

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Eighth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
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.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, April 29, 2004**

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

**Highway 227**

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PETITIONS**

**Minimum Sitting Days for Legislative Assembly**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Legislature sat for only 37 days in 2003.

Manitobans expect their Government to be accountable, and the number of sitting days has a direct impact on the issue of public accountability.

Manitobans expect their elected officials to be provided the opportunity to be able to hold the Government accountable.

The Legislative Assembly provides the best forum for all MLAs to debate and ask questions of the Government, and it is critical that all MLAs be provided the time needed in order for them to cover constituent and party duties.

Establishing a minimum number of sitting days could prevent the government of the day from limiting the rights of opposition members from being able to ask questions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider recognizing the need to sit a minimum of 80 days in any given calendar year.

Signed by P. Brar, Val Stark and Lynn Wagar.

**Mr. Speaker:** In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition.

It is unacceptable for the residents of Manitoba to travel the unsafe gravel roads of Highway 227 in the constituencies of Lakeside and Portage la Prairie.

Inclement weather can make Highway 227 treacherous to all drivers.

Allowing better access to Highway 227 would ease the flow of traffic on the Trans-Canada Highway.

Residences along Highway 227 are not as accessible to emergency services due to the nature of the current condition of the roadway.

The condition of these gravel roads can cause serious damage to all vehicles, which is unacceptable.

Residents of Manitoba deserve a better rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider having Highway 227 paved from the junction of 248 and 227 all the way to Highway 16, the Yellowhead route.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider supporting said initiatives to ensure the safety for all Manitobans and all Canadians who travel on Manitoba highways.

Submitted on behalf of Ken Tully, May Tully, Doris Tully and others.

**Mr. Speaker:** In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

### **Proposed PLA–Floodway**

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Province of Manitoba has tabled legislation in the Legislature that may result in the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway by the summer of 2005.

The Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA).

The proposed PLA would force all employees on the project to belong to a union.

Approximately 95 percent of the heavy construction companies in Manitoba are currently non-unionized.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association has indicated that the forced unionization of all employees may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

The chair of B.C.'s 2010 Construction Leaders Taskforce has stated, "Major industrial projects built under project labour agreements from the energy sector in Alberta to off-shore development on the East Coast have repeatedly incurred cost overruns, labour disruptions and delays."

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

Manitobans deserve an open and fair competition that protects taxpayers from unnecessary costs and respects workers' democratic choice.

Manitobans support the right of any company, both union and non-union, to participate in the expansion of the Red River Floodway.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his Government's forced unionization plan of companies involved with the Red River Floodway expansion.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider entering into discussions with business, construction and labour groups to ensure any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Signed Ashlee Heyens, Joanna Sallows, Jean-Guy Doiron and others.

In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

\* (13:35)

### **Alzheimer's Disease**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Alzheimer's is a debilitating disease.

Cholinesterase inhibitors are known to slow or even prevent the progression of Alzheimer's.

The provincial government asked for the development of an Alzheimer's strategy in 2000 and was presented with nine recommendations in 2002, none of which has yet been implemented.

In the absence of a provincial Alzheimer's strategy, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority put in place a policy in November 2003 whereby Alzheimer's patients entering personal care homes are being weaned from certain Alzheimer medications in a move that the WRHA's vice-

president of long-term care has referred to as a financial necessity.

The administrative costs of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority have more than tripled since 1999, to a total of more than \$16 million a year.

In a move that amounts to two-tier medicine, the families of Alzheimer's sufferers in personal care homes may request that the drugs continue to be delivered at the family's expense.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) to ensure that his attempts to balance his department's finances are not at the expense of the health and well-being of seniors and other vulnerable Manitobans suffering from this debilitating disease.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider reversing his decision to deny Alzheimer's patients in personal care homes access to certain medications.

To request the Minister of Health to consider implementing a provincial Alzheimer's strategy.

Signed by Karen von Hacht, Robert J. Sampson, Robin Stacey and others.

In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

### **Proposed PLA—Floodway**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Under the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway, the Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA) which will require all floodway workers to pay union dues and which may require all non-unionized companies and workers to join a union.

This Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) has publicly stated a project labour agreement would automatically require all floodway workers to pay union dues, even if they are not part of a union.

Forcing all floodway workers to pay union dues may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his Government's plan to force all workers involved in the floodway expansion to pay union dues even if they are not part of a union.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ensuring any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Signed by Gary Coleman, Bonnie Dayment, Rejean Courcelles and others.

In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Province of Manitoba has tabled legislation in the Legislature that may result in the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway by the summer of 2005.

The Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA).

The proposed PLA would force all employees on the project to belong to a union.

Approximately 95 percent of heavy construction companies in Manitoba are currently non-unionized.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association has indicated that the forced unionization of all employees may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

The chair of B.C.'s 2010 Construction Leaders Taskforce has stated, "Major industrial projects built under project labour agreements from the energy sector in Alberta to off-shore development on the East Coast have repeatedly incurred cost overruns, labour disruptions and delays."

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

Manitobans deserve an open and fair competition that protects taxpayers from unnecessary costs and respects workers' democratic choice.

\* (13:40)

Manitobans support the right of any company, both union and non-union, to participate in the expansion of the Red River Floodway.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his Government's forced unionization plan of companies involved with the Red River Floodway expansion.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider entering into discussions with business, construction

and labour groups to ensure any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Signed by Paul Caron, Al Hardy, Randy Palsen and others.

**Mr. Speaker:** In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

## TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a Manitoba Liquor Control Commission Nine Month Report for the period April 1 to December 31, 2003.

I am also pleased to table a Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Third Quarter Report for the nine months ended December 31, 2003.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the following Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, the 2004-2005 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for Manitoba Finance.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill 19-The Public Schools Amendment Act

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), that Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living, that Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Bjornson:** This bill will contain a number of amendments to strengthen The Public Schools Act, including clarifying roles and responsibilities, streamlining administrative procedures, allow school boards to utilize modern technology to facilitate board meetings, address MTS's request that

parameters around how limited-term teacher contracts are to be established and general housekeeping matters.

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

#### **Bill 48—The Human Tissue Amendment Act**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), that Bill 48, The Human Tissue Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tissus humains, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Health, seconded by the honourable Minister of Healthy Living, that Bill 48, The Human Tissue Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, amendments to the act are meant to increase Manitoba's organ donation rate. However, donation rates nationwide are low and Manitoba's amendments to this legislation will help improve those rates to save lives and make the quality of life better for all Manitobans.

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

\* (13:45)

#### **Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Faith Academy 31 Grade 10 students under the direction of Mrs. Colleen Funk. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh).

Also in the public gallery we have from Isaac Brock School 25 Grade 9 students under the direction of Miss Heather Wright and Miss Darcie Mitchell. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Ms. Mihychuk).

### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

#### **Health Care Services Government Initiatives**

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has increased the health care budget by \$1 billion, yet services have only deteriorated. Eleven patients have died while waiting for cardiac surgery. Front-line doctors and nurses are telling us that there is an ER crisis. What is the Premier doing to fix this?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Part of the ER challenges, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we have hired and have in place now over 800 more nurses today than we did when we came into office. As opposed to having reductions of doctors in the nineties, the mid-nineties in particular right through to the end of the nineties, we have an increase in the number of doctors throughout Manitoba.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, despite this Premier promising to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million, it continues. In fact, it gets worse. Patients are waiting hours on end before receiving care. Tragically, others have died before receiving care. What is the Premier doing to address this problem, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, the reduction in patients in hallways was some 80 percent on average year over year from the 1999 period. I note in my own community hospital considerable reduction in the number of patients in the hallways and, of course, the minister has announced the emergency room task force report to co-ordinate our efforts even more effectively.

#### **Emergency Rooms Patient Deaths**

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this Premier if any other patients have died in an emergency room while on the waiting list in the last month.

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I know that, regrettably, every day is a life and death situation in the emergency wards. Many lives are saved, some lives are lost in ambulances, some lives are lost in operations and some lives are lost in the emergency ward.

### **Emergency Rooms Patient Deaths**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Eleven patients have died waiting for cardiac surgery. Sharon Horn fell through the cracks of the mental health system and froze to death in the snow. Dorothy Madden died in the St. Boniface ER after waiting six hours without being seen by a doctor. Last week in the St. Boniface ER another woman died after waiting two hours without being seen by a doctor.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health: Can he tell us why yet another patient has died without treatment under his watch?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, as we speak, the former head of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Alberta is investigating 88 alleged deaths in the ER at Saskatoon hospital. As we speak, our head of quality care from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority is in Calgary investigating two alleged deaths in the Calgary ER.

We set up a task force, Mr. Speaker, that is not a one-shot affair, but it is a task force that is designed to, "oversee the implementation of improvements to the emergency care; listen and learn from patients and families who have assessed emergency medical care; work with emergency staff, hospitals and office of Chief Medical Examiner to develop both short- and long-term improvements to emergency care in Winnipeg."

We have an ongoing group that is working now and into the future to improve the emergency care not in Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, I am dismayed at this minister's response to this question. This woman came in by ambulance, was triaged as a Level 3 but was not seen by a doctor until she went into cardiac arrest, just like Dorothy Madden.

Can the Minister of Health tell us why this patient triaged at a Level 3 was not seen by a doctor for two hours until she went into cardiac arrest?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, let me point out to the member that ever since the Sinclair inquiry came

about, we put in place a quality incident occurrence procedure. One of the reasons that a lot of information is provided now and was not provided during the 1990s is there was no such process in place.

\* (13:50)

We put in place quality assurance. When a critical incident occurs, Mr. Speaker, a system is set in, an investigation is undertaken, the family is informed, the investigation is undertaken. When there is a death, the CME is informed and in addition now when an occurrence occurs it goes to the emergency task force for review.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, I am asking about a specific case at St. Boniface Hospital and I think this minister has the responsibility and the accountability to respond to the questions. This patient came in by ambulance, was triaged and was put on a hospital stretcher. I would like to ask this minister: Did this patient die in the ER hallway at St. Boniface Hospital?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, there are regular critical incidents that occur in this system. In the last several weeks, there was a critical incident that occurred at St. Boniface Hospital. The ER task force was alerted. The family was informed. A review is taking place. It is being discussed with the CME, and the family has asked that it be maintained at that level. I have no authority to release any information other than to say the ER task force is reviewing it, the CME is reviewing it to see whether or not it is preventable.

The quality critical-incident team kicked in and met with the family, Mr. Speaker, and an outside person has been brought in to review as they do in all cases. There are cases that occur on a regular basis. Critical incidents occur and we intend to start putting those critical incident issues on the Web site so we can have some public acknowledgment of the process.

### **Emergency Rooms Patient Deaths**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** I guess my question for the Minister of Health is quite simple. How many more headlines on the front pages of the newspapers are we going to have to see under this minister's watch like, "Heart care in crisis,"



"Medicare system killed my mother," "Government secrecy fuels crisis," "Nine heart patients waited and died"?

How many more headlines are we going to have to see in the newspapers before this minister takes some responsibility and acts?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** First off, Mr. Speaker, one of the lessons from the Sinclair inquiry was that the information be made public and we do not go into a blame game when there are issues that occur. It has been the policy of this Government and our policy that when an incident occurs we look at it, we review it. If we can make improvements, we do. We try to learn whether it is preventable or not preventable. If it is preventable, we try to ensure that an incident of that kind does not happen again. That is one of the reasons why we alert the family and individuals.

As I indicated, there are 88 alleged deaths being investigated in Saskatoon right now by the Alberta registrar and two being investigated in Calgary by the Manitoba authorities.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Mr. Speaker, when this minister is asked questions and legitimate serious questions, he always points to some other jurisdiction or blames someone else or some former government for all the ills that are here in the health care system.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we continue to see patients die in emergency room hallways under this minister's watch. When is he going to stand up, take responsibility and act to fix the problems?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, there was no critical-incident reporting system-wide. There is now. There was no public disclosure. There is now. There was no review done and emergency task force. There is now. There was no process in place. There is now. The overriding lesson from Sinclair report, the tragedy that occurred in the 1990s, was that when systematic or other situations occur, you review them. You look if you can improve the system and you take steps accordingly. That has been our practice and we will continue that practice because that helps improve the health care system even though every day there are challenges we face.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** We have a Minister of Health who says that he is going to continue along the same

course, the procedures are in place. If the procedures are working, Mr. Speaker, why are patients dying in hospital hallways under this minister's watch when he said that hallway medicine has ended?

\* (13:55)

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, the statistics on hallways have been on the Web site ever since we came to office. The members often have referred to it. The member can see a 70% to 80% decrease since we came to office. Not perfect, but recognized by *La Presse* in Montréal and looked at as a model as to how to improve the situation in the ERs across the country. I might add, I also asked the Health Council of Canada to put this item on the agenda of the Health Council of Canada because all provinces are feeling the same pressures in this regard. Not all provinces have the same systems in place that we have in place in this regard.

#### **Emergency Rooms Patient Deaths**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Mr. Speaker, a Manitoban is brought into an emergency ward by ambulance, which indicates need. She is triaged and then left alone till she dies. What is remarkable is all kinds of people are now looking into the problem instead of looking after the patient. When will this minister take charge and see to it that this does not happen again?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot promise perfection. What I can promise is that the people in our system have learned from the Sinclair inquiry and have put in place systems, critical incident reporting, an emergency task force that looks at these situations, looks at improvements every single day. There have been improvements. They will continue.

I admit because we are human there will always be situations that occur. Our job and our duty to the public of Manitoba is to learn from those situations and where we can prevent it, to take all steps necessary to prevent that.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, nobody is asking for perfection. What we are asking for is action. A woman, a Manitoban, an elderly woman comes into an emergency ward by ambulance. She is in need. Emergency is your last place of hope, and all that we

are seeing in case after case is that emergency wards are becoming a place of no hope. When will this minister not look for perfection but take action, take responsibility and deal with the crisis in our emergency wards?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, at the end of May a report is coming out from the federal government that will say there are 10 000 deaths that occur in the system as a result of medical-related and other errors. That report is coming out. It has been a combination across the country. It will talk about 10 000 preventable deaths and strategies to deal with those. We have to deal with that, but we are ahead of that curve because we put in place a number of measures as a result of Sinclair.

Again, every single incident that occurs makes people in the system sick to their stomachs, including me. We have to do our duty to the public of Manitoba and make sure that every time an event occurs, we take steps to ensure that a repeat of that does not happen or we put in place those measures to make sure another event does not happen.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, no one takes satisfaction over these cases. These are hard and they are sensitive, but the families and Manitobans deserve some answers and we have yet to see any answers from the last cases. What do we hear about from this minister? We hear about reports. There is a report coming. We hear about the hush committee, more people involved in dealing with the problem than dealing with the patient. What Manitobans are looking for is action.

Will the minister get up and take personal responsibility and see to it that something is done, that when people come into an emergency they are dealt with in a proper fashion and not die on a gurney next to the desk? That is not acceptable.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, in the last few years we put in place a system when something that is judged a critical incident, which may or may not be a death but is a critical incident, the family is informed. In the instance that the member is referring to the family was informed and talked to.

Three processes are in place. The Chief Medical Examiner is always reviewing the case to see if it is preventable or not. Secondly, it has gone to our critical incident committee to review. That has

already taken place and started, and it has gone to our emergency task force to review.

I might add to the member, we have since put in place measures to hire more nurses and some more nurses are in place. We have put in place electronic triage across the system as only part of the changes that we are putting in place with regard to our ongoing task force to deal with emergencies.

Remember, in Saskatchewan they are investigating situations, in Calgary they are investigating situations. We have an ongoing committee and working as we—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

\* (14:00)

### **Emergency Rooms Patient Deaths**

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Mr. Speaker, I guess what we want to do in the House today is to hold the minister accountable for the many preventable deaths that have happened in emergency wards and in our hospitals over the course of time. People are dying in hallways under this minister's watch, and all he can do is point to other jurisdictions or point to somebody else as a blame game.

We are asking this minister and this Premier (Mr. Doer) to take responsibility, to show leadership. That is what we need, leadership in making sure that not one more person dies before they see a doctor while waiting in an emergency ward or in a hallway.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, that is why we put in place the emergency task force. That is why we have already put in place several of the recommendations. That is why they continue to meet. That is why they are meeting today. That is why they had a teleconference yesterday, and that is why electronic triage is in place and additional staffing has been put in place in this regard.

I think that members opposite ought to reflect on all of the care providers who work every single day under very difficult circumstances and make life and death situations, and to consider the results of the reviews that are taking place before they point fingers.

**Mr. Derkach:** Mr. Speaker, we are pointing fingers on behalf of Manitobans whose family members are dying. Every time this Government runs into a problem, they appoint a task force. Task forces are not going to prevent the death of someone lying in an emergency ward or in a hallway without seeing a doctor. When a person is brought in by ambulance and that person is triaged as a Level 3 case, I think everybody expects that immediate attention will be given by a qualified physician. If that does not happen, the minister better make sure that it does happen. So a task force is not going to fix that.

So I ask this minister why he is not taking responsibility for the deaths that are occurring and why he is not taking steps to prevent the situation from ever happening again in one of our major hospitals in the city.

