaker.

What is it that they want? Really, they can take the bill that we have here. We can, if there are amendments that the government would like to make, they keep saying work with the government. Why doesn't the government work with this bill that's been presented? It's already here. I don't understand why that wouldn't happen, and we have the opportunity to have debate in this Chamber and now we have the opportunity to—let's have a vote on this bill.

Why would the government not vote on this bill? Today, within the next one minute, we could have a vote on this bill in this Chamber. We can pass it through to committee, and, at committee, we can have Manitobans come in and hear what they have to

say about this bill. If the government thinks that Manitobans are not in favour of this bill, then put it out to the committee and let's see what happens. Let's see who comes forward.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are many good reasons to look at first steps here. The principle of getting rid of these plastic bags that fill up our landfill sites—and I certainly drive by Brady Landfill quite often and see the bags flying around, and it is really a disgusting sight. We do need to take some first steps here.

So rather than saying, let's kill the whole idea here and wait for a plan that hasn't materialized in eight years, here's a good step. Here's a good step. Why don't we start here? Why doesn't this government say—they say, work with us. We say work with this bill. It's already here. It's in front of the Legislature. We can vote on it right now, so I encourage the members opposite to stand up and vote on this bill, and if they vote it down, say why you do vote it down. Let's pass it to committee. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade):** It's a pleasure to speak to this bill, and I would like to recognize the students from Cecil Rhodes School who are here today, interested in this issue, learning about the legislative, the parliamentary process. I certainly commend their interest in this issue.

Of course, they're in the riding of Wellington, just north of the area that I represent in the Legislature, and, given the area that I represent, I've learned a lot about garbage. Indeed, I have that on the top of my mind because this Saturday, I'll be gathering with the community and some of my colleagues here in the Legislature to clean up Omand's Creek.

My friend, the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), and I have worked on this for the last several years. I'm very pleased the MLA for Wellington (Ms. Marcelino) is going to come and join me as well. Indeed, we've expanded the procedure. I know that my friend, the MLA for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) is now involved in a plan to clean up Truro Creek, and as well, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) will, for the first time in many, many years, we have an MLA in Kirkfield Park interested in the community, and she'll be helping the community clean up Sturgeon Creek.

So, indeed, I've done this many years. I've had dirt under my fingernails as I've cleared up—

\* (11:00)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister for Competitiveness, Training and Trade will have eight minutes remaining. The hour being 11 a.m., we will now move on to resolutions and—[interjection]

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, on a point of order.

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just need your clarification from the Chair here. I know there are a lot of other members that want to speak to this very important bill, and I'm not sure just what the rules are here, but I wonder if we could canvass the House to have consent to continue discussion on this very important piece of legislation.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Inkster, on the same point of order?

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Turtle Mountain, I think, brings up a very good issue in terms of the political will, and I would further request that if there is leave of the Chamber, we would be more than happy to have whoever speak to the bill so that ultimately it could come to a vote if possible. So we would be prepared to give leave, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, we do indeed have many members who wish to speak to this. At the same time we've got a very important private member's resolution on breast cancer, which is coming forward. The legislative schedule has been set up, really, from the session order from last year, so, although we will continue debate on this bill whenever the opposition members wish to bring it back in private members' hour, this House has other important business, too, to care of.

**Mr. Speaker:** The request was to put to the House if there is leave to continue debate on the bill. Is there willingness of the House to continue the debate on the bill or do we move on to resolutions?

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, there is no agreement. We will now move on to—it's 11 a.m., and now we will move on to resolution 7, 2008 World Conference on Breast Cancer.

## RESOLUTION

### Res. 7–2008 World Conference on Breast Cancer

**Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert):** I move, seconded by the Member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun), that:

WHEREAS breast cancer is the most common-occurring cancer among Canadian women with an estimated four million women living with breast cancer globally;

WHEREAS the Canadian Cancer Society estimates that 2008 will see 22,400 new cases of breast cancer in Canadian women; and

WHEREAS an estimated 780 of those cases will occur in the province of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS breast cancer is not just a women's issue, given that approximately 170 new cases in men were diagnosed in 2007; and

WHEREAS approximately 5,300 women and 50 men will die of breast cancer this year; and

WHEREAS one in nine women is expected to develop breast cancer during her lifetime and one in 28 will die from it; and

WHEREAS the World Conference on Breast Cancer Foundation is strengthening international networks concerned with breast cancer as well as advancing global and local action on breast cancer; and

WHEREAS Winnipeg will be the host to the 2008 World Conference on Breast Cancer from June 4 to 8, which will bring together women from all over the world to share their experiences of living with breast cancer and share their hopes, dreams and fears;

WHEREAS the conference will also hear from individuals who are supporting friends, family and loved ones living with breast cancer; and

WHEREAS all Manitobans need to be informed and aware of the risk factors associated with breast cancer and early detection methods.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider continuing to support breast cancer research, screening and treatment for the benefit of all Manitobans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba welcome the 2008 World Breast Cancer Conference and

commend the important advocacy work of the Foundation.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable Member for St. Norbert, seconded by the honourable Member for Rossmere:

WHEREAS breast cancer–

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense.

**Ms. Brick:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to bring this private member's resolution before the Legislative Assembly. This resolution resolves that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider continuing to support breast cancer research, screening and treatment for the benefit of all Manitobans. It also resolves that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba welcome the 2008 World Breast Cancer Conference and commend the important advocacy work of the foundation.

Mr. Speaker, this conference that is coming this spring to Manitoba is important as it invites women from across Canada to come and talk about their fears, talk about their successes and celebrate in their successes. It's also really important because it brings people from different parts of the world together, where they can talk about treatment and they can talk about some of the research that's been relevant and been happening recently.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the title of the conference is Heart, Soul & Science which, I think, is a very appropriate title, considering some of the difficulties that people face when they do find out that they are facing a diagnosis of breast cancer.

I've had a friend, Sandi Felix, who passed away from this disease. I watched her struggle with her diagnosis and a struggle with facing the type of treatment that was available at the time, as well as facing her imminent demise. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that this is a very difficult disease to be facing a family as well as the individual who does encounter that they have breast cancer. We know that research is leading us forward and we know that research is making huge steps forward in terms of the life expectancy of people who are diagnosed with this disease.

Winnipeg will be host to the 2008 World Conference on Breast Cancer from June 4 to 8. This conference will bring women together from all over the world. They'll be able to talk about the disease

that they face; they'll be able to talk about their hopes, their dreams. They'll also be able to talk about their fears because often it is through us getting together as a group that we are able to find strength. There is strength in numbers; we know that's what we're going to be having this spring; people coming from as far away as Malaysia, Russia and Europe will be here.

One of the very unique things about this conference, Mr. Speaker, is that breast cancer survivors will be able to be speaking at this conference, and they will be speaking on equal terms with researchers. So I think that's a very unique facet that this conference has included in its mandate. It will be helping women deal with fear. There are, we know, lots of stories out there, lots of stories of success, and this will allow women to celebrate their success.

The objectives of the conference are to educate and share information on all aspects of breast cancer, including prevention, diagnosis, treatment, research, support, survivorship and international outreach. It will also provide opportunity for those affected with the disease to express their fears, their frustrations, their hopes and dreams. It will allow them to tell their stories. It will also encourage the strengthening of local, regional and international networks concerned with breast cancer. It will move forward and advance global and local action related to breast cancer.

I was quite surprised to find out that, in other parts of the world, getting treatment is much harder than it is here in Manitoba. Often breast cancer people who suffer through this disease in other parts of the world, they hide it; they aren't able to share it. So I think that we have to celebrate the fact that here in Manitoba and in Canada the survival rate of breast cancer is much higher than it is in other parts of the world. We look at breast cancer, we know that it's one of the most common occurring cancers among Canadian women, with an estimated four million women living with breast cancer globally.

We also know that men are affected by this disease, although it's not something that's widely recognized. This is often recognized as a women's disease. It is not seen as a disease that men are also diagnosed with. We know that there were approximately 170 new cases of men diagnosed in 2007 and that 50 men will die from it this year.

\* (11:10)

Manitoba continues to have the shortest wait time for cancer radiation therapy, along with B.C. We know that here, in Manitoba, we have a one-week wait time. When we came into office, cancer waits were much longer, as they were for my friend when she was diagnosed. They were much longer at six weeks.

In 2008, our government announced that it will triple the number of beds dedicated to radiation oncology. We will fund more than 2,500 additional prevention breast cancer screening, and we will hire new staff as part of a package of new investments aimed at cancer prevention and treatment.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the opportunity that this conference provides for people to find out about the research that's been happening. We want to be able to have people know; a lot of us are involved in raising money for breast cancer and it's great for people to find out where these funds are going. This conference will provide women the opportunity to find out what is happening in research, and cutting-edge research, and where the funds that they have been raising are going.

Women often describe breast cancer as being on a roller coaster ride. I saw that with my friend, Sandi, when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. We know that there's an ongoing screening that has to happen with individuals after they've been diagnosed with breast cancer, and they've been treated. There's an ongoing period of at least five years that you have to be considered free of cancer before you would be in remission. This period of time is often very difficult for people to struggle through.

So, I think that this conference does huge things in terms of looking at the kinds of fears that people face. It gives a great opportunity for families to get together and learn more about the disease and the research that is going on. It also is a great opportunity for the foundation to be able to support the kind of work that the Canadian Cancer Society is doing.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I want to say it's my pleasure to bring this resolution before the House, and I hope we can pass it unanimously.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** I'm very pleased to stand and speak to this private member's resolution and to indicate our support for the resolution.

It's very hard to imagine somebody that hasn't been touched by breast cancer in some way, whether

it was a family member, a friend, a colleague. I think we all know somebody that has been touched. It is always a profound experience, whether they are living with cancer and struggling to deal with it, or whether it is somebody that has passed away and has been a good friend, or we watch the family come to terms with it. Several of my friends have actually had breast cancer and some have actually died. So it is something, as I've said, that does touch many of us.

The World Conference on Breast Cancer is certainly greatly exciting for Winnipeg. It will be held on June 4 to 8, this year. I've been very pleased over the last couple of years to have had several conversations with Barbara Shumley, who is the president of this conference. Besides being the president of this world conference, she's also a nurse, a friend and a constituent of mine who lives in Charleswood. She has been a tireless, passionate advocate on the issue of breast cancer, and I don't know anybody who will put the kind of effort and passion into this conference as she will.

I think if you see the materials from the conference, you will see her creativity through everything, whether it's the presentations, whether it's the conference material, whether it is the activities that are going right now to bring attention to the issue. She is certainly to be commended, along with the hard work of her volunteers and all of the people that are involved behind the scenes to make this conference come together here in Winnipeg.

I would indicate that Barbara Shumley has been recognized nationally and internationally for her work. She has been a tireless advocate on the issue of breast cancer. She's also had in her job activities over the last number of years, been very involved in breast cancer research, prevention and treatment. She also won a 2005 Woman of Distinction Award here in Manitoba, acknowledging her great efforts, but that is not the only award she's won because she has been recognized nationally and internationally, also, for all of her work.

She gave me, over a year ago, a conference poster which I have in my office, and it is really a remarkable, beautiful poster that actually depicts a lot of hope in terms of addressing and looking at the issue of breast cancer. I think that is sort of an underlying theme of what drives a lot of people, that one day we hope we can eradicate this disease, that

one day we hope women and men will not be dying from it, or afflicted by it.

I was also able, at a conference last summer, at a Canadian conference of women parliamentarians, to share information packages about this conference with them in the hopes that they would take back to all of their provinces this information and encourage women from across Canada to also attend the conference. As has been mentioned, the theme of the conference is Heart, Soul & Science: "It's a Small World After All!" and what they've done is, by zeroing in on this theme it will provide the overarching framework for the program that will focus on the lyrics from the song "It's a Small World." Some of those lyrics are, and I would just like to quote it for the record: "It's a world of laughter / A world of tears / It's a world of hopes / And a world of fears / There's so much that we share / That it's time we're aware / It's a small world after all." And with that they're bringing women from all around the world to this conference to actually show us in many ways that it is a small world after all.

The words laughter, tears, hopes, fears, share and aware, reflect the personal emotions of the heart and soul as well as the experiences women face throughout their breast cancer journey while providing a connection to the more clinical and scientific aspects of the breast cancer continuum. Prevention, diagnosis, treatment, research, support, survivorship and international outreach, and all of that will be discussed at this conference. It will allow people, particularly women from other countries, to attend, to expand their knowledge, it will advance international and multidisciplinary global action, which is what is needed, and it will enhance valuable support networks for breast cancer survivors because we know that breast cancer survivors do, indeed, benefit in many ways from these types of networks.

I think what it will do, it will empower women, it will empower those involved in the fight against breast cancer to continue to work hard to take this issue and address it in many, many different ways. The conference will provide a platform to discuss breast cancer issues that are important to individuals worldwide, including access to care. As we've heard, it's not always the same in other countries as it is here. We even have our own problems here in Canada in terms of access to care. It'll look at primary preventions, support, advances in medicine, advocacy initiatives, improved treatment, as well as complementary and alternative therapies. So there's



certainly going to be a lot of opportunity to attack this issue from many different angles.

I would like to give credit to these volunteers that have worked so diligently and it has been for years that they have been working on this particular conference, and just knowing some of the people that are involved in this, I'm sure that this conference is going to be a tremendous success here in Winnipeg.

I would like at this time to also indicate that, not that long ago, the Manitoba walk to end breast cancer was actually ended here in Manitoba, and I think there was some disappointment about that because there are, you know, many ways for Manitobans to support the fight against breast cancer and this was a personal way for a lot of people and a lot of people gave generously in support of breast cancer research and treatment.

The CIBC Run for the Cure is one aspect I know that a lot of my colleagues and I and our staff and volunteers participate in on a very, very regular basis every year. It is quite an emotional walk to be with thousands of people with one intent, as you're walking, you know, sometimes listening to the birds, sometimes listening to people around you talking about their experiences, sometimes walking and personally sharing some stories with one of the walkers. These walks have been very, very empowering for a lot of people, and very emotional for many. So I am glad to see that many Manitobans are so committed to that.

\* (11:20)

The other event that I was just starting to talk about, the Walk to End Breast Cancer, was held last year and the year before but, unfortunately, has now been cancelled because, according to the head of CancerCare, Dr. Dhaliwal, one of the reasons the event was cancelled was that CancerCare couldn't use all the money toward improving breast cancer treatment because there aren't enough oncologists and technologists. That is certainly a significant concern to those of us in Manitoba that have put a lot of effort into the issue of addressing breast cancer.

How sad it is that we have had people that want to do something, that are giving money, but we do not have the oncologists here, according to Dr. Dhaliwal, that can actually take this issue and go forward in a bigger way here in Manitoba so that we can prevent and treat it. I think the government has a lot of work to do here in Manitoba in order to address this issue.

I'm very pleased to have this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to comment on this and I wish the conference organizers all the best. I'm sure they will have great success with their conference. Thank you very much.

**Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge):** Mr. Speaker, it's also my pleasure to get up today and speak a little bit about this very important conference that, I think, Winnipeg is honoured to play host to. I would certainly echo the Member for Charleswood's comments about Barbara Shumley. She is a tremendously passionate advocate. I have had the opportunity to meet her in my past life when I was working for the Women's Health Clinic.

I would also share her appreciation of the creativity, the beautiful poster and the beautiful materials that have been developed for this conference. Those posters, I think, came out years ago. So the promotion of this conference has been well, well in advance. I know that at the clinic we were so taken with the poster that we promptly had one mounted and framed so that we could display it in our boardroom. I think it does, as this conference does, express a theme, an overwhelming theme of hope and humanity in the face of very tremendous challenges.

I think the theme being "It's a Small World" does communicate that all of us, all of us I'm sure in this Chamber have had our lives touched by cancer, either directly or through family members. For me, I take a moment to reflect on the life of my grandmother who passed away—next month, it'll be 12 years—passed away from lung cancer, and was a very healthy woman all of her life but, like many women in her generation, also smoked for most of her life and had, of course, quit but tragically died at a young age at the age of 69 from lung cancer. I was privileged to be able to be with her as she was dying, with my mother and my aunts; it's a tremendously powerful experience. I know many, many in this Chamber have shared that experience of being with someone you love in their final days and their final moments.

I think the breast cancer survivors that I have been privileged to know have all showed a tremendous amount of courage. I think about the dragon boat races that we see happen every year on the river and the women who are there in those boats with tremendous physical endurance that I'm sure I could not match. These are women, many of whom have survived breast cancer, who have had surgery

and many kinds of treatment and, yet, put in the effort and the time to train to be part of this dragon boat experience.

When you talk to them afterwards, they speak about how empowering it is to be able to once again feel the strength of their bodies and have that physical experience of rowing together as a team. I know, when I worked at the Women's Health Clinic, one of the things that the staff wanted to do and came to me with was they wanted to put together a team for those races, and I wholeheartedly supported that. I said I would not be in the boat, but I would host the barbecue afterwards. It was a tremendously positive teambuilding experience not only for the staff who were involved but, I think, also the opportunity to be part of something bigger than oneself to raise funds for a cause as worthy as fighting breast cancer.

I also want to talk a bit about the theme of the conference, "It's a Small World," and reflect on the lyrics of that song, and the song talks both about laughter and tears. I think that that does describe the experience of cancer for many, many people. It is a heart-wrenching diagnosis to receive, but it does also—many people get through that experience with their sense of humour intact and I'm reminded of the comedian, Gilda Radner, who was dying—I think she died of ovarian cancer—and after her death, these things called Gilda's Clubs were founded and they're clubs of survivors and patients of cancer where they can get together and laugh. They can get together and share what many of us would probably consider inappropriate humour, but we know that often that kind of humour gets you through life's tough times.

I think one of the reasons that this conference is so unique and innovative is that it will take the experiences of patients and caregivers and put them on the same level as the experience of the so-called experts, the researchers and the doctors, who all have valid things to share with each other. Often, you know, when we have the opportunity to help patients empower themselves, we find that they push the researchers and the caregivers and the doctors and the nurses and everyone involved in the care of a patient to do better. They push for innovation. One of the places I think that has been especially true is the whole area of system navigation.

Now, we talk about how the strides that we've made in treating cancer—and certainly the survival rates now are much greater than they were even 10 or 20 years ago—it's important that we have the facilities in place that can provide treatment. It's

important that we have cutting-edge technology, it's vitally important that we train and educate the people who can deliver that care. I'm very proud that this government has consistently increased the number of spaces in medical school, the opportunities for specialties, the numbers of spaces for technologists, has tried to make those fields competitive with other jurisdictions so we can retain the people that we train here. I think that's vitally important to having a functioning health-care system.

Also important when you have treatment is that you have a system where patients feel that they can get what they need. Part of that, I think, is having good system navigation in place, and I think when we have that in place, we really treat patients again as human beings. It's often the experience of patients—and I just reflect on my own experience of being a patient as a child—the experience of being a patient can be very disempowering. It is mainly an experience of having things done to you and not having much of a voice in that. Whatever we can do to help give patients back their voice and their power and help them find the best way through the system for them, I think, is very important.

I'm also very pleased that this conference is going to have the opportunity for patients to share experiences and for their caregivers to share that experience of what it's like to go through the journey of cancer with someone you love.

In our last budget, we brought in a caregiver tax credit, which I know, perhaps, has not received a lot of attention but is going to go a long, long way to making the lives of many, many people easier and better, and mostly those people will be women. It's mainly women who do the care-giving of elders or sick family members or children with disabilities, so I'm very pleased that we've brought that tax credit in. I know that the need to give support to caregivers is something that has been championed by other organizations I've had the privilege of working with—the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence and all the centres of excellence on women's health—that, early on, recognize that there is a whole informal part of health care that often we don't talk about, that often we don't give enough credit to, and that's all of the moms and sisters and daughters and husbands and dads and brothers and extended family of friends that help take care of people when they're sick. That drive people to appointments, that hold the hand of someone as they're going through some kind of treatment or who are just there in the middle of the night to answer that 3 a.m. phone call.

