

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

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The Honourable George Hickes  
Speaker*

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
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GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
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IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	
<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 1, 2011

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### **Bill 47—The Accessibility Advisory Council Act and Amendments to The Government Purchases Act**

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 47, The Accessibility Advisory Council Act and Amendments to The Government Purchases Act; Loi sur le Conseil consultatif de l'accessibilité et modifiant la Loi sur les achats du gouvernement, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Ms. Howard:** This bill represents the next step on our journey towards becoming a fully accessible province. It is by no means the destination or the end of that journey.

Mr. Speaker, I want to—as we introduce this bill today, I want to thank all the people who've worked very hard to get us to this point, some of which are in the gallery today, folks who are from Barrier-Free Manitoba who I know will continue to push us to go farther and to go faster, and we welcome that intervention into the policy-making process. I also want to thank all of the representatives from various industry sectors—hotel, restaurant and retail—people representing municipalities who've also come on board for the push to make Manitoba more accessible.

The first—this bill creates the advisory council on accessibility. It will be made up of representatives of organizations for persons with disabilities, as

well as representatives from business and other organizations that will strive toward achieving greater accessibility for persons with disabilities and seniors and all Manitobans who face those barriers in their daily lives.

Mr. Speaker, this council will provide advice and recommendations on legislation and other requirements that the government can undertake in order to prevent and remove barriers. It will provide for timelines for the appointment of the advisory council members within three months of the bill coming into effect and for the preparation of the council's first recommendations due within 12 months of the bill coming into effect.

Mr. Speaker, the bill will also amend The Government Purchases Act so that whenever possible, government purchases will be made in accordance with barrier-free guidelines that will be developed by regulation.

The first task of this council, Mr. Speaker, will be to continue the development of strong accessibility legislation and standards, which will become legislation in this province. Thank you.

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

### PETITIONS

#### **Bipole III—Cost to Manitoba Families**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been directed by the provincial government to construct its next high voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba.

This will cost each family of four in Manitoba \$11,748 more than an east-side route, which is also shorter and more reliable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to build the Bipole III transmission line on the shorter and more reliable east side of Lake Winnipeg in order to save each Manitoba family of four \$11,748.

And this petition is signed by C. Goerzen, A. Goerzen, D. Goerzen and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

#### **Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

Many of those accused in fatalities involving stolen vehicles were previously known to police and identified as chronic and high-risk car thieves who had court orders against them.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by R.V. Svort, T. Zyha, C. Young and thousands of other concerned Manitobans.

\* (13:40)

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

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

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Much of Manitoba was hit by a devastating storm yesterday. Extremely heavy rain and violent winds prompted evacuations of hundreds of people and caused widespread overland flooding, road washouts, school closures and rising river levels.

Southwestern Manitoba is one of the regions hit the hardest by the rain, particularly the areas around Souris and Deloraine where preliminary reports indicate four to six inches fell in a short period of time.

Many roads in the area were washed out, and schools closed in Melita and Pierson for the day. The Parklands were also hard hit, prompting evacuations from the Dauphin and Ochre River areas as well as the communities of Mallard and Waterhen. Dauphin Lake was hit with major winds and water also rose quickly on the Turtle River at Ste. Rose.

Due to this massive storm, the Souris and Assiniboine rivers, as well as several tributaries, are rising significantly. The Souris experienced another crest higher than those seen earlier this spring, and more water is coming in that—into that system. Overland flooding is occurring in Brandon and the Assiniboine is expected to rise several feet as a result of this storm. The full impacts of what these rains will mean for water levels are being assessed as quickly as possible.

The storm also battered Lake Manitoba with gale-force winds flooding many properties and washing over many access roads. Mandatory evacuation notices were issued in St. Laurent, Delta Beach, Twin Beaches and other areas from Lake Francis north to Oak Point. The Office of the Fire Commissioner and local fire departments assisted in evacuating people late into last night with air and boat support after access roads were flooded. The full extent of the damages from this devastating storm will be assessed as access is restored.

On Lake Manitoba, water levels continue to rise and the crest levels and date will be reassessed in light of this storm, and a large rise is expected on the Assiniboine River. Residents on the lake also know all too well that this will not be the last major storm they see before freeze-up. In many cases, the flood protection residents and cottagers worked hard on to put in place over the last weeks will have been washed away by the force of the huge waves.

Mr. Speaker, we have put in place a unique program for residents, cottage owners and producers around Lake Manitoba to assist in this extremely challenging time. We will continue to work with rural municipalities to provide resources to protect properties where possible, and we have committed funds to assist property owners with the cost of moving or raising their homes and cottages. Over the longer term, we have committed to an assessment of

options to improve the capacity of the Assiniboine River, Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin flood management systems, including options to increase outflows from Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin.

The full impacts of yesterday's storm are not fully known, but we do know that this event was devastating for many and adds to the profound stress and hardship that they've already experienced as a result of this year's record flood. As always, we will work with municipalities and with Manitobans to get through this serious and prolonged natural disaster.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** I thank the minister for the latest update on the flood situation in Manitoba. Yesterday was an extremely challenging day as heavy rains and high winds wreaked havoc in many different regions throughout Manitoba.

Among the hardest hit areas were along the shores of Lake Manitoba where strong winds and high waves crashing, overtopping dikes, damaging homes and cottages, toppling trees and washing out roads. The situation was so serious that people had to be rescued by front-end loaders and boats in areas such as St. Laurent or—pardon me, Laurentia Beach, Sandpiper Beach and Twin Lakes Beach.

We thank the people who went in to help remove those stranded persons. As always, an abundance of caution must be exercised in these very serious situations, and we are glad no one was hurt.

Recovery from this storm will take time, and we urge officials to move swiftly to provide assistance. Mandatory evacuations are in effect in places like Delta Beach and in the rural municipalities of St. Laurent and Woodlands. There were also evacuations in communities such as Sioux Valley First Nation, the RM of Ochre River and Alonsa.

Elsewhere in the province, the storm battered properties at places like Dauphin Lake, and more work is under way in terms of flood mitigation efforts there as well. In Winnipegosis, the village has been dealing with breached dikes, Mr. Speaker. The heavy rains are sending river levels surging. In speaking with my colleagues and Manitobans from different parts of the province today, we have heard of the heavy toll the rains are taking on municipal and provincial roads and other key infrastructure, and the minister alluded to the area of Pierson and Melita that I'm most familiar with, where school was cancelled because it wasn't safe to run school buses on the soft roads due to the heavy rains.

These heavy rains continue to cause problems for agricultural producers in many regions who are struggling to get their spring crops in the ground, and many have indicated that seeding will be impossible.

We look forward to continued updates on the flooding situation. Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to recognize the heroic efforts that took place in various places around Manitoba, but particularly at Lake Manitoba last night and yesterday dealing, for example, with a situation on Laurentia Beach which someone who was there described as beyond comprehension, beyond words, unbelievable chaos and destruction. And it was obviously an amazing experience for the individuals who were there, and I just want to pay tribute to those who worked so hard and did so much under such very, very difficult conditions.

I want to recognize what's happening in southwestern Manitoba, the four to six inches in the area around Deloraine, the impact that'll have on agriculture and the washed-out roads and so on. And, certainly, it requires and needs prompt action in terms of support for people there. The situation around Lake Dauphin and Lake Winnipegosis, I am hearing from people of difficulties there, but, clearly, the very worst was around Lake Manitoba, St. Laurent, St. Francis, Delta Beach areas.

And, in talking with a number of people there, I just want to say that this is a very, very severe situation. I have talked with, for example, with municipal officials in St. Laurent and just want to pass on to the minister that they will be asking for an increase in their advance from \$200,000 to \$500,000 to deal with the infrastructure situation that they are having to deal with, and, being a small municipality, that seems to be eminently reasonable, and I hope that that can be accomplished.

Certainly, we need to recognize the contributions of people at the municipal level and make sure we're there to support them in their efforts so they can provide the on-the-ground efforts. So, thank you.

#### **Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public

gallery where we have with us today, we have Patrick Falconer, Jeanette DeLong and Dale Kendel.

And also in the public gallery we have Alex Forrest, president of the United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg; Greg Holubowich, president, and Brad Hoekstra, secretary, for the Edmonton Fire Fighters Association; and also Bruce Carpenter, IAFF vice-president of the Manitoba and Ontario Fire Fighters Association; and Craig MacDonald, president of the Alberta Fire Fighters Association, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Howard).

And also in the public gallery we have with us from Kelvin High School, we have 30 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Miguel Bérubé. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

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

\* (13:50)

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Lake Manitoba Flooding

#### Mitigation and Financial Compensation Plans

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I want to thank the minister for the statement today in connection with flooding around the province and, in particular, around Lake Manitoba.

As has been indicated, Mr. Speaker, there are many, many Manitobans at this moment dealing with severe damage to their homes, to their properties. Many involved in agriculture are not looking forward to the ability to do what they would normally be doing at this time of the year, and that's seeding their farms, and it's created a great stress and anxiety among those hundreds of Manitoba families who today are dealing with these very high water levels.

And I just wanted to ask the Premier, Mr. Speaker, if he can indicate, in light of the fact that decisions have been made that in some cases have created what would be a deliberate flooding, particularly around Lake Manitoba, what steps his government is taking to protect those properties, and also to give people reassurance that appropriate compensation is on its way?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Again, Mr. Speaker, the member will know of the tremendous efforts that the local emergency operations committees have put

in with volunteers supported by not only volunteers from the provincial civil service, but over 700 full-time people dedicating themselves to fighting floods throughout Manitoba.

And the member opposite will also know that we announced a—the most generous compensation program in the history of the province last week, which will provide essentially no deductible to people that do things to improve their properties or restore their properties that will also mitigate flooding in the future.

So we are very committed to ensuring that they get the supports they need, both to prevent damage, but in the case where damage occurs—such as yesterday where gale-force winds were blowing at over 90 kilometres an hour and wreaking havoc on people, even people that had put flood protection measures and systems in front of their property—that we will be there with them to provide this additional support and to process this additional support as rapidly as possible, including advance payments for people.

**Mr. McFadyen:** And I want to say to the Premier that the comments are appreciated, and certainly the need for some specific information for the many individuals being impacted is increasingly urgent.

Mr. Speaker, we know that high winds do occur in this province, particularly at this time of the year, but it's the high water that is being pushed up by those winds, it's that high water that arrived there as a result of choices and decisions that the government had to make. And I want to—*[interjection]* I don't think there's anything that I'm saying that's at all different from what members opposite have said. Choices that have been made had to be made by government.

But those who are on the receiving end of that water, Mr. Speaker, are today experiencing extreme levels of anxiety. There were people who had to be rescued on the front of dumpsters and people who were attempted to be rescued by helicopter. It's a very serious situation.

I want to ask the Premier if he will provide some very clear information to people, both about the protective measures and, just as significantly, about the compensation for those many cases, Mr. Speaker, that are dealing with this crisis.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, those people will get a compensation package that exceeds anything ever offered in the history of the province before.

And some of the specific measures: They will get 100 per cent of the cost of engineering advice for emergency or short-term flood mitigation works, up to \$2,000. They will get 100 per cent of the costs of moving or raising homes and cottages—and first time ever for cottages—up to \$20,000. They will have financial assistance for emergency flood protection, damages and restoration, including actual expenses for floodproofing, of a maximum of \$10,000. And if they take measures that restore their homes and address structural damage on their cottages, the co-payment will be waived as well, so they will have no initial expense in doing that. And these measures are intended to recognize the very difficult circumstances that people in rural Manitoba, particularly in the Lake Manitoba, are experiencing this year with the very inclement weather that we've got.

And the member opposite will likely know as well that the rain events that have occurred just over the last few days are going to add a lot more precipitation and water into our water systems, both in southwestern Manitoba as well as along the Assiniboine River, which we expect to rise again in Brandon and all the way through to the diversion and further into Manitoba as well.

#### **Water Level Forecasting**

**Mr. McFadyen:** And one of the most important things that the government can do is to provide the most accurate forecasting information that it can to all those people who are dealing with these issues. Many of those people are indicating in the media today that they were caught off guard by the significant amount of water coming their way. The ability to plan in advance to have—as difficult as the circumstances may be, as much information as they can about what to expect is important.

Mr. Speaker, the indication coming from government is that Lake Manitoba is expected to continue to rise even over the next couple of weeks, and as that happens the impact of that gets more and more widespread and more and more severe. The same can be said for people around the Shoal lakes, for people on the upper Assiniboine, for people around Brandon, people along the Souris River, along the Pembina River system, Pelican and Rock lakes and elsewhere.

Can the Premier provide some sense as to what the government's forecasts are saying about how this—how high the water—and the member has—and I met with residents of Lake St. Martin just the other

day, Mr. Speaker, Lake St. Martin and the other communities that are impacted.

Will the Premier provide, rather than playing politics from their seats, accurate forecasts for Manitobans?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will know that the weather has been very unpredictable this year in spite of the best forecasts put forward by people in the private sector, people in the public sector, and the entire North America has been impacted by unusual and unprecedented weather events going on throughout the entire continent.

In Manitoba, as that information becomes available, it is immediately provided to local communities so that they can do the preparations necessary and protect themselves as much as possible. Nobody expected that we would have the weather events, for example, that have occurred over just the last weekend, which are going to add very significant amounts of water to our various rivers and streams inside of Manitoba, and some of them are experiencing second crests, as we speak. Some have experienced an additional crest as recently as today, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we do is we work with the local municipalities, with their emergency operations committees, with volunteers, with dedicated public servants, some of whom work all day and then go and give volunteer time. In addition to that, we mobilize all of those people, and we will be bringing forward additional resources that will be mobilized at the community level to help people protect themselves, as much as possible, from the weather events and ensure that their families, their homes, the individuals and properties are looked after.

That's our commitment. We will not relent in doing that one single day until this event is completely done with, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Lake Manitoba Flooding Water Level Forecasting**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday was a very tough day for the people around Lake Manitoba as rain and heavy winds whipped up against the lake and sent waves crashing into properties. Some people were evacuated, and in some places, like Reykjavik area, were unable to leave. To say it was a scary situation for those affected would be a gross understatement, when I've

asked time and time again for this government's short-term and long-term plans to deal with a large amount of water being pushed into Lake Manitoba.

The lake has not yet peaked. It is not expected to peak until mid-June, if then.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick)—what these families can expect from the government both short and long term of a Lake Manitoba strategy. Those affected deserve some answers.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd hope that members would listen because I think the member raises a very important question.

One of the hardest hit areas in the province yesterday—and there were a lot of areas that were hard hit—was in and around St. Laurent, Twin Beaches.

And I thought the member would certainly appreciate a response in terms of some of the immediate issues we're dealing with, and I also wanted to pass on to the Liberal leader, who I know did raise some issues in his statement, that we're dealing with a devastating situation on the ground now, and I appreciate questions about, sort of, the mid to the long term. We have been addressing that over the last number of weeks.

But I do want to stress, whether it's St. Laurent, where we have the need for an advance so that that hard-hit municipality can deal with what needs to be done, we will be providing that kind of support. We've been working, obviously, on the situation in terms of—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, people in the rural municipalities of Woodlands, St. Laurent, Coldwell, Portage la Prairie and in communities like Delta Beach, Reykjavik and Big Bend were hit hard by yesterday's storm. We don't know how many storms they'll face this summer or this fall.