**Mr. Chomiak:** An 80% reduction of people in the hallways, 879 nurses now hired since 1999, 156 additional doctors, millions in reconfiguration for ERs and other services, fast-track antibiotics provided in the home, enhanced home care. All of those are measures in place including recent measures of electronic triage, additional hiring of staff, additional training for staff and other advice; plus what is already in place that was not in place before, critical incident reporting where people feel they are able to talk about incidents and provide and learn from those incidents, something that is very crucial in the system that was, unfortunately, not available in the past.

**Mr. Derkach:** Mr. Speaker, this minister is failing. Manitobans are getting to the point where they cannot believe and cannot trust what either this minister or this Premier (Mr. Doer) say because their actions do not follow their words. We are asking that this minister and this Premier take responsibility for the health of people in this province so that no more people are going to die waiting for a doctor to see them in a hospital bed or in an emergency ward. What is this minister prepared to do today to prevent those situations?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier in my comments, while we would like to, we cannot promise a hundred percent perfection. There will be situations that we cannot deal with. That is why we have taken so many measures and put them in place since 1999, including critical incident reporting that is in place across the system. The whole question of

the emergency task force is already put in place: electronic triage, additional training, additional hiring of staff, plus investigations and reviews of every single situation so people are allowed to discuss the situation, to learn, so that it is not repeated.

I think that the Government has acted. It will continue to act and while we cannot promise perfection, the public knows, Mr. Speaker, that we respond and we try to improve the situation every time a circumstance occurs in Manitoba.

### **Emergency Rooms Patient Deaths**

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I have been listening to the lack of response from the Minister of Health, the lack of leadership from the Premier on a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker. What we have heard from both the Minister of Health and the Premier is about all of these supposed programs that are in place. We understand, and I think the Minister of Health said, "We want to do our duty, Mr. Speaker," but when is he going to do his duty as the Minister of Health who is responsible for the health and well-being of all Manitoba patients and ensure that not one more Manitoba patient dies in a hallway or dies while waiting in ER? When is he going to take action instead of just talking about it?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I think that if you talk to anyone involved in the health care system, whether they are front-line staff or in administration or anywhere in the system, the system is designed to deal with the need and the requirements to the best that can be offered and that is what Manitobans do. The 700 people who visit the ERs every single day in Winnipeg, the several hundred that visit outside of Winnipeg, that is what they do. There are thousands and thousands of contacts every day. There are incidents. There are occasions when there are situations that occur. We call them critical incidents. Every single one is disclosed to the family, reviewed. The incident the members refer to over and over again has kicked in a process that was not in place before.

**Mr. Murray:** We are clearly not getting any results from the Minister of Health. I am going to ask the Premier of the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, who said to Manitobans that if he were elected,

which he was, that he would end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. He said it to Manitobans. He said he had a plan to ensure that health care was looked after for all Manitobans.

The Premier has been now the Premier for five years, so my question goes to the Premier of the province of Manitoba: When is he going to take steps to ensure that we have a program in place that does not have people dying in the hallway or dying in ER waiting for care? When are we going to start seeing some results?

**Mr. Chomiak:** When the Canadian Institute of Health Information did its report, it said that Manitoba had made significant improvement in the hallway situation. This independent body, put together by all of the provinces and the federal government before we were government, an independent body that reviewed the situation said we had made significant improvements in the hallway, stats that we put on the Web site every week. Every week this information goes on the Web site allowing the members to judge on a weekly basis what the status is and, if you look, it is down 80 percent. While we have not achieved perfection, Mr. Speaker, there has been significant improvement.

I know no deaths occurred in Manitoba between 1988 and 1999. I know that did not happen, Mr. Speaker, but we are willing to admit the situation and to deal with every single situation as it occurs.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, once again I am going to direct my question to the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province of Manitoba because this is a very serious issue and clearly we have not been getting any answers from the Minister of Health. We know that the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Health said to Manitobans that they had a plan in place to solve hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. They made a specific commitment and they said they were going to do that to Manitobans.

Since this Premier has been in the province of Manitoba, has been the Premier, we have seen 11 patients die while waiting for cardiac surgery, Mr. Speaker. Now another family has lost a loved one and what we are hearing from the Minister of Health is all about programs, all about meetings, all about doing everything instead of making steps to solve the problem so it does not happen to another Manitoba family.

My question is very simple to the Premier of the province of Manitoba: What is he doing to solve this crisis that is happening in ER when he said to Manitobans he had a plan to fix it? Why has he failed and what is his plan to improve it?

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Chomiak:** The member inaccurately mixes up a number of issues. If the member wants to talk about the cardiac wait list, the last time that I checked there were 69 people on the cardiac wait list which is, if memory serves me correctly, 50 percent less on the cardiac wait list than when we came into office and, in fact, is below the 10% guidelines indicated by Doctor Koshal with respect to wait list for cardiac and, in fact, the member is confusing issues of preventable deaths and non-preventable deaths.

Let me just say this, Mr. Speaker. In the 1990s, no process is in place. No one died in Manitoba during the 1990s. According to members opposite that never, ever, ever happened. All we know is when we came into office we disclose, we report, we take action where there is ability to improve. The cardiac waiting list is another example of steps we have taken.

### Provincial Sales Tax Referendum

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. We have a government which I truly believe is breaking the law. We have balanced budget legislation and I think we need to be very clear on this. We have a new retail sales tax on accounting services, legal services and others. The overall tax package that this Government is providing is not revenue neutral. There is documentation from this Government, the Budget documents themselves, and I would refer people to go to page D1 where it states the retail sales tax of 17.2 million for the '04-05 fiscal year and 23.9 million for the full year in the following, or if it was a full year.

We have, whether it is this document and other pages like B9, or the Manitoba Law Society, Mr. Speaker, that are contradicting the numbers that this minister is providing. My question is: Will the minister acknowledge that he has underestimated the amount of retail sales tax coming into this province?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I will acknowledge that we brought in a balanced budget under the existing legislation that is the law in this province. We have disclosed it all on page D1 as the member referenced, and all those numbers will be subject to confirmation as the actual experience unfolds after we implement the proper laws to bring this Budget into force.

If there is any question about that, I am always happy to answer for the members opposite. If the particular member from Inkster feels that there is anything that has been done that is untoward, he has the full recourse of the rule of law in this province available to him if he wishes to pursue it.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Great advice. In other words, you are saying, "Take the Government to court." If I had the resources I would, because I do believe, Mr. Speaker, this Government is wrong. Just because you print a number does not necessarily mean that we have to buy it.

Mr. Speaker, we are not buying it. I do not believe the Manitoba Law Society is buying it. They are underestimating, intentionally underestimating the retail sales and the reason why is because there is a four-million fudge amount here, and the Government has indeed exceeded it.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I need to be able to hear the question.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** The estimated revenue numbers are wrong and the Minister of Finance knows that. Will the minister ask for the provincial auditor to give an opinion on this issue and accept whatever his opinion is? I will apologize to this Chamber if the Auditor says that I am wrong, but I am not violating the law if I am wrong.

This Government is violating the law if he is wrong and I am telling you that this Minister of Finance is wrong. So the Minister of Finance needs to come clean and have the provincial auditor look at these numbers.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Inkster seems to have caught the same disease that the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) has, that if

you yell loud enough it will be so. But that is really not the way it is in the real world.

In the real world, Mr. Speaker, we brought in a new Auditor General Act in this province which gives the provincial auditor the right to pursue any dollar dispensed by this Government. We brought in the first summary budget in the history of this province and we have brought in Public Accounts that are done on a summary basis.

The provincial auditor can investigate anything he wishes in this province under the new powers he has been given.

### **Budget Advertising Campaign**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has a problem. If he prints a figure in the document, he expects us to believe it. This is where he is losing credibility. If your numbers do not jive you have a serious problem, and you are supposed to be the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the Government is: Now we have this document and we understand that they are on an advertising campaign.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, we understand the Government is now on an advertising campaign, promoting this document which obviously has flaws in it. My question to the Premier is: How much money, how much propaganda is this Government putting in tax dollars into promoting this Budget to all Manitobans?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the amount of money is down 40 percent from when we came into office in terms of public information. For Liberals to be asking any questions after the testimony of Mr. Guité last week about advertising, for any Liberal to stand up in this House and talk about advertising and propaganda, they should resign.

### **Legislative Building School Concert Series**

**Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry):** Mr. Speaker, I heard beautiful music in this magnificent building

today. I also noticed a calendar about music activities in schools at the foot of the grand staircase. Can the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth please advise the House about why he brought student music into the building?

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** Well, thank you for the question. On April 4, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to proclaim April Celebrating Music in Manitoba Schools Month.

I had the honour of attending concerts in Southwood School, at Collège Régional Gabrielle-Roy School. We also, of course, hosted several concerts here in the Legislature, which included River West Park, Collège Louis-Riel, Joie de Vivre choir, Suzuki string program, J.H. Bruns Collegiate guitar ensemble and today we concluded our concert series with the Windsor Community School.

Although we disagree on a lot of things in the House, I am sure that we all agree that it was absolutely a wonderful program and it was great to see so many people there supporting it, including the honourable First Minister, who joined us today. Celebrating music and the things that we do in schools is a very important part of what we believe in for our school system, as there is a very strong relationship between the arts and academic success. It is part of our promotion for the arts in our schools. Thank you very much.

#### **CAIS Program Manitoba Contribution**

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, the United Stock Growers of America were successful in obtaining a restraining order preventing Canadians from exporting beef into the U.S. over the next while. According to Canadian officials, a deal to lift the U.S. ban on live cattle will also not be struck in a meeting between our Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, our farm families are struggling. They have seen a 40% net decline in their net incomes.

Can this Minister of Agriculture tell us today what preliminary plans she has in place to deal with the discontinuance of meat products into the United States? Will she now put in place a program to

support fully the 40% reduction of net income suffered by the farm families of this province?

\* (14:20)

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed unfortunate that R-CALF has come forward with this injunction at a time when there are negotiations going on.

I want to wish our Prime Minister well as he goes to Washington to meet with President Bush. I know the issue of opening the border is going to be on the agenda. We have to only hope that those negotiations can be successful. We have to hope that a decision will be based on science. Secretary Veneman had indicated that there would be a short comment period and a decision would be made on science. We hope that we will go forward.

I want the member to know that the boxed beef, the boneless beef that was going over the border is still going. It is the new bone-in meat and the other cuts that are not able to go now.

**Mr. Penner:** Mr. Speaker, it is cold comfort to the farmers of Manitoba that have seen a 40% net income decline when this minister stands in this House and says that boneless beef will still flow across the border.

She has yet to commit fully to fund the 40% requirement under the CAIS program, which she has signed twice now; once, under the auspices of signing into the program that this program could be negotiated; No. 2, when the beef producers and the cattle producers were in serious trouble she, under the auspices, signed another agreement allowing some of the CAIS program to flow, which has not happened.

Will she today at least give comfort to Manitoba farmers that she will fully, without prorating, cover the 40% requirement under the CAIS program to the farmers of Manitoba?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Speaker, the member has asked the question about the funding for the CAIS program before. I have indicated to him that we have signed on to the program. Our money is in this Budget. We are going to be doing Estimates discussions soon. We will be able to discuss that further.

But I also want to commend the producers on the work that they are doing on Rancher's Choice to try to bring some solution to the challenges that we are facing with the export markets. I would hope the Opposition would get behind the producers on this one and see that this project becomes a reality, because the Government is in with them. We need the Opposition to show their support so that we can indeed start to do some processing or more processing in this province and not be so completely tied to an export market.

### **Drinking Water Safety Act Regulations**

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture again denies the comfort to the farmers of this province that she will sign on to an unqualified 40 percent on the one farm program that is left out there. She will not stand up and acknowledge that she will do that.

It is just like the water quality safety act. This Premier has been bragging for 18 months about the water quality safety act. Where are the regulations?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship):** I am really glad that the members opposite have taken the time now to acknowledge that this Government is bringing in an act that we believe will make us leaders in the country in protecting water.

In fact, not only through this act, but it builds on our legacy with The Safe Drinking Water Act in 2002 in being leaders in this country in protecting water. All the member has to do is read the act. He knows where regulations will be brought in. There will be full consultation. The act is there. Let us debate it, let us pass it, and let us protect Manitoba's water.

**Mr. Cummings:** This Government is on such thin ice, Mr. Speaker. They have been bragging and bragging about all their activities, just like the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), now the Minister—and the Premier—responsible for The Drinking Water Safety Act that was passed in this House in August of 2002. No regulations. Eighteen months later, what are they doing? Where are the regs?

**Mr. Ashton:** I do not know where the member has been, Mr. Speaker, but he will note, in addition to the

passage of the act, we have acted by putting in place 12 drinking water officers. We have a budget in this year's Budget of \$1.6 million. We are already protecting Manitoba in terms of drinking water.

We proclaimed the act earlier this year and we indicated there is one area left in terms of the semi-public facilities, and at the request of those that operate semi-public facilities, that is the last area that is going to be proclaimed. We need no lectures from members opposite about protecting Manitoba's drinking water. They did nothing. We have acted.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The time for Oral Questions has expired.

### **Speaker's Rulings**

**Mr. Speaker:** I have a couple of rulings for the House.

Following Oral Questions on Thursday, April 15, 2004, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) raised a point of order concerning answers to questions provided by the honourable Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), the honourable Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) and the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer), answers which the honourable Official Opposition House Leader contended were misleading the House.

He requested that the Speaker review the answers provided during Question Period. The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) also spoke to the point of order and suggested that a dispute over the facts does not constitute a point of order.

I took the matter under advisement in order to peruse Hansard. It has previously been ruled by Manitoba Speakers Walding, Phillips, Rocan and Dacquay that a deliberate misleading of the House involves intent to mislead and/or acknowledge that the statement would mislead.

Further, these Speakers have also ruled that when one member charges that another member had deliberately misled the House, the member making the charge must furnish proof of intent. Also, as ruled by Speaker Dacquay on April 20, 1999, short of a member acknowledging to the House that he or she deliberately and with intent set out to mislead, it

is virtually impossible to prove that a member has deliberately misled the House.

I have carefully read the Hansard transcripts for April 15 and can find no indication of an admission by the honourable Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) or the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer) of intent to mislead the House, nor was proof of the intent to mislead provided by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach).

I therefore rule that the point of order is out of order.

I have another ruling.

Following the daily Prayer on Monday, April 19, 2004, the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) rose on a matter of privilege concerning answers provided in the House by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) on the previous sitting day. At the conclusion of his remarks, the honourable Member for Steinbach moved that the Minister of Labour issue to this House and to the people of Manitoba an apology for putting forward incorrect information regarding the existence of and details on a proposed master labour agreement in relation to expansion of the floodway project, and that this matter be now referred to the Committee on Legislative Affairs and be reported to this House.

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh), the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) also offered advice to the Chair on this matter. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities.

\* (14:30)

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for a matter raised to be considered a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the matter raised at the earliest opportunity? Second, is there sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached to warrant putting the matter to the House?

Regarding the first condition, the honourable Member for Steinbach asserted that he raised the

issue at the earliest opportunity after having had a chance to peruse the Hansard from April 15. I do accept the word of the honourable member that he did raise the issue at the earliest opportunity.

Concerning the second condition of whether a prima facie case of privilege exists, there are a number of factors to consider. The crux of the argument by the honourable Member for Steinbach was that answers provided by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration appeared, according to the Member for Steinbach, to be at odds with comments from the CEO of the floodway and from a federal member of Parliament that appeared in a newspaper article.

In a comparable situation where a matter of privilege was raised in the Canadian House of Commons concerning whether a response given by the president of the Treasury Board was false in comparison with other available information, Speaker Milliken ruled on February 19, 2004, that it is not the Speaker's role to adjudicate on matters of fact as this is something on which the House itself can form an opinion during debate.

In addition, when Manitoba Speakers have been asked to rule on matters of privilege involving the alleged misstatements by members or the provision of misinformation or inaccurate facts by ministers, Speakers Phillips, Rocan and Dacquay have ruled that such situations appeared to be disputes over facts, which, according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 31(1), does not fulfil the criteria of a prima facie case of privilege.

It was also asserted that the information provided by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) impeded and prevented members from doing their jobs properly as members. As was noted for the House in a March 21, 1991, ruling by Speaker Rocan, *Beauchesne's* Citation 92 states, "A valid claim of privilege in respect to interference with a member must relate to the member's parliamentary duties and not to the work that the member does in relation to that member's constituency."

Joseph Maingot in his book *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* elaborates on this point. "There must be some act that improperly interferes with the member's rights, such as freedom of speech. The interference, however, must not only obstruct the



member in his/her capacity as a member, it must be shown that the member was obstructive in his/her work relating to a proceeding in Parliament and not simply while he/she was performing his/her representative duties in his or her constituency or in other myriad areas."

Though the honourable Member for Steinbach claimed that he was impeded and prevented from doing his job properly as a member, he did not explain how he was impeded, so it is difficult to ascertain whether the member's privileges were indeed breached. Just to be clear on this point, according to Marleau and Montpetit in *House of Commons Practice and Procedure*, the individual parliamentary privileges of members are freedom of speech, freedom from arrest in civil action, exemption from jury duty, exemption from appearing as a witness, and freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation and molestation. On the basis of the information provided, the complaint does not appear to fall in any of the enumerated categories of privilege.