I'm very pleased that this conference and our government recognizes the important role that those informal caregivers play.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Canadian Cancer Society locally. I got the opportunity to tour their new warehouse and it's quite stunning to see the volume of materials and work that they do out of that office and out of that warehouse. Not only work, I mean, most of us are familiar with the Cancer Society from their daffodil days and we give money to them, but they also do tremendously good work in advocating for cancer survivors and cancer patients, and I think we're going to see even more of that work and I welcome it.

\* (11:30)

So I suppose, in closing, I just would like to say how proud I am that Winnipeg will be hosting this conference. I look forward to attending some of the public events that will be held. I want to echo other members who have spoken about the tremendous contribution of the volunteer committee that has brought this conference here, and I hope that we'll be able to pass this resolution today unanimously. Thank you.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, wish to put a few comments on the record in regard to the private member's bill that is before us today. I'd like to thank the mover and the seconder and all of the speakers so far who have spoken to this particular topic. I, too, want to say that I think it's fantastic that we in Winnipeg will be hosting the fifth World Conference on Breast Cancer. I was reading with great interest that the *Winnipeg Free Press* is thinking of publishing a paper on June 4, and it will be a collectors' item, and it will be themed in pink.

I understand from the article that 10 cents of every newspaper sold will go towards breast cancer research and support. It shows that this is an issue that has a lot of support behind it. We know the devastating effects of it. If we haven't experienced it in our personal lives or our families we've seen it with other people who have suffered from it.

Historically, it was one of those diseases that was probably underreported, and by the time a woman would actually go to her doctor and get treatment it was too late. A lot of the treatment was fairly crude when it first started out. I learned something else from this debate coming up, that it's not just women who get breast cancer but also men. I

have a statistic here that approximately 780 Manitoba women and 170 men are diagnosed with breast cancer each year. It is one of those very, very personal cancers. It's not like a leukemia or others. Most people are very private about it. It doesn't really in a lot of cases get talked about because it does really hit an individual hard, and I know far too many women who've had breast cancer.

Initially the first response is, yes, I'm struggling with breast cancer but if you would, kind of, please keep that quiet. It's often not the best thing and it is their personal wish. Other cancers, it's sometimes easier to give support because you know that the people have the cancer and you can, whether to pray for them or send them a card or whatever. For those women who stand up and are very public about it, it's really a heroic, heroic stand to take.

It's a disease that does not strike older, it also strikes younger women, younger men. In the past, it was very devastating, and from those in this House who know about the treatment, the treatment tends to be very radical and it was very harsh, the scars that were left behind. Today they've certainly modernized the treatment a lot on breast cancer, and survival rates have certainly improved. But we can't just stop there. We can't just say, you know, we're doing better. Until we've found a cure, we can't stop.

Unfortunately, breast cancer has left a lot of people, spouses without a spouse, children without a parent, and that's the by-product. It creates victims in that for those individuals who have it are the first victims and those who are left behind become the second line of victims.

Having the conference here, I think, is great. I think Winnipeg is one of those incredibly warm-hearted, warm-spirited cities, and Manitoba in particular. I particularly loved our Friendly Manitoba slogan. I think it really depicted who we were, and I think we are very open and very warm. I think it's a great place for all these individuals to come and discuss a very personal topic and discuss a very personal topic in a very public way. So I give them a lot of credit and I'm very excited that they're going to be here.

In the newspaper article that I quoted from—and I should give credit, it's the *Winnipeg Free Press*—they mention in here that the main sponsor of the conference is Scotiabank which has raised an extraordinary \$8.3 million for the cause in the last 10 years. That is really, really remarkable. I mean, that is just remarkable. It's because of those kinds of

donations that we've moved from fairly crude treatment to the kind of more holistic, that the treatments that we have today that aren't as invasive, that aren't as harsh on a body that we have today.

So, again, I think it's important for this House to deal with this issue as we should be debating all these issues that we remind ourselves that when you peel away all the politics and when you strip away all the other stuff, in the end we're really here for what we hope is in the best interests of all our citizens, all Manitobans. You know, the fight for cancer has to go on. If I get emotional, it's been 40 years ago that my mother died of cancer, and the treatment was such that she couldn't thrive. I, at that time, didn't know what was going on. I was too young. But, to all of those who put a lot of effort and time into this, I thank them in memory of my mother, Wanda Schuler. I thank them.

**Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere):** Mr. Speaker, it is also a pleasure and honour to rise today to speak in support of this private member's resolution. I know our Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) and our Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) would love to be here but are unable to because they have commitments with meetings, but I know that they, too, would add their support to this resolution. I think it's been said often already this morning, that there are very few people who have not been touched by the effects of the disease of cancer. We have family members and friends who have succumbed to it. We have family and friends who are currently living with cancer.

Over the past eight years, it has certainly been something that I've been well aware of. I've had six friends and family members who have passed away from cancer. Unfortunately, four of those were contemporaries, so passed away from the disease before they reached the age of 60.

One of the things that struck me about this resolution was that I felt it was an opportunity for me to acknowledge and honour a friend of mine who was probably the first person that was a contemporary that succumbed to the disease eight years ago, and that was Jan Spielman, who was president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society at the time. I know my colleague from Brandon East is also well acquainted with Jan and her courageous battle with the disease.

\* (11:40)

The importance of it to us was the fact that there was a group of us younger women at the time that none of us had actually had any contact with someone who was dealing with the disease and fighting to remain active and contributing and to maintain a family. She certainly was a role model to us. I can still recall she went through her first breast cancer battle in her early forties and successfully lived through that, and then went on to become president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society. I recall all of us celebrating her fifth year of being cancer-free and sort of being lulled into a feeling that she had made it and that she was going to live to a ripe old age. Unfortunately, that cancer returned and those of us who were on the provincial executive of the Teachers' Society at the time lived through her second battle with breast cancer and it really left a huge impression on us.

We were a group of women who, at that point, had not really experienced someone who was dealing with the disease. She made us aware of the trials and tribulations, the joys that you take in getting that test result back that seemed to be optimistic and being able to have a few good weeks where you could accomplish all sorts of things, as well as the lows of dealing with the news that your chemo was going to have to wait for another month because your white blood cell count wasn't high enough.

She certainly made us aware of what we needed to do as individuals to rally around friends and family who were suffering with the disease, how we could get involved in making sure that the greater community was aware of it and how we could get things done and try to do our part to improve research and hopefully at some point eradicate this disease.

So, I think that even though she lost her battle, I think what she managed to do was certainly increase the awareness of a whole group of us who have gone on to advocate for research and work towards improving the situation for other breast cancer patients.

One of the things that also is important is to commend what we have been doing in terms of cancer research. Mr. Speaker, it really is scary as I look at information that says that 22,000 new cases of breast cancer in Canadian women will appear over the next short while but one of the things, and it certainly is more of a personal acknowledgment, is the fact that there will be more funds going towards

the Manitoba Breast Screening Program. That's certainly something that is a really, really important thing for our province to be doing.

I know, as a person who is part of that program and goes through it every second year, I think it's a very proactive kind of thing that we can be doing. Certainly, I have to say that when things did not look all that well with one of the screenings that I had, the whole process of going through the biopsy and getting the results was very short and the stress that my family and I had to go through waiting for the results was certainly something that wasn't very long-lived. It was great to know that the process and everything happens very quickly and that women are informed in a very expedited manner. The whole process, from the people looking after you and doing what they can, was very supportive and a process which really helped to sort of reduce the level of stress that you go through when you're experiencing that.

So, once again, I'm very pleased to see that this world conference is going to be happening here, that there's an opportunity for people to come together to share their experiences and to help others as they go through it.

So, Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to speak to this resolution.

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I do want to also speak to this resolution on the 2008 World Conference on Breast Cancer brought forward by the Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick). I do think it's a very, very important issue and something that, of course, we would support and welcome the opportunity just to talk about this in an open way, as the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) has said, sometimes it's more of a personal issue.

It is very hard to imagine this whole topic without thinking of—I think that we all recognize that there are so many people that we know that have been touched by cancer. Mr. Speaker, having the World Conference on Breast Cancer come here to Winnipeg, it's an opportunity for many people from around the world to come here, and it's a tremendous support mechanism for those who have suffered with breast cancer. I know others have said in this Chamber about how important it is for everyone to show support, and it is one of those things that provides camaraderie and strength and support to those people suffering from the disease and that also

transgresses through that to the families of people that suffer and their friends.

The statistics on this disease are quite horrific when you look at 5,300 women and 50 men will die of breast cancer this year. That's a very, very high number. One woman in nine is expected to develop breast cancer. That's huge, Mr. Speaker.

I know that there are many, many ways for Manitobans to support breast cancer and breast cancer research, Mr. Speaker. I know that we as a caucus did participate in the CIBC Run for the Cure. We've done that on several occasions. It was a tremendous event. So many people were involved in that, and they raised a lot of money. But, as we heard, unfortunately, according to Dr. Dhaliwal, who is the head of CancerCare, one of the reasons that the event had to be cancelled was there weren't enough people to actually be involved in the diagnosis of breast cancer. That is a very scary thing when you think about how prevalent the disease really is and the fear that people will have in knowing that there aren't enough people in the system to address the diagnosis and the treatment of breast cancer.

The Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) spoke of the dragon boat races. I did participate in that one year. I was in that boat, and I could tell you the time involved in training for that was extensive and doing the physical activity in that dragon boat was pretty difficult, but it was a lot of fun. Actually, we came in last on our first race, but we actually came in second out three, so in the second race we were in the middle of the pack. We didn't feel too bad for our first attempt at the dragon boat races.

I've also participated in some Pink Ribbon golf tournaments here in the city, raising funds for breast cancer. Mr. Speaker, there's certainly an awful lot of organizations out there that take the time to organize events that will help in our diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer.

\* (11:50)

I think that when people have to wait for their diagnosis or for the results of tests or for the treatment that has to follow, it is one of the most horrific things to have to deal with. First of all, the fear of being diagnosed with the disease, then waiting for those results, and then going through the treatment—having to wait weeks just to see a doctor.

I know a very good friend of mine, who has miraculously beat this disease, was diagnosed

10 years ago. At the time she was told she had five years. She was 35 years old, had three daughters and her incredible strength—she said, I will beat this. She went and sat in her doctor's office, in the waiting room at 8:30 in the morning because he couldn't see her that day. She sat there until 6 o'clock, all day. When everybody else had left and she finally got to see him, and thankfully she did. As it turned out, her records had been lost, and her perseverance, her strength, got her through that.

It's 10 years now and she's, thankfully, very, very healthy I have to say. I'm very happy to report that she's a survivor and the more that we can do to research and find ways to deal with this terrible disease, the better it will be for people that have the disease and for their families. This friend I talk about; three young daughters, and I have to say her mother was also diagnosed with breast cancer, so we know that it's—certain breast cancers are genetic—you can imagine the fear that that family has been in.

But I want to say that anything that we can do to further the research into breast cancer, the more we need to do, and certainly, welcome the idea of having this world conference here in Manitoba. Welcome the people that will come and support each other as women and men need to do when they have families who have been afflicted by this disease.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this motion.

My colleague, Kevin Lamoureux, and I and others in the Liberal party have been very supportive of efforts related to improving research—*[interjection]* Inkster. The MLA for Inkster. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

We have been very supportive of efforts to improve research, diagnosis, treatment, prevention, better understanding of the basic causes of breast cancer and better approaches to treatment. Mr. Speaker, we have, between the two of us, participated in many activities, whether it's walks—my wife was in the dragon boat races last year and in a variety of other activities to try and raise funds or promote better research related to breast cancer, a better understanding.

I had the opportunity to work for a number of years at the Health Sciences Centre. The Cancer Foundation was involved closely with others who were involved in treating or in research related to better understanding the treatments for breast cancer.

The good news is that there has been a large amount of progress over the last 30 years. The cure rate for breast cancer, particularly early-stage breast cancer, has improved dramatically from what it used to be, but there are still sad stories. There are still those who are not successfully treated and we must not hesitate. We must not flag in our efforts to continue until we have prevented all breast cancer, we're able to treat it and cure all breast cancer. There is still, in that respect, a long way to go.

Like many other members, I have had close friends who have been involved with, battled with breast cancer, including friends who we lost very sadly after a long battle. I can think of Violet Klassen of Altona, who died—I think it's probably two years ago now—after a long battle with breast cancer. She and many, many others who have now passed away are part of the reason why we need to be so dedicated to improving access to research, improving the amount of research, the quality of research and improving the treatment.

There is, slowly, better understanding of the causes of breast cancer and that information, step by step, Mr. Speaker, both understanding the genetic and environmental causes related to breast cancer, hopefully can put us in a much better position in terms of preventing further cases of breast cancer.

There was a significant step forward in terms of the understanding of what were at that point viewed as side effects of hormone replacement therapy, one of which turned out to be an increase in cancer rates, and we now know that, since the evidence came to light, and since there's been much less use of hormone replacement therapy, the incidence of breast cancer has decreased, and that really is a positive step. We need to continue to find ways in which we can reduce the incidence of breast cancer and make sure that we are doing what we can.

When we're talking about chemicals, there has been long discussion, much of which has not been as conclusive as we would like, related to pesticides and other chemicals as possible causes or promoters of breast cancer, and certainly, I would say, Mr. Speaker, let me sit down so that we can bring this to a vote and hopefully support it and pass it.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is resolution 7, 2008 World Conference on Breast Cancer.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? *[Agreed]*

**An Honourable Member:** Unanimously.

**Mr. Speaker:** Unanimously?

It has been agreed to unanimously.

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader):** Is it the will of the House, Mr. Speaker, to call it 12 o'clock within the Chamber itself?

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call it 12 o'clock in the Chamber itself? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 12 noon we will recess and we'll reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

#### HEALTH AND HEALTHY LIVING

\* (10:10)

**Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick):** 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 and Healthy Living. As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Madam Chairperson, good morning to you and the rest of the committee members.

Just a couple of short follow-up questions to the pathologist questions that we were on yesterday until I turned it over to the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

Could the minister just indicate, because I want to get clarity, she said that the system worked in terms of catching the discrepancies in the tests. Am I correct in understanding that the pathologists' tests have to be double-checked or checked twice by people within DSM?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Thank you to the member for the question and the opportunity to clarify. I can say at the outset that 100 percent of tests are not automatically double-checked by pathologists, and that is not what I meant to imply in the system working. What I was saying yesterday was that the internal processes that are in place when a complex case is being studied is that it is a natural course of action for pathologists to confer with

colleagues about complex cases. Again, I cannot emphasize enough in this discussion that we aren't talking about the kind of test that is slipped under a microscope and a pathologist can check a yes or a no box, if you will. It's very much a question of interpretation of complex tissue and even more complex illnesses. The measures that are in place within the system in a formal way to have conferring going on about complex cases did afford the opportunity for second looks at some tests.

But it's also fair to say that in the broader contexts, the post-Sinclair and Thomas era, where a culture is every day being nurtured to create an environment of openness and not blame, an environment of truth seeking and not sweeping under the rug of issues, it's that kind of a culture that has been nurtured and continues to be developed that did lead one pathologist at one site to be reviewing the slides of another pathologist from another site that had questions. It was those kinds of questions at the end of March that got raised about some inconsistencies in the interpretation of those slides. That is when the journey began to be on a path of investigating what one pathologist in his interpretation felt was not a correct interpretation by another pathologist.

It's within that system that we look at what roles can be. I know the role of government is to ensure that we have a process in place where we can identify problems. We also have a process in place where we need to work to minimize those risks. But in the end, and this point needs to be made—and I know the member is uptight about my longer answer, but I must spend one more minute on this.

In the end, these situations, the one in Manitoba and the ones that have occurred across our nation, lead us to remember that as much as we want medicine to be an exact and precise yes-or-no science, it absolutely is not. There is opportunity for error in interpretation to happen all the time. What we have to ensure, as government and Manitoba Health, is that we put in place the processes where we can identify the problem.

What can we do to minimize the risk? We create a critical incident process where we can be assured, as it was the case in this case, that a review was happening and that patients would be notified as soon as possible. That is to say they'd be notified when they could be told something of clinical significance and what would be the go forward plan. So this is not a simple yes or no check box. It's an

interpretation and a discussion among the team that needs to happen.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I assure the minister that I'm not uptight. I sometimes tire of redundancy, but I'm not uptight by the length of the answer when there's new information. To use the minister's vernacular, I think we may be on the back nine of these Estimates ourselves. I just don't necessarily want to have to go for another round if we can avoid it.

Could the minister indicate, then, if it's not an automatic double-check of complex cases—I think she was saying in her answer that they're just sort of a culture of pathologists checking with each other. So could she just confirm there isn't any requirement for a pathologist who's looking at a complex case, maybe leaving aside the other cases, to have a double-check or to have that as just something that is within the culture of the DSM?

**Ms. Oswald:** I can confirm for the member that there is no specific numerical protocol set up at the present time that automatically dictates a second look or a third look at a pathology slide. It certainly is something that is arising in a national discourse about standards and about targets and about errors and interpretation issues that is coming to the fore. There is certainly a number of improvements in standards and consistency of how things happen in the world of pathology by the very advent of Diagnostic Services Manitoba, and those standards in partnership with other groups like the WRHA, CancerCare Manitoba and, you know, different regional health authorities and Diagnostic Services Manitoba in concert are working continuously to improve those levels of standards and benchmarks, if you will.

But we know, based on what is happening across the nation, that there will be conversations going forward of a national nature that will work towards developing perhaps a minimum number of double-checks that occur. But what I can say here in Manitoba is that we have been given every assurance that these team consults go on to do the interpretation of these pathology slides. Again, I want to reiterate a point that I made yesterday. We need to remember that, when a pathologist is looking at a slide, it is very much in isolation of the patient's medical history, of the patient's other systems, and this is why the pathologist's interpretation is but one piece and not the singular piece of diagnostic information that's used to go forward to not only make an assessment of a patient's condition, but to determine the most

appropriate treatment protocol. So it is one piece. It's an important piece, and we need to take this seriously, but we can, of course, be sure that they are part of a team in interpretation.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Chairperson, I thank the minister for the response. We'll probably move through a variety of different topics now. I apologize. I tend to like to do things in a more linear fashion, but it's the nature of how things go in these Estimates process as we move around from a few different topics.

One of the things I neglected to ask early on in the process with Estimates was regarding the deputy minister. I understand that she was on a secondment from the WRHA at least for the last couple of years. Is that still the case?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, that is still the case.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that response.

A couple of questions that relate to the College of Physicians and Surgeons. I mean, not specifically to their organization, but maybe to some of the things that interrelate with the college. There have been some questions regarding the end-of-life directive from the college. I did take the opportunity, I found it actually quite interesting, quite an education, to go through the Law Reform Commission recommendation, the early case history of it. I'm fascinated by that part of it, and then the recommendation coming from that. I know that it caused some degree of surprise, I think, or there was some degree of surprise in the public about the statement because a lot of people, maybe to a lesser extent myself, but to some degree, were surprised that that was the existing situation, the doctors had the final say when it comes to end-of-life scenarios. But it brought it to the public eye, obviously.

\* (10:20)

I'm of the opinion that what exists from the college as a result of the Law Reform Commission is better than what was there before and that it does provide more safeguards for families. It puts a framework in place for consultation. Even though I was surprised that that was the state of the current case law, I do think what has been put forward by the college is better than what existed in a somewhat murky case-law environment. It doesn't mean that it's perfect, though. I think maybe there are ways that it could move towards improvement.



Is there any ongoing dialogue with the department and the college about how to not necessarily rewrite the entire directive, but how to improve it and strengthen it?

**Ms. Oswald:** I thank the member for the question. I know that his legal-eagle eyes on such a case—I mean that in the most flattering of ways, by the way—he certainly would have read the Manitoba Law Reform Commission report or commentary with a set of eyes that would be quite different from mine. I'm sure there would be things in there that would spark his interest that would not necessarily be picked up by someone, like me, who does not have law training.