People around Lake Manitoba need to know when and what this government is doing to help protect their properties. They need to know when the lake inflows will match the outflows.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Water Stewardship tell these families and this government examining the strategies to protect the properties,

which we know are going to be at risk for the foreseeable future?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to stress that certainly the flood control systems have been operating at full bore. In fact, the Fairford outlet has been operating at its maximum safe level since November. There's been actually more water flowed out of Lake Manitoba than has flowed in, with our—naturally through the Portage Diversion.

But, you know, that doesn't make any difference to people on the ground. Whether it's Lake Manitoba or whether it's Dauphin Lake or whether people are hit in southwest Manitoba, I think we have to understand here, this was a devastating impact.

And around Lake Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, we have been immobilizing every last source—resource available to us, a million sandbags, over 3,600 flood tubes, every available sandbag machine. We have huge commitments in terms of volunteering.

But I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, this is unprecedented, and I know the member knows that because he knows that area and represents it. So we aren't underestimating the challenges we're faced with, but this is Manitoba. We—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

\* (14:00)

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, municipalities around Lake Manitoba have been raising concerns for weeks. This government has heard from families like the Douglases, the Kitsches, the Classens, the Dents, the Hymers, Pesclviches, Culbreths, warning you about the problems with the rising lake level. They sent you emails, wrote you letters, called you. They even begged you to have a look at every option out there to spare them and help them be prepared.

Many have been evacuated. They don't know when they're going to return. It's devastating for them.

Mr. Speaker, natural floods are one thing. The lake is overflowing. I want to ask the Minister of Water Stewardship: Has her department exhausted every option to address the lake level, and what else is going to be out there in store for these people for protection?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, we're seeing unprecedented flooding this year. We've seen it all throughout the Assiniboine watershed. We've seen it all throughout the Lake Manitoba area. We've seen it

in southwestern Manitoba in terms of the Souris watershed.

And I wouldn't want anyone to underestimate what happened yesterday. That was a massive storm. And, yes, we're perhaps used to some degree of wind and wave action in terms of lakes, but I've talked to people who said this is something that they cannot remember in their lifetime.

Our focus today, as it has been right from the beginning of this spring flood season which is now well into close to two months, has been dealing with the reality of the situation on the ground. We've mobilized every last resource. We're working with some very stressed municipalities and there are a lot of stressed Manitobans.

But, Mr. Speaker, we're going to work together on this challenge and we—this is Manitoba—we will deal with those challenges and including for the families that the member so rightly is raising in terms of concerns in this Legislature.

#### **Agriculture Industry Economic Impact of Flooding**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's flood bulletin spanned a disturbing picture of the high rainfall levels being experienced in different regions of Manitoba over the past number of days. These heavy rains, combined with ongoing excess soil moisture conditions and spring flooding, are going to have a significant impact on spring seeding. My colleagues and I are hearing from producers across Manitoba who are very concerned about their ability to get a crop in the ground this spring.

Can the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) indicate what type of analysis his department is undertaking about the economic impact of this spring's flooding on the Manitoba agricultural sector?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Acting Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Indeed, there are serious challenges and pressures on the farming community, and the storm that was—took place yesterday has certainly added to those pressures and is going to make it more difficult for farmers to deal with their seeding but also to deal with their livestock, and, indeed, there will be an impact.

Mr. Speaker, we—I want to inform the House that the—as well as having programs such as the Excess

Moisture Insurance and other programs that are in place, the Minister of Agriculture had a meeting yesterday with the federal Minister of Agriculture to begin discussions and to look at how quickly we can put in place an AgriRecovery program to support those farmers who are facing those difficult times.

I want to also say that I'm very pleased that we do have an excess moisture program in place that this government instituted and many people will be taking advantage of that.

**Mr. Graydon:** Mr. Speaker, we recognize some crops went into the ground last fall, but they, too, can be affected by repeated rains and standing water in the fields. Spring seeding has ground to a halt in many regions due to the flooding and heavy rains. We trust the Minister of Agriculture is in touch with his GO centres to analyze this very serious situation affecting producers across a widespread region of the province.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister provide us with an update as to how many acres of land may go unseeded if weather conditions do not immediately improve?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to concur with the member that there is tremendous pressure on farm families right now trying to get their crop in, and there have been some of those people who have gotten a crop in, some who aren't able to get on the land. It's my understanding that about—maybe about 10 per cent of the crop has been seeded. That is significant. There is—we—there will be a tremendous impact on the farming community if those crops aren't—more crops don't get into the ground, but there are sections of the province where we may get crops into the ground before the deadline which is June 20th.

So there is time, Mr. Speaker. It's June 1st today. I'm always—I'm a farmer. I'm always optimistic, as many farmers are, that they will be able to get their crops in place. If they won't, there is Excess Moisture Insurance, and we're talking to the federal government about an AgriRecovery program—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Graydon:** Mr. Speaker, where spring seeding has once started, it has now ground to a halt due to the heavy rains. Saturated soil conditions may prevent any further seeding attempts in some areas. If producers cannot seed as expected, it's going to have a negative impact not only on producers but also on the businesses and services that are tied to

the agricultural economy, and this, in turn, will hurt larger provincial—the larger provincial economy.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister today commit to providing us with their analysis in terms of potential number of unseeded acres and the economic impact that this may have? Is this analysis under way, and if not, why not?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** And, again, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I know that the farming community that does a very good job about producing food and growing crops in this province is under a tremendous amount of pressure, and I know that farmers will take every step that they can to get that crop in the ground. That is just the nature of farmers. They will try all they can.

The crop insurance deadline is June the 20th. If people are not able to seed, they will be able to collect Excess Moisture Insurance, a program that I'm very proud that I was able to initiate when I was Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. But I want the member opposite to recognize as well that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) had a meeting with the federal Minister of Agriculture yesterday to look at AgriRecovery.

We all know that agriculture is a very important industry and there is going to be an impact on our economy in this province if farmers aren't able to get their crop into the ground, Mr. Speaker.

#### **RM of St. François Xavier Flooding Mitigation and Financial Compensation Plans**

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, the people that live and work along the Assiniboine River in St. François Xavier area have been feeling the effects of flooding and worrying about dike breaches now for months. Basements are flooded, roads are washed out and the dikes continue to seep and to breach. Thousands of acres of highly productive land used for vegetable growing, berry growing and grain and canola crops are now underwater and won't be farmed this year.

Mr. Speaker, can the government explain what steps are being taken to address the types of ongoing flood-related concerns brought forward to us by the people of St. François Xavier?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** I certainly appreciate the question for the member.

I think it's important to note, certainly on the agricultural side, that we will have disaster financial

assistance available. That is important because even though DFA does cover only damage to property, we are anticipating there will be some significant damage to property in that area and other areas as well.

I also want to indicate that under DFA we are able to cover a lot of the restoration costs as well, and I know this is a concern that has been raised. I know the member's raised it. I've had it raised with many of the reeves in affected areas as well.

And, certainly, some of the additional programs we put in place have anticipated some of the particular impacts on a number of areas in the province as well.

But I appreciate the question from the member, and our goal here as we deal with this very difficult flood is also to be dealing very much with the recovery stage, and there will be many challenges on both sides, including the recovery, and these kind of questions are very appropriate, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Flows on the Assiniboine River have been kept high, which means that the Long Lake Drain has backed up and created just a huge prairie lake covering acres of farmland, Mr. Speaker. The work on the Assiniboine dikes has caused a lot of loss of farmland. Farmland has been used for borrow pits. Trees have been taken down or they've fallen down because the land is so saturated. Businesses like the vegetable growers in that area and berry farms will suffer huge losses this year and probably next year.

I'm asking on behalf of my constituents who are affected: Will a special compensation program be available to them? Will it be similar to that of the Hoop and Holler zone and those in the Lake Manitoba area, and when can they expect some communication on this?

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record that similar concerns have been raised by reeves in a number of areas. Certainly the reeve of Portage raised a very similar concern.

We are looking at the particular circumstances around the Assiniboine dike. There was a significant amount of work done, certainly, going into the flood season, more than \$20 million, a significant amount of work done during the flood. And thank goodness,

Mr. Speaker, we did that. Thank goodness we had the support of the military to keep those dikes going, because I can just imagine what we would be talking about today in the Assiniboine Valley if we hadn't had that united effort.

But I do appreciate the concerns from the member, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* But I do appreciate the concerns of the member. And one of the key things I'll undertake—I know the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has emphasized this as well—when we're looking at a lot of our compensation programs, we are going to make sure that they meet the needs, the intent. And the intent was certainly to deal with these kind of concerns, and I will undertake to make sure that as we review all our compensation programs, all our recovery programs, that we deal with exactly what the member is raising.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** And I do want to also recognize and thank the many people that worked in building those dikes along the Assiniboine, and when I was out there this morning, the people there also are very thankful for that.

Mr. Speaker, 32 days now, and the Assiniboine River has exceeded its capacity, and as late as last night, there was another dike breach along that area. People who live along the Assiniboine say that they would be hit by a tsunami-like wall of water should one of those areas burst. They believe that decreasing the flows a thousand cfs would allow the river to drop about six inches, and therefore the drains would be allowed to flow back into the river instead of create the overland flooding. This would alleviate some of the imminent dangers to the homes there. As it is, there are going to be huge repairs and cleanup costs for this area, not to mention loss of income for farms and businesses that have been so badly affected.

So, Mr. Speaker, my constituents are asking and would like to know: What compensation will be available for cleanup and repairs, as well as business—loss of income to businesses and farm income? They're just looking for fair treatment.

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I would caution the member, and I appreciate that there are concerns in that area as well, but there really are only two routes for this. So, if that was to take place, it would mean additional pressure on the Portage Diversion and on Lake Manitoba. And just as when we're looking at the operation of our flood control systems, whatever happens in Lake Manitoba also impacts on Lake St. Martin. When you're dealing

with historic flooding, the key is to try and control it as much as possible, minimize the damage and commit to recovery. That's what we have done, right from day one.

When I say we, this is not a political statement. This is a lot of people coming together and a lot of the constituents of the member opposite. Quite frankly, they're all our constituents when it comes to floods.

And I want to stress that just as we've worked hard on the heroic efforts on the Assiniboine dikes to maintain that system, we will work just as hard on the recovery stage working with the exact people that the member opposite is talking about.

### **Lake Dauphin Flooding Mitigation Strategy Preparations**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, high water levels and gale-force winds yesterday caused unprecedented destruction of homes and cottages at Lake Dauphin and even evacuations at Ochre Beach.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell the House what preparations were done in advance of yesterday's climatic disaster to minimize damage to home and cottage owners at Dauphin Lake?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Well, one of the challenges we've been dealing with the unprecedented nature of the flooding is, in many cases, you have areas that don't have permanent flood protection. Quite frankly, in some areas we've talked to the best technical expertise available, whether it be internal or external. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to put in place—one of the major challenges, for example, in and around Lake Manitoba is when you have developments that are essentially on sand.

And we saw, yesterday, Mr. Speaker, despite heroic efforts—and I wouldn't underestimate the effort to put a million sandbags in place over the last few weeks around Lake Manitoba—how difficult it was, even with those efforts, to withstand gale-force winds of over a hundred kilometres an hour.

So we are dealing with a very difficult situation. In many cases, we're doing what we can, and when I say we, that's not just the provincial government; it's our partners in the municipality, local homeowners and cottage owners and many people around Manitoba. And we'll be assessing after this storm what we can do—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Maguire:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we cannot give enough credit to those people, the municipal people in those areas, but I was asking the minister in regards to what was available for preparations leading up to what ended up being a disaster yesterday. It's our understanding that sandbagging equipment may have been available but wasn't used for this situation.

And so with seven streams entering Dauphin Lake and only the Mossey River exiting, thereby backing water into Lake Dauphin, why did the government not utilize the equipment that was available over the last several weeks that it had, as it sat idle? Mr. Speaker, these citizens are telling us that they feel neglected.

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member, I certainly know at Lake Dauphin and many of the lakes in there, that we've been having sandbags delivered. Our partners, the municipalities, have been working with local residents to install them.

And I do remind the member that it wasn't that long ago there was some debate or discussion about whether we had sandbag machines that were purchased unnecessarily. Thank goodness, Mr. Speaker, we purchased those sandbag machines.

And I want to stress again that we work with the local municipalities, their emergency measures co-ordinators. There are 197 municipalities in this province. We've been operating our sandbag machines 24-7. We put a million plus sandbags around Lake Manitoba. We put many sandbags in the other impacted areas, and we're going to assess, with this very major storm, our next step.

But what we're going to do, I can tell you one thing, is we're going to continue to work with those municipalities and the affected people, because this is Manitoba. When it comes to floods, we fight together, Mr. Speaker, and that's the key thing we're going to do over the next few weeks and months.

**Mr. Maguire:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm just reiterating what the emails and the conversations that I've had with the local citizens, and they indicate that the sandbagging equipment that's been there for—that the minister talked about, that's been running 24-7, has sat idle for the last three weeks in that area.

So, Mr. Speaker, the citizens around Lake Dauphin and area tell me that they've known for

weeks that they were in jeopardy because of the extreme water levels and have expressed abandonment at the lack of attention paid to their looming disastrous situation as well.

As these flooded residents of Dauphin Lake have now suffered extreme destruction to their property as well, will the minister today indicate what type of financial assistance these citizens can expect?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I once again want to emphasize, too, to the member, that as I have explained, certainly in this House, and as we have explained in briefings with the opposition—I certainly offer that opportunity again for the member—the degree to which we have mobilized unprecedented amounts of resources.

And I appreciate emails and I appreciate the contact with the member's constituents, and if there are any areas where we identify that there were faults, in terms of response, we will certainly act accordingly.

But I wouldn't want to underestimate the degree to which the municipalities have—the ones that know the area the best have been dealing with this on the front lines, and I wouldn't underestimate, Mr. Speaker, the historic mobilization of resources we've seen in and around that area and many other areas around Manitoba.

And I also wouldn't underestimate, Mr. Speaker, the degree to which we're going to have to continue to stay mobilized. I know over the last week or so there's been some sense out there in some parts of Manitoba that the flood season's over. We know it's not over and we're going to be there for the people in those affected areas.

So we'll be there throughout the summer and fall and as long as it takes, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Flooding and Ice Jams Government Water Level Forecasting**

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The minister is correct to point out that Manitobans have pulled together in remarkable ways to deal with the emergencies that they're now facing across the province, Mr. Speaker.

One such group that I had the opportunity to visit this morning was the Salvation Army at their open house this morning who are providing support for people who are dealing with flooding. We've seen people rise to the challenge across the province of

Manitoba. We've had the support of our military and we do acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that the emergency response, once we were into the emergency, really has been a great testament to the kindness and the fortitude of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns is the forecasting on the part of the government, the ability of people to know in advance, with some degree of reliability, what may be coming in the days and weeks ahead, and I just want to ask the Premier what steps he's taking to address this very serious deficiency within his government.

\* (14:20)

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the member will know that the forecasts are done on a daily basis and information is provided both from within government, from outside of government, from public and private sector agencies, all of whom make a major commitment to providing weather information to Manitobans, and as that weather information evolves and changes, updates are provided to Manitobans.

All of that information is communicated to local emergency operations committees. Our emergency co-ordinators are available throughout Manitoba. They work very closely with municipalities and local emergency operations committees. They deploy resources very quickly.