I therefore rule that the matter raised does not satisfy the prima facie conditions of a matter of privilege.

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, I must challenge your ruling.

#### Voice Vote

**Mr. Speaker:** The ruling of the Chair has been challenged. All those in support of sustaining the ruling, say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Speaker:** All those opposed to sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Speaker:** In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

The ruling of the Chair has been sustained. Now we will move on to members' statements.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### St. James Community Volunteers

**Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James):** I am honoured to rise today during Volunteer Month to

recognize the extraordinary volunteers who make our community centres in St. James so vibrant and successful. We know that all community centres depend on volunteers, but this past bitter winter following untimely summer downpours, I have noticed extraordinary dedication. I am speaking specifically about the Sturgeon Creek, Deer Lodge, Bord-Aire and Silver Heights Community Centres. Volunteers who work at these centres every day provide services and programs to citizens in the St. James area. They have persevered through the severe summer and winter weather, through rain and snow. Their resilience is admirable.

The Bourkevale Community Centre does not participate in the same kinds of outdoor programs although they do offer important mental health and well-being social programs. Popularity of the centres becomes obvious when one considers the wide range of health and wellness programs offered.

For instance, the Deer Lodge Community Centre was open all throughout the winter holidays for youth. They organized five hockey teams and a basketball team. Another example is Silver Heights Community Centre where there were seven hockey teams this winter. Their winter carnival faced some challenges with the extreme cold, but there were 16 teams which competed in it. Of course, Sturgeon Creek Community Centre also had to reschedule its entire winter carnival because of severe cold. Pancake breakfasts and silent auctions are a part of the fundraising during these tournaments, and they require a lot of work and organization. I, for one, was only too happy to share in the fun and enjoyed a few pancake breakfasts myself.

Thanks to these parents and volunteers for countless hours of work in encouraging children, youth and adults in our community to participate in active living pursuits. They obviously know the importance of healthy living and community engagement.

Mr. Speaker, I heartily congratulate the many selfless volunteers who work at St. James community centres. They put together wonderfully valuable programs. Without their work and dedication, our community would not be what it is today.

**Arthur MacKinnon**

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today and

speak of a young lad, Arthur MacKinnon, who has just completed his first stage appearance at the Manitoba Theatre Centre where he played Ronnie Winslow, the Winslow boy, in a play based on a true story.

In 1908, a 13-year-old George Archer-Shee was accused of stealing a five-shilling postal note from a locker of a fellow cadet at the Osbourne Naval College, forging it and cashing it. Despite the young boy's claims of innocence, he was expelled from the college. His father believed his son was innocent and tried to have his name cleared and have him reinstated but to no avail. He could not file suit against the college because it was part of the King's domain and therefore immune from such actions.

The elder Archer-Shee hired the renowned Edward Carson, who had prosecuted Oscar Wilde, and although one of the highest paid barristers of the time, he took the case for a nominal fee. He made use of an ancient device, "The Petition of Right" which allowed a citizen to sue the government. King Edward VII received the petition and signed it saying, "Let right be done," allowing the prosecution to proceed. In 1909, the case went to the House of Commons where young George was debated with great emotion and passion.

Arthur MacKinnon, the 13-year-old who shared the part of Ronnie Winslow with Max Crispo, gave a stellar performance, as did the entire cast. I thought it fitting that this young lad himself be mentioned in the House, as was his character almost 100 years ago.

This MTC production and the actors and actresses who performed so well remind us that people will passionately fight for what is right regardless of personal costs, whether they be physical, emotional or financial. We as legislators should also live by the creed, "Let right be done."

### Guru Granth Sahib Scriptures

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** I am honoured to highlight the upcoming 400th anniversary of the compilation of the supreme scripture of the Sikh religion.

\* (14:40)

The Guru Granth Sahib is an ocean of spiritual and human values. It is the divine revelation of the Sikh Gurus and contains the messages of saints of other faiths and castes reaffirming the fundamental unity of all religions.

This year is the 400th anniversary of the first installation of the Guru Granth Sahib at the Darbar Sahib, commonly known as the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India.

The Sikh community is one of Manitoba's vibrant pioneering communities. It contributes significantly to the social, economic and cultural development and well-being of our province.

This spring, a chartered aircraft arrived in Canada with 150 holy books, known as "birs" of the Guru Granth Sahib. Each of these birs was moved from a "gurudwara," a Sikh temple, in a ceremonial procession with religious customs being duly followed. This is the first time they have been transported to another country.

The demand of these holy books from Sikhs is growing as the 400th anniversary approaches. It is an honour for the Canadian Sikh community that Canada is their first stop. I was happy to learn today that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) will be proclaiming September 1 as a day to honour the 400th anniversary of the compilation of the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib.

### Southwood Elementary School Celebrations

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to put a few words on the record about a delightful morning I spent at the Southwood Elementary School on April 22. I, along with my colleague, the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) and Mr. Domino Wilkins, the Garden Valley School Division superintendent, had the privilege of attending the school's assembly in celebration of Earth Day, Music Month and volunteerism.

The kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 6, Grades 7 and 8 bands all performed a variety of musical numbers for the audience. I heard pieces such as "Lean On Me," "Queenwood Overture," "Latin Fire," "Pick It Up," "The Crocodile's Toothache," an original recorder composition, "The Alphabet Song," "I Can Sing a Rainbow" and "Five Little Ducks."

It was wonderful for me to watch and hear the school children perform their selections after many hours of practice. As a former band director in Western and Garden Valley School Divisions, I can honestly say that Southwood truly has a talented group of young people, and just incidentally, my three grandsons attend this school.

I am proud to say that Southwood School is located in my constituency in the Village of Schanzenfeld, five kilometres south of Winkler. Currently, the school is bursting at the seams and the enrolment at the Southwood School continues to climb. Close to 600 students in Garden Valley School Division are presently in huts.

It was an opportunity for me to showcase the community and the accomplishments of the school. Currently, there are seven huts on that school's grounds and we are needing more space, and as of today, the Minister of Education has said that it has been postponed for another six months.

So it was an opportunity for me to indicate to the Minister of Education the need that we have out there regarding housing and accommodation for our students. Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Southwood School for organizing such a lovely ceremony and for the opportunity to attend.

### May Day

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Mr. Speaker, May 1 celebrates the solidarity of the international labour movement. May Day was first celebrated in Winnipeg in 1920, one year after the General Strike. The commemoration of May Day as a working class holiday finds its origins in the struggle for the eight-hour workday in 1886.

On May 1 of that year, national strikes in Canada and the United States were called by the Knights of Labour to advance the cause. The following day, an explosion in Chicago's Haymarket Square which killed several city policemen culminated in the unjust arrest, trial and execution of eight anarchists who later became known as the Haymarket martyrs. Three years later in Paris, the International Working Men's Association declared May 1 an international working class holiday to remember their sacrifice.

May Day was first marked in Winnipeg on May 1, 1920 to protest the imprisonment of the 1919 General Strike leaders and the oppressive social, economic and political conditions of the day. Mr. Speaker, 10 000 Winnipeg workers walked in a march through the streets of the city.

May Day parades were held in Winnipeg throughout the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, attracting thousands of workers every year to march, speak and peacefully advocate social change and the creation of a better world. With the revival of this tradition in the 1980s, Mayworks has evolved as a month-long festival of events intended to honour and promote the many contributions that working people and their unions have made to progressive social change in our province.

There are many events taking place as part of the 2004 Mayworks Festival. I would encourage all of my colleagues here in the House to attend as many as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the organizers of the Mayworks Festival for their commitment in celebrating the many positive contributions of unions and working people. Let us remember their lives and struggles on this 85th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike.

### MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to seek leave of the House to set aside the regular business of this Chamber and to deal with the matter that is of significant urgent public importance. There are two conditions to be satisfied for this matter to proceed.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I was advised that I should move the motion first.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, I move, seconded by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) that, under Rule 36(1), the regular business of the House be set aside to deal with a matter of urgent public importance, that being the issue of the hardship being faced by the agricultural industry and the rural communities and families as a result of the BSE crisis and the continued closure of the U.S. border to live cattle.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable Member for Emerson, I believe I should remind all members that, under Rule 36(2), the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other parties in the House are allowed not more than five minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately. As stated in *Beauchesne* Citation 390, "urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer."

**Mr. Penner:** I think it is important to note that the closure issue of the U.S. border to bone and beef and hamburger is of a very recent nature and all of us recognize that this issue arose yesterday. The other matter is, of course, that the U.S. border, to live cattle, has been and does remain closed and this is creating very significant hardships and financial downturns in the economy of the province of Manitoba. We have seen over the last year a drop of 40 percent of the net income which I understand, according to the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, is the lowest in history in the province of Manitoba. It is the first time in the history, Mr. Speaker, that the net income of farmers in general is below the positive line and that is historic in matter.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that those two issues clearly demonstrate the need to bring this matter to the legislative chambers and debate what could be done for the agricultural community in this time of crisis. I would suspect that the government members of the Chamber will support the matter of having a debate and sharing comments and ideas as to how we could mitigate the economic crisis that is pending in the province of Manitoba.

\* (14:50)

We know that farm families need some sort of income mechanism. They need some sort of income, and when farmers and their farm families have to go to the bank and borrow money to live on I think it is clearly a demonstration of what the needs are in this province. I believe that has been indicated clearly by the amount of money that the Government has currently forwarded under the BSE crisis programming through the MACC program. They have, I am told,

extended some \$60 million to farm families, and again, I believe that that is a matter and recognition of the difficulties that farm families are facing. Clearly, they have borrowed much of that money to be able to just live on to pay for the education of their families, to pay for the food on the table, and indeed to pay their hydro bills and their telephone bills.

It is a matter I believe that is of most urgent importance, that we recognize that difficulty, and that we deal with those matters, and debate those matters personally and publicly in this Chamber. It is the only time, Mr. Speaker, that our rules allow this matter to be brought before this House, and the urgency of this cannot be overstated because there are many farm families that have run out of the ability to borrow money and to continue existing or keeping their families in existence on their farms.

So I would ask, Mr. Speaker, the indulgence of the government members of this Legislature that we let this matter be debated before the Assembly today to bring the urgency of this nature home to the people of Manitoba and demonstrate clearly to them the consciousness we have and that we respect the need for the assistance to the farm community. Thank you.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I think the point that has to be made in response is that the matter raised is certainly one of importance, and it is of public importance. Indeed, this Government has recognized the challenges facing the agricultural economy and therefore all of Manitoba as one of a paramount concern. But that is not the issue under the rules.

The question is whether the importance merits putting aside the other business of the House and whether there are other opportunities available to discuss the issue raised.

Mr. Speaker, the ordinary opportunities for debate in this House have allowed and will continue to allow for this matter to be raised. First of all, we note that in Oral Questions there actually have been very few questions raised about the agricultural economy and the challenges being faced. Second, we have just come through the budget debate. It was concluded yesterday, and the members of this House have had full opportunity to talk about those important challenges. Some did and some did not.

Mr. Speaker, that is a free and wide-ranging debate that has allowed full discussion on issues. Now, what was most important is today we are scheduled to embark, and the Opposition knows this, of course, on Agriculture Estimates and the Estimates of Executive Council.

Not only is there every opportunity for a debate even today, even within a few minutes, but the Budget debate has allowed for full opportunity. Well, I think I will just leave it at that. I just wanted to speak to the threshold that is set out in the rules. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), I would just like to remind the House that, under our rules, 36(2), a member making motion or subrule 1 may explain arguments in favour of the member's motion but not more than five minutes.

One member from each of the other parties in the House may state the position. We had already heard from the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

If you listen very, very carefully to our rule, which is 36(2), and I ask members to listen very carefully, a member making a motion under subrule 1 may explain arguments in favour of the member's position in not more than five minutes, and one member from each of the other parties in the House, the other parties. *[interjection]* I believe you are from the same party; I believe that.

So our rule states one from other parties in the House may state the position of the party in respect to the motion for five minutes. First of all, the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), if he is rising to—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Can I have order, please? If the honourable Member for Inkster is rising to speak for the five minutes to this motion, the honourable member in this House is an independent member and is not a member of a party. So, if the member wishes to speak, the honourable member would have to seek leave of the House in order to address this issue.

So the honourable Member for Inkster, are you rising to ask for leave?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay. Does the honourable Member for Inkster have leave to address this motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes? No? Okay, I heard a no. So I would like to now, if I could have everyone's attention again. If I could please have everyone's attention.

I thank honourable members for their advice to the Chair on whether the motion proposed by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) should be debated today. The notice required by Rule 36(1) was provided. Under our rules and practices the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter.

Although the honourable Member for Emerson has already used his grievance, I would suggest that there are other opportunities where this issue could be raised. I would note from the Estimates sequence that was tabled in the House on April 27 that the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives are first on the list in the sequence of consideration in committee room 254. The issue could be raised there.

In addition, questions could be addressed during Question Period. There is also the option of having this topic presented as a subject of an Opposition Day motion.

Respecting the second aspect, will the public interest suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. Although this undoubtedly is a serious issue that the member has brought forward, I do not believe the public interest will be harmed if the business of the House is not set aside to debate the motion today.

Therefore, I must rule that this matter does not meet the criteria set by our rules and precedents and I rule the motion out of order as a matter of urgent public import.

\* (15:00)

### Point of Order

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader):** Well, Mr. Speaker, will you allow me to stand on a point of order?

**Mr. Speaker:** Well, is the honourable member standing on a point of order pertaining to the rules and procedures of the House, that is every member's right, and you know on points of order we do not allow debate of any issue. But, if it is to point out the breach of a rule or the practices of the House, that is every member's responsibility and, hopefully, they would not hesitate to rise on a point of order. But, if there starts to be debate on a point of order, then I must intervene.

The honourable Member for Russell, on a point of order.

**Mr. Derkach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I only rise to raise the issue of why this is of such urgent public importance. Again, I will defer to your judgment, Sir, if I am out of order in speaking to this, but I only want to address the issue of urgent public importance.

**Mr. Speaker:** I would have to kindly rule that it would be out of order, because it is not a departure of our practices or a breach of the rule that conducts us in the House.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Russell, on a point of order?

**Mr. Derkach:** No, Mr. Speaker, I simply am rising to once again, regrettably, challenge the ruling of the Chair.

**Mr. Speaker:** I just want to be very, very, very clear on this. The honourable member had stood up on, to me it was a point of order. I had given you the information of what a point of order was, and that is a departure of the practice of the House or a breach of a rule. You asked me if you departed from that if you would be out of order. So I have to ask for

clarification if when you said you challenged my ruling you are challenging the ruling on a point of order or are you challenging the ruling I made on the MUPI.

**An Honourable Member:** Both.

**Mr. Speaker:** It cannot be both. We can only deal with one at a time.

**Mr. Derkach:** To provide some clarity, Mr. Speaker, what I was doing in the challenge was challenging the ruling of the Chair regarding the matter of urgent public importance.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, and in our rules, our Manitoba rules, our rules are very clear that the ruling of a Chair dealing with a MUPI cannot be challenged. *[interjection]* That is fine?

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

Now we will move on and we will revert back to continue Orders of the Day.

\* (15:00)

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Could you please call Committee of Supply, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** In accordance with Rule 23(5), the House will now resolve into the Committee of Supply.

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Concurrent Sections)

### AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL INITIATIVES

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairperson:** You have the floor, Minister.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Thank you. As Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, I am very pleased to present my department's Estimates for the year 2004-05. Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives takes great pride in serving farm families, rural communities and the agriculture industry as a whole.

The agriculture agri-food sector is an important pillar in Manitoba's economy in terms of small business and community development, and my department is fortunate to have knowledgeable, qualified staff who are committed to the well-being of our farm families and dedicated to advancing the economic health of the industry.

There have been a number of changes in the department over the past six months, including a new name. Making rural initiatives a part of the department's responsibilities highlights the value we place on rural communities in the province and their importance to the agriculture and food industries' successes. We believe that by bringing agricultural and economic development more closely together, this helps us better co-ordinate and develop the industry.

Another change, as well as changing the name of the department, is a new deputy minister, Mr. Barry Todd, whose experience in agriculture will be and is a great benefit to the department. This is indeed an exciting time for my department as we move forward to renew our goals and commitments to the betterment of the industry.

Agriculture is much in the news lately, and some of the news is not good. Certainly, the last year has been a challenging year for people in the industry. BSE, avian flu, low grain prices, a high Canadian dollar affecting our exports, changes to the PMU industry and our potato industry have all given us cause for concern. However, I am pleased to say that there have also been some very good success stories in agriculture this year, particularly in the area of soybeans, in honey and in exports, just to name a few.

I would like to comment on a few areas within the '04-05 Estimates for Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. Our new budget reflects our Government's continuing efforts to support the priorities of rural residents and rural communities.

Responsibilities for rural communities and development activities were added to the department in November of 2003. The department has an organizational review underway to ensure that our programs focus on the priority needs of our clients. We have called this new review Growing Opportunities to reflect the opportunities and challenges in serving our clients. I expect the review process will increase the effectiveness and the responsiveness of the priority programs and services that we deliver to farmers and to rural communities.