We do know from that law commission report, one of the issues that came forward is that certainly it was the College of Physicians and Surgeons, according to that commission, that was the appropriate body to deal with these questions. It was stated quite clearly that politicians would not be the best people to be pursuing that kind of a policy-making endeavour.

They say, in that report, the commission does not favour legislative implementation of these principles. Its preference is to see them embodied in a statement or by-law of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba.

So we know that the college did embark on a very thoughtful journey in what the member, quite rightly, articulates is an extremely complex question, arguably about the most important of questions. I appreciate the member saying that the college has gone a good distance or some distance, in any event, to address some of the issues that may have been perceived as gaps existing before. When I read the statement from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, what leaps out at me is that there is a compulsory element in it today that requires the notification, conversation and consult with the family.

I think many of us may have believed that that always existed; it just seems to be a matter of common sense and common human decency. What this statement by the college has pointed out is that it has not been explicitly stated as a policy or as a matter of behaviour in the context of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. We know that there have been legal statements made in the past about the doctor's inherent right to make a decision about ending life-sustaining treatment where he or she believes it's in the best interests of a patient. This particular statement, as I think the member has

acknowledged, does make an improvement in the requirement of doctors to have that discussion with loved ones, with family members about such an important issue.

I'd like to say two other things about this issue, and that is I certainly do believe in my heart—and we have witnessed this in Canada, in the United States—that nobody wins, nobody wins, when patients become political footballs. We saw this happen in Canada with the Rodriguez case. Probably the entire nation or world, I should say, watched what happened to the Schiavo situation, where it became so politically heated, I think, even President Bush got involved in the case.

These are the most difficult decisions that a family ever has to face in their lives. To that end I would say, as the second point that I want to make, that in the last 365 days I don't mind telling the member I've been on this journey myself. I've been on this journey related to the care and the ultimate final days of my mom, just about a year ago, and more recently, this past January, with the journey of possibly my best friends in the world in the loss of their 24-year-old son. These were the most difficult of times, and we're in this debate and this discussion that goes on concerning the college's policy on this issue.

What I can say strongly and firmly is that there was no voice that was counted on more in these discussions than the voice of the doctor and the counsel of the doctor, who in each case, I believe, did absolutely everything medically available to these individuals, and right down the line, was at the elbow and at the shoulder of people that had to assist in making incredibly difficult decisions. While the college, I think, has taken some criticism for these very complex issues, I want to say personally that I believe Manitobans owe a debt of gratitude to these doctors that go into this field every single day with families. I believe their hearts break with these families and having more guidance from the college on how to consult with families and what to do, I think, is going to be helpful to everyone. I salute these people.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for her comments and also, personal experiences with her mother and the child of a close friend. I think all of us have been touched in some way, and I agree that the vast majority of physicians always have respected the balance that needs to be played between professional advice on medical treatment

balanced off with the emotions that families, all families, deal with at that time.

I also recognize that, even within families, there is sometimes conflict. We think of the case more clearly where there is a family unified against a physician, maybe like the Golubchuk case in Manitoba right now. But there are times when family members disagree to some extent with—even the Schiavo family that the minister indicates. So I know that these are complex cases and, again, I do think that what exists now is better than what existed before.

I'm not entirely sure that there isn't a role for legislators to play in strengthening directives and to ensure that they're not improved. Well, the minister is correct in that 99 percent of the cases that these things aren't an issue and physicians and families are able to come to some sort of an accord. The reality is that almost all legislation that's passed, either here in Manitoba or Ottawa nationally, isn't to deal with the 99 percent, it's to deal with the 1 percent. Whether that's drinking and driving legislation or any kind of legislation, it typically is to have to regulate the small percentage of society that doesn't act within what we'd consider to be social norms.

But in this case, and looking at it and studying it and looking at other jurisdictions, there are other jurisdictions that have proxy legislation, for example, that clearly identify in the absence of a health directive or a directive—you know, living will—who would speak on behalf of the individual who finds himself in an end-of-life scenario. Some people have suggested to me that that sort of proxy legislation would be helpful in clarifying the situation, the unusual or not common situation that does sometimes occur—who would speak on behalf of the family.

\*(10:30)

Certainly, the Association for Community Living has brought forward some concerns that the minister will be aware of, and I would echo some of those concerns, because they find their loved ones in vulnerable situations all the time, and some of them might not always have a strong advocate for them. I mean some of the cases that we look at, there are strong advocates in the family that sort of ensure that their loved one has a voice. There are many individuals who might end up in a situation that don't have a strong advocate either in law or just in practice, and ensuring that there is sort of an advocate, whether it's proxy legislation, and a means

to go forward whether there is funding available for court challenges for somebody who didn't have that ability, because I know that even with the new director from the college, the ultimate decisions can be made by the courts, but not everybody will be able to access the courts as a result of their own financial situation.

So there probably are ways in my mind that it can be strengthened to ensure that there's greater certainty to take in the concerns for groups like the Association for Community Living and Manitoba league for disabilities.

If the minister wants to comment about whether or not she has an open mind to looking at how to strengthen the directive, I'd certainly be interested in hearing that.

**Ms. Oswald:** I thank the member for those comments. I think that he makes a very important point about the majority of situations where we have families that are passionate advocates on any side of the issue but in those cases where there are not advocates working in ongoing discussions with the college. I don't think I said this in my last answer, that, you know, of course, we have regular meetings with the College of Physicians and Surgeons on a variety of issues that affect Manitobans. Of course, those conversations are grounded in ensuring that we strengthen together policies that will help families and patients, bearing in mind the Law Reform Commission advice about keeping a pretty clear line between politicians making decisions on such complex matters and the college issuing by-laws.

I do note with interest the member's comments concerning proxy and the comments from the groups that he mentioned, Association for Community Living and those with disabilities, and will endeavour to do a review of what may be already entrenched in our legislation, whether it's in PHIA, you know, just the amendment to, introduced into the House just the other day.

I do know that there are amendments and provisions for improving—and I think the very word in there is "proxy" but I want to double-check—but I'm not sure that it captures proxy in making decisions of this nature for an individual. So I'm going to commit to investigate that and also look at other existing legislation that may have within it items and issues that our existing legislation in a variety of forms under Health may not already capture.

I think that it's a good idea that we do that and work to endeavour to make a very imperfect situation and that is dealing with those last days of life perhaps stronger and more accessible to the variety of attitudes and opinions and beliefs that would come to that situation and have a voice to bear on it.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that undertaking. I think that there are ways for this position to be strengthened so I look forward to the end results of her consultation for the consultation on it.

Still on the theme of some of the things that have come from the College of Physicians and Surgeons. There was—I believe it was earlier this year or later last year—some concern raised regarding physicians being able to pick and choose patients in terms of screening their patients as it relates to the complexity of their needs.

I understand that the B.C. College of Physicians and Surgeons has put out a statement—a directive might be too strong of a word—but a statement indicating—and it wasn't that long ago; it was just in April of this year—that it's unethical for doctors in British Columbia to turn away patients because of the complex needs that they might have.

Does the minister have any feelings on the need for that sort of a statement here in Manitoba to ensure that Manitoba patients who might already be struggling to find family physicians, that those who have complex needs aren't put at a further disadvantage to finding somebody to meet those needs?

**Ms. Oswald:** Certainly, we have seen reports in the media and occasional anecdotal evidence on situations like this occurring, where it's real or perceived that the patient is turned away by a fee-for-service doctor, a family doctor for whatever reason and being told that, within the context of the rules in Manitoba, we don't have to take you as a patient.

We will absolutely commit to, and have before had conversations with the college about real or alleged behaviours on the part of doctors. I can certainly say broadly to the member that I believe that our goals are similar in that we want Manitobans who don't have access to a family doctor to have that. We want to ensure that not only does an individual have access to a doctor but to have an element of choice in that.

One of the things that we're working very diligently on is the PIN project; the Physician Integrated Network is the full name. According to what we study to be best practice nationally and internationally, having group practices wherein we not only have doctors that welcome one and all as patients, they do that because they have the resources within their clinic to be able to deal with complex needs. So these Physician Integrated Networks are indeed networks that may have within them a nurse practitioner, dietician, occupational therapy perhaps, whatever it is that the network itself decides is a very important component in providing care for the whole patient.

I'm very pleased, of course, to report to the member that there's a demonstration site for the PIN project in Steinbach and region. We're seeing very good results coming from that group and from others. We're moving into phase 2 of the project. Again, we are seeing very, very positive feedback from not only the patients that are entering into that network but from the physicians, who, I will say, have been real pioneers and very courageous in not only endeavouring to practise in a different way, going against the tide, if you will, of how practice is done, but also, taking on an even larger task and that is, re-evaluating the way that doctors are compensated, working together to develop standards and guidelines for quality of care, caring for complex patients and complex needs.

Sometimes we hear people criticize, not altogether correctly, by the way, but we hear people criticize that doctors get paid for how many patients they see in a day, so they won't spend any time with patients and they'll just run patients through at a rapid rate. While I know that the vast majority of doctors that are seeing people in a family practice are taking the time to care for their patients as they need to be cared for, looking at new ways for doctors to be compensated, for how they manage complex chronic cases will be an important part of this piece. That's what the doctors in the PIN project, on top of everything else that they're doing, are working to do. It's, I think, ground-breaking work.

\*(10:40)

**Mr. Goertzen:** Thank you, Minister, for your comments.

Just for clarification, because it's been clarified for me, I think that the B.C. college, it was the registrar who made a statement that appeared in a health journal that they would be issuing a statement

that it's unethical for doctors to turn down complex cases in British Columbia. That statement should be coming out in June, according to the registrar. The department will certainly watch for that with interest.

Just quickly, Madam Chair, on the recent RHA review that was done at the behest of members of my party, the minister will know that there are many recommendations within the review. I would rather not go through each one individually, although I'm prepared to do that, I suppose, just to get a sense if there's a commitment to each recommendation and a time line for ensuring those recommendations are put in place.

**Ms. Oswald:** Just to quickly touch back on the last topic, I did want to assure the member that we will, in partnership with the college, watch very closely these situations that he raises of patients not being afforded the opportunity to join a doctor's list of patients. We would be very concerned if this turned out to be a growing problem; we would be very committed to be having conversations with the registrar in Manitoba about what he, in concert with his colleagues, could do in a similar vein, or a vein that had the same spirit, to what the member reports is going on in B.C.

On the subject of the RHA review, the member never misses an opportunity to congratulate himself. I believe that maybe it was a team decision that, on a 10-year anniversary of regionalization, it would be an appropriate time to do a review, but I'll pat the member on the back too for being part of a group that asked for that review.

Certainly, it has been reported by media that I have received the report, of course, and reviewed it in detail and have struck a regionalization working group. There are lots of recommendations in that report, some of a medium size, some of a massive nature; so we will need to ensure that what we're doing is to prioritize movement on those recommendations.

When it was publicly released, we announced immediate action on two areas of best practice and recommendation, the first being an investment of \$355,000 to expand the Advanced Access model of patient scheduling. Again, within the context of what we were just speaking of with the PIN project and otherwise, we've seen some excellent transformation of patient access under that model. We want to be able to expand that as quickly as we can across Manitoba, where appropriate.

Also, the expansion of the PRCO, the Physician Recruitment Co-ordination Office's approach to recruitment and retention. We want to expand that to include nurses and technologists, both of which are, just like doctors, in intense international demand. We want to make sure that we expand the PRCO's capability to make sure that Manitoba stays in the game and continues to increase those numbers. That working group has met and is working to prioritize our movement forward on recommendations that exist within the external review of regional health authorities.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Just for clarification, I want to assure the minister I wasn't patting myself on the back. I think, actually, it was the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) who advocated for the review, so I'm more than happy to pat others on the back for that advocacy.

The minister certainly stopped short of saying that she would agree to all of the recommendations which is, perhaps, different than what some of her colleagues do with reports that come, whether they're from the Auditor General or, certainly, reports that they've asked for.

Is there a reason why the minister is reluctant? I can understand why she might not be able to give us a time frame of when every recommendation would be implemented. I understand that's more complex, perhaps, but I think a notional agreement that all the recommendations would, at some point, be adopted in Manitoba within a reasonable time frame is not something that is untoward to ask.

**Ms. Oswald:** Certainly, Madam Chair, we are committed within the context of that review to prioritize those items that we believe we need to move on as quickly as possible. Certainly we also know that when the public raises concerns about the health-care system or members of the opposition, Manitobans have an expectation that their elected government will be able to respond. We've seen this in the past. We know that Manitobans have made it explicitly clear that health care remains their No. 1 priority, and when we read those recommendations, we acknowledge that there very definitely is room for clarification of the balance between one's political accountability and letting regional health authorities manage, and we're going to work very diligently with the regionalization working group to find ways that we can make that happen.

We know that when it comes to issues about facilities—let's go right to the core of it, then, shall

we? When it comes to issues about hospitals operating in rural Manitoba, we know that health administrative analysts—with the greatest of respect to my deputy minister—across the country have given advice that might close most rural hospitals when it comes to a single-minded pursuit of efficiency. We also know that that's not what Manitobans elect their officials to do. We know that we have to keep in mind those issues that go beyond sort of single-minded efficiency finding like we spoke of the other day, I believe, the importance of a health facility to a rural community and what it means for economic development and what it means to the whole vibrant nature of a community. If anything, our promises have been to expand services in rural Manitoba, essentially the opposite of what the spirit of some of these recommendations have captured in that review. We've worked diligently to recruit more doctors, to add more diagnostic equipment, to build new hospitals for rural communities. We know that there isn't a cookie-cutter model that can be applied to the very complex, often emotional, certainly financial nature of maintaining services in rural and remote communities.

If the member is asking me if I would take completely, wholly and fully a recommendation in a report that says that the regional health authorities should have sole and independent and complete and total control over whether there should be a hospital open or closed in rural Manitoba, the answer to that is no, I do not accept that recommendation in full. I do believe we need to work together with our regions to improve care, and there's a lot in that report that talks about the successes that have occurred as a result of regionalization, but Manitobans elect their political representatives on very important issues like health care. To say that elected officials should give up total and complete control in that decision-making process is, quite frankly, not a recommendation that I can fully embrace.

\* (10:50)

**Mr. Goertzen:** That was an interesting answer. I hardly know where to start.

I mean, the question was, essentially, are you intending to take the recommendations or aren't you? And that was a yes-or-no sort of question and buried in there was a no, which is fine. I sort of saw that buried in there. I pulled it out and got one answer, but it's funny because the minister talks about how she believes it's her responsibility as a legislator to ensure that she doesn't give over complete control

over health-care issues and to make sure that she still has some say in it. Yet, when I was asking about the end-of-life issue, she said, well, this isn't a place for politicians to get involved, and we shouldn't be monkeying around in different issues that don't involve us. It's funny that she is able to, in some ways, say that absolutely, no, we wouldn't give up complete control over to health-care issues. Yet in other ways we should give up control. I guess maybe it's a matter of convenience at times.

But, moving beyond that, I do think that the minister makes a very good point, and I would agree with her completely. Rural health-care facilities are important parts of those communities. When they're not, they do affect communities, and they do affect real people. I'm glad the minister says that she was not elected to impact that in any way. So, with that in mind, can she put on the record a list of the rural ERs that are closed in Manitoba? I'm assuming there won't be any because she said how important it was to have those facilities operating for the benefit of the community.

**Ms. Oswald:** Certainly the member, I think, makes, with respect, a sweeping generalization about making distinctions between where government or elected officials should get involved. For example, when it comes to the operations of facilities and the existence of facilities and where, very specifically, entities like the Law Reform Commission have explicitly stated that politicians should not make political footballs out of terminally ill patients and should allow the professional entity to be making decisions about that, it's actually not that unclear to me. When we are talking about the operations and functions of a hospital and when we're talking about something as very complex as ending life-sustaining treatment, I don't for a second suggest to the member that being in government and in the role of working with health-care professionals is a black and white, simple checkoff, a box of yes and no kind of entity. We have talked about that today. It's one that requires a very thoughtful approach, and I think to suggest that whether or not a health-care facility would exist versus ending life-sustaining treatment is part and parcel to exactly the same thing.

I just don't think his is a reasonable statement, and the member and I may disagree on that. It won't be the first time and it won't be the last. But, respectfully, I can certainly say that I can see clearly where the difference is.

*Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

I can also say for the member that one of the most important issues in discussions of health-care facilities is the issue of community involvement. I know the member knows this. He's got an active and vibrant community and surrounding area that he represents, whether they're intimately involved in the foundation for Bethesda Hospital, whether they are part of a board for a personal care home, whether they're an everyday citizen that just attends events and lends support to the debate about health care. I know that the member knows how important these voices are when it comes to the debate. We know that government has a responsibility to work in partnership with communities that wish to get involved.

I think it's interesting as we embark on a discussion about health-care facilities that have suspended services or not, we need to remember, of course, that as recently as our last sitting together, it was actually the members opposite who stood with a petition each day and advocated for the closing of hospitals in rural Manitoba.

Now this wasn't shared by all members of his side of the House, but certainly by some. Of course, I would cite the example of the Minnedosa-Neepawa entity. This was a party that proudly represents, they say, rural Manitobans that stood every day to say, let's close a couple of hospitals in rural Manitoba. I know the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) had something very passionate to say about that in the House every day that that petition was read, but I think that we need to put that clearly on the record.

What we have in that case, of course, is a community that has come together and led by a number of physicians, many of whom I've had the—a number of whom I've had the opportunity to meet and speak. These doctors have come up with an idea, and they've worked with the region to see that proposal come forward. Again, it's our obligation as members of the government to listen carefully to these ideas and to work together with those communities to discuss feasibility and long-range benefits of what such an idea would be. Let's make no mistake about who was asking for hospitals to be closed in rural Manitoba, because the record is very, very clear on that point.

On the subject of ERs that are currently have services suspended or are providing partial service in rural Manitoba, I can cite for the member that:

Benito hospital, the ER has been suspended; the closest ER is at Swan River which is 25 minutes away.

Whitmouth has been suspended; the closest ER is at Beausejour, 30 minutes away.

Reston hospital has been suspended; the closest ER is at Souris, 30 minutes away.

Emerson Hospital has been suspended; the closest ER is at Altona, 40 minutes away.

Erickson has been suspended; the closest ER is at Minnedosa, 20 minutes away.

Rosburn has been suspended; the closest ER is at Russell, 20 minutes away.

McCreary has been suspended; the closest ER is at Ste. Rose du Lac, 20 minutes away.

Pembina-Manitou has been suspended; the closest ER is at Boundary Trails, 20 minutes away.

MacGregor has been suspended; the closest ER is at Portage, 20 minutes away.

St. Claude health centre has been suspended; the closest ER is at Notre Dame, 25 minutes away.

Wawanesa ER has been suspended; the closest ER is at Souris, 20 minutes away.

Birtle ER has been suspended; the closest ER is at Russell, 30 minutes away.

Rivers ER has been suspended; the closest ER is at Brandon, 30 minutes away.

Baldur ER has been suspended; the closest ER is at Glenboro, 20 minutes away.

There are partial suspensions at De Salaberry hospital; there's a daytime ER only and the closest ER is Steinbach, 25 minutes away. A partial suspension is at Gladstone; there's a daytime ER only and the closest ER is Neepawa, 20 minutes away.

I do want to note, of course, that we recognize that this situation is far less than ideal. We know that all of these facilities that have suspended ERs have access to medical doctors who provide clinic services in the community five days a week, which is very important to these communities.

We know that all RHAs are actively recruiting doctors and nurses for these facilities. It's an ongoing

challenge of which the member and I have spoken a number of times. We are committed to work together with the regions on that recruitment effort, whether it means improving the resources we have at our physician recruitment office, whether it means negotiating with the Manitoba Medical Association, as we did last June, in order to improve situations.

\*(11:00)

We saw some dramatic improvements as a result of that agreement. We're currently in negotiations with the MMA about remuneration broadly, which will be extremely important to Manitoba's competitiveness going forward, Mr. Acting Chair. Of course, commitments that we have made on the educational front to increase residencies and to ensure that we have specialty opportunities for ER medicine are all part of a package that we are working on to improve this situation. We want to keep as many of these ERs as we can, functioning to the best of their abilities, and we're working to recruit and retain doctors in these environments.