Our Department of Health, for example, has a system where they can locate all of the ambulances that have been bought and deployed throughout Manitoba. They can use GPS technology to deploy those ambulances to meet benchmark requirements to respond to calls as quickly as possible.

Our Office of the Fire Commissioner has helicopter capability now that they didn't have before. They moved in last night, for example, in and around Lake Manitoba to provide emergency rescue.

We brought into Manitoba, through the Department of Health, the STARS system of emergency rescues. They've done a phenomenal job moving in and out of responding to people right on the ground and saving lives.

All of these efforts are our way—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. McFadyen:** It's Manitobans around the province who continue to comment on the fact that things seem to come up very quickly without warning, that

they're being caught off guard in different circumstances, Mr. Speaker.

Joe Johnson, who's holding the meeting today in Amaranth, indicated, Mr. Speaker, that since 1996 the warnings have been there about the very significant issues with and around Lake Manitoba. The issues in the Shoal lakes have been around for a couple of years. In fact, the former premier made certain promises in 2006 for Brandon which were never followed through on.

Mr. Speaker, the real ability of Manitobans to deal with the issues that they're now confronting is enhanced when the government is able to provide better forecasting.

Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge the very good work on the part of the emergency response people at every level throughout Manitoba. We acknowledge the hard work of the minister and his willingness to be accountable to the House, to be here to respond to questions.

But the concern, Mr. Speaker, is that the Department of Water Stewardship seems not to have its act together in terms of forecasting, and I want to ask the Premier what steps he's doing to deal with that very serious weakness within this government.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the technology that we've invested in to anticipate and understand moisture conditions, weather conditions, has been at the highest level it's ever been in the history of the province of Manitoba. I can assure the members of that.

When other levels of government have retreated from providing weather information, Manitoba has stepped into the breach and provided additional technology, additional resources to provide weather information to producers and local communities.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, that this has been an unprecedented year for weather events, not only in this province but throughout the entire continent of North America, and we could go beyond that to identify other weather events as well.

But you take a look at what's going on in the United States through the Mississippi River system, you take a look at what's going on in Québec with the flooding there, and you take a look at what's going on in Manitoba, Manitoba has been better prepared, more proactive with the support of the local leadership and volunteers and public servants at every level of government, with the support of the

military who came in in a very timely fashion. Five hundred soldiers came out of Shilo within a matter of hours. Within a matter of days, 1,500 military personnel were in Manitoba.

And what they told me what they were impressed with, they didn't come into a vacuum. They came into a situation where Manitobans were already on the front lines fighting the flood, and they were able to join with those Manitobans on a very precise operation to protect the dikes and the people—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. McFadyen:** And, again, Mr. Speaker, everybody acknowledges that very good work has been done by Manitobans in response to the emergency conditions that they are now facing. The issue is that Manitobans are telling us that they are continuously lacking information in advance about things that are expected to happen. The government has had—in advance of the emergency, the Premier had 23 photo ops telling everybody that he had the situation under control.

Mr. Speaker, what people were looking for is accurate information, recognizing that it's a very significant challenge, but now that we know how badly the forecasting system failed, Manitobans want to know what the Premier's doing about it.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, we started to anticipate the difficult potential spring conditions last fall. We knew saturation in the soil was very high. We knew that we had a lot of precipitation last fall.

Decisions were made to buy additional equipment, Mr. Speaker, including Amphibexes, including HESCO barriers, including Tiger Dams, including Aqua Dams. Additional training was put in place for local emergency operations committee—committees. And Manitoba is a jurisdiction that has unique legislation that requires every municipality to put an emergency preparation plan in place well ahead of the event.

The additional \$25 million spent on the Assiniboine dikes, that plan was put in place well in—early into the winter, early into the new year, and as soon as it was possible, heavy equipment was brought onto those dikes. Manitoba public servants and Manitoba volunteers were building up those dikes to the flood record of—the flood event of record in this province: 1976 plus two feet. We went into Brandon and worked with the local leadership there

to build up the dikes there to a record never seen before.

All of those measures have prevented catastrophic damage throughout Manitoba, and all of the decisions that have been made have been to reduce harm to families and their homes, individuals and their property.

And, we, in spite of the challenges, have done extremely well, and we will not relent until this condition is over, and we will work with Manitobans to protect them every single day in Manitoba.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Let's have a little decorum here.

The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

### **Lake Manitoba Flooding Water Level Forecasting**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, the people around Lake Manitoba have been suffering from very high water levels which have been exacerbated by high levels of winds for the last several weeks, and, as we're all aware, in the last 24 hours there's been incredible devastation around the shores of Lake Manitoba with many, many homes flooded and many, many people evacuated.

The Premier has known since March that very high levels were expected along the Assiniboine River at Brandon, and the Premier must have known that this would result in very high use of the Portage Diversion with the potential for great problems around Lake Manitoba.

Why was it, in the many, many press releases the Premier and his government issued up until early May, there was very little mention of the potential for major flooding on Lake Manitoba?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Earlier in this question period, it was indicated very clearly that the Fairford outlet has been running at its maximum capacity, including throughout the entire winter, taking into account ice conditions. So from very early on officials in Manitoba have taken the flood protection systems that we have in Manitoba and have worked them to the absolute maximum to protect people and their homes inside of this province.

Everybody was well aware that Lake Manitoba could have very high levels of water this year. That

was made clear to everybody, and measures were put in place to minimize that kind of rising waters inside of Manitoba and to make sure that municipalities affected would have the supports they need to be ready to battle high water levels on Lake Manitoba.

High water levels with gale-force winds are a toxic mixture, and it has—even people that have put sandbagging protection around their homes found themselves having to evacuate them—their homes on a precautionary basis to ensure that their life was not put at risk. And even in some situations, where it was not anticipated that they would get these high waters, our Office of the Fire Commissioner and our Emergency Measures people were right in there protecting them, at risk to their own lives, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, the severity of the storm yesterday and the extent of the high water on Lake Manitoba have created incredible flooding, evacuation and devastation around that lake. I want to recognize all those who played an incredible and heroic role yesterday.

But at the same time it's apparent that there was insufficient advance planning for many communities around Lake Manitoba which have never before seen such flooding and devastation.

Why was it, when so much was spent along the Assiniboine River from Portage to Baie St. Paul in preparation for a large flood, that so little attention was spent on the people and communities like St. Laurent and Delta Beach who've been described by some as the forgotten people of Manitoba?

\*(14:30)

**Mr. Selinger:** I just want to reiterate for the member opposite that the Fairford outlet, which takes water out of Lake Manitoba, has been operating at its absolute maximum since late last fall. That was to make sure that the lake was as low as possible, given the flood protection measures we have in place. The people in the Lake St. Martin's area, the Little Saskatchewan people, the Fairford people have experienced a great deal of hardship because of those additional flows of water which have put many of them into an evacuation situation where they've had to come into the city of Winnipeg.

So it's—I enjoy the questions from the members opposite because they really point out the great risk that has occurred throughout the entire Assiniboine Valley. Whether it's along the dikes, whether it's along Lake Manitoba, whether it's in the Souris River

system, whether it's in Brandon, it underlines the unprecedented nature of the threat that has occurred this year and the extraordinary measures that everybody has had to take to deal with that threat.

And at every level and in every community and every level of government, people have worked very hard together through a great model of co-operation to fight this battle and they have done extremely well in doing it. And where there has been damage, there has been the best compensation program in Manitoba, and that's our commitment: prevent it where we can, compensate where necessary and put in place long-term measures so it won't happen again.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, at Delta Beach, which is just one of many examples, the extent of pre-flood preparedness was completely inadequate.

When I raised this problem in early May, I was told by the Minister of Emergency Measures' staff that they were focused on the Assiniboine River and that places like Delta Beach weren't even on the radar. When I raised issues about Delta Beach repeatedly and raised concerns about road access, the NDP government press releases sounded as if all was under control and there were super sandbags going to Delta Beach.

But it turned out that these were empty super sandbags and no professionals from EMO came to check on the situation to ensure the community could fill them and place them well. The people of Delta Beach and other communities around Lake Manitoba feel that they received too little and too late the attention they should have got.

I ask the Premier: Why were communities around Lake Manitoba so badly neglected in terms of flood preparedness?

**Mr. Selinger:** I thank the member for the question.

All the emergency operations committees of every municipality were notified early about the potential risk throughout Manitoba this year. Many of those communities were brought—invited down to the Legislature to be given an early briefing, and our Emergency Measures co-ordination system at the provincial level started a series of weekly calls with local emergency co-ordinators and operations committees throughout Manitoba very early in the process to bring people up to speed.

Mr. Speaker, the level of co-operation has been unprecedented and the level of communication has

been very strong. In spite of that, in spite of preparing for the flood event of record that has created enormous challenges when we've had one-in-300-year events, when we've had the worst flooding we have ever seen in the history of the Assiniboine River Valley—those challenges have never been seen before in this province, and even with that level of challenge, people have rallied extremely well at all—in all of our communities, at all levels.

Some people have had to be evacuated. Many families have had to be evacuated and that is, indeed, unfortunate. They will be looked after and supported as much as possible. Compensation programs are being put in place at a level of generosity not seen before and they will be moved on as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, we will do everything we can to prevent damage. We will do everything we can to compensate people, and we are turning our mind and we have made very forward-looking commitments to improve the infrastructure for flood protection in the future.

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

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### Bethel Heritage Park (Winkler)

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** The beautiful city of Winkler is set to open a new park for people to relax and enjoy their surroundings. Bethel Heritage Park is scheduled to open June the 12th and is located at the corner of Main Street and Pembina Avenue. There are a number of celebrations planned for the opening, including a ribbon-cutting ceremony, musical entertainment, a barbeque and other activities.

Upon completion, Bethel Park will feature a gazebo and pavilion, several historic cairns and story boards that recognize the contributions of local citizens. The walkways connecting the cairns, honouring the community's German and Jewish settlers—and recognize conscientious objectors. There will also be a cenotaph to honour members of the Armed Forces who died serving their country. A bronze life-size statue depicting a majestic winged angel will be the park's main attraction. The 18-foot replica of the Bethesda Fountain in New York at the park's centre also features four cherubs which represent temperance, purity, health and peace. All of this is behind a main entrance gate welcoming visitors to the park.

The 2.5-acre park will serve the community in a number of new ways. The covered stage will be open for groups to share their talents and entertain the community, and the gazebo will be a great setting to celebrate the special occasions and take photos.

There are also many ways to remember the various foundations that have contributed to Winkler, including the commemorative wall to remember the historic Bethel Hospital, where Bethel Park now stands.

The building committee and the City of Winkler have worked hard to bring this project to fruition; \$1.5 million was raised by the committee to go towards the park's construction. I would like to thank Bill Siemens, Phil Enns, A.L. Friesen, Don Kroeker, and the entire building committee for their roles in this project.

Mr. Speaker, residents of Winkler have anticipated the opening of Bethel Heritage Park for the past two years, and I know that it will be worth the wait. I would like to invite Manitobans to take time to visit Bethel Heritage Park this summer.

Thank you.

#### I Love to Read Month

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** Thanks, Mr. Speaker, for your time and attention. / For those who don't know, I'd just like to mention, / This spring I was pleased to be visiting schools / Across Kirkfield Park to break all the rules. / I told them The Secret, the tool they most need / To be the best people they dream they might be. / The Tool that poor grown-ups themselves can forget / When all that they can think of are numbers and debt. / This past spring, I went to École Bannatyne / For I Love To Read Month, a pleasure of mine. / I brought out my top guns to share The Ole Secret: / That learning to read, why, there's nothing to beat it! / With help from the brave and adventurous Mary / And her magic atlas, we learned of the prairie. / Fred Penner was next, with his tale of The Bump / Who became, to one family, a home and a chum. / I shared with the kids at WMEMS / Why books are exciting and reading's the best. / At Athlone and Sansome and St. Charles Catholic / We picked from a mixture of new books and classics. / École Robert Browning invited me in / To read about Sneeds with a welcoming din. / That feeling of needing to read one more chapter / Is just the right kind of excitement we're after. / This is the Secret we have to keep straight: / Imaginations need stories to keep them in shape. / My thanks to the

teachers who had me come in / For their I Love To Read month-long celebration. / Thanks mostly to the kids who listened so well. / These kids have their own unique stories to tell. / Until next year comes, happy reading! You see, / A good read is the thing that most everyone needs.

### **Andrew and Tanis DeRuyck**

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** Mr. Speaker, Andrew and Tanis DeRuyck of Mariapolis, Manitoba, are the 2011 Manitoba Outstanding Young Farmers. The DeRuycks' unique mix of grain framing and farm management consulting earned them the honour. They were chosen as this year's recipients at a banquet in Brandon, and will represent Manitoba at the National Outstanding Young Farmers celebration later this year.

Andrew and Tanis both graduated from the University of Manitoba with degrees in agriculture. Twelve years ago they began farming in a joint partnership grain-beef farm with Andrew's parents. The farm included a 275 cow-calf herd and a 275-head feedlot. In 2007, the cattle were dispersed, and Tanis and Andrew incorporated their portion of the family farm. They also purchased another section of land.

Mr. Speaker, the couple's interest in farming did not stop with their family farm operation. In 2008, Andrew and Tanis DeRuyck developed a farm management business called DeRuyck Consulting Incorporated after Andrew received his mediator's certificate. Mr. DeRuyck began working with many high-end agricultural companies, including Dow AgroSciences, BASF, Farm Credit Canada and CIBC. The consulting business has been—has given Andrew and Tanis the opportunity to work with many producers and advisory services to provide financial and strategic planning advice. In 2009, the couple joined financial adviser Mark Sloane to form Right Choice Management Consulting.

Although the DeRuycks have been busy with their consulting business, they have not forgotten their roots, and continue to operate as producers. Their grain operation covers 1,120 acres and includes custom work. Of course, they would not be able to manage this huge undertaking themselves, and have found their children, Ben, who is nine, and six-year-old Paige to be a great help for the family business.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the entire Carman constituency, I would like to congratulate Andrew and Tanis DeRuyck on being recognized as Manitoba's Outstanding Young Farmers for 2011. Their hard work and innovation has made them deserving recipients of this honour. I wish them all the best as they hope to become Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers at the national event in Brandon this November.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Fred Douglas Foundation Awards**

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Mr. Speaker, the Fred Douglas Society unites health, heart and home by bringing together many generations to care for and learn from our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, seven years ago, the Fred Douglas Foundation decided to formally honour those volunteers who used their knowledge and passion to improve seniors' quality of life. This year I attended the annual humanitarian awards dinner on May 11th to recognize the nominees and pay tribute to the award recipients.

\*(14:40)

Seniors have unique needs when it comes to housing, personal care and health. However, the ability to make a difference in a person's life can start with acts as simple as lending a listening ear. Congratulations to all the nominees who respectfully help seniors where they can.

This year's nominees were: for the Love of Caring Award, Shirley May, Linda and Larry Nazer, and Mary Ross; for the Art of Caring Award, Laurie Howard, Dr. M.B. MacMillan and myself; and for the Learning by Caring Award, for high school and post-secondary students, Olivia Ballentyne, Kaleigh Cameron, Lorelei Everett and Christine Vetus.