Our total budget in 2004-05 is approximately \$146 million. Overall, there is a slight increase of \$104,200 in this Budget over what we saw in the vote of '03-04. There will be a net reduction of 17 positions through attrition. Within the budget amount of \$145.7 million, we have allocated \$78.4 million for safety nets to aid our farm population. This \$78.4 million is equivalent to 55 percent of our overall requested budget.

Manitoba signed the Agricultural Policy Framework Canada-Manitoba Implementation Agreement with the Government of Canada in Winnipeg on September 19, 2003. The agreement sets out detailed terms and conditions for identifying programs to be delivered, funding commitments, expected results, delivery mechanisms and reporting requirements over the five-year period beginning in the fiscal year 2003-04. This agreement goes beyond the safety net program to working together to further strengthen food safety, food quality systems, advances in science and technology, renewal and the environment. The safety net program under the Agricultural Policy Framework agreement is the Canada Agriculture Income Stabilization program, which is CAIS, and production insurance. CAIS represents the old NISA and CFIP programs that were budgeted for last year and provides an additional \$7.2 million in funding.

The Province's Crop Insurance Corporation production insurance premiums are expected to decline by \$7.9 million based on new programs, program variabilities and program changes. These include an increase in insured acres, changes to coverage levels, crop yields and premium rates, decrease in dollar value of crops and a change in the cost-sharing formula.

I am pleased to announce a new Livestock Industry Development Assistance program that will

give producers and processors targeted financial and operational support to foster the sustainable expansion of all parts of the livestock industry. This program will help, in partnership with the agriculture and agri-food industry, to develop new markets and clients for livestock and meat products.

Our 2004-05 Budget provides for an enhanced infectious disease surveillance service through our Veterinary Services Branch. As has been dramatically demonstrated with the BSE outbreak, an outbreak of a foreign animal disease can quickly close international borders to trade in livestock and livestock products.

Manitoba is a heavily export-dependent province. We are very vulnerable to border closures. The resulting financial impact on primary and secondary producers is very significant. We have all seen the impacts of that.

Disease prevention and mitigation is a key component to the animal health system in Manitoba. This system requires both a surveillance program and laboratory infrastructure. Three diseases in particular require increased surveillance and monitoring: West Nile virus, chronic wasting disease and BSE.

An unused portion of the current Veterinary Services Branch building will be upgraded to bio-security Level 2 status. There is an additional investment of \$745,000 in 2004-05 for this project. This includes capital costs of \$442,000 to renovate the existing laboratory space, of which \$350,000 is included in the Government Services budget request of '04-05.

Our Budget also provides for three new positions and additional laboratory equipment. Manitoba will then be able to conduct testing for these diseases in-house instead of sending samples to Saskatoon or to the federal government. This will result in fewer delays and reduce shipping costs and ensure that Manitoba's samples are tested as a priority.

To ensure the safety of our elk game products, the department has proposed amendments to the elk game production regulation under The Livestock Diversification Act.

Under these amendments, the Government will pay for all required testing for chronic wasting disease and spot-check and monitor an estimated 500

animals per year. This will be significant support for the elk industry, which is struggling as many other of the livestock sectors are struggling.

The lower budget amount for the Agricultural Credit Corporation reflects a decrease in the net interest cost as well as lower administration costs. While the interest costs of the BSE recovery program are expected to be another \$360,000, there will be savings in other areas.

There are adjustments to the Young Farmer Rebate program given to the level of demands. When the program was set up there was a higher amount set in there. We have adjusted the program to what the demand is at this time.

The costs of the management training credit have also been adjusted downward. The one-time adjustment in the Budget for irrigation development reflects past producer demand for irrigation and more funding available due to federal partnering under the Agricultural Policy Framework and the National Water Supply Enhancement Program. This department is working actively with producers to increase demand.

The budget allocation for rural initiatives has decreased by \$1.2 million due in part to the lower VLT revenues available to fund Rural Economic Diversification Initiatives. REDI funds are used to invest in the rural economy to support economic development and diversification. An example of this is the new roof for the Keystone Centre and infrastructure assistance to many rural communities.

In 2004-05, \$300,000 has been allocated to community enterprise development through the Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit program. This program was previously announced in the 2003 Budget. The tax credit will provide community based enterprise development projects with an incentive to raise necessary local equity capital to bring about investment, jobs and economic development in their communities.

Tax credits will be provided for both the direct investment in a specific community enterprise and a pool fund called the community development investment fund.

\* (15:20)



This concludes the few comments that I want to put on the record in my introduction of these Estimates. I selected just a few areas that I want to highlight within our Government's programs. There are numerous programs and services that we deliver that support the agriculture and agrifood sector and the Rural Economic Development division in Manitoba.

I look forward to having a discussion with members of the Opposition on the various sectors. This is a very important sector. We had a debate this morning on awareness in agriculture. Many of us had an opportunity to put on the record the value of this industry. Certainly, there are challenges. I look forward to continuing working with the industry and providing them the supports that they need.

The one point that I want to make before I conclude my comments is the fact that we all know that it has been a very challenging year. I want to commend the staff in each of the divisions of this department for the work they have done. As we have gone through the BSE crisis, it has been hard on us as government, but it has also been very hard on staff. It has been very hard when we realize we have to address issues. With a major crisis like this, you have to work very quickly. Governments are trying to do a job, put forward programs. We cannot do it without staff.

Before I conclude my comments, I want to recognize people throughout the department who have worked very hard over the last year. I hope that we get through this challenge and then can continue to work on the new agenda that we have for the department. I hope that people will have a little bit more relaxing time in the upcoming year.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments. Does the Official Opposition critic, the honourable Member for Emerson, have any opening comments?

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The floor is yours.

**Mr. Penner:** I am rather interested in the comments that the minister made and, secondly, far more interested in the lack of comment on the agricultural industry, as a whole, in the speech the Finance

Minister made to the House when he presented his Budget. I have never in the history of this province seen a government ignore the main engine that drives much of the economy of this province in one form or another being ignored the way this Government has ignored agriculture. I cannot understand how this minister could sit idly by when the Throne Speech was delivered and no more than once was agriculture mentioned even in a passing way.

The main criticism that was levelled at the agricultural community was for the disastrous results that it had demonstrated because of the BSE crisis, blaming farmers for the budgetary deficits that were created by this Government. I have never seen a Minister of Finance stand before the general public in this Chamber of this House and condemn a part of society and single them out as the main reason for the budgetary deficits clearly created by the Finance Minister, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the rest of his Cabinet. So I would suggest that, No. 1, the minister, the Premier and Cabinet owe the farming community of this province an apology.

Before I go there, I want to say to the minister that I believe it is time that she actually consult and take recommendations from the numerous farm organizations that she has continually met with. I give her credit for one thing. She has met with the farm organizations, but very little of their advice has been incorporated into the policies that I see have been enunciated by this Government, except the issue of announcing and putting out press releases that far, far overstated the support that she and her Government have given the agriculture community during the BSE crisis.

I can list the programs that have been announced by the minister, and I can also tell her how much she paid out. The Canada-Manitoba BSE Recovery Program was a cost-shared program between the federal and provincial government, the Manitoba Feeder Assistance Program, which the Premier made a great, great to-do about going to special warrant of \$17 million to underwrite this program when, in fact, that program barely paid out \$2 million through the program. The total amount paid out under that program, according to your department and your office, Madam Minister, was \$6.2 million out of the \$15 million announced. It went on and on and on and at the end of the day they were advertised, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars advertising that there was \$180 million paid out to the farmers of

Manitoba when in fact the actual amount was probably closer to between \$30 million and \$35 million-plus, driving the farmers about \$60 million into debt through MACC.

I want to say this to you, Madam Minister, that you have portrayed the support through the loans programs as a similar program as a cash advance. You did that in a speech to Brandon. How unfortunate that this Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) does not even know the difference between a cash advance and an interest-bearing loan. I find it inconceivable that a Minister of Agriculture would appear before a large gathering such as happened in Brandon at the forum, especially in front of young people, and blatantly lie to the general public in this province, indicating clearly a cash advance and an interest-bearing loan were similar or the same. I think the minister owes the people of Manitoba an apology.

Not only does she owe the people of Manitoba an apology for that, I think she also owes the people of Manitoba an apology for the huge advertising campaign, the costs they ran overstating the support by hundreds of millions of dollars because the actual support was just over \$30 million, not \$180 million. Those of you who are ministers of this Government should remind your Minister of Agriculture that it is unforgivable to be deceitful, as she has been, in trying to portray the support she has given to the farm community, especially to those people in the city of Winnipeg that do not know better.

They are convinced this Government paid out \$180 million when, in fact, you did not. I think it is deceitful and disgraceful that this Government portray themselves in that manner.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. I would just like to take a moment to caution all honourable members on their language here in the committee today. Let us not cross the line. While I recognize that at times discussion in committee can become heated, let us be careful and keep our remarks tempered and worthy of this Assembly. Thank you.

\*(15:30)

**Mr. Penner:** I just want to clearly indicate to this committee as well as the rest of the people in this province that never in the history of this province have I seen a greater attempt to try and deceive the

people of Manitoba into what has been portrayed as support for the agricultural community when that in fact did not happen.

I think this is, you know, one would not want to use the word "lying," but it comes as close to lying and it was deceitful to the worst degree of actions that she perpetrated in this province. I think this minister should at least stand in front of the Legislative Assembly and apologize to the members of this House.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We should all become silent. I will just take a moment again to caution all members on their language here in the committee. I recognize that at times discussions can get heated. Keep your remarks tempered. Do not cross the line.

**Mr. Penner:** Mr. Chairman, under the circumstances that we have seen over the last eight, nine months, under the circumstances that we have seen as late as yesterday and under the circumstances that the minister and their Government even refuse to allow us to debate this matter in the House, I think it is important to recognize the economic disaster that is currently prevalent in the Legislature.

I know there are many people in this House or in this province that would use language far worse to describe the economic situation than what I have used. I think it behooves this minister to apologize to the people of Manitoba.

In light of the recent announcement of the U.S. border closure to stem again the export of ruminant products into the United States with bone in and hamburger and those kind of issues, I think in light of that and the minister's refusal to allow for an all-party debate on this matter, even though there was a signal given by the Government that a debate of this nature would be welcome, I would move, seconded by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), that this minister be admonished for her lack of understanding of the crisis being forced on our livestock producers and the rest of agriculture and that she specifically apologize to the farmers of Manitoba now.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Could we have that motion in writing?

Order, please. The motion moved by the Member for Emerson is that the minister be admonished for her lack of understanding of the

crisis being forced by our livestock producers and that she publicly apologize to the farmers of Manitoba. The motion is in order. The floor is open for debate.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I listened to the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) make his comments and talk about the lack of understanding on this Government, and I have to tell him he is wrong. We as a government have taken this issue very, very seriously. When the first case of BSE broke out in Alberta we were in an election. Right after that election I was at the western premiers' meeting with the Premier (Mr. Doer), where we met with the Cattle Producers to talk about what they felt the first programs should be.

That first program that was put in place was the BSE recovery loan. The total program was supposed to be \$18 million. It was to assist the animals getting to slaughter. We raised the issue of how difficult it would be to get animals to slaughter, because we do not have enough slaughter capacity in this province. We supported the program on the advice of the Cattle Producers that the first animals that needed support were those that were on feedlots.

The member was critical of our programs when he was introducing his motion. I want to outline the programs we have put in place and why we put them in place. It was on the advice of the Manitoba Cattle Producers that we put in place the first BSE recovery loan and then took some of that money to put into the Manitoba Feeder Assistance Program.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Chairperson:** A point of order, the Member for Russell.

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, the motion that was put forward by the Member for Emerson requested that the minister immediately apologize to the farm producers in this province for not allowing a debate to be carried on in the House on this matter of urgent public importance.

The border was closed yesterday to some of the beef products that are going across the line. The Opposition, Her Majesty's Royal Opposition, asked that we have a debate regarding the impact this is going to have on producers. That debate was not allowed to go on by the Government.

We feel very strongly about this. In light of that refusal my colleague the critic for Agriculture has moved a motion to not only admonish the Minister of Agriculture but to ask her to immediately, not tomorrow, not an hour from now, but immediately apologize to farmers and rural Manitobans for this kind of lack of understanding and this heartless action that was taken by the Government.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Now, the Member for Burrows, on the point of order?

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay, excuse me. These points of order are turning into debates. Let us make them quick and to the point.

**Mr. Martindale:** I will be very succinct, Mr. Chairperson. I believe it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts. The member did not refer to any point of order in the Manitoba rule book. The only point that he was trying to make had to do with a ruling of the Speaker in the Chamber, and the Speaker was only following the rules of the Manitoba Legislature.

In fact, if this member really wanted to debate BSE, he would be asking questions or making speeches about it in Estimates, and not personally attacking the minister.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Next, I will recognize the Minister for Advanced Education.

On the point of order, let us not turn it into a debate. Okay, comments.

\*(15:40)

**Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** On the same point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I just wanted to make the same point that the Member for Burrows has already made. So I think that you can have another speaker.

**Mr. Chairperson:** On the same point of order, the Member for Emerson.

**Mr. Penner:** Mr. Chairperson, I think it is clear that the motion addressed the resolution that is before the committee and the motion that is before the

committee, and the motion is very clear. The motion asks for the immediate apology of the minister on not allowing the debate to take place on an urgent matter in the House because of the closure of the U.S. border to some of the ruminant products in the U.S. yesterday.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Chairperson, that you rule that the minister should be required to meet the request of the motion and therefore that you demand that the minister offer an apology to this House and to the people of Manitoba.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Same point of order, the Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services):** Mr. Chairperson, I just want to say that there is no point of order.

I know it has been mentioned on numerous occasions, but when the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives began to speak and started to talk about everything that she has done, not only personally but her department, and the hardworking individuals in the department, trying to address the challenges of BSE and others, she was continually being interrupted and was trying to make a case and trying to show why. She was dealing with the admonishment, as the member from Emerson stated, yet she was trying to show why, in dealing with that motion, she should not be admonished in any way, in fact, should be praised for what she has been doing in working with agriculture.

I will try to be quick. Certainly, building rural Manitoba and reducing farmland education taxes, building rural infrastructure and committing to the Agricultural Policy Framework are her top priorities, as well as our Government's. She has been doing a lot of these, Mr. Chairperson, not only personally, but her department and others in the Government have been working very hard.

I would just second and follow what the member—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Just finish off.

**Mr. Lemieux:** I would just say that the Member for Emerson does not have a point of order on this at all. The Minister of Agriculture was addressing the

current motion and was attempting to and they kept interrupting her. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I thank everyone for their contribution, but please do not use points of order for debate.

I just want to caution all members to make relevant comments to the motion which reads that the minister be admonished for her lack of understanding of the crisis being faced by our livestock producers and that she publicly apologize to the farmers of Manitoba.

I do not believe there was a point of order, but I just want to have all members make relevant comments to the motion before us.

There was no point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Penner:** Mr. Chairperson, I challenge the ruling of the Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Could I have your attention, please. The honourable Member for Emerson wishes to challenge the ruling of the Chair.

#### Voice Vote

**Mr. Chairperson:** Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained? All those in favour of sustaining that ruling, please say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those opposed to sustaining the ruling of the Chair, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Chairperson:** In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

The ruling of the Chair is sustained.

**An Honourable Member:** Yeas and Nays.

**Mr. Chairperson:** A formal vote on this matter has been requested by two members. This section of the

committee will now recess to allow members to proceed to the Chamber for a formal vote.

*The committee recessed at 3:53 p.m.*

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*The committee resumed at 4:34 p.m.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. We are currently considering the motion moved by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

Is the committee ready for the question, or do members have further comments on the motion?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** On the motion, the member indicated that there was a lack of understanding on the part of this Government and on the part of myself with regard to the crisis. I do not accept that comment, quite frankly. Our Government has worked very hard. Our Government has worked with the industry and lobbied very hard to get the border open. We worked with the federal government. We have worked with farm organizations. We have put in place programs. We have flowed cash to producers to help get them through this difficulty.

Certainly, I am surprised that the member would look for a motion today to have an emergency debate. We have just come through the budget debate, and, quite frankly, I was quite disappointed with the Opposition that they really did not raise agriculture issues. In the whole time of our budget debate, there was a time to raise questions about BSE and a time to raise questions about the expenditure. There were a couple of times when the issue was raised, but the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) did not even ask an agriculture question.

Today, on a day when they wanted to do an emergency debate, they did not make agriculture the issue of the day. With respect to our Government not understanding the issue and with respect to my department not understanding the issue, I would have to tell the member that he is wrong. I can tell you that I have been out in rural Manitoba, in all parts of the province where people are facing very difficult challenges, but they certainly appreciate the work that we have done and the programs that have been put in place. Is it enough? Well, it is never enough.

I was at a meeting in Ashern yesterday with the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) and the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell). I want to recognize the Member for Interlake for the work he has done and information he has provided during the time that we were in that whole drought situation. It was the Member for Interlake that encouraged us to put in a freight assistance program to help with the transportation of hay. When I was in the Interlake last night, people showed their appreciation and said how that program had worked for them and helped them with the movement of feed to keep their stocks going.