Our commitment has been to keep as many of them as we can open. We have not wavered from that, and we're going to continue to work to do this. It's clear by the fact that this list exists that this is a challenge. I don't deny that, and we have to continue to keep working to do that.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Certainly, I'd suggest, I think most rural Manitobans for sure would suggest, that it's disingenuous for the minister in one of her answers to talk about how important her commitment is to rural health-care facilities and then list off 16 partially or fully suspended ERs.

I don't think that most Manitobans would think that this minister is taking it seriously enough, particularly those who are in these affected communities. I would caution her about trying to make grandiose statements about how important she feels it is when it's simply not ending in any results.

Her comments regarding ER or hospital closures, of course, were factually incorrect. She knows full well that there's been some lobbying by individuals in certain communities for consolidation to have one regional centre not unlike, for example, Boundary Trails Hospital that was started under a previous government and completed under this government, I believe, which is situated between Winkler and Morden. I think you'd be hard-pressed to find anybody in either of those communities, Winkler or Morden, who doesn't feel that the

Boundary Trails Hospital facility is the right solution for them as opposed to having, which existed before, a hospital in Winkler and a hospital in Morden, both of which were out of date and weren't satisfying the needs of either community.

If the minister wants to continue on with that line of thought, I suppose then she would have to take the blame for closing two rural hospitals at Winkler and Morden as opposed to the consolidated, because they like to take credit for Boundary Trails but I'm sure she's not going to then say that she closed two rural hospitals. She would know that for those communities it was a better solution and perhaps there will be better solutions for other communities, but I think it's up to their regional health authorities or elected representatives and the residents, the citizens of those areas to make that determination. But, clearly, the facts the minister put on the record which purported to be facts were incorrect and need to be addressed.

She did speak about doctor recruiting and doctor recruitment in response to the last question so maybe we'll just touch on that while we have the opportunity. Can the minister indicate how many doctors have left the province since 1999?

**Ms. Oswald:** I appreciate that this is not the first time the member and I are going to get into a debate about philosophy on health care and it's not going to be the last, maybe, as the member cautions me. Maybe it is. I regret that the member feels the need to use the word "disingenuous" about my feelings or my intent about preserving health care in rural Manitoba.

I can assure the member it's nothing of the kind and he's entitled to his opinion. I respect that, but I'm also entitled to mine. If the member wants to put facts on the record, we can do just that. I freely and openly put facts on the record just now about places in rural Manitoba where ER service is suspended because of doctor recruitment issues and, in some cases, nurse recruitment issues. That is a fact and it's an ongoing challenge but I think when we talk about making our commitments about health care clear, what's an absolute fact is that about a year ago we went to the Manitoba people and asked them the question about health care. Nobody stood up and said health care is easy, but we certainly did stand up and say that it was a priority for our government.

What is a fact is that it was reported in the newspaper a little over a year ago that your leader said that health care would not be a priority of your

party. As we went forward and looked at commitments that were made, and I know that members opposite feel upset when I mention their historical record on health care, they're very sensitive about it and imply sometimes that it's not relevant, and I respectfully disagree.

When, a little over a year ago, the Leader of the Opposition said that health care would not be a priority. It was just over six months ago that the Leader of the Opposition stood in your community and said we were spending too much money on capital projects for health. The quote is in the paper. I'm not suggesting for a moment that the media doesn't take some liberty with quotes. I mean that with the greatest of respect to media at the back, but it can happen from time to time. But that's what was reported in the newspaper.

So six months ago, or more, we have a statement—no, let's go a little closer than that. A little over a couple of weeks ago, the Leader of the Opposition said that we should be spending in health care somewhere around the level of inflation or economic growth. I think he wavered back and forth on that. Either way on how you do the math, we're talking about a 2 to 3 percent increase, which is an automatic \$135-million loss to the health-care system, instantly, if that's the rate of growth that we would see in health care. That was a couple of weeks ago.

About six months ago, the leader said that we shouldn't spend so much money on health capital. About a year ago, he said health care wouldn't be a priority. We can spend a bit of quality time, I think, talking about what his attitudes were 10 years ago when there were fruit flies in the operating rooms at the Health Sciences Centre, when spaces in medical school were being cut because doctors are too expensive, you know, and nurses were being fired at a rate of a thousand and another 500 being driven out of the system. I'm a bit passionate about this.

The member opposite called me disingenuous about what I feel about health care. I don't appreciate those remarks. I think from time to time there are things that the member opposite says that are wholly or partially untrue about how I feel about health care. We let those go and we move on in the debate, but there do come times when one has to stand up and say, let's hold on a minute here and look at what the facts are. The facts are that all of those things have been said by members opposite concerning health care. In the same way that there are remarks made by

members opposite about a 5 percent increase to Pharmacare, at the same moment that letters are being written to my office about, please cover this drug; please cover that drug; could you, please, under Pharmacare cover this experimental treatment.

So it's a little truth and illusion. I'm not going to go so far as to call members opposite disingenuous about health care because, you know what they're doing, they're advocating for their constituents and that's their job and I respect that. While we might not always agree on how to get to that finish line, Mr. Acting Chair, I think that I can say that all members of this House care about their constituents and prioritize what it is that they care about.

The members opposite have clearly stated, over time, that health care would not be their priority. We have stated that, although there are a number of challenges that exist not only in Manitoba but across the nation—like, for example, the recruitment of doctors in rural Manitoba—we're committed to bring those doctors, as best we can, to keep as many of those facilities as we can, open and functioning. We've also agreed to consult with the communities. We know that we've seen incredible work being done in Rivers, for example, on developing a rehab clinic there in consultation with the community about how that health-care facility could, and would, function. We've seen very good success there.

So I say to the member that we have work to continue to do on doctor recruitment. We are showing a positive influx of doctors to Manitoba. We know that the net score, not according to me, but according to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, is that we have 235 more—

\* (11:10)

### Point of Order

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Doug Martindale):** Excuse me, the Member for Steinbach, on a point of order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Chairperson. As a learned and experienced Chair, you will know that answers to questions have to have some relevancy to the questions that were posed. I did directly ask the minister how many doctors have left Manitoba since 1999.

I thought I was patient in the last five minutes going through the meandering stream of the minister's thought process, but could she please



answer the question: How many doctors have left Manitoba since 1999?

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Martindale):** To the Member for Steinbach, my understanding is that we're in global debate, and therefore there's a lot of latitude in what the minister can say in response to your questions. So, in my view, there isn't a point of order. It's a dispute over the facts.

\* \* \*

**Ms. Oswald:** I believe I was about to give the member the number as he interjected. Patience, patience is a virtue. I can say to the member that the relevant number to people in Manitoba, those people that want to have a doctor when they need one, is that since 1999 we have seen a net increase of 235 more doctors in Manitoba, 86 of which we know are stationed in rural Manitoba. We absolutely need more, but we do know that since coming into office we have seen a net increase of docs every year since being in office.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Let me try one more time, Mr. Acting Chairperson. I do think I'm exercising patience in this excruciating exercise to try to get the minister to simply indicate, not net figures, not any other sort of positive spin figures she wants to put on the record. I just, simply, on behalf of Manitobans, because it's relevant for those people in my community and for other communities who are having a difficult time finding a doctor, to know how many doctors have left Manitoba since 1999. If she doesn't know, if she doesn't keep track, which I don't believe because I know she knows, then she can just simply say that she doesn't keep track. Otherwise, could she just answer the question? How many doctors have left Manitoba since 1999?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, certainly, I will commit to the member to get the exact number of doctors who have left, but I respectfully caution the member. I've seen articles written in his local paper where he's cited numbers from where I'm not certain.

We'll see if the numbers that I gather and the numbers that he gathers match where he makes a comment of, what was it, 1,900 doctors leaving Manitoba? Was it over 2,000? Was it 4 million? I don't know what the member cited exactly, but what I did note was that the member did not make any mention of doctors that have come to Manitoba. It may be very interesting if he puts those two lists side by side.

It's true, in the case of a clinic in Steinbach, that doctors will leave for personal reasons or other reasons that we endeavour to investigate so we can always make the climate a better place for doctors to work and to practise, whether it's remuneration or physical environments. Doctors will have any number of reasons, but when we keep track—and, again, I'll commit to the member to do my best to find that number, which I do not have at my fingertips, at the moment.

When we have a discussion or we write columns in our local paper that talk about how many doctors have left Manitoba since 1999, I think it would be relevant in at least a fair and balanced way, maybe that wasn't the intent of the member, but I think it would be relevant to print how many have come, and what I would recommend that we do is then put one over the other, subtract, and get the net score.

And what we know, for a number of years in the '90s is that that net score was in the negatives. We lost docs. What we know today is there are 235 more than there were in 1999, and we've had a net increase every single year. On the college registry, by the way, last year being a record-breaking year at an increase of 54 doctors.

But the member, by his assessment, has been very patient, and so I will commit to him to endeavour to find the number of outmigration of doctors, but you can bet that, in addition to that, I'll probably insert a little slip that shows him how many that have come. I feel very confident that he'll probably also find the number 235 somewhere in my submission to him.

**Mr. Goertzen:** My understanding is, between 1999 and 2007, that 1,240 doctors have left Manitoba. If the minister can provide more updated information, including the last 12 months, to that—1,240 seems to me to be the number that I have been using.

The minister talks about fair and balanced, wanting to ensure that there is fair and balanced information. She says it's important that we have both figures listed, both those who've come into the province to practise medicine and those who've left.

Can she point to me any news release that she's put out in the time that she's been minister where she's actually listed the number of doctors who have left Manitoba, in the interest of fair and balanced?

**Ms. Oswald:** Assuming that the member opposite's numbers are correct, again, we'll endeavour to analyze where his numbers have come from and so

forth; we'll commit to do that, absolutely. If his numbers are absolutely precise, then he's going to get a letter from me that says something about 1,240 doctors having left and 1,475 doctors having come to Manitoba. If my arithmetic is right, that means there's a 235 doctor difference.

I apologize to the member. I was conferring with the deputy minister. Did he just ask me, is there a place where I have published how many doctors have left? Was that the question?

Off the top of my head, I can't recall if there is a place that that number has been published. I'm not going to rule it out that I absolutely have not, but I would need to check.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I'd appreciate the minister checking because she indicated that she likes to be fair and balanced in the information that she provides and she believes that balance and fairness is important in the public discussion around doctors. So I'm sure, if she's mistaken to publish the number of doctors who left, she'll now start to provide that in her news releases, given her new-found, or maybe not new-found, but certainly new commitment to the fairness and balance in providing information.

The 1,240 doctors that have left—and I do believe my numbers are correct—can she indicate the type of interviews or researches done with those doctors who are leaving in terms of why they're leaving Manitoba for other jurisdictions?

**Ms. Oswald:** Mr. Acting Chairperson, we know that the Physician Recruitment Coordination Office which has had lots of success in the recruitment of doctors has also been tasked with gathering information concerning doctors that are migrating out of Manitoba, to gather information about work balance, work life that may be relevant to our discourse in going forward on improving the work environment for doctors.

*Ms. Erin Selby, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

We also tasked the regional health authorities with this particular interview or gathering of information. That would also be true of CancerCare Manitoba, in the event that doctors should leave there.

We also know that some doctors, like fee-for-service docs that aren't particular employees of Manitoba Health, would make decisions of a personal nature to leave Manitoba. Those entities that I mentioned before aren't really—they don't

capture those doctors, so that information would be less available than the other.

\* (11:20)

**Mr. Goertzen:** I would simply encourage the minister to perhaps be more proactive. She'll know statistically that we have less doctors per capita in Manitoba than the Canadian average. She should be taking a strong interest in terms of why doctors are leaving and she should be being more—I won't use the word "on"—she should be more forthright with Manitobans in terms of the number of doctors who have left our province since 1999, since I know she likes to bandy around other statistics that predate 1999.

I know that we're running short of time, and so we need to move on to Healthy Living Estimates and do some questions, whether it's related to smoking in cars or issues around mental health. So, perhaps with that, we could move on to the Minister of Healthy Living.

**Ms. Oswald:** I thank the member for that information. I want to make a heartfelt commitment to him that I will publish numbers of increases of doctors and information about doctors as often as I can.

I also want to thank the member for a spirited and lively debate. It's never dull when he is in the room.

I'll hand over the chair to the Minister of Healthy Living.

**The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Erin Selby):** Honourable Minister of Healthy Living.

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living):** Since September of 2006, it's been an honour and privilege to serve the people of the province of Manitoba as the Healthy Living Minister. I'm proud to continue to build on the important work done by the previous ministers, Minister Rondeau and Minister Oswald, throughout the Healthy Living areas of focus.

Along with the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat and the Healthy Child Manitoba office, the staff of Health and Healthy Living have worked to develop, implement, and manage many different initiatives of which I am very proud. These varied programs and supports assist all Manitobans from babies to older adults, from northern, rural and urban areas of our province to be healthier. Each day passionate and dedicated staff are committed to

making a difference in the lives of all Manitobans. Through Healthy Living, Healthy Child Manitoba and the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, we've worked to improve co-ordination between all government departments on Health Living issues of importance to children, youth, parents and adults, and seniors and elders.

I'm continually impressed by the co-operation and collaboration between community groups and agencies, service providers, department staff and countless volunteers, who are all committed to the goal of Manitoba being the healthiest province in Canada.

The changing priorities of Manitobans help to inform the development of specific strategies to address the needs in each of the seven areas of focus for Healthy Living. We continue working to promote increased physical activity, good nutrition, healthy sexuality, improved mental wellness, chronic disease prevention, smoking cessation and injury prevention. Many innovative and interesting strategies have been developed and implemented with these areas of focus in mind. Many individuals, families, workplaces and communities across the province have taken inspiration from these initiatives and are making changes in their own lives to be healthier.

Some of our accomplishments include the distribution of over 31,000 low-cost helmets that have been made available and over 1,500 free helmets distributed to families and community groups since 2006. We've also offered grants to schools to promote bike safety, farm safety and water safety through related activities like community bike rides.

We've recently launched Workplaces in motion as part of our popular Manitoba in motion program. Since January, 2008, already over 65 workplaces have registered and seven Workplaces in motion grants have been approved.

There are also over 80 registered communities in motion in which we have awarded over 250 grants to encourage Manitobans to increase physical activity and make healthy eating choices that support wellness. A related initiative, Moving Around Manitoba, launched a year ago, has approximately 5,000 Manitobans registered who have taken over 60 virtual trips around the province. These programs have helped to reduce barriers for everyday Manitobans to improve their well-being and that of their families and communities by raising activity levels.

This year students entering Manitoba high schools are required to undertake physical activities every year in order to graduate. In addition, legislation was introduced to ban the sale of food containing trans fats in school vending machines and cafeterias. Madam Acting Chairperson, we've also committed to begin implementing a plan to double funding for recreation facilities across the province. We will be adding to the Trans Canada Trail network and other recreational trails such as the proposed 40-kilometre Duff Roblin Trail.

In addition, the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, which has 27 participating communities involved in community garden programs, will be expanded with the commercial greenhouse at Grand Rapids.

Our Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative continues to work with 57 participating communities including 21 First Nations on prevention and education and identifying different ways that they can support healthy living to lower the risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease, among others.

We are also working with our partners like the Manitoba Tobacco Reduction Alliance to continue to cut our smoking rates, further reducing the risk of Manitobans of cancer and other chronic conditions associated with tobacco use.

Recently I was also happy to release information on our cervical cancer prevention strategy which will include education screening, an HPV immunization component.

In the fall, with the announcement of the \$1.3-million healthy sexuality plan, we have introduced the expansion of HIV testing options enabling Manitobans access and diagnosis in a variety of ways and offering them the care they may need. The Manitoba HIV program has been introduced to enhance clinical care and co-ordinate related services and records province-wide.

I've continued to work hard for those individuals, families and communities affected by mental health and addiction challenges. I was pleased to announce this week a \$2.8-million investment to increase mental health and addiction services for Manitobans. This includes 20 new mental health positions and funding to four addiction agencies to provide quality service and better access for those in the need of assistance on the road to recovery.

Additionally, a five-point plan has been developed to assist us as we move forward to improve the system, making it a seamless spectrum of services that is easier to access and navigate.

We also look forward to the completion of the redevelopment of the Selkirk Mental Health Centre and the future development of the mental health crisis response centre in Winnipeg.

The health, independence and well-being of Manitoba seniors are of particular importance to our government. We recognize the value of planning for our aging population, and we are always looking for ways to better respond to the needs and interests of older Manitobans. This past year, funding and service agreements have been developed with partners. Our government is pleased to support these organizations and we appreciate and encourage their work.

Budget 2008 invests in healthy aging strategy for seniors including new resources to expand community-based services and help seniors maintain their health and independence. The healthy aging strategy enhances a person's ability to actively participate in family and community life through improved mental and physical functioning, social engagement, healthy relationships and to lower the risk of disease and disease-related disabilities. Peer-led physical activity programs such as Steppin' Up and Steppin' Out With Confidence programs, train older adults to lead physical activity programs for other older adults for varying mobility levels. Increasing health promotion and physical activity programs for older adults in rural Manitoba as well as increasing awareness of the importance of active living, healthy eating, smoking cessation, falls prevention and social connectedness in healthy aging.

Our province continues to be recognized internationally as a leader in putting children and families first. Our province is currently the only jurisdiction in Canada that has a standing Cabinet committee dedicated to the well-being of children, and it is my privilege to chair the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet.

The Manitoba government has understood that no single department, agency or community can meet the holistic needs of children to ensure the best start and the best possible outcomes for all Manitoban children. It was my pleasure to proclaim in the last legislative session The Healthy Child Manitoba Act which ensures that the successes of

this model for the community and government will continue into the future.

Madam Acting Chair, programs such as Triple P, a world-renowned program which promotes positive caring relationships between parent and child, Healthy Baby, now in more than a hundred communities including First Nations, the prenatal benefit provided to approximately 4,600 mothers a year and other investments in early childhood totally over \$64 million will help our children to grow up healthier.

So, with those comments, I'd like to reiterate that it's been an honour and a privilege and I look forward to continuing to work with Manitobans to make Manitoba the healthiest province in Canada.

\* (11:30)

**Mr. Goertzen:** In the interest of brevity, I will forgo an opening statement, Madam Acting Chairperson, and proceed directly to questions.

Can the minister indicate, just because there is a bill, a private member's bill, before the Legislature right now regarding banning smoking in cars with children—I believe the private member's bill sets the age of children at 12 years of age. I could be corrected on that but I believe that's what it is.

Can the minister indicate if she's had further thoughts or consultations with colleagues around the country about that legislation? I understand British Columbia either just proclaimed or will soon proclaim similar legislation—just in terms of what her current thought process is about the need or desirability of that sort of legislation in Manitoba.

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** Well, I think it was in March, Nova Scotia did pass legislation that made it illegal to smoke in cars, and from that point on when I've been asked the question, I've been very clear. We have a strong record about reducing smoking in Manitoba through our first province to legislate the smoking ban, as well as our strong education strategies. Right now what we're committed to do is continue to provide those education strategies and not legislate at this time. We'll continue to watch and see what's happening in other jurisdictions as it evolves and rolls out, but right now we're going to continue on the track that we have and the success that we've experienced with education. There's a really good education initiative that we're working with MANTRA, and it's around second-hand smoke.

**Mr. Goertzen:** So I assume then by the answer that the minister hasn't closed the door in her mind to legislation. Am I right then in suggesting she is going to be watching to see what the success of it is in other provinces or whether or not it has an impact or whether it's enforceable? Are those the sort of criteria that she wants to look at?

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** As I had stated before, under the current practices that we've been using around smoking cessation, we've seen youth rates drop from 30 percent in 1999 to 20 percent in 2007. We know that people are aware of the issues around second-hand smoke. We're committed to continue to reduce those rates and we've seen progress with education and we'll continue to do that. As we talk with our colleagues in other jurisdictions in Canada, we'll be talking about what they're seeing happening in their communities when they have this legislation and evaluating it.