This year's winners come to the table with very different resumés, but have their commitment to seniors in common. Shirley May won the Love of Caring Award for her involvement with Harrow United Church and with the Meals On Wheels program. Laurie Howard took home the Art of Caring Award for embracing the importance of storytelling to include marginalized peoples, specifically, Alzheimer's and aphasia patients. And in the last category, two young women received

awards: Kaleigh Cameron, who currently—who's currently in Brandon University's nursing program, has a passion for working in palliative and long-term care; Lorelei Everett, a student at Children of the Earth school, who is enrolled in the Medical Careers Exploration Program, received the award for her volunteer work with Deer Lodge Centre, Health Sciences Centre and Pan Am Clinic.

Mr. Speaker, heartfelt congratulations to everyone nominated, and a huge thank you to the Fred Douglas Foundation for advocating on behalf of this unique group. It has always been important to recognize volunteers' good work. Even more important, however, is to celebrate the fact that their compassion will continue to ripple through the lives of countless people in our community.

### Community Flooding Concerns

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak with concern about the continuing issues with the flood in Manitoba this year.

To begin with, I want to recognize the heroic efforts made by so many Manitobans in the last 24 hours. I want to recognize the efforts of homeowners, of farmers, of volunteers, of municipal and federal officials. I want to recognize, in particular, the efforts of municipal and emergency personnel as well as volunteers in helping with the evacuations from communities like St. Laurent and area yesterday.

Today, in talking to an individual at Laurentia Beach, he described the situation there yesterday as beyond comprehension and beyond words. He described unbelievable chaos and destruction. He told of a trickle tear leak in a dike, in a sandbag dike, which turned into a large unstoppable flow within two minutes. Septic tanks, decks, children's playhouses went floating by in the storm waters. The lake in some places has moved inland by one to two miles from where it was just 24 hours earlier.

With the evacuation, multiple families have taken refuge in neighbours' homes. The courage and the friendship shown by one Manitoban to another has been extraordinary. We can all be thankful that we have a province where helping others is such a strong tradition, and where this tradition continues so well under such adverse conditions of we've been seeing recently in Manitoba.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### House Business

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

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

Would you call third reading of Bill 6, please.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, we'll deal to orders of the day. We'll deal with concurrence and third reading of Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act.

## CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

### Bill 6—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

### *Motion presented.*

**Ms. Howard:** It's my extreme honour to be able to stand today and speak to this bill that has gone through the House and gone through committee, and, of course, I want to welcome, as you did earlier, the many firefighters we have with us in the gallery today.

This bill ensures—this bill does a few things. It ensures that WC benefits will not be reduced when indexing factors are negative in any year. But I think the most interesting part of the bill and the reason why folks have been watching this bill with great attention is that it expands the list of presumptive diseases for firefighters to include multiple myeloma, primary site prostate cancer, primary site skin cancer and, for the first time in Canada, primary site breast cancer. By adding these new conditions—there are now 14 presumptive cancers including in the firefighting presumption.

I would note, when we introduced this legislation, it was extremely moving to me to have so

many female firefighters in attendance that day, and, as I met them and talked to them, I couldn't help but think that their pictures were going to be on the television news that evening and in the newspaper—of the very many girls that were going to look at those pictures and know that they too could one day grow up to be a firefighter and when they did that they were going to live in a province that was going to protect their ability to serve and their ability to serve safely.

Manitoba, of course, was the first province in Canada to recognize cancer as an occupational risk of firefighting, and our legislation has been the template for seven provinces and two territories since 2002. Almost every province that has adopted this kind of legislation has used the Manitoba legislation word for word, and, of course, this legislation has not been confined to Canada, it spread across the United States in jurisdictions such as Ohio and Alaska. And a lot of the credit, I think, for the advocacy and the work that has resulted in that goes to Alex Forrest, who is in the gallery today, and his brother and sister firefighters who've been tireless champions of firefighter health and safety, and I want to thank them today.

In fact—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I don't want to put a sour note on this, but I must remind our guests that there's to be no participation by our guests and that also includes applauding. I'm sorry I have to relay our rules to you, but that is our rules of the House and it pertains to all guests of the Chamber.

Please continue.

**Ms. Howard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And now this legislation is making its way across the world to countries in Europe, like Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Ireland, Iceland, and also we know that next week Mr. Forrest will be in Australia to make a presentation in front of the Australian Parliament, and we're hoping and expecting that legislation will be forthcoming in Australia as well.

We're taking a great step forward in expanding the list of presumptions in this legislation, and I'm also pleased to announce that two weeks ago Alberta went forward with legislation for these same four conditions that have been listed in this legislation and I hope will be passed here today.

We know we've got firefighters from other cities as well that have been working to further the cause of firefighter health and safety.

I also want to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to thank the leadership of the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and the minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Transportation who were the first to bring this issue to this Legislature in the 1990s, who brought it in the form of petitions and private member bills and were leaders on that, and, of course, when we became government we took on that leadership and passed legislation to make it so.

We're proud of what we've been able to do in partnership with firefighters, and I want to, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of us in this Legislature recognize these brave men and women and dedicate this legislation to all of them.

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** I'm pleased to speak on this bill for third reading, Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, Mr. Speaker, which we know amendments are made in—to these provisions to ensure that indexing does not result in benefits being reduced. That's one of the positions of the act as explained by the minister already.

\* (14:50)

And the other, of course, is the expansion to include four new cancers in the presumptive list, Mr. Speaker, which would be multiple myeloma and primary site prostate, skin and breast cancers.

So we have heard that this is leading legislation. We are very pleased to support the legislation. We indicated this right away when the bill was brought in that we would be supporting this legislation. Want to thank the fire department officials that are here with us today and welcome you here. And also, I do also want to say to Mr. Forrest in the gallery that his efforts have been recognized in the province in the leading work that you've done, and certainly internationally as well, as we've heard.

And certainly from committee, we know that your presentation—when I listened to your report at the committee, I was quite impressed by the knowledge and the work that has been done on this in terms of scientific data and collection so that this is actually based on some scientific evidence, Mr. Speaker.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, there is a—something that we do need to recognize and that is the work that these brave men and women do in firefighting where they go into buildings where people are coming out of, running out of, they're running into, and with no fear of what they may encounter. And what they can encounter is a number of things, and it's more complicated now, I think, than ever with the number of chemicals and composite materials that are in homes today.

And, of course, we know when these burn, they create other nauseous fumes and different things that we're not really familiar with, Mr. Speaker, and so there's all these kinds of things that these people are faced with when they—when they're just going every day to do their jobs.

So we recognize the importance of this and, certainly, as we said right from the beginning, we do support this bill, Mr. Speaker, and we'd like to pass it as quickly as possible. So thank you very much.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill 6 and to support Bill 6.

I want to recognize and pay a tribute to the firefighters who are here, Alex Forrest and others, and to recognize that it's tremendously important not only that we are doing this, but that we're doing it in a way that makes sense, that is based on scientific evidence and which recognizes the impact of exposure during their work experience fighting fires, and that it recognizes, as we do in this legislation, that multiple myeloma, that primary site prostate cancer, primary site skin cancer and primary site breast cancer are all linked to exposures in the workplace for firefighters.

I think it is very important in making this recognition that we recognize the real impact of these exposures, that they are not trivial, that the exposure is done to help all Manitobans to deal with the tragic circumstances of a fire, that these exposures have a real impact on the lives of real people who are trying to help all of us.

And I think it is important as well that in recognizing these exposures and doing this as we are doing in legislation, we also recognize that we have a job to do, and we have a job to do to compensate, through workers compensation as we are doing today, but we also have a job to do in looking at how we can prevent the effects, the exposures. There are improvements in the use of masks and various other

devices that firefighters use and certainly one of the things that we must work toward is being able to prevent the impact of the work experience on the health of firefighters, in particular on these cancers.

And that is not going to be a simple effort. It is not going to be simple to do, but it is a challenge which we need to undertake, because the larger, long-run and most, you know, important in terms of preventing future cancers is doing what we can to prevent these exposures in one way or another. And we won't do it by completely eliminating fires, so we must do it in other ways. And whether it is, in part, by identifying the particular chemicals that are involved, whether it is, in part, by looking at how we can decrease the exposures by better masks or ventilation in some fashion, that step by step we do need to dedicate ourselves, not just as we're doing today to compensation, but in the future to trying to prevent these adverse health effects, because we would all like firefighters to live a lot longer and not get cancers in the first place. That must be our long-run goal, and let us never lose sight of that important goal as well as this goal of compensation. Thank you.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Unanimous.

**Mr. Speaker:** Would you like—you would like it recorded as being voted on unanimously? [Agreed]

Okay, that will be recorded unanimously.

### House Business

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, on further House business.

We're prepared to move into concurrence this afternoon. I wonder if we might have a short recess to make sure the ministers that have been called are prepared to move into concurrence. Five minutes?

**Mr. Speaker:** First of all, is it the will of the House to have a short recess so that the ministers that have

been called can be called into the Chamber to answer the questions that will be put to them? Is there agreement on that?

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, our critic for Justice is ready to go with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) and the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), who are both here, if you want to proceed with that.

**Ms. Howard:** As long as that's acceptable to the official opposition, then we're pleased to proceed on that basis.

**Mr. Speaker:** From all indications, what I've heard is that it is acceptable, and so now we will—orders of the day, we will now move into Committee of Supply to deal with concurrence motion.

Madam Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

\*(15:00)

## COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

### Concurrence Motion

**Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

The committee has before it for consideration the motions concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

The Official Opposition House Leader previously tabled the following list of ministers who may be called for questioning and debate on the concurrence motion: the minister for the Executive Council, the Minister for Water Stewardship, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Justice. The ministers are to be questioned concurrently.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Yes, Madam Chairperson, just wanted to divert to show my flexibility and ask a few questions first of the Minister of Health, if I may. She'd be disappointed, I know, if I didn't ask some questions regarding a favourite topic of both of ours, that being the Bethesda emergency room expansion which has been announced more times than I can remember, but certainly going back to about three years ago, perhaps three and a half years ago, that the announcement was made.

Since that time, I know the minister has provided, and other members of her government have provided, different deadlines and timelines for

when the expansion might begin. She knows full well and I think she appreciates that the community is quite anxious for this to begin and in some ways have probably lost a degree of patience, which is remarkable for a very patient community, I might add.

But the minister, earlier this year, made a commitment to me in this House during question period that the tender would be issued and construction would begin this spring. I don't have my calendar in front of me. I don't know when spring ends and summer begins. I think it might be later this month around the third week of June, or something like that.

Can she indicate whether or not this most recent timeline of tender and construction beginning in spring of this year is still holding true?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Yes, Madam Chairperson, I am pleased to inform the member that we are on track, for the most part. I can say that there have been some challenges this spring in a variety of areas with parts of our capital department being diverted to work on issues concerning flood and some other matters. There are a pretty significant number of capital projects under way.

I can inform the member that I would anticipate by week's end information concerning tender will be released. And the regional health authority will go through that process. We believe, because of a lot of front-end preparation that has happened that the process will unfold and the tender will be awarded and that construction will begin swiftly thereafter. But to reiterate to the member, I think it—we're confident to say that by week's end, information concerning tender shall be released and we hope for construction upon the award of that tender to swiftly follow.

So we're on track; we may be a couple of weeks behind that spring-summer turnover, but by all accounts, given some of the challenges that have been faced for all Manitobans this spring with flooding, I think we're in a good position to move forward on Bethesda.

We know that a lot of work that has been done since the announcement has involved consultation with the community and discussions of potential capacity in the ER and some expansions from the original vision. We believe that that challenge is

going to be met and that the final product will be very good.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I share the minister's optimism in terms of what the final product will look like. Certainly, the expectation, the hope of the community and the Bethesda Foundation, who've been more than a generous partner in the project, in terms of its commitment, so we all hope that the final product is one that will hold the community in good stead for awhile. We know there's a number of pressures in the community not just on the health-care field but in a number of different areas as a result of immigration and other sources of growth within the region.

I appreciate the fact that the minister has indicated that the tender should come out later this week. I'm tempted to ask her what her definition of the end of the week is, but I don't want to be too forceful on that. I think that's the most narrow time frame I've been given, so I'll take that. I recognize that there are other pressures on the government in terms of expenditures. Of course, that would be more comforting if this was the first sort of delay on the project. This has been delayed for three or four years now so there's been ample opportunity, and I know that there's been unique situations happening this spring, but certainly in the past number of years that should not have been the case or the problem in terms of the delay.

I wonder if the minister had the opportunity to see an article in the Steinbach *Carillon*, a very well-read paper in Manitoba. It was in May of this year, so just last month on the 5th, and there were some comments made by surveyors who were at the Bethesda ER and—the Bethesda Hospital and they were commenting on the ER. Those surveyors were there as part of the accreditation process that's undertaken, and their words were, they were flabbergasted that the emergency room hadn't been started. I guess they'd been there in 2008 as part of the accreditation process and so when they came back, they were stunned, or flabbergasted is the exact word, that it hadn't begun. In fact, the vice-president of the RHA said the surveyors, they were all flabbergasted by that. They couldn't wrap their brain around how the process works at the provincial Treasury Board and Manitoba Health.

Is there any explanation that the minister can give as to why it's taken so long for this project to get going when even surveyors who are quite apart from the political process—they're not elected

representatives but they're part of the accreditation process—they're stunned and flabbergasted that it hadn't begun. What's taken so long? I understand the issues this spring, but why has there been such a delay leading up to it?

**Ms. Oswald:** Madam Chair, I did see the article. It was colourfully written, I felt, and interesting. It, I suppose, represented the point of view of one group, and, you know, I respect that. It's a free country. But I can certainly tell the member and all members of the Legislature that, you know, we made a commitment in '07 to provide an expanded rebuilt facility and we will deliver on that commitment. We have been working, of course, with the community, with the regional health authority on ensuring that the planning and the design of this process would be such that space would be available for patient visits that, you know, exceed 25,000 a year. I think space would be needed and processes would need to be in place to ensure that there wouldn't be a temporary closure of the ER.

Again, we have, as I've said before, rebuilt, renovated or built from the ground up over 100 facilities since 1999. This has been a very active file in terms of building health capital, and we do know that planning has been under way for some time and that the community is, as the member has said earlier, extremely generous and very well organized and have been anxiously anticipating this build. I can say that there are other areas of the province that have also got projects that the department has been working on very diligently. The time has come for Bethesda, and, as I said before, information concerning the tender will happen by week's end, I would anticipate. The RHA will be able to use its processes that it has at its disposal to issue information about that tender swiftly thereupon, and we look forward to the successful proponent being chosen and the work being done. The people of Steinbach deserve no less, and, indeed, there has been lots of capital construction, and it's now Steinbach's turn, and that's just what's happening.

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Goertzen:** I'm—they'll be happy to hear that it's their turn. I think they probably thought it was their turn a while ago, but, regardless, not to dwell on the point because I don't think it'll move the ball any further down the field any quicker.

On—in the article, though, however—and I appreciate the minister feels it was colourfully written, I'll pass it on to Grant Burr, who was the

author of the article and a good reporter for the *Carillon*. It also went on to quote the vice-president of the RHA in speaking of the surveyors who are doing the accreditation. He said that they couldn't believe how low their infection rates were at Bethesda, and he made those comments because the central reprocessing area is so aged at the facility. And the surveyors were surprised that there wasn't a higher infection rate given how old the facility was, and that speaks more generally to the surgical units themselves and how old they are and in need of replacement.