There is no doubt that there are still challenges out there. There is no doubt that we will still have to do a lot of work. I hope that the decision to open the border is made soon. I hope the decision is based on science, and I wish our Prime Minister well as he goes to Washington tomorrow to raise this issue with President Bush. I am counting on Ann Veneman living up to her word when she said that decisions would be based on science, and after the comment period, there would be a short review. There is no doubt that there are groups of people, particularly R-CALF, that do not want to see the border open, but I can tell you that there are many groups that we met with when we were in Washington and in Boise who indicated that they want the border open. There are processing facilities that are suffering because they depend on Canadian cattle.

I also know that when the border opens, and even before the border opens, we have to continue to work on getting some slaughter capacity in this province, and certainly the people involved with Rancher's Choice are key to this. Again, staff from my department and the staff from Industry, Trade and Mines are working very hard on this. I would just say that the member is not listening to rural Manitobans when he put his motion on the floor, and I am speaking against this motion.

**Mr. Penner:** Mr. Chairperson, I guess the normal rules would prevail that the mover of the motion close the debate. Is that correct?

**Mr. Chairperson:** I think the Member for Emerson is referring to House rules, but you can speak to this as many times as you want.

**Mr. Penner:** Thank you for the clarification.

I just want to say to the committee and the rest of the people in the province of Manitoba that the reason we did not raise the issue in Question Period until toward the end of the Question Period was because the 14th person had died in the hallways of this province when the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province promised during the election campaign almost five years ago that he would end hallway medicine, and that he would end people even having to lie in the hallways.

He said to the people of Manitoba, "Give us \$15 million and six months and we will have cured what ails this health care system." Yet, now, after 14 deaths, we thought the matter urgent enough, Mr. Chairperson, that we in fact did do the first six questions in Question Period today on the matter of health and the inordinate action—

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. I am having a difficult time hearing people speak. Please let the person speak that has the floor. If you wish to speak, you can speak back there or in the hallways.

**Mr. Penner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson. I think it is imperative that the people of Manitoba know that 14 people have died in the hallways of the hospitals in the province of Manitoba during the time that the NDP government has been in power, even after the people elected them on the promise that they would end hallway medicine.

I suppose they are trying to end hallway medicine, because they are letting the people die instead of curing them. I think that is unfortunate.

However, we did raise the matter in Question Period of the border closure that has happened just recently, as of this morning, I understand, on court action that the R-CALF organization in Billings, Montana took.

I believe that it is important to note—*[interjection]* Well, the minister is quipping on the left side of where I sit, and that is where she belongs too, on the left side of where I sit, but she is quipping that it was three days ago.

Yet, when we asked her, the minister, yesterday whether she knew anything about it, she did not know anything about it. She should have been one of

the first ones to know something about the border closure. Why did you lie to us then when we asked you that—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please.

First of all, I caution people at the language they use. Please use parliamentary language. We are crossing the line. Also, there is too much talking here. We just want to hear the person that has the floor talking, okay?

**Mr. Penner:** I apologize, Mr. Chair, for using the term "lying." I think that is not appropriate that I used that language, but I know that, if the minister had known, I think she would have shared that with us, and of course she did not share it with us. I find that also unfortunate. That has been the model that the minister has used instead of sharing the information that she is aware of.

I think it is unfortunate also that she tried to indicate to the people of Manitoba when the Premier of this province went to Washington the first time with an all-party committee, including an all-party committee, to try to convince the people in Washington that the border should be open.

Yet, when the all-party committee got there, they found in Washington that the Americans had a national holiday and there was nobody in Washington. They just walked from door to door and it was all closed. So I found that very interesting that the Premier (Mr. Doer) would not even know that there was a national holiday in Washington.

Secondly, I also found it very interesting that just a couple of weeks ago the Premier and a number of ministers went to Washington again on a Thursday, on the Thursday before Good Friday, trying to meet with people in Washington that would be decision makers and leave the impression that they in fact had met with substantive people when we all know that most people in Washington would leave early on Thursday to go home to their constituencies or to their states and be with their families for Good Friday and most of them would attend church on Good Friday morning. They would have to leave early in order to get home.

Yet this Premier and his ministers were not even aware, unless maybe, unless just maybe they thought that they could make an Easter holiday of this, and

maybe they did. I do not know. I only ask that question. But we can find out whether they stayed the week or the weekend or whatever, and we might do that.

However, I want to get back to the real issues that are before us. That is, of course, the recent closure of many of the products that we were hoping would be able to be exported to the United States. It was on a court action. I think it is unfortunate that the Premier of this province has initiated action through the U.S. federal court on taking the U.S. federal government to court on other matters. I suspect that part of the problem that we are incurring, especially in Manitoba now, and, I believe, even as Canadians, because whether we are Manitobans or not, we are seen in the United States and in Washington as Canadian. So, if there is federal court action mounted on one hand by the Canadian government, it does not surprise me at all that organizations such as R-CALF would want to challenge us in the courts.

Well, I think the Premier has taken the NAWS project to court in a federal court in Washington, and I would suspect that the Americans are seeing this as Canadians taking them on on a given issue, and we will play tit for tat. I would suspect that the Canadian government might, in fact, be seen as doing the right thing. We would certainly support the Manitoba government in their effort to try and stop Missouri water coming into Manitoba out of the Garrison project.

We have made this very clear. I have made this very clear on numerous occasions when I met with North Dakotans, when I met with the governor of North Dakota, that we were not supportive of a pipeline being built from the Garrison to Minot without the water being treated before it hit the pipe. I think there was an opportunity to negotiate that with North Dakota. As a matter of fact, some of the people that are influential over there told me this, that if Manitoba would have come to them with a proposition, they would have accepted that proposition.

Yet our Premier chose not to take the diplomatic route. He chose to take court action. I think we are now seeing the results of that, and, whether we are right or wrong, it is totally immaterial. What is evident is that we are receiving the results of that

because the R-CALF organization is now using the same process to stop us from exporting meat.

That is what you get when you set aside diplomacy and use the legal system and the court actions to drive home a point. I think the newness of the Government, of many of the ministers in that government, or of the backbenchers is evident by those kinds of actions, and I think it is being reflected in the kinds of results we get now in those kinds of things.

So be it. I would suggest that the questions that the minister asked as to why we had not raised, during the budget debate, the agricultural issue to a larger extent, we were debating the Budget, and there was one word called agriculture in that Budget, just one.

**An Honourable Member:** There was a whole book, Jack.

**Mr. Penner:** No, there was not a whole book. Look at the minister's speech. When the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) made his speech in the House, he mentioned agriculture once, and he mentioned the BSE crisis as being the reason why they were running a deficit, and blaming the farm community for running the deficit and the livestock producers in this province. How utterly irresponsible and how unfortunate that a government of Manitoba, especially the Finance Minister, would use a crisis to drive home the point that they had the right to run a deficit. I thought it was, to say the least, not done in a tasteful manner. Specifically, using less than three lines to describe the whole agricultural initiative in this province in the budget speech, demonstrated clearly how much of a relevance this Government paid to the importance of agriculture.

When you really look at how and what kind of a contribution the primary agriculture producers in this province make towards the economy, the kind of revenues that are generated because of the raw product production that happens, and all the processing, manufacturing, and all the jobs that are secondary right through the food chain to the grocery store, and even beyond the grocery store, they are huge, and the economic effect of that is huge.

\* (16:50)

Yet, when a crisis develops, those very farmers that are in the deepest trouble are being blamed for the deficit that this Government has run. If it had only been a one-time deficit that this Government had initiated, we might have let it go at that. We might have responded differently, but this is the fourth time that this Government has run a deficit, and they still refuse to admit it. They have had all kinds of excuses. I believe the health care system was one excuse that was used. It was all kinds of excuses that have been used, but to blame the agricultural community for that deficit, I think, is unfortunate. I think it is unfair to the farmers of Manitoba.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. I just want to ask the Member for Emerson. Are you speaking to the motion or your opening remarks?

**Mr. Penner:** I just want to say to you, Mr. Chairperson, that I think it is unfortunate that the government of the day would not recognize the importance of the debate that needed to take place in the House. I think I need to raise some of the issues that are relevant to that debate. I would suspect that the minister should have gone to her Premier and her House Leader and suggested very strongly that the debate should be allowed to take place. I think that would have given all of our members in our caucus, indeed, a chance to reflect on what the crisis was all about and how it was affecting those communities in rural Manitoba; how, indeed, it was reflected and affecting the city of Brandon, the city of Winnipeg and all the cities in this province and, obviously, affecting the revenues of this province dramatically because they had to run a deficit.

Mr. Chairman, that is why we chastised the minister today when we started this process, and that is why we moved the motion. So I suspect that it is clearly a reflection of the Government's lack of intent to fund and finance the agricultural crisis in a proper manner.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is the committee ready for the question, or do members have further comments on the motion?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The question, I will read the motion again.

The motion of Mr. Penner, that the minister be admonished for her lack of understanding of the crisis being faced by our livestock producers and that she publicly apologize to the farmers of Manitoba.

### Voice Vote

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Chairperson:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chairperson:** I will ask the Member for Emerson to conclude his opening comments.

**Mr. Penner:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. As I indicated before we broke for the vote, I believe that—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Excuse me. I just want to say that the motion was accordingly defeated. Thank you.

**Mr. Penner:** I would like to suggest to the committee that, in my remarks when I started my opening remarks on the budget, the Agriculture budget, that the 40% reduction in income in this province of Manitoba, I think, is reflective of the lack of understanding of the agricultural situation in the province, the lack of income in this province and the large drop in income and pricing in the province in the year 2003. I think government totally ignored what was going on all around them and forgot to recognize that the significant commodity price declines that were happening all around them had a very dramatic effect on the agricultural community and farmers in this province.

The one, and I will let the minister and the member for—

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

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please.



**Mr. Penner:** The interesting part is that the Government did not recognize the effect of the commodity price declines that were happening around them and I think other provinces did. When the federal government announced the changes to ag support and ag policy and put forward the proposition to put in place the Ag Policy Framework, I think there was clearly an indication by government that they would recognize what had to happen and the economic impact that would happen from the shift from the CFIP program, the AIDA program and the NISA program and what kind of difficulties farmers would incur through that transition. They put, I think, almost a billion dollars in place as a transition program dependent on 40% participation from the provinces. The Province of Manitoba made it quite clear that they would not contribute their 40 percent to that transition program.

Mr. Chairman, had the Province of Manitoba contributed its 40 percent to that transition program, the net income of farmers would have reflected the, roughly, it would be between \$45 million and \$50 million that would have accrued to the farmers of Manitoba through that program, if the Government of Manitoba had chosen to participate. That would have increased the net income fairly significantly in the province of Manitoba and would not have put farmers in a net minus-income situation which has never, I understand, happened in this province before. I think this is clearly an indication of how and why NDP governments have not understood how agriculture functions, nor how it operates, and that it must be allowed to be competitive with the international community.

I find it relatively interesting that the United States spends about \$90 billion a year in income support programs in one kind or another, and yet when we talked to our federal government about that kind of income support for our farmers, relative to the numbers of farmers we have compared to theirs, the federal government tells us they cannot afford to compete with the U.S. Treasury. When we talk to our NDP government about those kinds of things, they tell us they cannot afford to compete with the U.S. Treasury. Yet we have no difficulty subjecting our farmers on an individual basis to compete directly with that U.S. Treasury. That is the only way that they can be in that business. I think the income figures are a direct reflection of the huge U.S. subsidies that have gone on and the downward drive in prices that that has caused. Forcing our farmers to

have to sell their products at those depressed prices because of the U.S. subsidies and the European subsidies in the world market have driven our grain prices down, have driven our oilseed prices down, have driven our livestock prices down.

I believe the net income reflects very clearly on that. I think it is important that the people around this table and in our Chamber recognize that, because they are the decision-makers. They have been given the right to govern by the people of Manitoba and I respect that, but surely, when economic crises such as we have seen this last year develop, then government must step up to the plate in a more significant way than they have.

\* (17:00)

I opened with a statement and I want to go back there for a bit. I found it distasteful, quite frankly, that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and the Government of Manitoba would announce a whole raft of programs, and the farm community is courteous enough that they have actually complimented the Government from time to time on trying to bring forward initiatives that would help them. Some of them would tell you very clearly that they have been helped and that they have received benefits of this, but there are many, especially the cow-calf operators that have virtually received no benefit at all from government, and this is a cow-calf province. This is a cow-calf province.

When Canada and the provinces announced that first BSE Recovery Program, the total amount that should have accrued to the province of Manitoba was fairly significant. Yet the Province of Manitoba recognized early on that very little of that money under the terms of the agreement could flow to Manitoba producers and did. There was very little money flowed to the producers.

I think there was roughly about \$18 million according to the Department of Agriculture and the minister's office, who forwarded this out of a portion of 184 million that should have accrued to the program, if the Province, I believe, would have negotiated properly with the federal government. However, that did not happen and the amount announced of 460 million combining the federal and provincial contribution, 40 percent of that portion is a very, very significant amount of money that our producers did not get. Again, I think that was a

contributing factor to the net income decline that we saw last year.

The Manitoba Feeder Assistance Program: When the Premier made a big to-do about doing a \$17-million draw on the Treasury, was announced at \$15 million. He made it sound as if they were drawing 17, but only paid out 6.2 million because the criteria around this program did not allow the payouts to be any larger than that. Again, when the advertisements came out, it came out as a \$15 program and the actual delivery was 6.2, according to the minister's office.

The Manitoba Slaughter Deficiency Program: An amount that was announced at \$10 million, and this one came close to the amount that should have been paid out. This one came out at \$9.3 million, according to the minister's office. I asked, by the way, the Crop Insurance department whether they would release those figures to me and the first response was, "Yes, I think we can because we have all of them." Then I was told that you have to talk to another person. That person told me, "No, we cannot. It has to come through the minister's office."

I found it very interesting that a member of the Legislature could not go to a corporation owned by the Province, which is not directly responsible to the minister, and request information from that corporation without having to go through the minister's office. That is unusual because until now we have been able to go to MPIC and ask for information. We have been able to go to Workers Compensation for information. We have been able to go to Crop Insurance or MACC for information without any questions being asked. Why should they not give us the information?

But not on this program. This program, the staff was told, "No, you have to get that information from the minister." I think that sets sort of a bit of a precedent and I find that unusual.

The Manitoba Drought Assistance Program was a \$12-million program that was announced, and I believe the minister announced it knowing full well that she would not have to pay out the whole 12 million. In fact, they did not even pay out 4. They paid out \$3.9 million, according to the minister's office, not according to Crop Insurance, but according to the minister's office.

The Manitoba Cull Animal Program was a \$6-million program and it only paid out 4.7, again, according to the minister's numbers, not Manitoba Crop Insurance numbers.

The Manitoba BSE Recovery Program was a \$100-million program. What I found most interesting about this loans program, that farmers were not entrusted with the money that was extended to them through the loans program. It was required that the farmers submit the bills, and I think this is the first time in the history of this province where you are required to submit the bills and that the MACC office would pay the bills when receipts were submitted to MACC.

It reminded me of a story I heard when we visited Ukraine for the first time. We visited a collective farm and that manager, we spent the whole day with this manager. He showed us his whole farm. Then, that evening, his wife prepared supper for us, and he told us this story about how they operated. This was almost exactly reflective of how the USSR forced its farmers into a controlled position, and the minister made the decision on how the operations would run and how the bills would be paid, and how they could acquire goods.

This time around, farmers tell me they were issued a loan, and that they had to go out and buy hay, and that the farmers they were buying from were told, "I am sorry. I cannot pay you, but you have to give me a bill. I then will go to the minister's office or MACC and submit the bill, and they will then send you a cheque." They did not trust their farmers.

This minister did not trust her farmers with the money to allow them to write the cheque, very similar to the situation in the USSR and their collective farms. They were not allowed to go out and spend the money that they raised on their farm. They were not even allowed to get the money. Same as this program did, they were not allowed to get the money. They were allowed to make the order, and then they were allowed to submit the bills. The government paid the bills. The government told them exactly how much they would get to buy fertilizer, as we did here. We told the farmers here exactly how much they would get to buy hay. Boy, the comparison was so real. I said to many farmers who have told their story to me, "How reflective of a socialist government forcing farmers to come and

kowtow and bow to the minister." I think it was so unfortunate.

Then the minister included the Feeder Financing initiative, the Stocker Loan Program, the Made-in-Manitoba Beef Fund. She rolled that all into the spending, which, I think, is unfortunate. I think it is somewhat unfair and does not reflect fully the BSE program. But, in total, they paid out 96.2, if these numbers, in fact, are correct, because they came out of the minister's office. I am not sure that I could trust the minister's office. I would not trust them nearly as much as I would trust MACC and their staff.

\* (17:10)

**An Honourable Member:** Attack the servants. They cannot defend themselves, so you attack them.

**Mr. Penner:** No, I am not attacking. I am attacking the minister—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. We will all get our chance to speak when we have the floor. Let us allow the person who has the floor to speak.

**Mr. Penner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I say to this committee, and I say to the minister, that if you had trusted your department, you would have said, "Certainly, release the data," instead of having to funnel it through the minister, so reflective of what we heard in Ukraine and the USSR, so reflective of a similar—I trust the staff of the department. I trust the MACC people. I trust the Crop Insurance people. I deal with them every day. They are some of the finest people that we have in this province—total trust and total respect. However, the minister, obviously, did not trust her own staff in her own department, in the Crop Insurance Corporation, to allow them to release the numbers to us. I found that very interesting.