**Mr. Goertzen:** That's a fair comment from the minister and I'm not trying to value-load the questions; I just want to sort of get a sense of where the government is on this sort of legislation.

As you evaluate any of the success or the enforceability, is there a sort of tipping point for the minister in terms of, if more jurisdictions come on line with this sort of legislation, and we sort of are standing out as one that doesn't have it. I understand Ontario has made a commitment or Premier McGuinty has made a commitment to move forward on legislation. British Columbia has it. I mean, is there sort of a critical mass point at some point where the minister feels it would be detrimental for us not to be involved in that sort of legislation?

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** I'll just say again. What we're looking at is continuing on our strategy of educating not legislating, but as you've said, we're not closing that door at this time. We'll continue to meet with jurisdictions, with our community partners as we come up with a plan.

*Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

Mr. Acting Chair, the department is always looking at what's happening around smoking cessation, around policies, around programs, and are constantly providing me with information and strategy so we can go forward and continue to reduce the smoking rates.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Those are fair comments. Again, they weren't value-laden questions. I simply wanted

to—because I get constituents who ask me about it and sort of, well, you know, is this something that's coming, or where's the government's mindset on that? So I take the opportunity to just get some of those comments on the record from the minister.

Just switching gears a little bit, but issues that relate to the constituency that I represent—and I gave a heads-up to your colleague, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), about this a few days ago, about the need for a crisis stabilization unit in the community of Steinbach, but one that would service residents throughout southeastern Manitoba.

This has become a bit of a public issue in the last few months in the community or in the region. The RHA, I know, has come forward and said that they need this sort of facility in the region because there are very few mental health services in southeastern Manitoba, and I think they feel that they're doing a bit of catch-up on it. As the minister knows, the population is growing significantly in the region, and with that population growth, which is generally positive, there also become needs on the social structure within the region. So there's been a bit of a campaign launched by local residents to push the need of a crisis stabilization unit to ensure that those people in the community who need to access that sort of service don't have to go to Selkirk or somewhere well beyond the region, because that sometimes makes their situation more challenging and sometimes worsens it.

Could the minister indicate where the need for that facility may be at? I know it's been prioritized by the Regional Health Authority in South Eastman and that there's been contact with government on it. Maybe she could just provide an update on it.

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** The CSU has been prioritized by South Eastman RHA and they are discussing with the department. I have no new information on that but, what I can tell you, that in the announcement that was made yesterday around the 20 new staff, mental health workers, four of those positions are in the South Eastman region; there will be some front-line services that will be provided.

We're constantly evaluating our mental health services across the province and will be working on development of a strategic plan and continuing to build on the foundation that we already have in the province.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Regarding then, still on the CSU, certainly any additional support staff for mental

health services is welcomed in the region that I represent but, more specifically then, because I think that the need is acute for a CSU within the region. Certainly, the desire by the community to have one is there, and those advocating on behalf of the people living with mental health issues is strong.

When she talks about a strategic plan, could she give, for the community, some sort of a timeframe in what they might be looking at in terms of a response for this sort of facility?

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** I'm advised that the CSU will be reprioritized again by the South Eastman RHA for '09-10 year. Specifics around the strategic plan, that won't be concluded probably 'till late fall or winter of '09, late '08, early '09.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I appreciate the minister's response there. I'm getting used to the brief and succinct responses. I haven't had that for the last few days, so I appreciate it. Maybe we should have had you up in the chair first, Madam Minister, just to set the tone, I should say.

Is the minister then indicating that the—not that I expect her to make an announcement here to tip her hat, although if she wants to, I'm certainly open to that—but is the minister indicating then that some sort of a response to the community on the possibility of a CSU would come late this year or early next year?

\* (11:40)

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** You were right in calling that there will be no announcement at this time. Sorry about that, Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen). What we will do is, when the RHA presents their health plan, it will be put with all of the other new initiatives as well as the other capital projects. As you can appreciate, your colleagues as well as my colleagues have lots of capital projects in all regions of the province of Manitoba. We have to evaluate the needs and how we provide those services in those communities, balanced off with what services are already happening.

In the continuing to work, I know that in South Eastman region they were very pleased when they received the announcement yesterday and very supportive of that announcement and the new staff. We are committed to continue to work on mental health strategies across the province of Manitoba. We've increased funding; I have a number here for you. Since 1999, we've increased funding by almost \$172.4 million for mental health and addiction services. So this is a government that's committed to

ensuring that services are available to all Manitobans.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I recognize that the government is committed to spending money. I'm probably more focussed on specific results and the announcement, to the extent it provides new resources in South Eastman for mental health, is appreciated. I do have no hesitation anytime something good happens in the region saying that that's positive.

The reality still is, though, we started somewhat far behind and because of the growth of the region—one of the few regions that would be growing at that rate in Manitoba—I think we continue to fall behind in spite of announcements. It's going to take a concerted effort for us to receive the services that the population growth demands within the region. So we'll look forward to future announcements, and, hopefully, by the end of this year or early next year, the minister and I can stand shoulder to shoulder as an announcement is made for the region to the benefit of the individuals there.

Just some questions regarding addiction treatment services in Manitoba, the minister referenced some of that in her opening statement. I know in recent articles in relation to Manitobans not being able to get treatment in the province for their addictions, whether it's alcoholism or other addictions that they're facing, some of them have had to go, not only out of province but out of country. There was a reference made and I understand there is an overhaul of addiction services happening in—the minister seems surprised by that, that sort of language. Would she not characterize it as an overhaul of addiction services that's happening in Manitoba?

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** You overhaul cars, you reform addiction systems. So I would call it a reform. Were you wanting more detail on it?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I do appreciate the admonition by the minister. I might refer her to an article, February 25, from CBC where it indicates that the provincial government is overhauling its addiction services, and it quotes Yvonne Block, the executive director for mental health for Manitoba Health, so perhaps there is a disconnect within her department. I will just simply ask about what the reform to the system in Manitoba is.

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** Reform, overhaul, I think the important fact is that changes are happening to ensure that seamless continuum of services is

provided to Manitobans. There are five points for a plan, and it's called Breaking the Chains of Addictions.

The first point, I could go on for a long time but I'll try and be very brief, is building a better system. That's looking at developing standards for all agencies, modernizing the legislation and providing training opportunities to staff in the front line.

Improving service access, and that's ensuring that clients can get the right access at the right place at the right time. That's going to be attained by developing a provincial centralized intake and assessment unit in Winnipeg and also strengthening the existing addiction system to ensure clients and their family members can smoothly navigate through the spectrum of services.

Increasing residential treatment capacity, and that will occur by the creation of a multi-agency facility in Winnipeg. That will offer a comprehensive spectrum of services under one roof right from, there'll be prevention and out-patient services right from detox to primary and secondary treatment as well as after-care programming.

Mr. Acting Chair, the fourth point is building a community-based treatment capacity, and that's reaching the underserved population. As we started to investigate what's happening in Manitoba, there are certain gaps in the services. One being for people diagnosed with fetal alcohol syndrome disorder, as well as seniors, and looking at what can we do within our system to strengthen it and provide them the necessary services.

As well as the fifth point being enhancing the addictions research, and that will give us a strategic research plan for the province of Manitoba to evaluate what's happening within our system or within our province, but also looking at what's happening outside of our province.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can the minister indicate, and I know in looking at a variety of newspapers in Manitoba, certainly one daily in the city of Winnipeg continues to run front-page ads for addiction treatment on cocaine and meth in Cuba. My understanding, although it's anecdotal, is that this company that's offering this service is doing quite well, which speaks to, seemingly, the shortage of treatment or adequate treatment in the province.

Is she aware of the facility or the company that's offering this service and why it is that they seem to

be filling a gap in Manitoba in terms of treatment services?

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** In 2007-2008, the government is spending over \$21 million directly on addiction services, and that shows our commitment. There have been lots of other previous announcements around addictions, and I'll just put some of them on the record for the member.

There have been outreach positions at Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. There's been core funding for the Behavioural Health Foundation youth programs. There's been the addition of two new positions at Behavioural Health Foundation to enhance their ability to work with clients and co-occurring disorders. As well as the creation of a centralized intake line for youth addictions. As well as the 10-bed youth drug stabilization unit. As well as increasing community-based mental health and addictions services throughout the province, including additional mental health workers in RHAs, and funding for outreach worker at Resource Assistance for Youth. And we have increased the treatment beds at AFM James Toal Centre for men.

One other piece that I'd like to add is that there's been, in the past, history of summer closures at the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba across the province. I don't know if the member saw yesterday that there was a public commitment made that those closures would no longer happen.

There's a commitment to make our system accessible, easy to navigate and ensure that people can access the service in Manitoba.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Perhaps I wasn't clear in the question, so I'll try to restate it more succinctly. There is ongoing advertising in a daily newspaper, the *Winnipeg Sun*, to be more clear, on cocaine and methamphetamine addiction treatment in Cuba. I understand that this service is being well received, which speaks to the shortage of addictions treatment in the province or, at least, it would suggest that shortage.

Can the minister indicate what knowledge she has in terms of why that seems to be the case in Manitoba? Why are there these private options for people to go out of country to get the treatment, and they seem to be getting good take-up on that?

\* (11:50)

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** I'll just reiterate to the member, our public system is providing 444 beds across Manitoba

for addiction services. The investments we have made are enhancing our system. We are making these investments in a public system, and it is meeting the needs. There are needs that are being met through out-patient programming, in-patient programming, and always in conjunction with the self-help groups out in the province. We'll continue to provide the services.

I can assure the member that, as we are reforming the addictions system, we're constantly looking at how we can best provide those services in our public system. We're committed to this system. I have witnessed the good work that they do, and I know the work that they will continue to do to make a difference. Part of the addictions announcement yesterday was a million dollars for four agencies to continue to provide services, everything from readiness to secondary treatment, and ensure that addicts, as they're on their road to recovery, can return back to their communities and their families so they can parent their children, become good employees, and continue to make those many contributions that they do.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I guess that was strike two for me trying to get an answer to that question. I dare not take another swing at it. I'll just leave it with the minister to know that this continues to be, obviously, an issue where people are reaching out to private services, not only outside of the province, but outside of the country. I do think, respectfully, on behalf of those families who aren't able to access this sort of treatment, that I think it does cause a hardship for them.

Could the minister provide for me—maybe there's a list that exists somewhere that I'm not aware of, just looking for a list of obviously AFM addiction services in Manitoba, but also a compilation of private, or semi-private services, like Teen Challenge and different things that exist within the province. Does the minister have sort of a master list of—and I just say this as a constituency issue so when people phone the office, you can sort of give them the litany of services that are available and what the criteria are and what it is they'd be suitable for.

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** Are you looking for a list for youth and adults for mental health and addictions?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes.

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** We'll commit to getting that together for you.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I appreciate that commitment from the minister, I think it'd be just helpful from a constituency resource issue being able to provide that to individuals.

I know that we're running short of time here and while I'd like to ask the minister more questions, I suppose our decision to cut Estimates hours in half, I think at some point a while ago—there are times when that might seem to have been—some members might say that that was a good suggestion. At this particular moment, I might be begging for more time, but I'm going to have to leave it there with the minister.

I do have a question for the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), not a series of questions that I know she won't have time to answer because I do want to move the Estimates before noon. They're questions that relate to medical waste disposal that have been raised by my colleague from Morris. I wonder if the minister would allow me to simply table those questions for her, then she could respond directly to the MLA for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) on the issue.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Martindale):** The Member for Steinbach doesn't need permission to table, but we do need three copies. We'll get the page to copy that. Consider it tabled.

Are we ready to pass? The Member for Steinbach agrees we're ready to pass line by line.

Resolution 21.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$18,965,700 for Health and Healthy Living, Corporate and Provincial Program Support, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 21.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,739,800 for Health and Healthy Living, Health Workforce, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 21.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$22,694,900 for Health and Healthy Living, Primary Care and Healthy Living, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 21.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$47,835,700 for Health and Healthy Living,



Regional Affairs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 21.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$43,261,900 for Health and Healthy Living, Public Health, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 21.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,863,392,400 for Health and Healthy Living, Health Services Insurance Fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 21.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,951,700 for Health and Healthy Living, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 21.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$93,890,600 for Health and Healthy Living, Capital Funding, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 21.10: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,337,000 for Health and Healthy Living, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 21.1.(a) Ministers' Salaries contained in Resolution 21.1. At this point, we request that the ministers' staff leave the table for consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions. Hearing no questions, the Minister of Health would like to make a short statement.

**Ms. Oswald:** I do, very briefly, want to thank the member for his thorough investigation of Health. I also want to acknowledge that we know, going on in the House right now, a very impassioned debate of a private member's resolution on the subject of breast cancer and breast health.

While I wouldn't dream of speaking for the member opposite, I'm going to go out on a limb and say that all of us in this room doing the duty of the Legislature with our Estimates, of course, are in support of all that we can do to support families and women, and men, living with breast cancer, and we encourage all members of Manitoba to do all that they can to support everyone in our war against cancer.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I do thank the minister for her comments, and certainly I echo them. Had duties not kept us here, I know both the minister and I would have been in the Chamber for the duration of the debate on that. *[interjection]* The Minister for Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) would have been as well, and probably all members of this committee, but sometimes duties keep us—only allow us to go in so many places.

I do what to thank the staff who've joined us for the Estimates. I know your schedules are busy and it takes some time to come and to certainly support your various ministers. We appreciate the work that you do on a day-to-day basis and wish you well as you continue to do that work.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Martindale):** Thank you.

Resolution 21.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,952,500 for Health and Healthy Living, Administration, Finance and Accountability, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The time being shortly before noon, I'm interrupting the proceedings. The Committee of Supply will resume sitting this afternoon following the conclusion of routine proceedings. We are recessed.

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

\* (10:10)

**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 for the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I do, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Ashton:** I'm very pleased to be here this morning and talk about, not just the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs and Emergency Measures Organization, but some of the really important things that are happening in Manitoba, Mr. Chairperson, the kind of partnerships we're developing with our municipalities in particular, and the fact that, quite frankly, I think we're being acknowledged as being leaders across the country.

In fact, Mr. Chair, I've been asked to speak at the FCM about the Manitoba model of supporting municipalities, our tax-sharing model; this is something, by the way, that goes back to the Schreyer government in 1976. We have some very significant advantages as a result of that. That means that we have, for example, a share of income tax, fuel tax, VLT and gaming and provincial fine revenues that go directly to the municipalities. As a result, we have the lowest reliance on property taxes in the country. I think what's also interesting is, at a time when there's a lot of concern with municipalities across the country in using up an amount of their funding in unconditional sources, we also have a very significant, in fact, the highest percentage of unconditional grants.

If you want to get some sense of what that means, I think it means we have a real partnership. As we've gone through various discussions about new deals here and across Canada, if I were to summarize our relationship with municipalities, it's aiming to have a good deal. When I say a good deal, recognizing again, as we provide adequate support to our municipalities, that provides not only municipal services but also allows municipalities to deal with some of the pressures on the property-taxation side. I do want to add that, in addition obviously to what we do directly, we've continued to increase the property tax credit; that's important for property owners across the province. We've also levied the education support levy.

Just to give you a sense of what that means in this year's budget, Winnipeg will receive almost \$60 million, including an additional \$900,000 for 10 additional police officers, building on our previous investment of 60 new police officers. Outside of Winnipeg, Mr. Chair, there's almost \$10 million in unconditional VLT grants through the Building Manitoba Fund. We're seeing significant funding this

year again as an increase of 5.4 percent in funding to municipalities through that fund.

Mr. Chair, there's been an average increase of 3 percent in per capita general assistance payments to municipalities outside of Winnipeg. We've also renewed the Municipal Recreation Fund; that's a \$9-million commitment that helps us work with municipalities in terms of both recreation centres and libraries and, of course, is over and above some of the past support and past infrastructure support.

We continue to focus in on firefighters and paramedics, Mr. Chairperson. This continues our \$3.8-million expansion in terms of firefighters and paramedics. We're also this year providing two more police officers for the city of Brandon, bringing the total number of new city police officers, supported by the Province since 1999, to 11.

We'll be providing \$29 million in new funding this year for transportation infrastructure in Winnipeg. That's an increase of \$8 million over last year, and it's part of our five-year, \$125-million commitment. Mr. Chairperson, it's the largest ever provincial contribution for Winnipeg's transportation infrastructure, a very significant investment.

This year legislation is also being brought in that's legislating Manitoba's Kyoto commitments. I'm very pleased that there's a specific provision in the legislation to continue the 50-50 transit cost-share that we reinstated last year, something that had been eliminated in the 1990s. We've also moved to secure the federal government's transit capital trust—\$17.9-million allocation. Mr. Chairperson, we're working with Winnipeg; we're working with other municipalities as well on various options involving active transportation and transit.

Infrastructure is a challenge, obviously, and we continue to be part of the solution. I mentioned already the road improvements, and it's very important, by the way, to note that—like I say, this is former minister of Transportation—we recognize that inside of the city of Winnipeg there are no provincial highways that would be designated roads, but they are under city jurisdictions. So it's very significant that we're now directly involved as a Province with the city to this degree, and I think it's going to make a very significant difference over the next period of time.

I'm very pleased we're continuing to expand Neighbourhoods Alive!. We've now expanded to five new communities, and this year we're now into Flin

Flon, The Pas, Dauphin, Portage la Prairie and Selkirk. We believe this is a very significant opportunity for those communities to have the same kind of community revitalization we've had over the last number of years in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson, and we believe this is a very significant part of what we do, which is community development. I won't say we do; it's what we do collectively. We have a real experience of that.

We do have, also, of course, a rather unique situation with economic development. We have an ongoing agreement. We've had 25 years now of federal-provincial-City of Winnipeg agreements. We're now on the fourth year of the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement and we continue to be very pleased to be a part of that, whether it be in terms of Aboriginal participation, building sustainable neighbourhoods, downtown renewal, or innovation and technology. I do note, by the way, the real progress we're seeing, particularly in our downtown—not perfect; there are still more things need to be done, but I'd be more than pleased to get into our vision for the downtown and some of the real progress we've seen working with our partners on that.

We're also seeing, by the way, continued supports in building local government capacity. We've improved on our statistical information for municipalities. We're very pleased recently to help sponsor a very innovative conference on thinking, acting like a region here in the Capital Region, and everywhere I go as minister I get the opportunity to talk about that. I mean, we have to recognize we have to compete as regions; we can't compete with each other. We're in a global economy and it's critical, not only in terms of economic development but in terms of quality of life.

In terms of the emergency measures side of the department, we've faced some significant challenges in recent years with flooding and with tornadoes, and the unprecedented F5 tornado in Elie. We continue to work with municipalities, our partners, and we've already come forward with some improvements in terms of public education and the processes related to our tornadoes. I'm very pleased, too, that thanks to the leadership Manitoba's shown at the national level, there is a commitment to what has previously been called CANALERT, but a national alerting system using our existing technology to get direct information to people about disasters, and they put some very important improvements there.

Also, some very significant changes to the disaster financial assistance. I'm very pleased that we've taken the lead here. Municipalities used to get 16 percent of their equipment costs recovered, 16 percent of the heavy equipment rental association rental rates. Not enough. The federal government has moved to 40; we moved to 65, and when I say 65, by the way, that's of the commercial rate. That makes sure that municipalities have full cost recovery, and we consider that very significant.

Also, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, a very important development with DFA and that is there has been a shift in the consideration of threshold for eligibility for small business and farmers, ensuring that those that have more off-farm income are still eligible. That was a real difficulty before. Many people have significant off-farm income and that doesn't mean that they are not farmers.

So we're moving ahead in terms of approved legislation, property assessment, the members have seen the new bill on that. We're looking at sustainable land use; there are very significant opportunities there. We're also working with the City of Winnipeg in terms of Plan Winnipeg. We've committed half a million dollars, I note, in the department's budget. We've increased the UD funding as well, recognizing the many opportunities there to use UD to promote development in our urban centre.