I know that when the minister was out making the announcement on the ER back in 2008—and the time does fly in this business and many others, I suppose—she made some comments about how there would obviously be a need to start looking at the surgical centres, and that was, you know, then, back in 2008. What progress can she report in terms of prioritizing that project in the capital health funding?

**Ms. Oswald:** And the work continues with the regional health authority and with the professionals at Bethesda in configuring the hospital in the way that's going to best serve patients. And, you know, while it may be intimated by the member opposite that nothing has been happening, you know, nothing could be further from the truth. We know that the initial proposal for the ER project, I believe, was somewhere in the neighbourhood of a 6,000-square-foot expansion. And we know that with discussions that have gone on, with assessments, with dreams being put forward by the community and—about their needs that the project really has increased to be some—over some 40,000 square feet, which will be taking into account issues of infection control and all of the elements that have gone into the construction of new emergency rooms around the province, as well as looking at some of the unique needs of the community.

So that—those conversations have been very active. Lots of planning has gone on. The work and discussions concerning new surgical units is ongoing as well. Of course, our goals right now and energies are dedicated to completing the project for the emergency room, but the discussions concerning new surgical suites are happening concurrently, and I can assure the member that we're taking them very seriously.

**Mr. Goertzen:** In the same article, it indicates that a letter was sent from the deputy minister of Health putting new restrictions—and I'm quoting, now, the

article—putting new restrictions on health plan discussions which included the annual list of capital project priorities. The article indicates that whereas these discussions used to happen in open meetings, they now had to be—take place behind closed doors because they were considered advice to the minister, and so they had to be in closed-door sessions. And the directors of the RHA expressed concern about that, suggesting that it didn't really feel like a good decision, although I think one of the regional—or one of the directors on the RHA indicated that they sort of felt their hands were tied.

Is that the case? Are those—the discussions now having to take place behind closed doors in terms of health-care planning and the prioritization of capital projects in the RHA?

**Ms. Oswald:** I do understand that a letter of that nature concerning discussions and advice to the minister was sent by the Deputy Minister of Health. It was my understanding that the deputy minister, when he took the chair, looked at the interpretation of the rules and the protocols around advice to the minister and did send this communication, not to be a change, but to be a reminder about how discussions were to occur. It's been my understanding that that was always the process but that this letter was new.

What I would say generally is that we want the regional health authorities to be engaged with their community and with their citizens and to be providing as much information as possible and, probably more to the point, receiving as much advice as possible from the public. We know that when the external review was done of regional health authorities a couple of years ago, that was one of the central recommendations, was re-engaging the public to ensure that they have a voice in how their health care is delivered. And so our view is certainly to broaden the nature of communication between RHA officials and the public.

And, certainly, we have asked the deputy minister to provide clarification to board chairs and CEOs about the nature of his communications to them, reiterating what has been an existing policy versus any interpretation that this was something new or something that was being disallowed.

So I appreciate the member's question, and if this has caused any concern in the regional health authority, I want to assure him that we have asked the deputy to clarify those statements. We want communications that are appropriate and, indeed, have historically occurred to continue and we also

want the deputy to be able to communicate about the nature of discussions that are considered advice to the minister, a policy—or a protocol that's been in place for a long time. I think he was clarifying that and, in doing so, there was some miscommunication. So there needs to be some discussion about it going forward and I will concede that point.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And maybe the minister can clarify for me, then, because I may be a little bit confused myself.

In the article, it indicates that the directors of the regional health authority used to be able to approve the annual health plan at an open meeting of the board. And now, as a result of the letter from the Deputy Minister of Health, the interpretation of that letter by the regional health authority is that the annual health plan now has to be considered behind closed doors, at a closed-door, in camera discussion.

So I guess what I'm asking on behalf of the regional health authority is: Can they continue to do business as they did before and have the annual health plan, which is in some ways very much a community document, discussed at an open meeting and not behind closed doors as advice to the minister?

**Ms. Oswald:** Again, I would tell the member that we want as much information as possible to be communicated with the public in an open and transparent way.

It's my understanding that the issue that the deputy minister was endeavouring to communicate was the fact that a number of health plans contain information about capital projects that also contain information about costings, projected costings and projected investments that need to be made. And the point was being made that there is the potential to be tainting some tendering processes and that that information needed to be, you know, kept carefully as tender processes were engaged in and completed.

So, as I said to the member, it is our hope that every effort is made to clarify which elements, you know, should not be sent out to potentially result in inflated prices for projects that are forthcoming and which elements of the health plan—which, in my view, would be the majority, could be openly and freely shared with the public as it should be.

\* (15:20)

So, again, I think that a letter that was endeavouring to clarify a policy that has existed for a

long time—for good reason, obviously—did, in fact, cause some confusion and there's work going on to clarify that.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, and then I just want to leave it, and I'll turn it over to my colleagues, who, I know, have questions as well for the minister. So I just want to leave it, then, with the assurance that there is going to be communication with the RHA to clarify the clarification that was sent out by the deputy minister, so that at least a good portion of this annual health plan can be discussed and debated the way it always was before in a public forum.

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, Madam Chairperson, again, I will reiterate that—not just stemming from advice from the expert external reviewers, but coming even most recently from the review that was done of the NOR-MAN Regional Health Authority, the advice is very clear, that engagement of the public and seeking advice from the public is critically important, and so we want to follow through from those recommendations and apply them across regional health authorities.

So, yes, we want to have as much public dialogue and open discussion as is possible, while at the same time being responsible and good stewards of the taxpayers' money, while dealing with financial information that could compromise the tender process.

I would also say to the member that we have a bill in front of the House that speaks to the entire issue of increasing transparency and that's exactly what it is we're trying to achieve. And while many regional health authorities meet and, in fact, exceed what it is that we're asking for within the context of this legislation, we know that there is more work to do.

So within the context of those three themes, we do want to have open, public dialogue and, yes, there will be communication among CEOs and board chairs about what is absolutely appropriate to take place in a public forum and what needs to be handled with caution, in terms of tendering, procurement and so forth.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Madam Chairperson, I have a constituent that has been prescribed Simponi, the drug Simponi, for ankylosing spondylitis, the disease that she has, and it's a crucial drug for her to take, to allow her to continue working and to have some quality of life.

And, although there is some private coverage that they have, they are required to pick up the remainder of the cost by themselves.

Now this drug is covered in nine other provinces across Canada, and her question to me that, of course, I have to ask that the minister is: What's the holdup in Manitoba? Why isn't Simponi covered in Manitoba, when nine other provinces have covered it?

**Ms. Oswald:** I thank the member for the question, and on the specific drug itself, I will commit to her to investigate where it might be in the process of coverage. I don't know off the top of my head, but I will check.

I can say to the member generally that we have here in Manitoba a very robust process for reviewing drugs that go through the processes on a national scale. We have processes in place that allow Manitobans to see the expansion of coverage; over 2,500 more drugs that have been added to the formulary in our time in office, but also with a lot of work being done with pharmaceutical companies to ensure that Manitobans are getting the best possible financial benefit for the coverage of those drugs. We've done this, you know, on generics through utilization management agreements, and there's much work that has gone on in expanding coverage.

So I will commit to the member from River East to look specifically into this drug for this individual, who clearly, according to what she's telling me about, receives great benefit from it, and try to provide her with some information about when this is something that might be expected here in Manitoba.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chair, and I thank the minister for committing to get that information back. I guess and I know that the minister has indicated quite often that we have a very robust process. But that robust process has done nothing to help my constituent who, if she lived in nine other provinces across the country, would have the coverage for this medication.

So I just wanted to put that on the record, and she has pleaded with me to try to get some help and some information for her. And so that's what I am doing today, and I would hope that the minister would be able to get back to me very quickly with information, so that I might be able to share it with my constituent. So I thank her for that.

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, Madam Chair, and again I appreciate her advocacy on the part of her constituent. We do know that there are occasions where Manitobans see drugs listed first in the nation, and that is of great benefit to individuals that are needing medications in that realm.

There are occasions where we don't place first. This would be one of those times, and, you know, we will really work hard to ensure that we're doing the best that we can to be responsible to Manitoba taxpayers and, most importantly, trying to provide coverage as swiftly as possible for Manitobans. And, on the subject of this drug, I will ask these questions today and endeavour to try to get an answer just as swiftly as possible for the member's constituent.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Just a final question on what my colleague from Steinbach was asking.

He was making reference to a letter sent by the deputy minister, putting new restrictions on health plan discussions. Can the minister provide me a copy of that letter?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, just to clarify what I said to the member opposite. I'm not sure if the member could hear—it was quite chatty in here—that, indeed, the letter that was written by the deputy minister to the regions was, I am informed, reiterating existing policy concerning discussions that need to take place in a fashion that wouldn't compromise our ability to put forward tenders.

So I know the member, in her question, said new policy. I don't believe that it was new; I think it was reiterating. And, certainly, I'll ask the deputy if it's okay by him to release the letter. I'm pretty sure he'll say yes. So unless he says otherwise, yes, I'll get you a copy of that letter.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I'd like to now move on to a few questions about the NOR-MAN regional report, the review that was just done in that area. And, according to a number of people out there, they felt that the government sidestepped two of the most serious controversies in the Flin Flon-The Pas region, and that was financial management and the quality of care, including physician competency.

Now, the two—the committee that was looking at these issues said that these two particular issues were too big for it for handle. Can the minister just indicate why there wasn't broader criteria and the expertise brought in to fully review the NOR-MAN Regional Health Authority right from the get-go and

why that proper expertise wasn't put on to the committee to look at those broader issues?

\* (15:30)

**Ms. Oswald:** Madam Chairperson, what I can inform the House is that the committee was formed. The external review team was formed, based on the nature of the kinds of issues that we felt were of greatest concern, and it was a very, very good team. And, as the review process evolved and further issues emerged, the team made it clear that perhaps a more extensive and detailed audit should take place over the course of the review and, indeed, in their final report made the recommendation that Manitoba Health go in to conduct an internal audit on some of the issues. In fact, as the review was unfolding, it was the decision in Manitoba Health to call in financial auditors in advance of the completion of the review.

So, in fact, a financial audit is under way in NOR-MAN. We took a step beyond what was recommended by the reviewers, and have had the Department of Finance be the ones to be at the helm of this review.

So, in fact, you know, I've seen the member's comments in the media. It was not a sidestep but a quickstep; the audit is already under way.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I would like to ask the minister why she didn't ask the Auditor General to go in, and why she has chosen to actually do an internal audit, instead of having somebody that is totally unbiased, like the Auditor General, go in and do that review?

**Ms. Oswald:** The reviewers recommended that Manitoba Health go in to do the review. We took the step to send in members from the Department of Finance, very capable individuals. If we find that there is more reason to call in further review—financial auditors, then we will take that step. It certainly is my view that there are capable, competent, excellent, in fact, folks in the Department of Finance to do that review. But, again, if they say that more needs to be done, we'll have them do that. But I've never known those folks to be particularly biased, says the Minister of Health. They're a little too focused sometimes, I find.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Does the minister not, though, view the fact that, had the auditor gone in, the perception of a more independent review would have been more beneficial overall? Why did she just so quickly jump on the recommendation, as she said, from the review committee, and why not, in her own mind, determine

that this might have been better managed by the auditor and the auditor's team, rather than doing an internal review? Because an internal review certainly doesn't send off, necessarily—and no discredit to the, you know, the people from the department, indeed, there's some great expertise there. But, when we have an Auditor General, and this is their job, to look at issues like this, why wouldn't the minister have just decided that that was the better route to go?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, again, we did take the step that was beyond what the reviewers ultimately recommended, to bring in the Department of Finance to look at some specific issues that were raised by the reviewers that they felt needed a more in-depth analysis.

You know, I felt at the beginning of the line of questioning I was, you know, being accused of going too slowly on the financial audit; I now understand that I'm going too quickly on the financial audit.

But I'll be very clear on the fact that if there is information that is brought to the fore that requires an additional level of analysis, we won't hesitate to do that. The information that has been raised and the questions that have been raised, in my view, I think can be very competently and proficiently handled by the professionals in the Department of Finance. And we'll look at the outcomes of that audit and decide if further work needs to be done accordingly.

**Mrs. Driedger:** In looking at this issue there, does the minister have any sense of why nurses' complaints about patient care were ignored?

**Ms. Oswald:** I think one of the things that we see in the outcome of the NOR-MAN Regional Health Authority review is concerns with some of the relationships among professionals. We have seen, in the context of the review, that there are most definitely some strained relationships between physicians and, by extension, potentially strained relationships existing between physicians and nurses.

We know that there were a number of recommendations concerning improvements that need to happen in dealing with people in leadership roles, and we know that there is, quite frankly, a culture shift that needs to happen in terms of individuals in positions of leadership and power and those that report to them. These are very, very complex issues, but I know that the chair of the board and the board of the NOR-MAN Regional Health Authority have embraced all of the recommendations—have, indeed, welcomed the

prospect of bringing in external governance experts to provide them with some guidance on how to transform a culture in the regional health authority that, by all accounts from the reviewers, is very challenging.

It is possible that within the context of physician-nurse relationships that nurses were not feeling heard in raising some issues. This is a concern. It would be in any venue, and we know that the board is committed to restructure their leadership and to provide new direction and rebuild a culture of trust and collegiality.

Again, they did say in their review that if there were very specific issues concerning individual cases that those cases ought be reported to the region or, more specifically, to the College of Physicians and Surgeons or Registered Nurses, as appropriate, so that more specific investigation can occur.

So, again, in my reading of the review, I would think that if any such circumstances did exist, that they existed as a result of some strained relationships, which the board has committed to work on and transform for the betterment of all citizens of the NOR-MAN Regional Health Authority.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I have another question for the Minister of Health. She indicated to me earlier that there would be a tender announcement or information coming forward on the Bethesda ER sometime before the end of this week. So now I'm going to push my luck a little bit, and while we're in the mode of making announcements, there's been lots of discussion about a crisis stabilization unit in the city of Steinbach and the need to have that kind of a facility.

I understand that the city or people in the city have stepped forward to provide, perhaps, the place—a capital investment by providing the location of a CSU, and that this would be important to those who are having a mental health crisis, that there isn't an appropriate place to take them within an hour and a half drive right now. And that's a long way from the community, not just in terms of getting them to the place where they can get the appropriate help, but also then having them far and away removed from those who might aid in their recovery who are closest to them.

Can she indicate for me whether or not we will see an announcement on a CSU for the city of

Steinbach and, in extension, for the southeast region sometime in the near future as well?

**Ms. Oswald:** I know there is a lot of work going on concerning this discussion. The member has articulated quite well why a crisis stabilization unit would be of considerable benefit in the region. And I can say to him that I know that there are a number of discussions under way on this subject.

\* (15:40)

I looked at the notes I have in front of me and don't have the information that he needs, but may get it imminently to try to provide a more precise timeline for the nature of those discussions. If I don't get it imminently, I will commit to the member to have a discussion with him post haste on the status of the CSU.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the Minister of Health tell us if she's ever toured any of the Winnipeg ERs?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can she indicate which ones and in what years?