I want to reflect on the impact of the agricultural industry to the economy of the province of Manitoba. It is well known that the agricultural sector directly employs between 30 000 and 35 000 people, depending on what time of year it is. Have we ever done a study on how many people are indirectly employed in this economy, in this province, in a secondary and beyond in a tertiary manner because of the primary agriculture sector? I do not think we have ever really done that, and I think we should do that. I think we

would be surprised at how many people are actually dependent on that primary agricultural production. If we would recognize that in this province and truly appreciate that, I think government would look differently upon agriculture. I am not reflecting only on this Government; I think governments in the past, too, would have reflected differently on the agriculture community and the agricultural needs than we have in the past. Yet we have nickelled and dimed the Department of Agriculture to the point where they are forced to rationalize the programs that I believe should be first and foremost.

Our Soils and Crops department, I believe, has been nickelled and dimed to death. I think that is unfortunate because that is where the future lies. The research that needs to be done just to keep up with the pace of change that is happening, I think must happen, and governments of all stripes must recognize the importance of that.

I think the educational side of the department is sadly underfunded. I think the agriculture producers, the primary producers working together with the department needs to be encouraged to a much greater degree than they are now. I think many farm organizations would agree with me on that but, yet, we have not seen an effort made towards that.

I also find it interesting that this Government would now roll part of intergovernmental affairs into the Department of Agriculture. I am going to be listening very carefully to what is said, or what comes out of the meeting that the minister is going to hold with her staff in Brandon on the 30th. I suspect there are some surprises going to come out of that meeting. We are going to look forward to those surprises and how they affect the department but, more so, how those will affect the workings of the department and how they will affect the decision making in agriculture and the agriculture community. I would hope that the government of the day recognizes the importance of the department and its needs and the needs of the agricultural industry.

I understand that I have two more minutes to make my remarks. I want to say that I find it most unfortunate that the potato industry under the NDP administration is indicating the cutbacks that they are making. I found it, also, very unfortunate that the PMU industry made the decisions that they did when they made them. I think the Government of Manitoba should have played a much larger role in talking or

trying to convince the PMU industry to keep its processing in this province.

I also find it very interesting that the Government of Manitoba and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) have not paid a much greater degree of attention to the TB situation in Riding Mountain National Park and that she has not spoken much more strongly on the issue of trying to eradicate that disease in Riding Mountain National Park. Our livestock industry is far too vulnerable. I think the case in La Broquerie demonstrates that. When part of a herd was bought by a dairy farmer in La Broquerie and had an outbreak in tuberculosis because there was a case of tuberculosis, the herd had to be annihilated in La Broquerie. The animal came from Riding Mountain. I think that just demonstrates how vulnerable our whole industry is to the TB situation in Riding Mountain National Park.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order. I thank the member for his opening statement.

We will continue on. Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary should traditionally be the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of the line item 3.1.(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining referenced in Resolution 3.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce her staff in attendance.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairperson, I had a discussion with my critic about the order of Estimates, and we have had the tradition where we will deal with the corporations first. The first corporation is the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation. I am joined at the table by my Deputy Minister, Barry Todd; Neil Hamilton, of the Manitoba Crop Insurance; Marvin Richter, who is Director of Financial Administration; and Jim Lewis, Director of Finance from the Crop Insurance Corporation.

Before we get into discussion on the corporation, I would like to respond to a few comments that the member opposite made. I was just intrigued with his—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable Minister, I just want to know if there is agreement from the committee that we move to the corporations' continuing of Resolution 3.2: Risk Management and Income Support before we go ahead. Is there agreement that we start with—there is agreement. Thank you.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** As I was saying, there are a few issues that I would like to address before we get into the Crop Insurance Corporation. It was with interest that I listened to the member opposite compare the programs that we have here in Manitoba to programs that they have in Russia or the Soviet Union at the time.

**An Honourable Member:** The process, ministerial process.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Pardon me. He talked about the ministerial process and the fact that under our loan program, the BSE Recovery Program, we required bills provided before money would flow. I think the member opposite must have been in touch with the Soviet Union before they put their program in place because, under the Manitoba Producer Recovery Program under the previous administration, it was required that producers provide their bills before their money flows. I believe the same thing applied under the floodproofing loan assistance program. Before producers got their money, they had to provide receipts. I just wanted to clear the record. The member is implying that something is being done very differently under the programs here than it was done under their administration. The requirement under the loan program was the same.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I just want to remind people, let us keep our debate on the resolution. Our opening statement has been completed. So we would like to get on with the resolution.

\* (17:20)

**Mr. Penner:** I intend to do that. I want to remind the minister that there was a vast difference between flood compensation and damages incurred and payment of damages incurred than there is for buying supplies for your livestock to feed your livestock on your farm or supplies or for that matter loans to run your farm operation with than the two items that the minister indicated.

Certainly, if she does not recognize that difference, I will excuse that. That is, of course, up to her if she wants to make that comparison.

First of all, there is under the Risk Management and Income Support Programs an issue that I think we need to deal with. I want to make mention of it. That is that the Keystone Agriculture Producers has said that farm families can no longer afford to be used as a cash cow—that is their term—by the Government of Manitoba to support their spending habits.

They reflect directly on the huge increases in the taxation of farm properties that they have incurred over the last number of years. The education tax increases have been nothing but a very severe negative impact on the income of farmers.

Farmers are by far the largest individual contributors to the education tax process and pay a far larger portion of the education tax or contribute a far greater portion of the education cost to the Province of Manitoba in Manitoba. I believe that it is imperative that the education tax from farmland be removed entirely.

Any government that takes a realistic look at how government raises money for education purposes should have an understanding that that needs to be reviewed and removed. I believe that the special levy of farmland gives the school divisions in this province an opportunity to use the funding that they derive from property tax to change the levels of education that are offered to the pupils of this province.

I believe we are probably far closer to operating 57 private school operations in this province than we are to providing funding equally to the children of the province of Manitoba. I say this with all due respect. We are going to in our area, for instance, next year see a 20% increase in property taxes by the school division to our properties. They have already told us that. Next year's increase would have to be 20 percent over what they applied this year. This year I believe it was very close to 8 percent that they increased the tax this year.

Their administrative cost went up 13.8 percent, the administration cost in the division. That was after the minister and her Government said the administration cost would drop dramatically and that is why

they were forcing the amalgamations. It is unfortunate that Borderland voluntarily decided to merge, except that Sprague School was forced into this merger, and has caused very significant economic difficulties for the division and is now causing very significant economic difficulties for the taxpayers of that division. There are going to be large cost increases. The minister has not given any indication that he is going to provide special funding to that division and I think that is unfortunate. I believe, as I have indicated before, that the 30th of this month is going to be a D-Day for the department, and we look with interest into how that is going to be managed.

Mr. Chairperson, I want to ask the minister about the operations of Crop Insurance. I want to ask the minister whether any administrative costs of the BSE programs have been accrued to the Crop Insurance Corporation and whether the administration costs came out of the funds of the Crop Insurance Corporation

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairperson, I said earlier that I wanted to recognize the work of our staff, and I certainly want to recognize and commend the people at the Crop Insurance Corporation for the work they did to administer this program.

It was a difficult time and government was putting a lot of demands on all staff. In this case, a tremendous amount of work was picked up by the Crop Insurance people and I really appreciate that. I am sure that they felt a tremendous amount of pressure from government when we wanted to deliver the programs as quickly and as best we could. The administration of the programs that Crop Insurance took on the responsibility for was paid for by the program. Costs were not paid for by Crop Insurance.

**Mr. Penner:** So the minister is telling me that there was no cost accrued by the Crop Insurance Corporation to fund and deliver the program. The inspectors and everything were paid for out of the funds of the program.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The Crop Insurance took on that extra responsibility, and their costs will be paid from the program. The inspectors and all of the people that did the work, that cost comes out of the programs, not from the corporation.

**Mr. Penner:** I apologize, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson, so no costs would have accrued to the corporation for the delivery of the many BSE programs that were delivered through Crop Insurance and no costs would have accrued to the corporation.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, certainly the administration of Crop Insurance incurred costs as they were doing the program, delivering those programs, developing the programs, putting together the computer program that had to go with it, but those costs were then calculated and accrued back to the programs.

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

Mr. Chairperson, can the minister tell me what the changes in operation in Crop Insurance are going to be or what the changes farmers can expect by the changes that are going to be required under the CAIS program, the APF agreement, and how Crop Insurance is going to configure itself to be able to provide the service to the farmers that might in fact be required by government in delivery of the CAIS program?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I wonder if the member could clarify if the question is: Is Crop Insurance going to have to make some changes to deliver the program? Crop Insurance is not delivering CAIS. The federal government is delivering that program. But, if I did not understand the question, the member could clarify it.

**Mr. Penner:** I apologize for not being more clear. I understand that there might be requirement for CAIS participants to actually subscribe to crop insurance.

Can the minister indicate to me how that will be delivered, and how the programs will be designed under crop insurance to tie into the CAIS program? If I said the delivery of the program—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. The time being 5:30, I am interrupting the proceedings. The Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow (Friday) at 10 a.m.

## HEALTH

\*(15:10)

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

section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Health.

Does the honourable Minister of Health have an opening statement?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Madam Chairperson, I welcome the members of the committee again to another round of Estimates debate. I am going to forgo an opening statement, insofar as there is a new addition to the Department of Health in the form of a new Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), who, I think, would like to make some opening comments.

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister responsible for Healthy Living):** Good afternoon, Madam Chairperson, colleagues, staff, and guests from the public. I am pleased to join you here today. Last November, the Premier (Mr. Doer) announced that there would be a new minister with a focus on healthy living to help the province concentrate on prevention and health promotion. This will help improve the quality of life and, potentially, offset more costly medical care down the road for thousands of Manitobans.

It was a premise of medicare originally that prevention was a very important part of the whole basis on which medicare was based. My mandate includes the promotion of health and wellness, safety and injury prevention, chronic disease prevention, as well as responsibility for the Seniors Directorate and Healthy Child Manitoba.

I am excited about this opportunity as I have been getting out and talking to Manitobans about healthy eating, physical activity, smoking cessation, safety, injury prevention, and, in general, how to live healthier lives.

What is healthy living? For individuals, healthy living is all about adopting health enhancing behaviours or living in a healthier way. Healthy living means making positive choices about personal health practices, such as eating healthier foods, not smoking, becoming physically more active, and taking more precautions to prevent injuries that are preventable.

Our vision for Manitoba is a healthy province in which all Manitobans experience the conditions that support the attainment and maintenance of good health. We want to help Manitobans improve their

overall health status and reduce the health disparities within our population. This cannot be done without the involvement of others, as healthy living is the shared responsibility of all government departments, as well as communities, private industry, social networks, families, individuals, everyone in society.

For example, soft drink manufacturers are voluntarily removing pop from vending machines in elementary schools. This is a good start. If they provide healthier alternatives, not just sugar-rich fruit drinks and sports drinks, this will support children in making good, healthy decisions.

Children and youth are also targets of aggressive advertising campaigns and marketing techniques, because of their spending power, purchasing influence, and their future consumer habits as adults. I have a little bit of an anecdote here where my niece, when I was talking to her about where to go eat for lunch, her comment was, "Good food, priced right. Let's eat at McDonalds." So, therefore, we do have strong influence of advertising in how to get kids to eat properly.

Foods like candy, chocolate, fast food, convenience foods, are all heavily advertised, but how many times do we see advertisements for fruit, vegetables, healthy food?

Milk becomes very, very important in the development of kids when they are around puberty so that we ensure that people have strong, healthy bones. We have to make sure that people are getting good, balanced diets. That is all stuff that we have to promote, and it is stuff that we have to do early so that people have good, long lives, healthy lives.

Physical activity is also important. The environments where Canadians live, learn, commute, work and play must be able to support regular physical activity. It does not just start in the schools; it starts at birth. We have to make sure that people are active from birth throughout their whole life. We know that activity promotes better lifestyle. It gives you less chance of getting diabetes early, other chronic disease, such as heart attacks, et cetera. Very, very important if people are active, so we must get our community and everyone more active.

Things like safe routes to school, bike paths, the provision of shower facilities at work might encourage more Canadians to be more active. It is

not one size fits all. We have to work together on multifaceted approaches to make sure that Manitobans have a whole variety of activities that will keep them healthier.

The idea is prevention. The idea is to get people more active. If you look at the alliance of chronic disease, we have to work with multiple groups to make sure that we get more active. I must commend PACOM, the Physical Activity Coalition of Manitoba, established by the Heart and Stroke Foundation, which comprises over 30 groups that are trying to encourage physical activity throughout the province.

When Manitobans require medical care, it is the job of Manitoba Health to ensure that the most up-to-date medical services are available when and where they are needed. But we also need to continue to promote health and well-being in this province to help Manitobans live longer, live healthier lives before they find themselves using their health care system.

Prevention makes fiscal sense. It also makes huge sense in human terms. This is a direction that we are currently leaders in, and we are moving further ahead on.

The role of the individual in making healthy choices is also vital to the success of these kinds of initiatives. Some of the items that we have been working on include the following: A bill has been tabled, Bill 21, to amend The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act to implement a province-wide ban on smoking in enclosed public places and indoor workplaces. The bill will also amend The Municipal Assessment Act and The Workplace Health and Safety Act. This legislation was recommended by the All-Party Task Force on Environmental Tobacco Smoke and calls for a complete ban on smoking in the enclosed public and indoor workplaces where provincial government has clear jurisdiction. We are aiming to have this ban take effect October 1, 2004.

\*(15:20)

I would like to publicly commend the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) for his leadership in this, where he has actually moved very, very forward on this and, actually, single-handedly moved the agenda faster. It is nice to see the co-operation of all parties on this important health concern.

Currently, there are about 2800 people who suffer smoking-related deaths. What we want to do is make sure that we decrease that number.

Emphysema is terrible. It robs people of the active lives they have. Lung cancer, throat cancer, nasal cancer are all things that can be preventable. What we want to do is make sure we decrease the number of people who are suffering from these ailments.

We have developed a framework and a process for the development of healthy living strategies for Manitoba. There are six guiding principles that will ensure that the work we do reflects the needs and opinions of Manitobans.

The first one is injury prevention. I am pleased that just this week we had a conference on injury prevention. We try not to call it accidents, because if you are speeding, doing silly things around the house, if you are not talking about proper precautions, they are not accidents. They are things that you take a chance or a risk on. What we are trying to do is injury prevention, which involves making people understand what the risks are, what their behaviours are, so that they can take appropriate actions so that they are not hurt or injured in their activities. So, a lot of injuries can be prevented. We have to work together. It is something that we can work with the department of highways, with MPIC, with businesses, with parents, with schools. Everyone can work on this to prevent injuries.

Smoking cessation. It is nice to see that we have gone from a 35% to a 28% smoking rate, and we continue to work on it. We have some wonderful initiatives that we began. Some of them were targeted in junior high schools, where we have a number of commercials which are talking about the anti-smoking commercials. We have those in the schools that are, basically, talking about how kids view the commercials. They then give their assessment of which are the best commercials. They also, at the same time, think about all the damage that it does, the personal damage, the biological damage, because that is how the commercials are set up, and it is wonderful.

I would like to commend Manitoba Health staff. Andrew Loughhead has done a wonderful job on this non-smoking youth committee. They are doing a lot of things to promote non-smoking and healthy

lifestyles. He has done an excellent job. I am pleased that again we worked on an all-party basis to move this forward.

The other items, like healthy living and lifestyles, are also important. What we want to do is make sure that people eat well, are active, and they focus on the positive things to keep themselves well. I would like to comment about the important part of our Healthy Child and Healthy Baby programs where mothers are entitled to supplement. Low-income mothers are entitled to a supplement so that they can ensure that they have proper nutrition and proper support.

We also have a program where we have about 1300 families that are visited by professional staff, so they get the support and the information they need to make positive choices for their child. That is a really good program. I hear wonderful things about it. We are talking about less FAS. We are talking less underweight babies. We are talking about proper nutrition, proper parenting. We are developing skills in parents, and working with them in a co-operative method to develop skills so that we have better, more healthy generations.

We are also working on reproductive sexual health care. What we are trying to do is develop programs where people have the information and the resources so that they can, therefore, make appropriate reproductive health choices. We also are concerned that a number of tests, like cervical examinations, pap tests—I think that we can encourage women to get proper reproductive health care, take appropriate action, so that we do not suffer larger consequences, because we do not have up front diagnoses, up front examinations, and then we have to take more radical action. I think what we want to do is make sure that people have appropriate tests at the appropriate times so that they move forward in this important area.

I am also responsible for seniors. Being responsible for seniors is a very important job, because what you want to do is you want to make sure, we have a large portion of seniors, and we want to make sure the Government is listening to them, that government is reacting to them, and that government is sympathetic to what they need to make sure they age healthily. The advancing age strategy is wonderful, because it is dealing with government across all the bounds, and so we are not dealing with silos of



government departments. We are dealing across all departments to make sure that we have policies and processes and supports for seniors, so that they can age at home healthily.