The bottom line here is you'll see some significant support but the most important thing to my mind is the partnership. This year, for the first time, we had local government ministers meeting in Winnipeg. We hosted it. We invited the AMM to come to talk about local government. It never had been done before. Go figure, local government leaders talking to ministers about local government. We're making real progress Mr. Chair, and the key word is partnership, working with our municipal governments. Thank you.

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

Does the official opposition critic have any comments?

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** I just have a few short comments, just to start up, and then we would like to get into questions right away, also.

First of all, I've the past year visiting with municipalities, the AMM, and certainly hearing what they have to say. There's still some very real

concerns about downloading onto municipalities. While this won't be solved overnight, it's something that we continue to listen to them to and work towards solving.

I was out in Brandon, I think that was April 16, the municipal officials meeting and the minister spoke there. I found it rather interesting that he was urging the municipalities to lobby the federal government to sign on the Building Canada Fund when, as I understand it, it's the provincial government that's actually holding back on signing this.

There are some significant funds that are being held in place for now from the federal government, such as for the port of Emerson, under the Asia-Pacific agreement, and some other projects where the federal government—the Treasury Board chairman Vic Toews has offered up some money to answer some of the questions from Manitoba on the Building Canada Fund, and yet the Province refuses to sign. It will be interesting to ask the minister on his involvement in that.

When I talk to municipalities, there are still concerns about PSAB, the accounting and the delays that they're seeing in those. Infrastructure deficit needs, municipalities are faced with some rather significant infrastructure needs—lagoons, municipal roads, water, sewer, et cetera.

The property tax rebates, I hear the minister saying that the rebates have gone up. It still amazes me why we can't do it with a computer mouse instead of having to pay the tax and then apply for a rebate. It seems rather redundant to do that. That's something that really needs to be addressed, to be more efficient on this. The cost of running this rebate program could certainly be put to better use than in administration where it is now.

The Building Manitoba Fund, I certainly have some questions for the minister on this as well.

So, rather than go on with what we see as deficits in the government's programs, I would like to just end there, and certainly look forward to asking the minister some questions. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Very good. Let me thank the official opposition critic for those remarks.

We don't usually do two opening statements, unless there's leave from the committee.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** I'm not really wanting to, in any length, go into any detail on

an opening statement. I just wanted to indicate that I do have responsibility for the city of Winnipeg under my critic responsibilities, so I will be asking questions later on. I know we will be doing a joint effort on these Estimates.

\* (10:20)

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

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 13.1.(a) contained in resolution 13.1.

At this time we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and, when they arrive, if the minister would be so kind as to introduce them.

**Mr. Ashton:** What I should probably do, actually, to just sort of save time a bit here is to introduce those at the table and those who will be, at various times, available. Linda McFadyen is deputy minister; Claudette Toupin is assistant deputy minister of Community Planning and Development division; Denise Carlyle, executive director of Municipal Finance and Advisory Services; Brian Johnston, chief of Financial Services; Beverly Kachanoski is the manager of human resource management services.

We will also, during the Estimates, be having Laurie Davidson, who is the ADM of Provincial-Municipal services; Craig Halwachs, executive director of Financial and Administrative Services; and Lee Spencer, the director of Recovery from the Emergency Measures Organization.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Are you tabling this?

**Mr. Ashton:** It's for *Hansard*.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay, very good.

Thank you very much for that, Minister.

Now does the committee wish to proceed in a chronological order, or to have a global discussion?

**Mr. Pedersen:** We'd like to go in global.

**Mr. Ashton:** Think globally.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Very good.

**An Honourable Member:** Act locally.

**Mr. Chairperson:** It is therefore agreed that questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner, with all of the resolutions to be passed once all questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Pedersen:** First of all, I would like to start out with a list of all the political staff including the names, positions and full-time employments.

**Mr. Ashton:** What I'll do is I'll just read through, this is from the past year. I'm sure the member is interested in terms of the minister's office and technical appointments. So I'll just run through it. This is chronological too. Some have since moved on.

Kathie Currie, special assistant; Clif Evans continues as planning programmer; Tom Garrett is a professional officer.

We have, through Westman Regional Cabinet Office, a number of positions there: Jennifer Nicholson; Margaret Richards; Michelle Scott; also Gord Landriault, whose position is out of that office; Donna Kildaw, that's my executive assistant in the minister's office; and, finally, Kinasevych, who is the administrative secretary to the minister.

I don't know if the member is interested in previous people, people who have left. I could give the list: Dawn August; Nathan Laser; Donna Kildaw left and came back; and Bobbi Montean. They are no longer—well, Donna Kildaw is back under a different technical appointment.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister then, how many of those are new people as of this year? Since last year's Estimates?

**Mr. Ashton:** Kathie Currie is the new special assistant, so that's new; Tom Garrett is a professional officer in planning issues; and Margaret Richards in the Westman Regional Cabinet Office is new. It's a PA position; and Jennifer Nicholson, sorry.

We'll say new, you know, in 2007 they were hired, in the past year.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I would also request a specific list of all staff in the minister's and deputy minister's office as well. *[interjection]* That would be over and above these people? *[interjection]* No, that would include these people?

**Mr. Ashton:** The positions there are the technical appointments. If the member wishes to have the minister's and deputy minister's staff I can—it's

probably best just to provide a list, or would you like—I can read it into the record.

The deputy minister's office, essentially none of them are technical appointments. The deputy minister obviously—I'm not sure if the member wants non-technical appointments. There's the assistant to the deputy minister, the deputy minister's secretary, administrative secretary. In the minister's office, there are two administrative secretaries.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Would it be possible for me to get a list of those people?

**Mr. Ashton:** Sure. We'll will provide that separately.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you. Because reading off names is not really helpful to me unless I can actually sit down and look at them. The number of staff currently employed in the department right now and then as compared to 2007, a year ago.

**Mr. Ashton:** Just for clarification, is the member asking—I assume he's asking about the SYs, or is he asking for the number—because there'll always be vacancies. There's a managed vacancy rate as the member is aware. Does the member want the number of SYs compared to last year?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Yes, the number of SYs as compared to last year.

**Mr. Ashton:** Last year there was a grand total of 285.43 SYs and this year the total is 288.43.

**Mr. Pedersen:** The minister did tell me before some of the names, but the names of the staff, is that all—when you gave me those names before of the staff that had been hired in 2007-2008, was that included before? Did you give me those names of all the people that were hired in '07-08?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yeah, I gave you a list of the technical appointments including the names of those who are no longer tech appointments. They've moved on, and I think if the member checks *Hansard*, you know, I tried to get the full list of that, and they're not necessarily new appointments either. We've also identified those that were new.

Most of the technical appointments have continued from previous years. For example the department's responsible for the Westman Cabinet office which I'm sure the member is more than aware of, and that Cabinet office actually dates back to I think the 1970s certainly in my area, and we've had the responsibility for some of the Cabinet office functions. In that case there were a couple of new

people hired, but there was some continuation as well.

But I have put out a complete list on the *Hansard*, those who have been and those who are technical appointments over this past one-year period.

**Mr. Pedersen:** When you mention technical appointments, is that—there's a difference between competition and technical appointments. So, if you could indicate to me on that list, when you provide me that list, whether each of those people was competition or technical appointment.

**Mr. Ashton:** I can make it very easy, actually. Essentially, Mr. Chair, you have Order-in-Council appointments, and, other than that, you're dealing with the civil service process. So, for example, the deputy minister's office, there are no technical appointments. They're hired through the civil service, the minister's office, and this has been the case for many years.

\* (10:30)

You have technical appointments usually for the minister's secretary. Other positions, you know, are ongoing, and they're either through Order-in-Council or through direct appointment, but when we talk about the technical appointments, those are the positions that are not part of the normal, you know, the civil service process.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Has there been a reclassification of any of the positions within your department?

**Mr. Ashton:** No reclasses this year.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Can I have a listing of all the vacant positions? Or what is the vacancy rate for this year as compared to last year? And a listing of all the vacant positions right now.

**Mr. Ashton:** What I was going to suggest, I'll get the list of vacant positions, but I'll try to get the member the current vacancy—[interjection] 6.8 percent currently. We will check last year's, but what I'll do is, if the member wants a list of vacant positions, I have a list here, but rather than take up committee time I can get a Xerox of it actually and probably provide it to him, you know, before 1:30.

**Mr. Pedersen:** That would be good if you could give me that list, and also I can go back in *Hansard*. I'm sure I asked the same question last year so we can find it from *Hansard*.

So there is 6.8 percent current vacancy rate. So are the staff years—how does that compare then with staff years being filled?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well I, you know—6.8 percent is—that's the current vacancy rate. As the member knows, we do manage vacancies in the department. It's the same across government, and, basically, you know, if the member wants it in terms of positions, that's 19.2 SYs that are currently vacant. You know, the department, obviously, manages that. You do have retirements; you have people leaving jobs, you know, and we do obviously make best efforts to make sure that there's no interruption of services and, you know, that is I think fairly standard across the board in terms of government departments. You know, we're within the range of other departments in terms of vacancies.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, are there any contracts being awarded directly from this department?

**Mr. Ashton:** Perhaps if I could ask what kind of contracts? I mean is he—

**Mr. Pedersen:** Well, any contracts that are awarded directly. I don't know. You tell me what kind of contracts there are and if there's a dollar figure. What I want to know is, if there's a dollar figure, whether contracts can be let out directly or is there a tender process? If there's a tender process, what the dollar figure is.

**Mr. Ashton:** The vast majority of the contracts are done through tendering. There may be some exceptional circumstances, you know, where there are untendered contracts. I can get the member a list by this afternoon.

**Mr. Pedersen:** And if you would, when you're finding that list, if you could also tell me if there is a dollar figure. Whether they—you know, in contracts—in other departments I know there is a dollar figure, for instance, in renting facilities, buildings or whatever that there is a dollar figure where they need to contract it if it's over that figure, or if it's under that they can just award them directly. So that—I need to know that as well.

**Mr. Ashton:** Certainly, and just another bit of information. We actually do—we have very few contracts. If you look at the services we provided, the department works through direct employment. Notwithstanding that, I'll get all the information to the member.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Have there been any positions relocated, in the past year, from rural northern Manitoba into Winnipeg or out of Winnipeg into rural Manitoba, northern Manitoba?

**Mr. Ashton:** No positions and I might add that certainly as minister and, I think, as a government, we're watching that as well. I think it's important to maintain a balance in terms of employment.

Coming from northern Manitoba, I know how important the provincial government is in terms of employment in many communities in rural northern Manitoba. We, in fact, have a pretty significant component of our department employed outside of the city of Winnipeg. In fact, I can probably get that breakdown for the member as well. I think it's always important to—I'm just getting the exact breakdown, it might be useful. We actually did add a position outside of the Perimeter, if I can use that term, and it's related to Neighbourhoods Alive!. Well, I'll just give you an example of how significant our rural commitment is: 57.3 percent of our employment is basically in rural and northern Manitoba, so it's a very significant employer as a department outside of the city of Winnipeg.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Chairperson, there are new department initiatives, and I know that, and if I could perhaps leave it outside of Neighbourhoods Alive! because I have a couple questions later on about Neighbourhoods Alive!. But are there any new departmental initiatives announced, undertaken in '07-08 other than Neighbourhoods Alive!?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, certainly, in the budgetary context, a significant increase for the Urban Development Initiative, UDI. The member will see that in the budget documents. I think in terms of initiatives, I outlined a number of the significant initiatives that we are involved with currently in my opening comments. Of course, with the restriction of 10 minutes, the member will appreciate there's so many good things that we're doing in the department that that was the *Reader's Digest* version.

Just to give a couple of highlights because I think it's really important to note, I would say the renewal of the library and rec fund is significant, largely because no matter what happens on infrastructure, and I don't want to get into that right now. If the member wants to then certainly we can discuss the infrastructure with the funding component. We found that this was an important way of supplementing and dealing with situations that weren't covered through infrastructure and the

member knows there's—even with a fully-functioning infrastructure program, there're limits, they're out there—so I consider that to be very significant.

\*(10:40)

There's a number of other ones. I mentioned an EMO, I can't state enough how significant the CANALERT is. We've taken a lead role on that, and the idea of having a national alerting system for major weather events is something that we are proceeding with but in the meantime, we've worked with AMM on some improvements on how we deal with tornadoes and other disasters. I mentioned some of the very significant shifts on funding for municipalities for equipment and, quite frankly, the one that virtually no one seems to know about, one of the most important ones for me, is the fact we're also treating farmers—actually producers generally—and it's the same situation with fishers. You know, to my mind it was ludicrous given the situation and the part of the farm economy and that represents many constituents who I'm sure are in the same category. There are a lot of people that make more money off-farm than on-farm; it doesn't mean they're not farmers. We have now a national—a clear recognition that if you're hit by a natural disaster under DFA, it shouldn't matter what percentage breakdown is. That's going to benefit farmers. I mentioned fishers because many fishers throughout the province often will make less money fishing than they do off-farm, but their way of life is fishing. It's no different with farmers.

The other thing I just want to mention very briefly, there are major initiatives, which, just to enhance a little bit on: the member talked about my speech in Brandon. One thing I really stressed was thinking regionally. I'm very proud of some of the significant changes and improvements we're seeing in terms of planning in this province, and we're seeing the results of that. We're seeing some very significant improvements in municipal planning; more sustainable, both financially and in terms of the environment. We're working on the city of Winnipeg on a re-draft, updating of Plan Winnipeg. We've already poured a significant financial contribution, but that could look at issues, you know, transit, such as the environment. I think that's very significant, and I think on the planning side, even at the conference here, I want to give Reeve Strang and the Capital Region mayors and reeves a lot of credit because we have to start thinking regionally. That's very important.

Probably the other significant initiative, and it's not strictly in this Estimates but it's on the transit side. To move to 50 percent funding on transit is hugely significant, first of all, because from 1993 on that was not the case. And if you're going to build a modern transit system, and we have four communities in the province that have transit: Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson, and Flin Flon. Selkirk, by the way, is looking at it as well, and may be an option for other communities. We believe that's really critical, but with the Kyoto legislation I think there's very important recognition of the fact that rapid transit is also a part of that. We have secured the funding from the federal government in terms of active transportation. We're committed, by the way, to active transportation, and that includes bike paths, including commuter paths, and it also includes a potential for further enhancements to rapid transit. So I think there are some real opportunities there for us to move ahead on that, and we've been involved, obviously, in discussions with the federal government securing the money and with the City of Winnipeg currently, and I consider that to be a very important initiative.

Finally, the Neighbourhoods Alive!—we will get into that, but I think what's really critical to note, outside of the expansion, is the fact we've essentially expanded twice already: we had the original neighbourhoods of Winnipeg and we expanded to new neighbourhoods. What's really significant, what's happening right now in downtown Winnipeg, the core area, in the Neighbourhoods Alive! areas, is the fact that we're really turning around a lot of the depressed property values. We've started to really tackle crime; I mean, I consider the announcement we made in the budget of additional rec directors for the city through Neighbourhoods Alive! to be creative, hugely important, because we're starting to turn things around. And I hear everywhere I go, kids, what is there for kids to do? And there's less to do today than there was 20, 30 years ago. Now we've got the Lighthouses making a difference. I'm talking about recreation here. I see it in my own community with the Boys and Girls Club; we're making a real difference on that side, so those are some of the initiatives that I'd be more than happy to expand on any one of them. I think I got the rest of my opening statement in. Thank you.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Chairman, what out-of-province trips did the minister take last year?

**Mr. Ashton:** Last year I took three trips out of the province. One was to Halifax, a ministers'

conference; the second was to Minneapolis where, along with department staff, we met with—a number of elements of cross-over in terms of our department, in terms of their communities, in terms of community development, also the metropolitan area.

Third was a trip to Toronto where I met with a number of people. Most importantly, there's a new technology that's being developed for water monitoring and has been particularly targeted at some of the needs of municipalities. Actually, at the request of [*inaudible*], I met with the individual that's developing that and actually had an individual meeting with municipalities here and with the Department of Water Stewardship, along with IGA.

I'm sure the member is going to ask the cost of the trips. I did not go business class, by the way. I actually drove to Minneapolis and got back at three in the morning, but that's another story. All this will be part of our general release. I think the member is aware that we're actively releasing this information over, I think, in the next few days; it's going to be up on the Web site.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Where was the second trip?

**Mr. Ashton:** Minneapolis.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Of course, you will provide me with the dates and who went and who paid for it when you—

**Mr. Ashton:** Definitely. It will be up on the Web site too. Just to save a bit of time there, the minister's conference, my then-executive assistant was there; the deputy minister was there and also the executive director of EMO was there. At Minneapolis, two staff were there, including Claudette Toupin, who is with us today; in Toronto, it was just myself.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Was there any travel by the Premier (Mr. Doer) or a delegation by the Premier that was paid for out of your department?

**Mr. Ashton:** No.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Getting into some of the financial end of it here—by the way, it would certainly be nice if we could get the Estimate books sooner than a day before the Estimates; it would be appreciated.

**Mr. Ashton:** We thought we were going to be in later in the week. If I could say, no offence to the House leaders but, if as ministers, we had a little bit more notice on when we're coming up—I found out yesterday. So we're in the same boat. Maybe we



could have a joint delegation to the House leaders, but I know they have a tough job to do.

**Mr. Pedersen:** We're not going to criticize the House leaders. They certainly have their job full. I thought I would put that in anyway; last week would have been even better.

Page 5 of the Estimate books, there's a 10.5 percent increase in the budget. The majority of this seems to be going in the areas of community planning and development and financial assistance to the municipalities. If the minister could be a little more specific on where this additional funding will be spent.

**Mr. Ashton:** On the community development side, that's the additional UDI funding and it's the additional Neighbourhoods Alive! funding. It's 3.1 million, I believe. It's essentially UDI and Neighbourhoods Alive! plus, I think, the member's probably looking at other aspects. One of the reasons here is the *[inaudible]*

\*(10:50)

The Building Manitoba Fund, I mentioned that in my opening comments. Rather than spend too much time on that, if the member wants any more detailed information, I'd be more than happy to provide it. Once again, because of our unique situation in the province where we have shared growth revenues, there are some very significant funding increases to all our rural municipalities, northern municipalities and our cities as well, the City of Brandon, the City of Winnipeg. Those are really the three main areas: assistance to the municipalities, UDI, and Neighbourhoods Alive!.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I'm not really familiar with this Building Manitoba Fund, and I understand it's different than Building Canada Fund. What is the budget out of Building Manitoba Fund and where does that money come from?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, first of all, you know, the Building Canada Fund is the federal government's new name for the infrastructure, the old, you know, we had the MRIF, so it does create a bit of confusion, but the Building Manitoba Fund is essentially our tax-sharing fund. The member may recall that formerly, it was the PMTS, Provincial-Municipal Tax-Sharing fund, and in 2005, legislation was established to establish the Building Manitoba Fund. This includes—I'll just—you know, I mentioned this in my opening statement, but just to sort of put

on the record again, this includes new fuel tax sharing, so that's, you know, fairly significant, but very significantly, in terms of the formula, it does deal with, you know, a variety of taxes, income tax, fuel taxes, and we also, of course, transfer lottery revenues. So Building Manitoba Fund—it's the fund that transfers tax sharing to the municipalities. I can give the member all the breakdowns this year, but essentially, I think the member's aware just from reading the documents that again, it's provided very significant funding.

Just to give you a sense of it, by the way, this really makes us a leader in Canada. I've been asked to speak at the FCM. It's not because of any other reason than the fact that Manitoba's seen as a leader and particularly, you know, when overall provincial revenues have been rising, the Building Manitoba Fund has really been ensuring that municipalities have a very significant and growing share of that. And that's what municipalities across the country are asking for. In Manitoba we've had it since 1976.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So for the '08-09 fiscal year, what is the Building Manitoba Fund projected to be, the total fund?