**Ms. Oswald:** I believe I've been to all of them, some more than once, and this is not as the mother of a five-year-old, but as the Minister of Health. I would have to get back to the member to provide her with sort of dates and times of when I've been to the ERs. I know that I've been pre-construction, post-construction and when there have been challenges in ERs I've been to speak with staff on intervening issues. So, off the top of my head, I can't tell you what the exact schedule was but, sure.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I do have some of that information, not the most recent, but I have actually FIPPA'd for it in the past, to see how much the minister has actually spent out there on the field.

Has she ever, during the time of Brian Sinclair's death and after that period of time, did she ever take a tour of the Health Sciences Centre ER, just to have a sense of what was going on there at the time and to have a sense of the surroundings?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I have recently toured that ER myself and found out that the waiting area itself is not constructed big enough, and I was also made

aware of the fact that the original design of that ER was—waiting room was much larger than it was, but that this government scaled it back to save money, and now, in order to do renovations there, it's going to cost much more and it's going to cost about \$2 million because of the fact that the design and the further development and the changes were mismanaged. How much does the Minister of Health know about what's going on there with the redesign now?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, certainly, as emergency rooms, the waiting rooms and the full emergency rooms, have been reconstructed over the last 11 years, there has been a lot of work that has gone on, consultation with staff not the least of which.

So there's a lot of information about emerging best practice, uniqueness of clientele and so forth. Again, I would have to perhaps look back on construction plans from years prior to me being in the chair of the Minister of Health to validate some of the member's claims about what was in an original plan versus what ended up in the final construction.

But I can tell her that, after the tragedy of the death of Brian Sinclair, there were a number of recommendations that came forward concerning all aspects of care from staffing levels, from complements of social work that's available, from culturally appropriate staffing being on hand and, indeed, capital construction, and the need for amended configuration and construction, and so that—there's a lot of work that's under way regarding the upgrade that is going to happen across emergency rooms.

So, when the member asks, how much do I know, you know, on the 'knowledge-o-meter', I would say, you know, quite a lot in terms of why the amendments are going to be made to reconstruction, what the best possible configuration is for sightlines for staff and, included in that, the best possible flow for patients and for staff that are working in very challenging circumstances.

So, you know, we know that the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority in May of 2010 talked about the redevelopment of the HSC emergency room. I think the member said \$2 million. HSC at that time announced that they would move forward with a \$4-million renovation. So there's a lot of work that's under way not just at HSC connected to the

issue concerning the death of Mr. Sinclair but at other emergency rooms, and we know that when the inquest comes to a conclusion that there will likely be additional recommendations, and we'll take those very seriously.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate whether there was a cutback on the original expansion plan in order to save money?

**Ms. Oswald:** I'm sorry. Can the member repeat that? I just couldn't hear.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate, was there a cutback on the original expansion plan in order to save money?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, as I indicated to the member earlier, I will have to go back and look at what the original plan was, the original estimate versus the final decision for construction, and I would also have to ask questions about the nature of why those amendments to proposed original plan were made. I don't know the answer. I wasn't there then.

But this does come in some contrast to the member who has, on lo, these many occasions, said we're spending too much money on health capital, bricks and mortar. So it's a bit of a departure in the tone of question. You know, I welcome variety. But, again, I will say it—*[interjection]* Now the member seems to be sensitive to the fact that I've made reference, but we do have quotes, you know, from her saying, why are we spending this money on bricks and mortar. But, again, I will commit to the member to seek out some thoughts about what the original plan for the emergency room was, what the final construction was and the reasons for amendments in that plan.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Madam Chairperson, I think the minister just torqued her answer quite a bit more than what the original question had ever been. When the question had been asked a number of years ago, it was why was everything in terms of health capital done on debt and why wasn't there more cash spent, as it was in the '90s for CancerCare. There were a number of mental health projects that had been done in that period of time, and they weren't done on debt. And, under the NDP, all health capital has been debt financed. That was the question.

So—Madam Chair, and I've also been on record saying we do need substantial health capital development, renovations because a lot of our health infrastructure is old. So it's not that I am against health infrastructure. My question to the minister

earlier, which she has been putting misleading comments on the record, was more about why did she debt finance everything, and, in fact, the minister has indicated that health capital debt has probably tripled or quadrupled under her watch.

And my question had simply been, earlier on, is why did it all have to be debt financed and why couldn't some of it—with all the largesse from the federal government, why couldn't some of the federal dollars that have been rolling into Manitoba been spent on paying for some of the capital rather than debt financing it all, because I understand that now we've got something like \$800 million or more a year that is going on interest payments, and now a lot of that money is being taken away from front-line health care.

So, just to clarify and set the record straight, that the minister in her tendency has always liked to manipulate the language and, in this case, it's been misleading.

\*(15:50)

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, certainly, I can tell the member opposite that we have made a very aggressive and strong commitment to building health capital in the province. You know, I do know that the member just made reference to their spending during the '90s on health care, and she referenced the cancer building. It's certainly been well documented and, indeed, discussed within circles that, in fact, the original CancerCare building was cut back by some 100,000 square feet. So there—you know, really there's a whole development now and a very exciting announcement coming forward from the government of Manitoba on a \$70-million investment in a new building that's needed for CancerCare for improved treatment and research and study and a first-in-Canada colorectal cancer centre of excellence. And one of the central points in that was, you know, if only it had been built to an appropriate size in the first place, and not cut back by a hundred thousand square feet. But I digress.

Certainly, the member opposite was, I think, in the room moments ago when the member for Steinbach was seeking further development at the marvellous Bethesda Hospital new emergency room, new surgical suites and a crisis stabilization unit. And so, you know, on the one hand, the member opposite is concerned about our investing and the nature of financing on health capital, but on the other hand, three seats over, we have a member of the

Conservative Party that is saying more, more, more. Build more health capital.

So we do see even, you know, some very clear tensions within the Conservative caucus on the issue of health capital. We can see that, you know, they're at odds with one another on this subject, and we know that again, you know, the member from Charleswood was certainly very clear in a debate that we had—I think it was concerning a child health program of some nature—she was very clear in saying, you know, why do we have to spend all this money on bricks and mortar—I think that's an exact quote—you know, rather than investing in the topic she was discussing of the day. So, for her to suggest today that, you know, I might be putting information on the record that is not, you know, entirely forthcoming, I would just remind the member of that debate when she said, you know, in clear Technicolor language, that she did not like that we investing in bricks and mortar. I think that we just need to be clear about that fact.

Bottom line, Madam Chairperson, certainly we are going to continue to invest in health capital in the north, in the south, in the east and in the west. We're going to work with our regional health authorities to build this infrastructure for the betterment of all Manitobans. Whether it's for primary care, maternal care, acute care, we're going to keep on this path and, indeed, we're committed to do it.

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** I have a question for the First Minister, if I might.

Madam Chairperson, this afternoon in question period, I listened fairly carefully to the First Minister talk about the preparedness of the government for the—in terms of forecasting the eventuality of the flood in Manitoba, and I, in listening carefully to the Premier, he made it appear as though all of the i's were dotted and the t's were crossed before the high waters hit this province.

But I want to remind the Premier that just two weeks before the call for emergency flooding came from the government, I was briefed on the circumstances surrounding the community of St-Lazare, and at that point in time, the Qu'Appelle River was not even on the radar screen. And I was told quite emphatically that the spillway at the Shellmouth Dam would not be used this year because of the steps that were taken to lower it to unprecedented levels this past winter.

And I want to ask the minister, the First Minister, how it is that if, in fact, they were so well prepared, that we were given such erroneous information at a briefing that we were at, regarding, first of all, the Shellmouth Dam, and secondly, regarding the Qu'Appelle River.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** I'd like to ask the member when he received that briefing.

**Mr. Derkach:** I'd like to tell the First Minister that the briefings were received about two weeks before St-Lazare was being flooding by the Qu'Appelle River. The briefing on the Shellmouth Dam was received about six days before the flood warnings went out in the Assiniboine Valley just below the Shellmouth Dam.

**Mr. Selinger:** On that first one, the—you're talking the Qu'Appelle River, when you say two weeks before, can you give me, like, a rough ballpark, what month, date, sort of thing?

**Mr. Derkach:** Well, I can't give the specific date but I'm sure that if the minister were to check—or the Premier were to check with the department, they would know when the briefings were given to us by the minister and by his staff.

So it's not a matter of the exact date. The question I'm asking is, even if it was a month before the Qu'Appelle River crested or started to flood in the St-Lazare area, when the briefing was given to us, the Qu'Appelle River was not even mentioned. I asked the question about the Qu'Appelle River; I was told that the Qu'Appelle River was not even considered a factor in the flood of this—for this spring. And so, at that point in time, I suggested that perhaps we should get some levels from the Qu'Appelle River, because those of us who live in the area understand the amount of water that was coming into the system from the excessive amount of water in Saskatchewan last year and through the winter.

**Mr. Selinger:** The reason I was asking for the dates is because there were some very serious weather—there was a blizzard, I believe, April 29th to May 3rd, May 4th, and then—

**Mr. Derkach:** I appreciate what the Premier is saying. This was at least a month prior to the blizzard that we received in the area.

**Mr. Selinger:** I thank the member from Russell for that, but the reason I was asking is because there were some very serious weather events which came

later in the spring—April, late April, early May—which added a lot of precipitation to the system. And there were also weather events that were, as I understand it, occurring in Saskatchewan, which added more moisture or precipitation into the Qu'Appelle Valley system.

But the member raises important questions about how much information do we have, how fast do we get it, how fast can we convey it, and those are important issues. I'm informed, as soon as people got information that there was a risk or a threat to somebody, that that was communicated to people, so that they could respond to it. And the gap between getting the information and response—you know, obviously, the larger the gap between the information received and the response helps them to prepare. But, in the case of some of these weather events, they're late-breaking events.

**Mr. Derkach:** Madam Chair, the blizzard that we had and the weather events that we had in late April were compounding the impact of water that was coming from the Assiniboine basin from—and largely from Saskatchewan.

But the reason I raise this in terms of the forecasting is that, at one point in time we had a water resources manager with a complement of staff located in the area, in the Shellmouth area—actually in Roblin, and at one point in time right at Shellmouth—and those human resources were able to give more accurate forecasting because they lived in the area.

\* (16:00)

This year we had some difficulty in communicating with government officials the fact that we were facing unprecedented levels in the Assiniboine—upper reaches of the Assiniboine basin. As a matter of fact, three individuals took it upon themselves to travel to Brandon and to provide the Brandon City Council with information that they were gathering as lay people in terms of the flooding that could occur along the Assiniboine Valley, and that happened in February of this year. People—and I can name them, there was Gene Nerbas, Rick Keay, and Cliff Trinder, who actually went to Brandon to advise city council in Brandon that they should get prepared for an unprecedented flood coming down the Assiniboine River. And that was well before the thaw had started in the reaches of the Assiniboine River.

And there has been a constant, I guess, debate going on between people who live in the area and officials from government who are not present in that area about the type of flooding and the amount of flooding that is going to occur. And each year it appears that the people in the area have it forecast far more closely than officials within the departments do.

And I'm not faulting anyone here. I'm just asking the Premier whether they would consider, in the future plans for mitigating flooding and for dealing with the flooding, whether we would have a commitment from the Premier to locate resources in the area where the water is starting from or where the water is coming from so that people downstream in Brandon, Portage and in Winnipeg would be better prepared and better informed about what eventuality they could be facing when there are high water levels in Saskatchewan.

Because, Mr. Premier, at the same time that we were—that people in my area were warning communities about the type of flooding we might receive this year because of knowledge we had of what was happening in Saskatchewan, the government was signing an agreement with Saskatchewan to allow more water to come into the Assiniboine River from Fishing Lake. And to us who live just below the dam, this was of grave concern, especially when there was no consultation with people in the valley about the agreement that was being signed with Saskatchewan.

So I'm asking the Premier whether or not, in their future plans, they would at least consider locating resources in that area to help forecast in a more accurate way what might be happening in that region of the province and in the eastern part of Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Selinger:** I thank the member from Russell for the question.

The short answer is we will talk to our officials about the strategic location of officials for forecasting and where they are best located on any annual basis. They might—it may be different in different years depending upon where the potential risks are. But if there's a high risk of a lot of additional water coming through the upper Assiniboine, then, clearly, the more information we have about that, the earlier we have it, the better off we all are, which I think is the member's point. And so I understand what he's driving at, and it would be in all of our interests if we had better, more accurate

information as early as possible if we think that that's an area of greatest exposure, and so we can review that matter.

And, with respect to the role of local people, it is excellent, I think, when local people have information, that they bring it to the attention of local government and government themselves so that people can analyze that information and see if it's something they—foreshadows or gives them an indication of future challenges that need to be met.

So, I mean, these things can be looked at, and we can ask our people in the department that looks after forecasting, Water Stewardship, whether or not that's the best use of their resources or whether they feel their better deployed elsewhere to provide the maximum amount of information and protection for Manitobans. But it's not an unreasonable question. I think it should be explored.

**Mr. Derkach:** Madam Chair, I have a question for the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick).

Last fall, *Hansard* will show that I asked a question about the lowering of lakes in the Sandy Lake—

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

**Madam Chairperson:** Order. The honourable Government House Leader—

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** Yes, Madam Chairperson, I think the rules state that when moving on to another minister, it's customary to take a recess to ensure that minister is prepared to answer those questions.

So I'd ask for a—

**An Honourable Member:** What rule is that? Where did you get that rule?

**Ms. Howard:** Well, I can quote it for you if you like. Rule 78(4.2) in our rules, on page 38. But, as—but I think the minister is prepared to answer the question, so we can proceed.

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable member for Russell, on the same point of order?

**Mr. Derkach:** No, on a question.

**Madam Chairperson:** Just a moment. I have to rule on the point of order.

Seeing that—[interjection]—okay. The honourable Government House Leader has withdrawn the point of order.

\* \* \*

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable member for Russell, to put his question.

**Mr. Derkach:** And my question is to the Minister of Water Stewardship.

Last fall, *Hansard* will show that I did ask a question regarding the lowering of lakes in western Manitoba to allow for more capacity in the spring runoff. And those lakes, Madam Chair, were Sandy Lake, Salt Lake, Thomas Lake, and all of those had been at high water—extremely high water levels, not just for last year, but for about the last four or five years.

Madam Chair, I was told I didn't know what I was talking about and that, in fact, that the department was handling this in the best way possible. And so the lakes were—although they were allowed to be lowered a small amount, much of the farmland in the area that had been flooded by these lakes, the community of Strathclair was still being threatened by high water. And a lot of the infrastructure, the road infrastructure around these lakes was threatened, as well as the First Nations that—just outside of Sandy Lake, where water was surrounding homes on the reserve, and were—these people were putting up with high water levels and still are today.

Madam Chair, those lakes were not lowered sufficiently, and today we have a situation where, with yesterday's high winds, Highway 16, just west of Strathclair, was being inundated by water from the high levels at Salt Lake. And I want to ask the minister why it is that last fall those lakes were not lowered to accommodate for what we knew was going to be extreme high water levels this spring.

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** When we're talking about the Salt lakes in the area, this has been a long-standing issue. This is an issue where we know that the RM is looking at the issue and that they are working on a plan. They have not submitted their plan to us yet. The Department of Water Stewardship has been working with them, as well as Conservation, to make sure that they're going through the processes that are necessary.

They are aware that they are requiring an environmental licence as well as a water rights permitting licence. And they're working on that, but they have not yet completed that, nor, like I say, has there been a final proposal submitted. They're working on a draft proposal and, again, we're providing the services as they let us know that they need one.