I am also working on the area of chronic disease prevention. I think what we need to do is work with organizations like CancerCare, Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Alliance for the Prevention of Chronic Disease, to make sure that we have programs where we are promoting good health, promoting early detection, so that we try to decrease the amount of chronic diseases that we have to deal with and, also, if we can delay it, such as diabetes. Through just good diet and activity we can delay diseases like diabetes. If a person is predisposed to get diabetes at the age of 35, and we can delay it till 55, the health outcomes, I am sure you agree, will be wonderful.

An important part of the strategy will be the new Healthy Living Web site. I encourage all of you, Myrna, the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), if you have a chance to view it, it is a wonderful Web site. It was launched earlier this week. Links to information on active living, healthy eating, injury prevention, smoking cessation will be available on the Web site, making this important information accessible to all Manitobans. We plan to continue to work on this Web site so that it becomes a resource that all people can access.

We also have undertaken the production of a report called "Injuries in Manitoba: A 10-Year Review" also released earlier this year. This report analyzes the 10 years of injury, hospitalizations and deaths in Manitoba, and provides important information about who was injured, where they have been injured and how they are being injured. This allows RHAs, organizations, businesses and parents to actually look at what is going on, what the history of injury is and then take proactive action. It provides us with baseline data that we need to guide our planning and activities, and to measure our progress.

We are also very pleased to announce the funding of three childhood vaccines to be added to the routine childhood immunization schedule over the coming year. The three new vaccines are conjugated meningococcal, conjugated pneumococcal and varicella. The conjugated meningococcal prevents bloodstream meningitis infections. The pneumococcal prevents infections with seven types of

pneumococcal bacteria that cause bloodstream meningitis, middle ear infections. Varicella prevents chicken pox and its complications, skin infections, et cetera. These new vaccines will be provided at no cost to vaccine recipients similar to other childhood immunizations as part of Manitoba's universal immunization program.

I would like to publicly commend the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), who took this initiative to the national agenda in 2001. Manitoba took the lead in pushing this agenda item forward. It is nice to see that he led the country. It is also nice to see that we were able to focus, in the Healthy Living Ministry, where what we would do was we wrote a letter to the new federal public health minister. What we tried to do was bring this again to the agenda.

It is nice to see that our officials in the Manitoba Public Health branch also push this agenda. Because of it, I think, we have added a lot of pressure from the doctors, pediatricians, GPs. Everyone has been pushing this. I think that the federal government reacted. For the first time they have put money into the actual delivery of vaccines to our population. It is nice to see that we are actually moving forward on this very, very important health initiative.

Our Government has finally been able to nail it down and move forward on vaccines. It is not just with the three-year money that the federal government has coughed up. What we have done is we have taken the three-year money and we have made a long-term commitment to fund vaccinations.

We will be working with First Nations, Inuit health branch. We will be working with RHAs, multiple partners to move this important initiative forward.

Other things that we have done are we have funded the Reh-Fit Centre for \$1.2 million, which is wonderful, because it is talking about access to activity. The Reh-Fit does a wonderful job turning around people who have suffered heart attacks, but, also, I used to coach a volleyball team that played at the Reh-Fit Centre. That is called healthy living.

\*(15:30)

We have funded the Turnabout Program for \$94,000. That is getting kids out who have been involved in crime to get away from crime. I was very

pleased to work with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) and make that announcement just this week.

We have launched a Web site regarding fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, FASD, at a meeting of the ministers responsible for the Canada Northwest Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Partnership in November.

Actually, as an MLA, I was able to open up or announce with the federal and civic areas the new expansion of the Centennial Pool project. It is wonderful. The Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) and I, I am sure, will get lots of positive responses, because what we are doing is we are taking a proactive approach to keeping people healthy.

I have also been leading the review on The Personal Health Information Act. We have launched a new approach on improved children's therapy services by initiating a number of projects in Winnipeg, Brandon, Central and NOR-MAN. I was at the announcement for the awarding of the tender for the construction of the \$2.5-million prostate cancer centre.

I know that the members opposite once made a comment that I am the minister of ribbon-cutting. I am proud to see that, as Manitoba Health, what we are doing is we are cutting ribbons. We are cutting ribbons on new MRIs; we are cutting ribbons on new CAT scans; we are cutting ribbons at Misericordia hospital; we are cutting ribbons in rural areas. We are expanding the Reh-Fit Centre. We are working together to provide the financial assistance to make people healthy.

I am also pleased to chair the Healthy Child Committee, to let you know that we were working very hard to keep kids busy. So we gave small grants to each school, and we had about 480 schools apply for the grants this year for active living. Previously, we have worked on nutrition so that schools apply for small grants and they promoted nutrition and healthy eating in their schools.

So, you can see, it is a ministry that crosses all boundaries. It is a ministry that works with all departments. It is a ministry that works with government, business, all sorts of organizations, to promote health and to move the prevention agenda forward.

That is what we are doing. I think it is very, very proactive. There are only two healthy living ministries in Canada; one in Nova Scotia and one here. What we are trying to do is work across all departments, across the entire spectrum, so that what we are trying to do, and we are succeeding in bringing the agenda of health promotion, awareness, and prevention forward.

I think if we want to look at a good way of sustaining health care, we have a choice. We have a choice between adding money, in other words, having a separate tax. We have a choice of privatization, that some of the members opposite wish, or we have another choice, a choice that is fundamentally different. That is the choice of having people become aware of what keeps them healthy, focuses to keep healthy, and promotes wellness.

By promoting wellness, we put less strain on the acute care system, less strain on the tertiary health care system, and then focus on having people stay well at home. I think that is the area that we believe is important because we want people to stay healthy longer. We want them to focus on their own good health, and take responsibility for good health, and move that agenda forward.

**Madam Chairperson:** I thank the Minister of Healthy Living for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Charleswood, have any opening comments?

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** I do have just a few comments that I would like to put on the record, and I certainly would like to firstly welcome the ministers to the table, particularly to our new member, the Minister of Healthy Living, to his first set of Estimates.

I also want to indicate, at this time, acknowledgment of the good work that is happening at the front lines of health care, whether it is in the hospitals, the community, personal care homes, within the RHAs and within Manitoba Health. There are an awful lot of people out there that are giving their very best to our health care system. I think so many put their hearts and souls, really, into their jobs and they do want to give the best care to patients, often in a very challenging environment in today's health care system.

I know that everybody is certainly making best efforts, and I do want to acknowledge that. I do want

to thank them for that. Having been a front-line health care worker for a lot of years, I do know the personal challenges that you face in all of that, and certainly, on behalf of Manitoba patients, I want to acknowledge the sincere efforts that are being put forward by so many people.

I also want to indicate that I appreciate the challenge of the health care portfolio to both of these ministers. It is probably one of the more difficult portfolios in government, and I do know the challenges they face on a day-to-day basis. I do wish them well in facing the increasing daily challenges that are before them. I know that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), in particular, tries hard and cares very much, and that is very obvious.

Certainly, I also truly in my heart, though, do not feel that things are going to improve a great deal until this Government gets away from making decisions for political or ideological reasons. I think that that sometimes interferes in the direction they choose to go, and I think decisions need to be made because they are going to be right for patients. I do appreciate that this is easier to say than it is to do, but I believe it is the course we must set for ourselves. We have to remember that, when we look at a model for health care, the centre circle is very, very patient oriented, and those decisions need to be made in the best interests of a patient. Sometimes those decisions may not fall within our ideology, but it may be the best decision for the patient.

I think things also are not going to change without a plan. People need to know what a government stands for and the direction that they are taking and what their priorities are. I think this Government tends to drift day to day without a plan or a grand scheme, as this Minister of Health has said in the past, and what we see is a government going crisis to crisis. The minister has indicated he does not feel he needs to put forward a plan from on high, that that is not his role. I think that this will lead to a continuing movement down the road of crisis management and just flying by the seat of his pants on a day-to-day basis.

I am certainly getting a lot of calls from the public, far more than I did have ever in the first term of this Government. Since the second term of this Government, I have to indicate that the calls, not only that I am getting but that my colleagues are getting, have grown in number and have grown in

seriousness of what is coming forward. There is a very fast-growing dissatisfaction with how this Government is managing the health care system.

I think it is going to be extremely important to look critically at these Estimates in health care to find out where all of the spending is occurring and for the ministers, both, to justify these expenditures. I will also be asking the minister—he committed in the last set of Estimates that he was going to be able to identify exactly where the last, whether it was \$73 or \$75 million that the federal government gave—about a commitment he had made to be able to itemize that right down to the dollar as to where all of that money has specifically gone.

CIHI says we spend the most in Canada per capita on health care, and the most disconcerting part of all of that is it does not seem to be making a difference. The Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) just made a comment about looking at the outcomes, and right now the outcomes are not indicating that a billion dollars has made a difference. I would like to think that it would. I would like to think that putting that kind of money into the health care system would make a significant difference, but patients still are in hallways, despite this Government and this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) sitting there, saying, "Oh, we fixed it. We fixed it by 80 percent. This newspaper said we did a good job; this organization said we did a good job." Well, they changed the numbers of how patients are counted in hallways. Nurses are now told what to count and how to count, and it is not the same as it used to be counted. We are not looking at apples and oranges.

\* (15:40)

I understand the Victoria Hospital also has a more unique way of counting within the last few months that has dramatically changed the numbers. Nurses from there are telling me that what you are getting out of their numbers is not a true reflection of actually what is happening. I spoke recently to a patient that was in the ER hallway at the Victoria Hospital for two days. He said the hospital hallways, the ER hallways are full, and it was full when he was there.

I think while this Minister of Health tries to spin that he has fixed the problem, it is a long ways off. In fact, not that long ago, within the last few months, I

had doctors and nurses calling me saying that they had never seen it so bad.

Waiting lists for diagnostics in four of the five categories have skyrocketed. They are far higher than where they were when this Government took over. There are long waiting lists to see specialists. Cardiac surgeries are still being bumped. The minister is indicating that there are some efforts that have been made, but we will be certainly talking about the cardiac surgery program in this set of Estimates, because I have some huge concerns as to where that program is not going and should be going, because we are still seeing surgeries that are still being bumped in that area.

I think in today's Question Period we certainly heard of another patient that had died in a hospital emergency room. This time it appears that this patient died in a hallway. That is so far removed from probably the biggest failed health care promise in the history of this province, and that was that the NDP were going to fix health care. They were going to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. I think in the end that is probably going to go down in history as the biggest failed promise in political electoral history in this province.

This Government has put a billion dollars more into health care. It begs the question about sustainability of our health care system. Even the Premier of this province has indicated that health care will hit the fiscal wall in 10 years or even less. All the premiers from across the country are giving this same indication, that it is not sustainable as it is. Roy Romanow does not have any problem with more money coming in. He would like to see more money coming in, but he indicates that it is to buy change. It is not just money that he wants to see coming in to prop up the status quo. We can see that the status quo is not working. To just keep throwing money at the system is only going to maintain that status quo.

I have to recall that before this minister became the Minister of Health, it was prior to the 1999 election, he was on CJOB with Charles Adler. Charles Adler asked him, "How much more money are you going to need to fix health care, to address the challenges in the health care system?" Did the Minister of Health say a billion dollars? No, he did not. In fact he told Chuck Adler, "Oh, I do not think it will take that much more money to do what needs

to be done in health care." And after the election, what did we hear?

After the '99 election, what did we hear the minister say a month or two after he became the Minister of Health? He said, "We do not have any control over spending. The buck stops nowhere." In fact, he said at the time that when the budget was only \$2.1 billion that spending was out of control in health care. He said that spending was out of control in health care. He called it a disaster. In fact, those were his words. He called it a disaster. So now, a billion dollars later, I have to wonder what he calls it now.

Those statements should be haunting the Minister of Health, but they should also be asking for some accountability and an explanation of what he meant then and what is happening now. If he felt so strongly about those issues at that time, why has he not had any control over his budget since he became the Minister of Health? The financial burden of health care is growing beyond our ability to fund if the status quo is maintained. There is absolutely no doubt about this.

To continue to pour more and more money into health care—and the challenges are there and I do realize that for sure in the short term there is no doubt that more money is going to be needed with the technological challenges, the pharmacological challenges, the aging population, new equipment, baby boomers are going to be hitting the system—there is no doubt that we are going to be facing incredible funding issues within health care. But, if we do not address them and find, perhaps, money within the system itself, where, if we cannot do that, are we going to find the money?

It is going to have to come out of other departments. Are we going to take more money away from roads? Are we going to take money away from Education? Are we going to take money away from Justice? Are we going to take money away from Conservation? There are some very serious challenges in all of those areas.

Health care is like a black hole and will take every cent we throw at it, so the responsible thing is to find a way to make this work better, to find a way to sustain this without hurting other departments. I have fears that I do not see the kind of reforms being

put in place by this Government that are going to address these areas.

I think it is going to place a huge burden on other areas of the Budget and, therefore, on people in this province. I think the current government, though, sees health care as frozen in time and they do not seem to truly understand that the money for it will not be there at the rate they are going.

I really urge them to wake up to this fact before it is too late, before it becomes totally, totally out of control, but it is hard to do that without a plan. Without a plan or a road map or a vision, you get lost. Patients will continue to fall through the cracks. Spending may be unwisely put into place.

I recall listening to a presentation by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation actually not long ago. I believe it was maybe to the Kirby commission, where they said there is enough money in the system, it depends how you spend it.

Reg Alcock recently was quoted in the paper making reference to the constant whining for money by our Premier (Mr. Doer) to the federal government, and he made a reference that perhaps what this Government needs to do is to look at its own management of health care.

What we have, Madam Chairperson, is a Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) that is like a dog chasing his tail, and that is not going to change unless more controls are being put in place and unless there is a plan and a vision for what needs to happen.

I think this Minister of Health is like the Red Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, running as fast as he can to stay in the same place and we cannot afford to be in the same place anymore. We have to find a way to sustain a health care system that is facing just huge challenges.

I urge the minister to strive for a vision, an increased focus on strategy and policy and less on fire fighting and crisis management. I think there needs to be visibility, transparency, accountability to the public that key issues are being addressed in a timely, effective way and I firmly believe that we desperately need to see a health care plan for the future.

Sadly, for Manitobans, I do not see that there is a vision in place by this Government to strengthen our health care system and that is only going to make things worse for the future.

\* (15:50)

**Madam Chairperson:** We thank the critic of the Official Opposition for those remarks. Under Manitoba practice, debate of the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of a department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of this item and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in Resolution 21.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask the minister to introduce their staff present.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, as has been the past practice, I am joined by the Deputy Minister, Milton Sussman, and the Chief Financial Officer for the Department of Health, Heather Reichert, who report both to myself and, of course, to my colleague minister.

**Madam Chairperson:** We thank the minister. We will now proceed to the remaining items contained in Resolution 21.1 on page 91 of the main Estimates book. The floor is open for questions.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Madam Chairperson, I would like to ask if we are going to be using a global approach, as we have in the past, and do that for several days, and then approach it on a line-by-line basis. As in the past, we will certainly make every effort to accommodate the minister's staff, appreciating that there may be times when they cannot be here. I do not have a problem in working co-operatively to try to see that we can work best around that.

So, other than that question, one other question I do have is some direction as to how Estimates are going to be carried out this year with two different ministers, and whether the two ministers will be here throughout this or whether there will be certain times where they will split their shifts.

**Madam Chairperson:** Is it the will of the committee to debate globally? Mr. Minister?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, Madam Chairperson. I think it has always been a function of practice, at least since I have been minister, to function in that way, and I appreciate the co-operation of the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) in that regard. We have had good co-operation and advance notice with respect to staff, and I see no reason—I do not think all committees function like this, but I think that it is useful to function in this fashion. So I suggest we do function in this fashion and proceed on that basis.

I think it is our intention, generally, to have both ministers present during the course of the Estimates process to accommodate questions.

**Madam Chairperson:** We do have the permission to discuss globally. Agreed? [*Agreed*]

**Mrs. Driedger:** I would just like to thank the minister for that. I appreciate that.

**Madam Chairperson:** The floor is open for questions.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Madam Chairperson, I guess the first thing I would like to address, which is normally the first line of questioning, I think we have had over the last few years, and that is to look at the organizational chart. The first question I would ask, out of all of the people listed here on this chart, could the Minister of Health tell me if there are any secondments, if any of the people in any of these positions are here on secondment from some place else?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, there have been no changes with respect to the secondment on this chart, to the best of my knowledge, from that when we last discussed this matter, which was August.

**Mrs. Driedger:** If my memory serves me correctly, would it be accurate to say then that Mr. Sussman and Ms. Reichert are still on secondment from the WRHA?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the Minister of Health also indicate if Arlene Wilgosh is also on secondment from the WRHA?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No, not from the WRHA, from RHAM.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister tell me when she went over to RHAM, when Ms. Wilgosh went over to RHAM and perhaps she has been there for quite some time, I do not know, and when she got seconded back then as an ADM?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson. I believe we discussed this during the course of last year's Estimates, and, if memory serves me correctly, she was an employee of the Department of Health and was seconded to RHAM at the time of its formation, which would have been around 1999. If memory serves me correctly, she was seconded back to the Department of Health in the year, approximately, 2000. I will verify those numbers.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister give some indication as to why these positions are still in a secondment position and have not become full staff within Manitoba Health?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, the practice was developed between the Regional Health Authorities and the Department of Health prior to my assuming the role of minister. An individual by the name of Linda West, I believe was her name, was seconded—

**Madam Chairperson:** A count-out vote has been requested in another section of the Committee of Supply. This section is now recessed to attend the Chamber for a count-out vote. The committee is recessed.