**Mr. Ashton:** I just refer the—the information is available in the Estimates book, but this year, for the City of Winnipeg, it's 91 point 982 point 2, so 91 million, and for municipalities outside, it's 50 point 135–50 million.

**Mr. Pedersen:** If you would just guide me to where this is in the Estimates book. I guess I missed it.

**Mr. Ashton:** Page 69.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So that 91.8 million breaks down, you told me 50 million for rural?

**Mr. Ashton:** Page 75. You'll see outside of the city of Winnipeg, that was the two separate numbers. The total, by the way, is 132 million, rounded off. The breakdown, again, reflects some of the relative population between the city of Winnipeg and the municipalities, but either way that's—I mean, that's one of the reasons we're able to in this province have the lowest reliance on property taxes of any jurisdiction at the municipal level because of those kinds of transfers. That's very significant.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So I have a local municipality that wants to, well, a town in a municipality that wants to rebuild their recreation facility, and they were quite concerned that the Province hasn't signed the Building Canada Fund because traditionally that's

where infrastructure money came out of. Is this money now coming? Would they be eligible for money out of Building Manitoba Fund? Is that part of what it would be used for?

**Mr. Ashton:** There is the Municipal Recreation and Library Fund, which is available in terms of municipal eligibility for projects. I do want to stress, though, on the Building Canada Fund, I think it's important—part of it I can answer, when we talk about Building Manitoba Fund, it's not strictly an infrastructure fund in the sense of a dedicated infrastructure fund, so it's very easy to confuse with the federal government.

The real issue with the federal government, and I know that the member mentioned this in his comments about my comments in Brandon, is the fact that the federal government—and I can talk from some experience here as former Conservation Minister and Water Stewardship Minister, having been responsible for the floodway—had committed first to phase 1 of the floodway, which was originally 160 then raised to 240, that was Prime Minister Chrétien. Then there was a commitment to the second stage of the floodway and that was as a strategic infrastructure project, and there's a fundamental difference, by the way, between taking the money out of a strategic infrastructure allocation federally and taking it out of infrastructure funding generally because our position with the federal government has been, just as the original floodway was of national significance, so was this project.

I can say as Minister responsible for EMO as well that the real issue with the floodway here is when you're dealing with major mitigation—I mean, the floodway has saved us billions of dollars. It shouldn't be traded off against recreation centres, waste water, you know, libraries, and in fact, the biggest beneficiary outside, obviously, of the people of Manitoba, has been the federal government. The floodway will protect upwards of 435,000 people in the case of a one-in-700-year flood. With the 90-10 cost-sharing formula in a disaster, if we had a disaster of that significance it would cost the federal government billions, so it makes sense for the federal government to be investing in mitigation, and this is mitigation. Our position—and I don't know if the member's raised this in the Estimates of the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation—is that the federal government made the commitment, the previous federal government. The current federal government made the same commitment as well. We've been at events where it was jointly announced

that continued and we would love to sign on tomorrow, but we don't think it's fair that we take funding for the floodway out of a fund that is there for our municipalities.

You've got to remember that the Building Canada Fund is on a per capita formula. That's the issue there.

Now, on the Building Manitoba Fund side—by the way, that \$9 million is there, and it was used in the first round to supplement the infrastructure program. Mr. Chair, even with the previously existing infrastructure program there clearly wasn't, you know, anywhere near the amount of funds that municipalities were looking at. Some very significant projects throughout the province on the rec side, water and waste water, so we recognize that it was important to supplement that.

Of course, we have other ongoing programs, one of which has had an increase in funding this year, Community Places, but that's the bottom line there. We do have that \$9-million allocation where municipalities would be eligible, and we would love to sign on to the Building Canada Fund tomorrow. The issue there, though, is whether the infrastructure agreement is going to have to fund the floodway and we don't think that's—not only is it not fair, it's not what was committed to by the current government and the previous government.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So I don't think he answered my question about whether the municipalities should go there, but, Mr. Chair, just to stay on the Building Canada Fund for a moment, are you as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs actively involved in negotiations on this, or is it the Premier (Mr. Doer) alone?

\* (11:00)

**Mr. Ashton:** The lead minister is Minister Lemieux, as the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, and, obviously, in our department, as minister, I work with my colleague, given the particular interest in municipalities. Once again, the Premier is always involved in matters of federal-provincial relations. He's also the—well, I guess he's the lead minister on everything, but particularly when it comes to federal-provincial relations.

**Mr. Pedersen:** But it's Minister Lemieux that's the lead minister besides—obviously, it's the Premier. I understand that he's the chair on everything. So, going back to my municipalities and wanting to

rebuild their arena, are there funds available for that type of thing in the Building Manitoba Fund?

**Mr. Chairperson:** Just before I recognize the minister, a quick reminder: Fellow MLAs get referred to by their constituency title, or by their official portfolio if they're a minister. That's a gentle reminder. Mr. Lemieux's name has come up a few times, that's all. *[interjection]* And just now. We can do Monty Python if we want.

**Mr. Ashton:** Monty Python is a great way to keep my sanity at times around this place, which explains a lot of things.

But, essentially, the new \$9-million allocation works similar to the other one. Municipalities will apply through Community Places and the Canada-Manitoba Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund. I'm assuming they've applied there. This fund is essentially one that operates through projects that have already applied through those funds and is available really—well, we'd like to see it essentially as a supplement to the infrastructure fund. We recognize there are concerns about the Building Canada Fund and I think I just explained our position on that, so I won't elaborate. But, essentially, there's not a separate duplication of paperwork, largely because the criteria is for rec centres and libraries and we had a very significant number of rec centres and libraries funded through the first round of this particular fund, and we anticipate significant amount of interest in the second one. Quite frankly, a lot of communities—and, you know, the member has this in his own constituency. I do. In my area, in Thompson we have an arena that's a World War II surplus aircraft hangar. Let's put it this way: When I was in high school it was pretty old and that's a few years ago. And it's being renovated as we speak.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So is this Building Manitoba Fund—no, just a minute now. Yes, Building Manitoba Fund. There is specific funding that it did last year, and where would I find that?

**Mr. Ashton:** Are you just talking about the rec and library, or are you talking about the general—

**An Honourable Member:** The rec and library.

**Mr. Ashton:** Just to run through some projects, the Interlake area: the city of Selkirk, R.M. of St. Andrews, R.M. of St. Clements library. In northern Manitoba, the city of Flin Flon, Whitney Forum; town of Grand Rapids arena, city of Thompson rec facility; Parklands, R.M. of Swan River, Benito library, the city and the R.M., the rec centre; R.M. of

Grandview, community hall; south-central town of Manitou, Pembina Wellness Complex; southeast R.M. of Alexander, the Allard Library. It's funding, in Brandon, the Andrews Field, Vincent Massey sports field; the town of Melita, the pool. There was also public library infrastructure program funding.

I haven't given the dollar amounts. I don't know if the member's interested in that, but just to give you sort of a sense, it ranges from \$50,000, on that list, to probably the highest amount would be the regional library, which was \$600,000. I should also add one as well to there. There was an original notional commitment to Brandon University and the Y fitness complex through the City of Brandon that, as the member is probably aware, is being reworked. We've certainly indicated that if there are similar proposals, perhaps a reworked proposal that comes back, that we would certainly be willing to consider it under this fund at this, meeting significant community needs. So, when I was out in Brandon, we made that commitment that, notwithstanding there have been some significant changes, that certainly we would consider that.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Okay, if we can move on. City of Brandon. Any discussions with the City of Brandon about having a charter similar to Winnipeg?

**Mr. Ashton:** I know the issue of a separate charter for Brandon has come up. You know, the City of Brandon has significant powers under current legislation and we have been in contact with them at both the administrative level and the level of the mayor, and certainly they feel they have sufficient powers in terms of planning, sufficient powers in terms of municipal authority under the current legislation, so it's not been an active issue that's been pursued by the City of Brandon, and you know, we're doing quite a bit in Brandon, as well. Renaissance Brandon, for example. Neighbourhoods Alive!, for example.

So I'm more than happy to get into, you know, what is happening on the ground there, but in terms of the charter, it's not been something that the city has been pursuing with us, but they've certainly been actively pursuing, making sure that Brandon is clearly recognized as our second largest city and a very important part of our future, and we're certainly doing that in terms of our programming and supports.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, I would like to spend a little bit of time talking about the R.M. of Ellice case. The

expropriation case which he is very familiar with. So am I. The case is no longer before the courts now.

Does the minister have any comment on that—where he sees it going or what he would like to see happen there?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well I think, without commenting on the case directly, and I realize, you know, whether it's before the court or not, what really should be of consideration here is not the specific facts what happened, but the policy issues that arise out of what did happen.

You know, first of all, I think it's important to recognize that it's important for all governments to have the ability to expropriate where necessary, and I think we all recognize that. So I don't think that's an issue.

I think the, arising out of some of the events we've seen recently, there are some issues related to, perhaps, scope. You know, clearly, the scope and some of the concerns that have been expressed there are something that I do take seriously. I'm not any way prejudging what happened. I mean, what happened happened, but as we look at the policy issues in the future sense I think that does have to be considered and I look forward, by the way, to feedback from municipalities on this and particularly, the AMM. I certainly respect the views of the public on this.

\* (11:10)

I can tell the member that, having been a minister in departments that have at various times had to expropriate, you know, to my mind, it's the last resort. I respect the interest in property that people have, and I also respect the fact that, in many cases, we often tend to forget that property isn't just something you own today and sell tomorrow. In many cases, particularly in rural Manitoba, you'll have property that's been in a family for generations. That does put a very different kind of attachment to the property; it's not just a commercial transaction.

The only reason I'm saying that is because I am satisfied that our legislation does protect the commercial interest in terms of value in the expropriation process of that land. There is adequate compensation. People may not always agree with it, but there is an appeal mechanism, the member is aware of that, that is in place.

I will, in my ongoing discussions with municipalities and with the AMM, be really raising

some of the issues there about scope because I do believe that a rising out of some of the events the last period of time, that's a legitimate question.

I'm not prejudging what that might lead to. I think what we're looking for is a system that treats expropriation as something that's there for the broad public interest as a last resort. I want to make sure that that is the case. I want to say, broad public interest. I think it's a legitimate question as to what the public interest is. We certainly know if it's a public roadway, if it's something of that nature, it's a case. I think there are some other issues that we recently know about, how you define public interest.

I'm not being critical of anyone. If the member can understand that, even though it may not formally be before the courts, the case he's talking about here, the point to mind is you can't change the past. You can certainly look at some of the issues and concerns that have been expressed at a more general sense and make sure we have the proper expropriation process in place that meets the needs of municipalities and also is fair to individual citizens.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So is the minister contemplating any changes in legislation?

**Mr. Ashton:** Certainly, at that point, but I will be engaging in a discussion with municipalities and looking at some of the issues that have been expressed from individual citizens as well. I don't prejudge that. Certainly, I'm aware of the public policy issues that have been raised recently and I do respect them. I can't stress enough again this fact of this being the last resort that is used.

I, quite frankly, empathize with Manitobans who are on the expropriation side, the other side, not the expropriation agency with their property. So I'm going to look at that with a certain amount of—actively considering changes in the legislation. Policy issue, yes, that will be a subject of discussion over the next period of time.

**Mr. Pedersen:** In this particular case and without—I appreciate not getting involved in, you can't pick sides certainly and we don't want to judge what's already happened—but is there any way the minister can, either through himself or through his workings with the AMM, help these two parties to reach some sort of settlement?

**Mr. Ashton:** When any matter ends up before the courts, to my mind, whether it's actively before the courts or not, it certainly indicates that it's gone beyond normal discussions, et cetera. Quite frankly,

we do respect local government—I never use the term, if I can avoid it—different levels of government. I think part of the gamut here is to recognize the need for local government to have the ability to function as a municipality.

So my concern is more the general public policy issue that has been raised. The member raised it again, and I think it's a legitimate area for discussion. I don't want to assume that the current system we have for expropriation is perfect. I'm open to some of the discussions. I think the key issues are the use and the scope.

I think the member is aware that that essentially has been the issue. It's not to criticize one side or another of a previous dispute, but when you do have something that ends up before the courts and a pretty significant disagreement about the appropriateness of something that happens, without getting involved in the specifics, you know, I think it's important to look at any of the public policy issues arising out of that. As I said, we're not at the point of looking at any changes to the legislation right now, but it's something that I've indicated my willingness to review in terms of the general policy issue of expropriation and the balance between the ability of local governments to function appropriately and the rights of individual citizens and families.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So have you had the general policy issue discussion with the AMM?

**Mr. Ashton:** I will be having that. I mean they have their list and I have my list and sometimes it's the same issues on the same list, but this is one of the issues that I do want to consult with them on over the next period of time because I think it's in everybody's best interest to make sure that you have a system that is sensitive to the needs of municipalities and sensitive to the needs of individual citizens and it's a fine balance. I mean I just can't stress enough again how I do not like, at any time, signing off on expropriation processes at the provincial level because you always would prefer that that wasn't necessary and you don't want to see it go to the point where individual citizens don't have much in the way of recourse.

Now, we do have all sorts of protections in place about the public interest. Members are probably aware of the fact that you have process ability, whether it's a disagreement over whether a project should proceed. You know, we often have public hearing process. There's a process in place for land appraisal, independent process. So there are all sorts

of protections built in, but I think the issue the member is referring to here does raise some issues about scope and appropriateness. You know, what is an appropriate thing for expropriation, and that includes both questions and that will be something I'll be discussing with the AMM.

By the way, I mean, not exclusively to look at it from the perspective of AMM, I respect the AMM, but I'm always cognizant of the fact that we're somewhat individual citizens, as well, and I think we have to always be careful that we're balancing the needs of governments before the public good, but also the rights of private citizens. I want to stress again when, particularly, your same people that have had land in the family for many generations, I think we don't often reflect on the fact it's not just a commercial transaction for them. It's part of their connection to the land and to the community and I think you have to constantly make sure you've got a fine balance.

I know a lot of the jurisdictions where there is no balance. You know, the state either has no abilities to prefer the public good, in which case you end up with chaos, or the state often has too many powers, in which case, individual citizens don't have much in the way of rights and recourse. I like to think we have a balance in Canada and I want to make sure we keep that appropriate balance, so it will be on the agenda for discussions with the AMM over the next year.

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** I want to thank the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) for allowing me a couple of minutes on the program this morning to ask some questions of the minister.

First of all, I'm just sort of wondering what role your department played here in terms of developing regulations, and actually these regulations are under The Water Protection Act, and the reason I ask the question is because these particular regulations have a direct impact on municipalities and planning districts in some areas. So I'm just wondering what role your department would have played interacting with Water Stewardship on those particular regulations.

\* (11:20)

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, certainly, members will be aware that the previous Minister of Water Stewardship made sure that there were extensive consultations on the water quality management zones and, of course, I look forward one of these days when perhaps I'm on

an acting basis for the current minister to—if you can blame the previous minister, as well. Maybe I'll blame the previous minister myself, but we did have fairly extensive consultations that are in place.

Our role as a department in this particular case is through our role on the planning side, and I do want to stress we have been moving ahead with municipalities in terms of municipal planning, and I think that's fairly significant. In terms of regulations, obviously any and all regulations go through internal processes as well, but our essential contribution here is really through our role on the planning side more than it is on the technical nature of the water quality management zones.

Certainly, the Department of Water Stewardship is also involved in discussions with municipalities. We don't necessarily get involved directly with that. We respect the ability of municipalities to put forward their own interests and concerns, and I can't think of regulations, legislation that's gone through more consultation and discussions and various public meetings going into—you know, very well-attended meetings, actually, throughout the province; a number in the member's area during the development of the water quality management zones and the process has been quite exhaustive. I mean I know some people criticize us for not just bringing in the regulations immediately and the legislation immediately. My sense is you take the time to do it right because these can have a very significant long-term impact down the line. There's been fairly extensive consultation on the legislation and on the regulations as well, and certainly we're involved with any and all internal discussions that deal with planning, including water quality management zones.

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate the minister's response and certainly his background in the Water Stewardship side. He should be familiar with some of the situations that may develop.

In this particular case, it may be one that, when the consultations were undertaken, was probably not even thought of. As you're probably aware, the N-1 to 5 classifications are based on soil classifications, so what we're finding in some of the lighter soils, they fall under the N-4 classification, and the regulations are written in such a way in dealing with some of these acreages in terms of their waste-water treatment, and they're not allowing pump-outs as we're familiar with in some of these soils.

I'm just wondering if the minister's aware of any of those situations that may have come to light,

because I think it's just a situation that probably people never thought of before. I think it was an add-in on Water Stewardship's side of things. We were more focussed on the agricultural implications of The Water Protection Act, and not necessarily on the zoning side and the planning side of things. So I'm just wondering if the minister's aware of any situations that have developed on that side.

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, I certainly appreciate the member bringing forward the specific concern and certainly would encourage him to raise that, which I assume he's probably already done, with the Minister of Water Stewardship as well, in terms of any direct implications in terms of that. Clearly, one of the things that's important here, by the way, is to move to comprehensive planning that includes any and all aspects right at the water and the environment generally, and certainly we have been doing that.

I mean, without sort of getting into the broader debate, because I'm sure we could debate some of the areas that the member might disagree with in terms of the initiatives we've taken, but whether it be in terms of manure and mortalities legislation, phosphorus, the phosphorus experts report, you know, in terms of the adoption of recommendations coming out of the water quality management zones which we're referencing here, changes to The Planning Act, they all are moving us toward, I think, a consideration of the fact that we've learned, and in some cases perhaps learned from our mistakes in terms of clearly recognizing that you have to have a plan that plans for sustainability in the long term. You know, you can't look at it, you can't do something first and then ask questions later. That just isn't going to work.

I have no doubt that there will continue to be specific situations that will arise. The great thing in Manitoba, though, is even if there are specific issues of concern, we have all sorts of avenues for discussion of that. I look at the legislation, we're the only province where every bill goes to committee. We, actually, if the member recalls, on water quality management, and those, we made a number of significant amendments. We did listen to the public. There was a very significant contribution by the opposition, as well, in terms of specific elements and, particularly, listening to the Keystone Agricultural Producers, some recommendations originally put forward by KAP. I note, Ian Wishart, of course, is now on the Water Board. Ian Wishart is now president of KAP and was very instrumental in

putting forward some of the specific amendments that were adopted.

So, of course, if the member has any specific concerns to raise that, but I think we've come a long way here. Quite frankly, I do believe we're looking, not only at the impact of agricultural producers, but industries. We're looking at municipalities. Right now, probably the single most significant reduction in nutrients in our waterways will come from the city of Winnipeg waste-water treatment. So the bottom line here is: Is the system perfect? No, but we think we have a much better planning mechanism. We think it's going to benefit Manitoba generally because what we heard from everyone is that if you get better planning, then people know where to plan, what to plan for and you end up with a much better end result than the old model which had unrestricted or fairly unrestricted development followed by a recognition, that in some cases, it went too far.

So I appreciate it's kind of a long answer, but our key role here in this department is more on the planning side.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, I thank the minister for that reply. Municipalities are facing more and more regulations all the time, and they're coming at them from various departments. In this particular case, I could see the planning district is going to have to make sure that they understand where Water Stewardship is coming from in terms of their regulations, and that, actually, they are in the right soil classification. It appears to me in the regulations, that there is a chance to make sure the Province states its case in terms of the right classification.

I appreciate your comments in terms of what input we had into this thing as opposition members. Again, we, as opposition members, look at the broad legislation. We don't have too much impact in terms of what comes out in the actual regulations. It's the old story, the devil's in the detail, and we're never sure what the details are going to be until the end of the day.

Having said that, we'll assume that the planning districts get clarification from Water Stewardship in terms of this particular classification. If they don't agree with that, is there a role for your department to play on that side of it or is it something you would look at on a broader spectrum?