The other issue is that there is very strong public opinion on both sides of the issue. So I'm not sure if the member is representing one side over the other or if he's representing all sides. But we've been made aware that there isn't consensus within the community, and so we wouldn't want to move forward with an action that would negatively affect folks downstream or negatively affect folks upstream. We need to make sure that we're moving in a way that the whole community feels is the appropriate way to go.

\*(16:10)

A public review of each proposal will occur as part of the environmental assessment and the licensing process once these applications are received from the RM, but until we have that we're not able to move forward. It's also important to note that one of the concerns about what the member may be suggesting, what I understand the member has been suggesting for the last while, is there are about 15 cottages on South Salt Lake that could very possibly be flooded if water is released from North Salt Lake.

So these are—this is the information that we have. We wouldn't want the municipality to move in a way where downstream property owners would be damaged and then the RM would, in fact, be liable for those damages. So provincial officials have been and remain available to help with the process.

This is—the member is right when he talks about a long-term situation, and we have to make sure in times of high water that we're making the sorts of decisions that are good for the whole community and that will really be effective for the long term.

**Mr. Derkach:** Well, Madam Chairperson, I really can't believe the response from this minister, and I'm going to go to the Premier (Mr. Selinger) once again because I want to ask the Premier whether he thinks it's acceptable for us to wait for environmental studies. And, by the way, the environmental study was long done at Salt Lake, and it was presented to the community. But the problem with the whole

study was that it only concentrated on the Salt lakes and did not look downstream of the Salt lakes. And because—and, as I had mentioned to the minister before, you can't do a study of the lake alone. You've got to do an entire study that goes from the—where the water enters the Assiniboine River up to the Salt lakes if you're going to do any kind of an impact study, and that's well beyond the municipality's scope. That's got to be something that's undertaken by the Province, not a municipality.

And I want to ask the minister—the Premier (Mr. Selinger) whether he thinks it's acceptable for cottages, personal property, homes to be threatened by high water levels at this time of the year and for the ministers to say that she's waiting for environmental studies to be completed before decisions can be made. We have a situation where property, homes, cottages, farmland, municipal infrastructure is being flooded by high water levels at Salt Lake, Thomas Lake, Sandy Lake, Jackfish Lake today, and the minister is saying she's waiting for the community to come onside.

I don't understand this. Can the Premier explain to me why it is that this area has been isolated as having to come up with all of these studies while their citizens are drowning?

**Mr. Selinger:** I'm aware of the member's concerns about this. And, as I read through the information, it seems to me that the requests that have been made of the community are the traditional information required if they want to provide these outlets on these Salt and Thomas lakes. Now, in certain cases of emergency, there may be the necessity to do it another way. But it looks like, from the information here, that they, since '09, they were advised of the need for licensing under The Water Rights Act and The Environment Act.

So I don't think there's any attempt or any deliberate strategy to treat folks differently, and perhaps it requires more communication so that people understand what's required. But I—my note indicates that provincial officials are available to provide assistance in working through the licensing process to ensure that an emergency procedure is not used on an ongoing basis as a regular mechanism for dealing with it when, in fact, there could be a long-term solution that's brought in place that complies with the laws of Manitoba.

So, clearly, people up there have some pressing issues with water, and our officials are ready to work

with them to try and address them as efficiently as possible.

**Mr. Derkach:** And I thank the Premier for that, and, certainly, I'm not trying to be unreasonable and neither are the people of the area trying to be unreasonable here. The communities were requested to do environmental studies on these lakes before they could be lowered, but the environmental studies concentrated on the immediate areas of the lakes. The environmental studies did not go beyond the municipal boundaries because the municipality has no jurisdiction beyond that.

Yet the impacts of allowing these lakes to be lowered are felt by communities and citizens below the municipal boundaries. So it isn't something that a municipality can do and find an effective solution for, because it's a broader issue than just the municipality. And this is what I've been trying to impress upon the minister and her department, is that, if you're going to do an impact study, you better start at the bottom end of the stream and do the impact study as it goes up to the problem area, and that's well beyond the municipals' responsibility and ability to do.

And so I want to ask the Premier, this has been an ongoing issue, not for one year, not for two years; it's been an ongoing issue for about five years, and we have seen land inundated, woodlots drowned out, completely killed because of high water levels, roads that have been under water for more than two or three years, they've been under water for about five years, in some instances. Farmland—as a matter of fact, a farmer was told that he must've put his fence in on a canoe, because there was no way that he could have fenced his property because it—the water level there seemed to be too high and it seemed to be that way for too long. This is an insulting comment being made of a—to a person who's been suffering these high water levels, whose actual land has been drowned now for more than five years.

And I want to ask the Premier if he finds it acceptable, in the province of Manitoba, to have this condition prevail on people for more than five years? And today these same people are starting to suffer the same consequences as many who are suffering in the Assiniboine Valley and beyond, because of what I would term has been a mismanaged water issue for some time.

**Mr. Selinger:** Well, the member, I believe, is correctly making the point that people shouldn't have to suffer year after year from the same negative

water impacts on their properties. And my information says that the departments of both Conservation and Water Stewardship have been working with the RM of Strathclair for several years on these projects, and that it's a question of getting everybody to actually look at what the impacts are of the decisions they'd like to make on people downstream, and to make sure that if you're solving a problem for one group of citizens out there, you're not making the situation worse for another group of citizens.

And so that's why these procedures are put in place, to ensure that one person's—one group's solution isn't to the detriment of another group. And the point that the—the information I've got here is that using local states of emergency as—on an ongoing basis is not necessarily the best procedure for moving water, because it winds up not addressing the legislative—and impacts on people, other people in the community.

So officials remain completely open and willing to work with the local RM to follow the proper procedures, to take a look at what can be done in such a way that it doesn't increase the harm for others by solving one problem. And that's an important—these are very difficult circumstances. Any time you have a downstream community that could be potentially affected by an upstream community's decision, there has to be the proper review of it to ensure that one group's not better off at the expense of another group.

So all these environmental impacts have to be considered and they have to be considered on the merits of the environment itself, but also on the impacts of other communities in the immediate area.

**Mr. Derkach:** I just want to make the Premier aware of something here, and an individual by the name of Mr. Baker, Wayne Baker is a—he's a paramedic with the Province, as a matter of fact, or with the ARHA, but he has a quarter section of land where he and his wife have tried to make a living, also raising some cattle. He's had to sell his cattle herd because his land has been flooded by the high waters at Salt Lake. And when Manitoba Emergency Measures had come out to witness what was happening in his area, they had put in writing the fact that, as he says, and I quote: They said I had put my fence posts in from a boat. Unquote. And this was put to him in writing by Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization.

\* (16:20)

Now, Mr.—Madam Chair, and I say this to the Premier, because I appeal on behalf of people like this. Mr. Baker was at the presentation by the consultant who was hired by the municipality when he gave his report, and Mr. Baker was in tears as he tried to describe the situation of his family to the people who were in attendance.

And the minister was not there. She was invited, but she did not come when this presentation was being made. And these are types of people who have suffered immeasurably, not just for one year. And so I appeal to the Premier on their behalf that we can have all kinds of studies made, but unless we're prepared to take some action to alleviate the suffering of people, we don't really answer their problems. And I'm hoping that those people, who today are suffering in the rest of the province from unprecedented flooding, are not going to be treated the way that people of the RM of Strathclair are.

As a matter of fact, I want tell the Premier, also, the RM municipal council of Strathclair tried to meet with the minister. As a matter of fact, when the municipal conference was held, they joined another municipality to get access to the minister to meet with her and to plead with her about the situations they were facing. The minister said she would not meet with them and refused to continue the meeting until the RM of Strathclair left.

Now, that was reported to me. I did not witness it, but that was reported to me by the municipality. Now, if that isn't true, I want to get a commitment from the Premier that his minister will, in fact, meet with this municipality to try to come to a conclusion of this issue before more people suffer as a result of the continuing high water levels at these chain links—chain lakes in that area.

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, there are very serious water issues and hardships being caused all throughout Manitoba by the high water levels this year, and people have very legitimate concerns that need to be addressed.

In this particular case, the information I have indicates that since '09 they, from time to time, operated under emergency conditions, and they were offered support to follow the proper environmental licensing and water rights permitting requirements for their initiatives to alleviate high water levels on Salt and Thomas lakes. And they are—so far have draft proposals, but they need final proposals and, once they are received, officials will move on them very quickly.

So, apparently, this information has been made available to the local municipality and that there's a great willingness on the part of public servants at the provincial level to help them move through that process to get the proper licensing application completed so that proper decisions could be made, so that, for example, there is not a—for example, my information says there are cottages on south Salt Lake that could be flooded by draining North Salt Lake, and so all of these matters need to be considered through following the proper procedures.

So I would encourage the MLA for the area, who's asking the questions, to see if he can help the local municipality work through the proper procedures with officials who are apparently available to work with them to do this, to get this matter in a format that could be properly addressed in terms of licensing requirements, because that seems to me to offer the possibility of some long-term solutions being arrived at that will not make some people better off by making other people worse off. And those factors need to be considered in the operation of additional outlets from these lakes.

**Mr. Derkach:** I want to thank the Premier for his answer. I just want to respond to that, and then I want to ask another question on another issue.

Mr. Premier, I want you to know that the municipality doesn't want to impact negatively on anybody downstream. As a matter of fact, there are landowners and residents downstream who would be impacted if, in fact, they were to allow the water to leave Middle Salt Lake or South Salt Lake in a big rush; that's not their intent. Certainly, the consultant who did the study indicated to them that in order to alleviate the problem, there were certain steps that had to be taken.

However, he also indicated at that meeting, and I was present at the meeting, that further work needed to be done below the municipal area, the boundaries, but that wasn't the municipality's responsibility, nor could they—or they didn't have the jurisdiction to go beyond that.

And that's a provincial issue, and so telling the municipality that they've got to have their studies complete is one thing, but their studies are dependent upon what can happen downstream. And that's not something they have any jurisdiction or any power over; that's something the Province has to respond to. So they're stuck with a dilemma, as is the Harrison municipality just above there.

And so these have to be broader studies, and they have to be undertaken by the Province. But I thank the minister—the Premier (Mr. Selinger) for at least acknowledging that there is an issue here, and, as he notes himself, 2009. The problem was there before 2009. We still haven't got a resolution to it in 2011, and that's not acceptable.

The other—but I do want to—and that's my comment.

The question I have for the Premier has to do with the people in the Assiniboine Valley below the Shellmouth Dam, and that includes the communities of Shellmouth, the community of St-Lazare, Millwood, the community of Miniota and those surrounding areas who have—who were the first to be flooded in this spring because the Shellmouth Dam went over its spillway and continues to do so to this day. That whole region below the Shellmouth Dam—and I don't know if the Premier had an opportunity to tour that when he flew above the Assiniboine Valley, whether he went as far as the Shellmouth Dam was, but I had a chance to fly over that area and into Saskatchewan and into the Fishing Lake area. And I can tell the Premier that in fact the channel that was dug during this winter is flowing into the White Sand River and, as a matter of fact, is taking water into the Assiniboine Valley.

But I want to ask whether or not the compensation package that was announced by the Premier, the special compensation package, will also be made available to the people below the Shellmouth Dam and to the communities of St-Lazare, Miniota and the people who live in the valley who have been swamped since, I guess, early April and even March.

**Mr. Selinger:** Just before I turn my—to respond to that question, the member from Russell had some follow-on comments from our last round of questions, and he indicates that the municipalities can't complete their studies because some of the things they have to look at are outside their jurisdiction. I think, if that's the case, then that's where the Province and the adjoining—presumably, if it's outside their jurisdiction, it's in some other municipality, is that not correct?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Selinger:** So, if that's the case, presumably we have to bring people together to take a total look at this situation. I wouldn't want the member to think that things should be indefinitely stalled because

there's some element of information or analysis that is required from outside the jurisdiction.

The municipalities can work with the provincial officials to draw these things to a proper conclusion, and they can engage other municipalities and First Nations as necessary to prepare all that information so a proper licence can be proceeded with. I mean, if they were notified in '09 of the procedures and we're here in '011 now, clearly, there needs to be some more rapid follow-up to get this information done and get final applications in so that these outlets aren't being operated on an emergency basis that may impact on other communities without them having a chance to properly have input into that, and they might be bearing the consequences of that, which would be of major concern for the Department of Water Stewardship, which would be an appropriate concern as regulators. I believe the member from Russell understands that.

In the Shellmouth Dam area and below that on the Assiniboine River, I believe we have brought legislation forward that allows for compensation in that area, and that has been the first time that's ever done. And as I—if I recall correctly, and I stand to be corrected on this, I thought we took some measures last year to deal with the folks in that area. So there has been compensation offered over the last three years. So, for the first time in the history of the province, in the operation of these facilities, there has been provision made for compensation, and it has been acted upon for up to three years, I'm informed. So that's a big step forward and it's a step that allows people to get some recognition for the role they play in storing additional water in Manitoba at a high-time of high water levels.

\* (16:30)

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable member for Russell. But just prior to recognizing the honourable member for Russell, I just wanted to remind members if they'd like to put up their hand and then get recognized, their comments will appear in *Hansard*. Otherwise, they will not.

**Mr. Derkach:** Thank you, Madam, just one last final question to the Premier. I want to advise the Premier that the special compensation program was through the Department of Agriculture. As a matter of fact, last year, if I can just give the Premier a flavour, the compensation for a flooded field of canola was \$3.65 an acre. The compensation for another field of canola has not been settled to date and has—and the

person has never received any compensation from any source to this point in time.

We have homes that are flooded. We have property that has got excessive damage because of the fast moving waters that are coming out of the Shellmouth Dam. I witnessed a home that had water halfway up the picture window this year. That home is unrepairable and will—something will have to be done about that as well.

This is because of unprecedented water levels in the Assiniboine Valley just below the Shellmouth Dam, continuing on to St-Lazare. And a lot of work was done to mitigate against the high waters in St-Lazare but, Mr. Premier, there are still people suffering flooding even though much work was done by both the department and the community.

There was some inevitable flooding that took place. And so people in the area are wondering whether they will be included for consideration under the special program as were people who were artificially flooded in other parts of the province. And that's—and it's not a—there's not a lot of people in that area who would qualify for that, but there are, you know, in an overall—if you compare it to the overall issues in Manitoba. But, indeed, these people have suffered as much as people in Elie or around the Lake Manitoba. And so I'm wondering whether the Premier will confirm today for the people in the Shellmouth area and below, whether the special compensation package will be eligible in that area as well.

**Mr. Selinger:** Yes, I thank the member for the question. Again, there has, in law, been put requirements for compensation for people that are artificially flooded, and the people in the Shellmouth Dam area are treated the same way as the people that are south of the floodway, and they have received compensation in the past.

If there's some hold up for somebody getting compensation, I hope the member will give us more specific information, and we can examine that and see if there is something we can do to move that along. If you have any specific information, you could provide myself to the minister, I'd appreciate that.

A couple of other points the member raised—I understand that a permanent water resource officer is located in Shoal Lake, near Russell. I understand that that's where they're located, near Russell and as well, there are staff in Neepawa.