**Mr. Ashton:** I wouldn't say that it would be appropriate for Intergovernmental Affairs to be an arbiter in these types of circumstances. Obviously,

the Department of Water Stewardship has a very significant role. Conservation is also involved in various aspects of this, as the member is aware. There is a regulatory process where part of bringing in regulations is to look at the impact. That's not unusual now but, I think, Manitoba, we've been doing that for many years. It usually does pick up a lot of the concerns. I think one thing people don't necessarily recognize, sometimes, is that when there are perceived delays in moving ahead on issues, it's often because it's very extensive consultations.

\* (11:30)

I can tell you, I was Minister of Conservation when we went through, for about a year and a half of consultations, manure mortality regulations. I think that by the end of it I've become an expert on the regulations, which was actually quite scary, given how technical they were. We did it because we kept seeing that, if we took more time and we took into account some of the specific circumstances, we'd end up with a better end result. As I said, there were people at that time that were critical of us for not moving on that.

Phosphorus expert's report is a good example, as well, where there was a fair amount of work that was put into doing that. I know, you know, the member knows some of the key issues, but you have to take the time to do it. So, in this particular case, we certainly respect Water Stewardship's lead role in terms of regulations that are, you know, involving an act on their side. I'm not saying there wouldn't be times where some of our staff might pick up concerns that they might pass on, but you know, since our key role is through The Planning Act.

So we are involved in a lot of the broader issues, and one of the things that I do want to indicate, by the way, is I really think there's been a wholesale shift on the planning side the last number of years. It isn't getting very much attention. We're getting much greater sustainability, much better planning, and in a rise of times that means that municipal plans are being rejected because they don't meet the provincial land use guidelines, but I actually think we've seen a wholesale shift and we're now seeing land planning, municipal planning that is really state of the art, and that is where we are involved in, in terms of Intergovernmental Affairs in terms of our authority under The Planning Act.

**Mr. Cullen:** I should mention, one of my local planning districts, it's Glenboro, Carberry, North and South Cypress, they've been very active for quite a

number of years, and those four jurisdictions have really shown an active role and have really been able to work co-operatively. They do face a lot of challenges given the nature of the soil characteristics and the nature of the area in conjunction with the aquifer, and they're going through another evolution, if you will, in terms of looking at their livestock capacity and whatnot. So it's certainly, you know, a hats off to them with these new regulations, and they're finding some of these regulations are impacting some of their development in some areas. So it's something that we all certainly—I will be working with them trying to make sure everybody is on the same page and understanding the intent of the regulations and that we're all working together to the same thing. So that's something that may be brought forward to the department in the future.

On another issue, and it's also kind of in a similar vein, the Department of Labour through the Fire Commissioner's office, has brought forward changes and regulations relative to fire departments and emergency service personnel, and it pertains to all departments across the province. Certainly, we agree with the premise of safety and, you know, that certainly should be at the forefront, but these regulations come at a very significant cost. If you've ever had anything to deal with equipment relative to the fire service, that equipment is very, very expensive. It's everything from the boots, the helmets, the turnout gear, everything right up to the, you know, the extrication equipment and the fire trucks. Just unbelievable the cost of those particular items.

I know larger centres such as the city of Winnipeg have a potential to absorb some of those increased costs, but when we look at some of our smaller communities and our smaller departments, the expenses that they are incurring are very significant relative to their previous budgets, and obviously it has a big impact on local taxpayers.

I'm just wondering if your department has heard any discussion about that issue from municipalities and then, second of all, has there been any movement within government to help look at those types of situations?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, first of all, Mr. Chair, I would assume these concerns have been raised with the Fire Commissioner's office directly. Obviously, they're responsible for the regulations. It certainly hasn't been raised directly with me. On firefighting generally I do want to point to the fact that last year,

and it's included in this year's budget again, we did recognize that the real pressure is on our cities with the full-time fire departments. We have additional firefighting positions in four municipalities for the first time designated.

We also did recognize the needs of our communities served by volunteer firefighters in terms of training, additional provincial assistance in terms of training. I'm very proud of that, because I think we often don't recognize the greater—we talk about public security and we often almost instinctively think of policing and that's important. We are providing policing resources, additional policing resources across the province. Part of public security is firefighting, and we have been there. Certainly, there may be some additional costs attached to those regulations but, if you look at the situation we're dealing with, certainly following that tragic fire in which two firefighters in Winnipeg lost their lives just over a year ago now, clearly there were some needs there to change the way we proceed.

I look by the way at our firefighting generally. We've done a remarkable job at protecting our firefighters over the last number of years in terms of safety and new procedures and our citizens. I look to what happened overseas in Greece this year where close to 60 people died in forest fires. I can't remember the last time there was a fatality in Manitoba during a forest fire; I don't think we often do enough to credit our Fire Commissioner's office, the Association of Native Firefighters; EMO, of course, works directly on these issues.

The training—I'm sure the member's aware of this—is quite significant. It really is. I consider the increased assistance for training to be absolutely important. It's very important, by the way, for our firefighters, the volunteer and full-time firefighters, to have full knowledge of the latest techniques in firefighting, the latest regulations.

I recently attended here in the city a graduation, as a direct result and provincially supported as well, of a training program. Obviously, they had the new firefighters there, but you had experienced firefighters being trained on some of the new regulations and the new procedures. I think we are there in terms of being part of the solution. There will be some additional costs involved and certainly that will impact on the municipalities as well but, to my mind, that's important to protect our firefighters, protect our citizens. Quite frankly, I haven't had a



single concern expressed to me directly on this. I don't mean it isn't a concern; perhaps it's being directed through other channels. Notwithstanding that, as I said, we are funding more firefighters and more training for firefighters. We think that's appropriate because we want to be part of the solution as well.

**Mr. Cullen:** I do appreciate the minister's response to that and certainly look forward to increased commitment from the Province in this regard.

As one who did successfully take and complete the level 1 firefighting, I can tell you it is a fairly extensive course, all right. It is quite gratifying to know that we have a lot of people who have taken that course and passed that course. That particular course is recognized across North America so we do have a very well-trained implement here across Manitoba.

Certainly, the Emergency Services College in Brandon has been a real benefit to all of Manitoba, particularly the west side of the province, in training individuals. So my hat's off to those people who do spend the time, a lot of them volunteering, to train other firefighters in the trade.

I just hope we don't get into a situation where regulations make it too overwhelming that we don't have volunteers come forward. We've seen that on the paramedic side of things, at least in rural Manitoba, Mr. Chair, where there's a reluctance to get involved because of the onerous training and time commitments there. Notwithstanding that, I do think that training's very important and hopefully that will continue. As you say, if the Province views this as another public service, I think maybe the Province does play an important role in that, especially on the training side.

\* (11:40)

One thing I'll maybe just leave with you, as hopefully, your staff can follow up. Just talking with some of the members of the Winnipeg city force, as a result of the incident you talked about, just a couple of years ago in the loss of two firemen, they are going to be changing all of their self-contained breathing apparatus. My understanding is a lot of that current apparatus would probably be something that would be appealing to a lot of the smaller and rural departments around the province. I'm not exactly sure how the process would work in terms of—I think they're going to change everything all at once, is my understanding. So there could be quite a bit of

apparatus that would be available to other jurisdictions. How that could be made available, I'm not sure, but it is something that your department or in conjunction with the Office of the Fire Commissioner, might have a look at.

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, we'll certainly pass that on. I think it's a useful suggestion, and I could indicate too, by the way, I do see even further fallout coming from what happened in, you know, the fire situation. I'm now obviously the minister responsible for the Fire Commissioner's office. I've had that role previously but I do think that we also have to recognize the unique situation in Manitoba with our weather. You know, there are certain unique challenges to firefighting in extremely cold weather.

We had a very serious fire in my own community in Thompson, before that fatal fire in Winnipeg, in which a number of firefighters who actually I know very well personally were able to rescue a young child using infrared detection equipment and were able to get out just in time. It was a very fortunate situation, and it did have a real impact. I know I'd certainly talk to the firefighters union. They're very committed to not only fighting fires, obviously, but improving firefighting safety for our firefighters, and I do think there are some real opportunities there to look at cold weather firefighting, some unique situations.

If you look at the work that's already taken place, I'm very pleased to see the focus on improved building codes. I mean if there's one thing that came out of the two fatalities in Winnipeg, it's the degree to which we have to make sure our building codes recognize up front any known fire hazards, and I think there's a recognition of that. I think, quite frankly, in terms of building products, a lot of work needs to be done there. It's interesting. We're now concerned about plastic water bottles, but we live in houses with incredible amounts of plastic, in terms of more modern housing.

There are some real issues there for firefighting in terms of flammability and toxic gases, and you know I think there's a whole series of things that do come out of that, so I appreciate the member having raised that. I'll follow up on the specific suggestion obviously with the proviso that obviously there would have to be appropriate equipment as well. I think one of the key things that is happening is the degree to which we are recognizing when we have a very serious fire, no matter where it is, whether it's volunteer or full-time firefighters, they need the

maximum protection and they need the maximum protection against the hazards. I would say, I mean, firefighters are rushing into places and everybody else is getting out as fast as they can.

Quite frankly, I don't know how they do it. I've got the ultimate respect for them. I sure appreciate the member's taking the first level training and I suppose if we end up with a serious incident at the Legislature, we'll be looking to him for leadership on this. Behind you all the way. We used to have a paramedic until Scott got defeated, so at least we've got a firefighter now.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I'd just carry on a little bit more of that. I have heard from some of the municipalities; they're concerned about the costs of attending accidents and, particularly, the cost of attending false alarms is a cost to the municipalities. There has been—I will have to follow up and then get the municipality—you say that nobody has contacted you about this. I will make sure that you will be contacted then with some of the details and the concerns that they have and, particularly, as I said in attending false alarms because that's a real cost to the municipality and where there was no accident. There was nothing there.

These days with cell phones, somebody sees a car in the ditch now and they just jump on their cell phone, phone 911, and keep driving down the road. They have some specific recommendations of how to mark cars if you do hit the ditch; you can put a flag on your car or something like that, something to work through Autopac, but I will get the particular municipality that brought it up to me to send you some information on this.

**Mr. Ashton:** I certainly appreciate, and I know the member also appreciates, that there is, say, a part of this is MPI in terms of cost recovery.

What I was also going to mention, too, is it's unfortunate, actually, our final week of sitting is also the week of the regional meetings, but I plan on attending as many as I can. Often those are, you know, the places where I do pick up those concerns. I do appreciate the role of MLAs in making sure that, if I haven't heard about it yet, I will. I'll be watching for the letter.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Municipal infrastructure. Obviously, there's a huge deficit—lagoons, water treatment facilities—and you've touched a little on this in your comments, but does the minister have any—maybe it's

a wish list, or any sense of how much deficit there is out there in municipalities in Manitoba?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, I mean, it's really hard to get a figure that really means anything. I say that, by the way, having some experience as Minister of Transportation where, the first thing I got in the way of briefing from the department when I became minister, was the infrastructure deficit.

Now, I always start from the premise that there's always more capital needs than there are capital budgets and I've always appreciated, too, when I'm talking to municipalities who are looking for additional funding that obviously we have budgets as well, and I don't know a single situation anywhere when any government has more money in its capital budget than it does needs. It doesn't exist.

You know, in a global sense, there is a significant infrastructure deficit, but that we're making some real progress on that. The reason for that, by the way, is, if you go back to every decade from, say, the '40s, '50s, '60s, '70s and up until the '80s, we were investing in infrastructure very significantly. Roads, sewer, water, you name it. What essentially happened then is we hit high interest rates, recession, we also hit some serious budgetary challenges and every government started cutting back. So there was a gap in much of the '80s and '90s.

We're now significantly turning that around, but the problem didn't occur overnight and it won't be solved overnight, and the reason I say that, by the way, is not to say that we shouldn't be doing more. I still believe that there's—I mentioned before, the floodway, of getting in all the details again on that—but there's all sorts of areas where, clearly, we believe the federal government, you know, they made some very significant steps in the right direction but there needs to be more work done. That applies also to our municipal infrastructure as well. I mean, obviously, even when we had the MRIF fund, we were significantly over-subscribed and the member knows this, Mr. Chair. There were a lot of municipalities that got some funding but not certainly what they were seeking. It's really hard to put a meaningful number on it.

It's also important to note, by the way, that it often varies by community. My own community in Thompson, there's some real challenges now because all the infrastructure was essentially built in about a 10-, 15-year period. Guess what happens? It all starts to go at around the same time, so there's some

challenges that we're facing. My sense is there's a significant infrastructure deficit and really attaching a number to it, I think, is probably of less value than actually identifying specific projects. That's why we are interested to sign the Building Canada Fund with the federal government: to make sure that there is enough money in it for, essentially, partnering with our municipalities and with the federal government.

\* (11:50)

I think if you look at that, that's the same thing on the other areas like highways, you know, any of the other areas where there are infrastructure deficits. The way you deal with it is you make sure that in this decade and into the next decade, you invest very significantly, and I believe we are. When I say we, not just us as a provincial government, you know, with our highways funding, with our municipal funding, but, quite frankly, I think the federal government has recognized, certainly more the current government or the previous government, the governments of the '80s and '90s, and I think if you—well, the members knows, whenever you talk to municipalities, they talk infrastructure, so, while I don't have a number, if I had a wish list, it's, certainly as minister responsible for IGA, that we have a signed Building Canada Fund, quite frankly, a long-term infrastructure fund. I mean, I hate to be a little bit cynical here, but it seemed to me for a while that, years back, infrastructure funds at the federal level seemed to appear just around the electoral cycle. You know, we go into an election, and, all of a sudden, there was a new infrastructure fund. Infrastructure doesn't come and go, or challenges don't come and go around elections; they're there on a regular basis.

I say that, in the sense that, notwithstanding our dispute with the federal government over the Building Canada Fund currently over the floodway, I just think that they and even the previous Liberal government federally have gotten it at least to some degree, if I look at the gas tax transfers being a good example of that. But, yes, the wish list, more money for infrastructure, absolutely.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I was not so much thinking in terms of the value of the infrastructure and I've heard the FCM number, however many billion dollars of infrastructure deficit we had, because with values we all know that even just the cost of construction in the last few years makes values seem kind of moot because they change all the time.

So there is no actual inventory of what is required over the next 10 or 15 years from the

municipality. The AMM doesn't have this. Your department doesn't do this. Again, I realize you have to be very careful that just because you talk about a community needing a lagoon or a road or something or a sewer, they're not being put on the list for rebuilding, but so no sense of inventory at all what's needed?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, it hasn't traditionally been done. I mean, you know, there are 198 municipalities, you have, you know, *[inaudible]*, but one of the advantages of the PSAB is that it does move, as we have as a province, by the way—I appreciate the additional challenges, I mean, I was just at the municipal officials' convention here in Winnipeg. You know, it's a challenge for municipalities. But what we are doing is moving both municipally through PSAB and also provincially, by the way, with our budgeting to a much better situation.

I'll give the member a quick example at the provincial level that can apply, I think, across the board as well. That is, we used to consider highways as an operating expenditure. You build a road that would last for 40 years, surface that would last 20 or 30; you have to expend it in one year. We now have moved to amortize those costs, and that's huge. I don't know anybody—well, I certainly am not in that situation where you buy a house in cash or you buy a business in cash. It's quite all right to have a mortgage if you can afford it. What the mortgage does is essentially that you amortize over a period of time the cash flow to pay for the current and future benefits. So that's the one thing, I think, that is shifting on the capital side through PSAB and through our own provincial accounting measures.

I'm a great believer that you still have to make tough decisions about where you invest and what you invest, but you have a much better sense of the long-term nature of this challenge. My sense, by the way, too, is that I don't think it's any one of our 198 municipalities that aren't talking about this. Municipalities have been leaders in terms of pushing for infrastructure, but I think the PSAB will really not just standardize our accounting procedures municipally, but will allow municipalities to do a lot more planning on that side. I think the member's already seeing that. I'm seeing that from a lot of municipalities that actually now do have individual numbers attached.

My own municipality in Thompson has come up with its own number on the infrastructure deficit. By the way, you have to be careful, even with that term,

because my local paper actually kind of misconstrued what that was. Actually, it's a bit of a misnomer, because most people understand what a deficit is. We don't have them anymore, but it used to be that, when the government would run a deficit—right?—you understood what that was. We talk about infrastructure; you're talking about, what they're really talking about, is the cost to replace existing infrastructure. Now, you know, I think that the term "deficit" is more than a bit misleading, because it's not a deficit per se. It's really an obligation that's there. You know, it's no different than if you have a car. If my car needs repairs—which it did fairly recently—is that a deficit, Mr. Chair? No. It's called a maintenance problem, right? Of course, when you're dealing with infrastructure, you're dealing with not only the repairs but the cost of replacement.

But one of the key things I just want stress about PSAB and the accounting treatment of it, of infrastructure, is what you really have to do is make sure that you don't fall into the slippery slope where you end up spending way more money on maintenance than you would if you spent it on capital.

The member will know, you know, if I had an older car, after a while you just say, that's it. That's enough, right? You're spending more money on maintenance than the actual value of the car.

Well, it's the same to a lot of the capital decisions I think municipally. You know, a lot of municipalities are now trying to plan on capital investments that—with sewer breaks or waterline breaks, pardon me. In my community they're really planning on that, and that is, again, where the PSAB process will be instrumental because if you want to get out of the real—and I would call it the sort of the deteriorating infrastructure trap, after a while the more it deteriorates, the more money you spend on maintenance that is not cost-effective and the less money you have for the overall investment.

Have we solved all the problems yet? No. Are we turning the corner? I believe we are.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I understand about deficits, and I also saw the headlines and the subsequent retraction in the Thompson paper about misquoting deficits and whatnot.

So, is there a move at all by the Province, by Intergovernmental Affairs, to having some sort of inventory of deficits, or you're just going to leave it up to municipalities? Or just as is basis?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, I don't think we would cease spending a lot of time and effort on what would be a ballpark number. I think our focus is on the solution side and, notwithstanding that, clearly on an individual basis, with municipalities we have a good sense of some of the challenges they're facing. Believe me, any time I meet with municipalities they have their list. So I think that information is generally there. I don't know if the AMM has necessarily developed a sort of a detailed breakdown either, but certainly that's, you know, that's their option as well.

As I said, one of the difficulties of that—and you saw what happened in Thompson. Even my local paper which usually is fairly accurate, and it was just a misunderstanding. Deficit, what is a deficit? And actually infrastructure deficit is confusing. I mentioned that earlier.

So my concern is actually to make sure that we have good discussions with municipalities, funding that's available and, quite frankly, I believe we're well on the way in terms of doing that.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Municipalities were required to get on PSAB. How many municipalities have? Are totally on, and have completed their—

**Mr. Ashton:** City of Winnipeg is on PSAB. Everybody else is actually in the process of implementing. So it's just the City of Winnipeg in terms of full operation and compliance with PSAB, and January 2009 is the compliance date.

**Mr. Pedersen:** That was extended. It was January '08, wasn't it, for PSAB, originally?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, that was an original sort of conceptual date, but again, you know, we listened, and municipalities said, maybe it's a good idea, but it takes some time to implement. By the way, there's been a lot of work done, a lot of training and you know a lot of work that's ongoing right now. So I'm very optimistic about the ability of our municipalities to be there and be compliant by the upcoming date.

**Mr. Pedersen:** When is the Province going to go on PSAB for value of the roads and infrastructure?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, I mean, in terms of accounting for roads—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The time being 12 noon, I'm interrupting the proceedings. The Committee of Supply will resume sitting this afternoon, following the conclusion of routine proceedings.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

CONTENTS

<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>		<b>Resolution</b>	
<b>PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS</b>		Res. 7–2008 World Conference on Breast Cancer	
<b>Second Readings–Public Bills</b>		Brick	1686
		Driedger	1687
Bill 200–The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act		Howard	1689
		Schuler	1691
Gerrard	1675	Braun	1692
Struthers	1677	Taillieu	1693
Stefanson	1678	Gerrard	1694
Blady	1679		
Lamoureux	1680	<b>Committee of Supply</b>	
Bjornson	1682	(Concurrent Sections)	
Taillieu	1684	Health and Healthy Living	1695
Swan	1685	Intergovernmental Affairs	1713

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings  
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

**<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>**