On the Fishing Lake question, I understand that a natural channel is flowing out of Fishing Lake at 150 to 200 cubic feet a second, and the man-made channel is not flowing. So I just—well, that's the information I have. We can check that again if you have any way of verifying your point on that, I would appreciate that. That's the information I've got. We'll check it again, based on your concerns.

**Mr. Derkach:** Madam Chair, and I would be pleased to provide the Premier with a copy of a video that I took out of the plane when we flew above the Fishing Lake. The channel is flowing and, as a matter of fact, there's another channel that we didn't even know about, and that's from Good Spirit Lake that is flowing into the Whitesand and the Assiniboine River as well, and it's a man-made channel as well.

So, you know, when people in Portage and downstream in the Assiniboine Valley are suffering because of high water levels, we need to take a look at what's happening in the Assiniboine Valley basin. And, you know, officers in Neepawa and Shoal Lake are no good to the people who are working in the Shellmouth Dam area and dealing with the issues there.

So I just wanted to mention to the Premier that, indeed, the Fishing Lake channel, man-made channel, is flowing, and I can provide the videos that will confirm what I'm saying.

**Mr. Selinger:** I look forward to receiving them. The video, I hope it's date-stamped and time-stamped so we can see whether it's flowing now, which is the point I was making. And the officers in Shoal Lake, near Russell, or staff in Neepawa, they're mobile; they're not captured by any constraints. They can move into these areas and provide support and resources as required, and many of them do that. Many of them are on the road on a regular basis, out there serving the community.

There is legislated compensation for people affected by artificial flooding of the Shellmouth Dam. As well, there is a Shellmouth liaison committee, and these folks can have representation on that committee so they can have input into the operation of the Shellmouth Dam.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** My question to the Premier: There are pretty clear indications of the plans of the federal government with respect to the Canadian Wheat Board. I just wondered what the Premier's response is going to be.

**Mr. Selinger:** Well, the member from River Heights will know that we've been a supporter of the Wheat Board and we continue to be a supporter of the Wheat Board and we are concerned about some of the proposals we're hearing about taking the single desk away from the Wheat Board.

**Mr. Gerrard:** There are—the federal government has expressed a pretty clear intent to take the single desk away from the Wheat Board.

*Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

Should that, in fact, be the direction that the federal government goes, there are a number of people who—a considerable number of people who believe that it would be possible for the Canadian Wheat Board to exist and provide choice to farmers. But, for that to happen, it would likely require some significant role with the Province, and I just wondering what the position of the Province is going to be if—what the Province will do, should the federal government remove the single desk from the Canadian Wheat Board.

**Mr. Selinger:** I thank the member for the question. We believe that the Wheat Board should operate according to the wishes of farmers and that they should have the voice in that. And they have consistently said they wanted the Wheat Board to maintain a single desk and offer services as they have over several years to the benefit of all farmers in western Canada.

So that's the view of the government, is that the farmers should have the voice in determining how the Wheat Board should operate. And we support farmers in that regard and will continue to support them in that regard, to have their voice be the dominant variable in deciding how the Wheat Board should operate.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Will the provincial government be taking any action with respect to this?

**Mr. Selinger:** Yes.

**Mr. Gerrard:** And, very briefly, and my last question: What will that action be?

**Mr. Selinger:** Well, the member will know, in the past, that we've been very vigorous in expressing our concerns about not only the impact on farmers, but

the over 400 jobs impacted on Winnipeg as well as the impact of the Wheat Board being deregulated and in terms of the role it plays in moving product through Churchill. It could have a very negative impact there as well.

So all of those concerns are front and centre. They've already been communicated by our Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) to his federal counterpart, and we will continue to communicate those concerns vigorously on behalf of farmers who want to have a say in how the Wheat Board operates on their behalf.

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** And with the very significant flooding and challenges with both lake, stream, river and overland flooding this year, a lot of farmers in Manitoba won't be able to seed this spring and won't, therefore, have crops to market, and I'm wondering if the Premier (Mr. Selinger) can just indicate whether the government is looking at any per acre approach to dealing with the very significant pressures being felt by farmers this year as a result of the inability to seed.

**Mr. Selinger:** The member will know that we have an Excess Moisture Insurance Program in place, which we have made permanent, and is available every year for those that wish to participate in it. And we've always encouraged our producers to purchase that insurance and have it available for exactly these types of circumstances.

\* (16:40)

**Mr. McFadyen:** And so, then, just to be clear, is the Premier saying that the government's not contemplating—in light of the exceptional circumstances this year, there's no thought being given to any additional support for Manitoba producers beyond what's already been announced?

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, we have the Excess Moisture Insurance. In the past, we've collaborated with the federal government on what additional programs—under the AgriStability programs and AgriRecovery programs—could be made available, and we definitely will keep an open mind on that and have that discussion with the federal government. But we do have Excess Moisture Insurance available to all Manitoba producers that wish to have it.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Acting Speaker, can the Premier just indicate what warnings were provided to people with an interest in property around Lake Manitoba with respect to the current high water that

they're dealing with? What warnings were they given, and when were those warnings issued?

**Mr. Selinger:** If the member's asking me for specific dates, I'd have to get that information for him. But, during question period, I informed him—and I think he was aware of this, in any event—that under legislation in Manitoba, people—the municipalities are required to have an emergency plan in place. And they were given information that water levels could be high this year, and engaged early by our Emergency Measures people to start preparing for the potential of high water throughout all those areas in Manitoba where it is occurring and could occur at the time that it was identified.

**Mr. McFadyen:** And, with respect to all of those people, which includes farmers, homeowners, cottagers, First Nations, Métis people and others around the lake, what form did that notice and warning take?

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, I was indicating to the member that we worked with the local municipalities, and they are required to have a plan and an emergency operations committee. So there was early contact with many of these municipalities that were in areas where high water could occur so that they could be abreast of these matters and be ready to deal with it.

Some of the councils, municipal councils, that were elected had new members as a result of the fall election so there was some training requirements, and training was offered through Emergency Measures on how they could be operational to deal with these kinds of issues.

**Mr. McFadyen:** And the operation of the Portage Diversion, which the government has acknowledged is the cause of much of the increase in water levels on Lake Manitoba, is obviously an issue where flooding is caused as a result of deliberate choices.

And without—and we're not questioning the choices per se, but I'm wondering if the Premier can indicate what treatment those who have been flooded around Lake Manitoba are going to get, and is it on par with the treatment of those who were in the vicinity of the dike at Hoop and Holler?

**Mr. Selinger:** The information about the special assistance program for Lake Manitoba has been made fully public. It's available to the member and any member of his caucus or any member of the public that wants to review it. It includes 100 per cent of the cost of engineering advice for emergency or short-term flood mitigation works, up to \$2,000. It

includes 100 per cent of the cost of moving or raising homes and cottages, up to \$20,000. It includes financial assistance for emergency flood protection, damages and restoration for Lake Manitoba families, including actual expenses for flood-proofing, to a maximum of \$10,000. It includes 90 per cent for reasonable costs of restoration of homes, up to \$200,000; and 90 per cent of the cost of structural damage to cottages, up to \$90,000. And that additional 10 per cent, which was often termed a co-payment, can be waived entirely for property owners who commit to measures that generate permanent flood mitigation. And those are the measures that were taken for the people around the Lake Manitoba area.

As well, there's comprehensive financial assistance for producers around Lake Manitoba, including for renting alternative pastures, transporting feed and livestock, mitigation, damages, and restoration.

**Mr. McFadyen:** And again to the Premier: During the Estimates process for Executive Council, which wrapped up 33 days ago, on reviewing *Hansard*, the Premier, on 85 occasions, indicated he didn't know the answer to the question and would get back to us with his response 85 times. And it's now 33 days since the end of that process, and I'm wondering if the Premier can—and we acknowledge that it has been a busy time for government, but I wonder if the Premier can indicate when we can expect responses to those 85 outstanding questions.

**Mr. Selinger:** I thank the member for acknowledging that it has been a busy time, and staff have been fully engaged in providing support and resources to people affected by flooding throughout Manitoba, which is, I think the member would agree, a very appropriate focus for their energies. And I want to commend the staff who have done that, who have put their efforts into providing support and protection and good policy and program information that would help people throughout Manitoba.

And, with respect to the questions that he asked for information on, we will certainly respond to them within the time frames that usually occur in that case or even better, as resources are available, but the member knows very well that we're fully engaged in dealing with matters related to the flood throughout Manitoba. It's an unprecedented amount of extensive water challenges throughout the province this year, and the public service has been working to the maximum to respond to those challenges.

**Mr. McFadyen:** The 85 questions that he didn't have answers to relate to areas involving staff and departments that would not be and, in fact, are not, directly involved in the flood effort, and so while we do acknowledge that it has been a busy time, it's now 33 days. And I wonder if the Premier can be specific about when he will discharge his duty in terms of accountability to the Legislature and provide responses to those questions.

*Madam Chairperson in the Chair*

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, I thank the member for the request for information with respect to those questions and the acknowledgment that there have been pressing matters of urgent concern to Manitobans that require government to be there to support them, and the 700 people that are working across government right now on the flood are from a variety of departments. Some of them may be directly involved in the flood. Some of them may be providing support to others, and even where there are 700 people that are directly involved, often people are picking up some of the responsibilities they might otherwise have to allow them to be more fully engaged in the flood.

So I will check with our officials and just see how quickly they can get that information to him, but I, again, appreciate the member opposite recognizing that there are pressing matters of public concern that need to be addressed by government officials and that they're turning their attention to that.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Many of the outstanding issues relate to the financing and funding of the stadium deal, and I'm wondering how many of the officials involved in the stadium deal are currently involved in the flood fight.

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, just in my last question, I indicated to the member that public service is engaged in responding to the flood as well as many other pressing matters of providing front-line services to Manitoba, and the member would like information with respect to the stadium and we'll get that to him as soon as the officials can compile the information and make it available to him.

\* (16:50)

**Mr. McFadyen:** Can the Premier just indicate in terms of the ownership of the windmills at St. Leon by Pattern Energy—

**An Honourable Member:** St. Joseph.

**Mr. McFadyen:** –sorry, at St. Joseph for Pattern Energy, what is the—where is the control room for those windmills?

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, I'll have to verify that information. I believe this may have been one of the questions he asked me earlier, for which I need to get him information.

We did see a structure that provided control in the area when we went out there for some of the preliminary opening procedures for the windmills. But I—if I understand his question properly, he seems to be wondering whether the control is actually in the local area or whether it's outside the local area. And if that's the point he's driving at, he can clarify that and I'll try to find that out for him.

**Mr. McFadyen:** The Premier's correct. That is the question. It relates to the—there is a—for all generating facilities, a control room for the hydro dams in northern Manitoba. That control operation is based here in Winnipeg, and just asking where the similar operation is with respect to the windmills that are owned by Pattern Energy. And so that's the clarification.

Now, just in terms of the next question, on the release of the 2005 routing study into Bipole III, the CEO of Hydro indicated in the media that there were a bunch—that was his word—a bunch of routing studies that were done. He went on to say there was a whole series of studies that were done. I wonder if the Premier can just provide us with the dates of those studies and undertake to table them.

**Mr. Selinger:** Just quickly, a follow-up on his question about the windmills.

I did see a control building in the area and, at the time, they were managing the shutting off and putting on of some of the windmills from that site, and we'll verify if that's the normal operational site for the windmills in that area or whether there's another control structure elsewhere, outside of the area, that may also be playing a role.

On the question of the studies, he described it as a bunch of studies, as indicated by the president-CEO of Manitoba Hydro. We'll work through the Crown corporation to find out what the president-CEO was referring to.

**Mr. McFadyen:** One of the—or the study that was publicly released by government was the 2007 study, known as the Farlinger report—

**Madam Chairperson:** Order. I just want to—order. Excuse me for just a moment.

I want to remind all honourable members that there are to be no exhibits here in the Legislative Assembly. That goes for committee the same as it does for question period.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, to continue his question.

**Mr. McFadyen:** And I regret I didn't get to see the member for Dawson Trail's exhibit, but, Madam Deputy—Madam Chair, the—on the issue of the Farlinger report, which is the one that was released in 2007, can the Premier just indicate whether that report was provided in draft form and distributed within government prior to it being finalized and issued publicly?

**Mr. Selinger:** I'd have to check the record on that.

**Mr. McFadyen:** And, just while he's checking the record on whether or not it was provided in draft, could he also indicate whether there were any edits made to that study—to the draft, prior to it being finalized and released publicly?

**Mr. Selinger:** Yes.

**Mr. McFadyen:** And, can the Premier just also indicate whether Manitoba Hydro, the engineers and the experts at Hydro, ever presented an option to government to deal with reliability of the Dorsey Converter Station that was dramatically less expensive than the option that's currently being pursued by government?

**Mr. Selinger:** I'd have to check on that.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Can the Premier just indicate, in terms of health care, issues have arisen recently, as he knows, in the area of community pediatrics and the recent directive that came out from the WRHA barring many community pediatricians from being the physician of record for infant patients within some wards and hospitals in Winnipeg, can the Premier indicate whether he's had a chance to look into that directive and deal with what appears to be a heavy-handed attempt to take choice away from parents?

**Mr. Selinger:** The member characterizes what's going on here in one way. I believe the folks involved in providing services and the medical director for pediatrics have looked at a measure that apparently is in operation in other provinces in Canada, and what it does is it—from the perspective

of the folks in the WRHA and the medical director for pediatrics, it puts on record the doctor or the physician that's actually providing the care while the child's in the institution.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Madam Chairperson, reading the documentation that was provided to us that came out of the WRHA and the response of the community pediatricians, it appears as though those doctors are being denied the right to admit infant patients into certain wards and are being told that they are no longer able to provide the continuity of care that most medical experts would recommend and that most parents would want for their children. Can the Premier just indicate whether that continues to be the policy of the government or whether they're backing down from that position?

**Mr. Selinger:** I must apologize. I didn't quite catch that question in its full flavour. Could the member repeat that, please?

**Mr. McFadyen:** The question is the change in direction that was issued by correspondence by the WRHA to these community physicians, takes away their ability to admit patients to certain wards within hospitals in Winnipeg and denies parents the ability to choose the physician. The advice that they are providing is that it'll hurt patient care, disrupt the continuity of care for infants, and also deny parents the ability to choose who the pediatrician is who cares for their child. That's the way it's been described.

I want to ask the Premier whether the directive that's been issued is still the policy of the government, or is the government now backing away from it?

**Mr. Selinger:** As I understand it, the medical director for pediatrics was wanting to ensure that the

in-hospital physicians, and who are specialists, who are providing the care to these very sick children on a 24-7 basis were the doctors of record and so that there'd be clarity about that. I don't think there was any intention to deny parents a choice of which pediatricians they have for care outside of those circumstances, and one of the purposes, I believe, of the director of medical for pediatrics meeting with these physicians is to review these matters and to assure them that they will continue to have a valuable role to play in providing care to these children and their families but that, when a child is under the care of an in-hospital specialist, that that be the doctor of record because they are, in fact, providing the care while they are in the facility.

**Madam Chairperson:** Just prior to the Committee of Supply rising for the day, will the opposition critic please identify on the record whether questioning is completed or whether questioning will continue for the honourable First Minister (Mr. Selinger), the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), the honourable Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick), and the honourable Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald)?

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader):** The questioning will continue with all four ministers.

**Madam Chairperson:** Thank you for the clarification.

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Wednesday, June 1, 2011**

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