*The committee recessed at 3:57p.m.*

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

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, as I indicated, the precedent was set with an individual by the name of Linda West, who was seconded from one of the regions, and worked at the Department of Health. I actually think the idea of employees moving back and forth between the region and central government is a very valuable exercise, given the nature of how the system works. I think it is a very useful way of obtaining information from both the operators and the policy advisers as we move along the recommendations from the Sinclair report, that called for some structuring of the Department of Health with

regard to be a rural setting and the policy-setting body, and less an operational body.

\* (16:40)

**Mrs. Driedger:** Does the minister not feel that there is some potential there for conflicts of interest to arise when you have got, for instance, your deputy minister on secondment from the WRHA, the biggest spender in the health care system, and you have got your deputy minister on secondment from the WRHA, supposedly to be non-biased, and looking at everything totally in the system, looking at it in a very balanced way, and not having to have any particular commitments to anybody? I mean, he supposedly reports to the Minister of Health, but it is on secondment from the WRHA.

Does the minister not see that in some of that there could be a potential conflict of interest?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, certainly there is, depending on the eyes of the beholder, and in the public sector, one always has to be conscious of the issue of conflict of interest.

For example, when that employee from one of the regions, her name was Linda West, she handled negotiations with the doctors for the Department of Health, even though she was an employee of a region. But, nonetheless, I do not think that that biased the particular views. As I understand it, there is an agreement signed whenever there is a secondment. I have encouraged, and I will encourage continuing.

Madam Chairperson, the question of conflict of interest with respect to caregivers in the health care system is a diverse one, and if one looks across the spectrum of the system, one could find "conflict of interest" in almost every application of every principle on every decision-making process. I think that the people are professional enough to rise above that, and to function effectively in that regard.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Perhaps the Minister of Health knows Linda West better than I did. I thought she worked at a Pinawa hospital and not for a region and then was brought here. I do not recall that it was ever on a secondment. But perhaps the minister knows her better and knows the situation better. I certainly am not aware of that.

But that is quite a different level. If the minister is correct in saying that she was seconded and came here in that particular job, quite a different level of responsibility and authority than what is currently happening with two significant positions within the Department of Health that are seconded from the WRHA, and Arlene Wilgosh seconded from RHAM. Those are fairly significant positions, and I would wonder why the minister would allow that to remain on secondment and not create permanent jobs.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, the individual in question, Linda West, I believe, undertook negotiations and negotiated the collective agreement for the previous government and continued into our regime. I am surprised the member does not know her because I think she ran as a candidate for the member's party during the last provincial election. I think she is running for the leadership of the provincial Conservative Party at this point.

Having said that, Madam Chairperson, I will accept the member's suggestion. I will reflect on the member's suggestion.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Maybe I could just ask: Is the deputy minister seconded from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority? Can the minister indicate how his salary is paid?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, as I indicated in this committee in August, it has not changed from the arrangement that it is paid by the region and reimbursed from the department.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Can the minister also indicate if the Chief Financial Officer, H. Reichert, I believe, is also seconded from the health authority? Can the minister indicate how she is paid?

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I indicated in August of last year during the course of these Estimates, it is the same arrangement.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I guess it is Arlene Wilgosh too, seconded from RHAM. How is her salary paid?

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I indicated last August when the same question was asked, it is the same arrangement, that it is through RHAM via administrative apparatus of the WRHA and the same arrangement.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Could the minister tell me, then, whether those salaries are included in administrative costs through the Regional Health Authority?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Could the minister indicate to me, then, whether they are included in administrative costs in the Department of Health?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister indicate whether Manitoba Health is paying exactly the same amount of money that shows up in their salaries that are paid to them by the WRHA? Is that the same number that appears in the Manitoba Health documents, financial statements?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I will have those figures for the member when we next sit.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I guess I have a little problem with that. The minister has the deputy minister and the chief financial officer right here, both of whose salaries we are discussing. I do not think that should be a very difficult discussion for us to have right now.

**Mr. Chomiak:** No, it is not a very difficult discussion to have. I just thought that we would be able to expedite proceedings and move along. I will provide that information, but that is fine, if the member wants the information now, I will undertake to provide that information to the member now.

The deputy minister, the chief financial officer and the ADM for Regional Affairs, Ms. Arlene Wilgosh, are paid at the level shown in the public accountability act through the WRHA, which is for Mr. Sussman 140 plus benefits; Ms. Wilgosh, 103 plus benefits; and Ms. Reichert, 130 plus benefits.

\* (16:50)

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Where do we find those salaries in the minister's detailed Estimates?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, Mr. Sussman is listed under contract on page 23; Ms. Reichert under contract on page 27; and Ms. Wilgosh under contract on page 63.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chair, can the minister indicate then, the employee benefits that are in the

next line under the contract on page 23, what the breakdown of those employee benefits are? Who are those benefits paid to?

**Mr. Chomiak:** It is employees that are included under those FTEs on that page of the Supplementary Estimates.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I guess I am just trying then to understand why the significant jump in the Estimates from last year to this year are under Salaries and Employee Benefits. The same number of employees, eight employees, and a \$250,000 increase in—why the increase in cost?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, I think the note on sub 1 of page 23 indicates an increase in funding for support staff of the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau).

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** It does not indicate that there are any more staff, so why not, if in fact it is support staff for the Minister of Healthy Living?

\* (17:00)

**Mr. Chomiak:** The allocation is for administrative support and, because we are in transition, it is being looked at with respect to placing SYs against that particular administrative support. But we are not through the process yet with respect to earmarking the specific SYs with the administrative support, even though there is an additional functioning minister in this regard.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I might be a little slow, but I am not sure that I understood that answer. There is a \$250,000 increase. Are there people that are being paid that \$250,000? We are talking about a budget that has just been introduced; we are talking about a minister that has been appointed; and we are talking about this year's Budget.

So, somewhere, I mean, the department may be in the process of moving people around, but should this budget document and these detailed Estimates not reflect what is going to happen over the course of this year? Where are the people that are being paid the \$250,000 more in administrative costs?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, as the member will well know, the department is trying to, there are cases where we are double booking and utilizing



cross-resources, but, in order to actually reflect the fact that there are additional costs being attributed to the Minister of Healthy Living's (Mr. Rondeau) office, it is being shown in this particular line as administrative support numbers.

That is only appropriate, given that it is a new operation that came in a partial year through and that we are giving the best information that is available to us for the member who has had some experience in this regard.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chairperson, I do not recall having these kinds of issues to deal with when I was a minister in the government.

Can the minister provide for us today then the people, the names of the Professional/Technical staff that make up the four SYs in the Estimates?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I will endeavour to supply that information.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** This is executive support to the minister. I would imagine that these are people that work very closely with the minister, and I would think that those individuals would be at the top of the minister's mind. So I would hope that he could provide that information right now.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, the FTEs would be considered within the Professional/Technical support area that consists of four FTEs. They would be the communications director, the special adviser, the special assistant and the senior adviser.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chairperson, I think the minister indicated that was the communications person, special adviser, special assistant and senior adviser. Okay, and those would all be direct Order-in-Council appointments?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No.

\* (17:10)

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Could the minister indicate which of those positions would be direct Order-in-Council appointments? I would believe the special adviser, special assistant.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, I believe the member is correct. If memory serves me correctly,

the special adviser and the special assistant are Order-in-Council appointments.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chair, could the minister indicate who those individuals are?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes. Alissa Brandt and Jeff Sulymka

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** So the special adviser would be Alissa—

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, Brandt.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** And the special assistant?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The special assistant would be Jeff Sulymka.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** And the communications person?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Would be Joseph Czech.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chair, could the minister give us again the fourth position and the person that is in that position?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The fourth person that I identified was the senior adviser and that would be Suzanne Ring.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chairperson, is the senior adviser an Order-in-Council appointment?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Is the senior adviser a ministerial appointment, a direct ministerial appointment? What would be the role or the function of the senior adviser?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, the senior adviser is an adviser to the deputy minister.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** So that person then is hired by the deputy minister to advise him. The communications person, is that a new position or is that a position that has been ongoing?

**Mr. Chomiak:** That has been ongoing.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chair, can the minister indicate to me how long Alissa Brandt has been his special adviser?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, upwards of a year.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Could the minister indicate to me who his special adviser was then before Alissa Brandt?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Previously I believe that that particular position was filled by Jean-Guy Bourgeois.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Could the minister indicate where Jean-Guy Bourgeois has gone?

**Mr. Chomiak:** For purposes of accuracy, since it is not in my department, I will just take that as notice and get back to the member tomorrow with the specific location.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** So the minister is indicating that he is in the bureaucracy of the Government of Manitoba, but not within the Department of Health?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, and I will confirm the details for the member.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Can the minister indicate to me where his executive assistant's position would be located?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The FT, as I understand it, is located in the administrative support component.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Could the minister indicate who his executive assistant is?

**Mr. Chomiak:** It is Evelyn Livingston.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** So then, I am to assume, can I ask what the eight positions in administrative support would entail? What kind of support? To whom?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Those positions would be support to the minister and the deputy minister. As that footnote notes on page 23 as well, there is increased funding with respect to administrative funding for the Minister of Healthy Living.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** So that is secretarial support for both the minister and the deputy?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, yes.

As I indicated, that is administrative support to the deputy and the minister and there is additional, as

is noted in the footnote 1, increase in funding for support staff for the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau).

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Thank you.

Just for some clarification, Madam Chairperson, how many administrative staff, secretarial support, would the minister have in his office, and how many would the deputy have in his office?

\* (17:20)

**Mr. Chomiak:** There are three administrative support in the deputy's office, four in the minister's office and one in the Minister of Healthy Living, but, as I indicated earlier in my response, the FTs do not correspond to the actual payment shown, as is indicated in the footnote, because of the increased funding for staff and some of the allocations between offices, et cetera, which is still being worked on with respect to specific staff years.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** This is absolutely unbelievable. I mean, it took the minister five minutes to tell me how many secretarial supports were in his office and in the deputy's office. I guess, by that answer, he is indicating to me that there is only one administrative support staff for the Minister of Healthy Living. Does the Minister of Healthy Living have an executive assistant and a special assistant, and if so, where are they located?

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I indicated, because of the new establishment of the new minister's office, et cetera, the FTs are not booked directly in the Estimates book, but, as the footnote indicates at the bottom of page 23, there is an allocation for funding for additional positions.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** This is absolutely bizarre. These are the Estimates of Expenditures for the upcoming year. The Minister of Healthy Living was appointed several months ago. Is the minister telling me that he and his department are so incompetent that they do not have any estimate, or that either the Minister of Healthy Living has no one working for him on the administrative side right now, or they cannot estimate. They have got \$250,000 more in this line in the Budget, and they have no idea who or how those positions are going to be filled, that there is no one in those positions right now. If, under administrative support, as the minister has indicated to me for the

Minister of Healthy Living, he has political staff, and I would presume there may be two political staff positions, where are they located in this Budget? This is absolutely unbelievable.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I outlined for the member already that there was additional allocations that were made, and the footnote at the bottom of page 23 says increase in funding for support staff of the Minister of Healthy Living.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Again, this Budget is extremely misleading, because, in fact, the \$250,000 is allocated, but there is no staff allocation here. What is the minister trying to hide? This does not reflect the true picture of this year's Budget.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I think what the member is having trouble understanding is that these Estimates of Expenditure numbers are put within the Expenditure book. That is the number the member is looking at. That is where the member got the information from. It is unbelievable that the member has to keep repeating this whole issue about some kind of great revelation. If the member looks at the footnote, as I have indicated to the member on several occasions, it says increase in funding for support staff of the Minister of Healthy Living and the SYs are not yet re-allocated. There are a variety of tasks that are performed both—let me perhaps explain to the member, for example, there is a deputy minister of Health now that has the responsibility of providing support services to both a Minister of Health and a Minister of Healthy Living. The deputy minister has to report to two ministers.

There are reallocations of staff and reallocations of resources around the system. There have been changes in terms of staff coming and staff leaving. The actual staff-years that are denoted in there are a result of the actual FTE allocations. The actual expenditures as estimated by the department are in the budgetary Estimates. I point out to the member that a footnote at the bottom of page 23 supposedly alerted the member to this inconsistency by pointing out there is about a \$250,000 increase. I will again quote from the footnote at the bottom of the page. It says, "An increase in funding for support staff of the Minister of Healthy Living."

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Maybe the Minister of Healthy Living could tell me how many support staff he has in his office presently.

**Mr. Chomiak:** If I understand correctly, the member is asking for the first time how many support staff are in the Minister of Healthy Living's office. For the first time now the member now is asking that particular question. I will just consult with the Minister of Healthy Living on that issue.

**Mr. Rondeau:** I have three staff in my office. The money is marked in the allocation in the Budget. There have not been staff-years allocated to those people as yet, though, but the money is in the Budget.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Thank you, but that is just a conflicting answer to what the Minister of Health gave us a while ago when he indicated that under the eight staff-years that are written in the book that there were four in his office, three in the deputy's office and one in the Minister of Healthy Living's office. Now the Minister of Healthy Living is telling us that he has got three staff.

How many political staff, besides your secretarial support, are in your office?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I think the member is having trouble understanding.

**Madam Chairperson:** The time being 5:30 p.m., I am interrupting proceedings. Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow at 10 a.m.

#### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Executive Council.

Does the Premier have an opening statement?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** I guess I have a very short statement, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Doer:** Yes, I would like to thank the members of the Chamber for their participation in the Executive Council. I would also like to formally thank them for the fact that I have to be participating in a NASCO meeting with the Secretary of

Transportation. That meeting was changed. It was originally scheduled earlier, so I do apologize. I do not normally agree to speaking engagements during the middle of Estimates. So I thank you for the participation. The Secretary of Transportation from Mexico, Mr. Bush's Secretary of Transportation and myself, on behalf of Canada, which is obviously advantageous for NASCO, will be participating along with senators and congressional representatives along the valley, and, of course, members of the business community from Winnipeg involved in transportation. So I thank you for that indulgence. I appreciate it.

Certainly, the Estimates are fairly straight forward. We have increased the spending expenditures in the Estimates by 2 percent. That is adjusted because of the fact that it is an adjusted vote based on apples-to-apples. We have transferred, since the last set of Estimates, positions in the Intergovernmental Affairs branch to have some more co-ordination with Trade and they rest in the Intergovernmental Affairs Department of government. We have transferred the protocol office into that office, too, to have greater co-ordination of protocol with Economic Development.

Beyond that, Mr. Chairperson, the staff levels are comparable. The grants to the international bodies are comparable to past years and many of the same people that were working in, discussed in Estimates about six months ago, are the same people as today. So I did not want to repeat everything today. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the Estimates before you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Does the Leader of the Official Opposition have any opening comments?

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Yes, I do. I would like to say that I look forward to this very important process of Estimates with the First Minister and acknowledge that he has a meeting which he has made a commitment to go to. I think on behalf of Manitobans, as the Premier of the province of Manitoba, it is an important meeting that he should attend. We hope that there is some positive outcome from the session or the meeting and whatever takes place.

I also want to just say that at conclusion of my remarks, I know that the Premier will be bringing in

staff, and look forward to discussions with that staff. I do think that this is an opportunity, and I know that during the course of Estimates, we will get a chance to sort of look at some of the issues that not only come out of Executive Council, but, as the Premier is aware, I will be asking various questions on some of the other areas. I hope that, with his staff available, he will be able to respond to some of those other areas that we will be discussing. I know, from time to time, he likes to say that those questions should be directed to the specific minister. I do believe, though, that the Premier is responsible for the overall well-being, financially and direction, economics, of the province of Manitoba. So I hope that we will be able to have that kind of a discussion.

I would just like for the record, Mr. Chair, to say that I know that the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) raised an issue here in the House that we wanted to speak on. It was obviously to do with lifting the U.S. ban on live cattle. We understand it will not be struck at the meeting between Prime Minister Martin and President Bush, I understand, a meeting that is taking place tomorrow, and of course, as was referenced in the House earlier, just the issue on the R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America that they apparently, were successful in their lawsuit in a U.S. District Court in Billings, Montana, to seek a temporary restraining order on Canadian imports of edible bovine meat products including ground beef.

I am not here to take length at talking about that because I think there is clearly issues with respect to Estimates. I do not want to spend a lot of time because there is obviously important issues on the Estimates that we want to get at, and we want to talk about, and we want to get a sense of some of the expenditures that the Doer government is looking at in this Budget. But I do think it would be inappropriate if I did not say how disappointed I was that something of this importance to Manitobans, to our rural economy, to our rural producers—I believe that it is probably the most important issue facing our economy with respect to some of the challenges that are being faced out there.

So I know that the honourable Member for Emerson stood on a matter of public importance and was not successful. Of course, to have a matter of public importance go ahead, I think we need consent from the government side to be part of that debate, and the fact that that was not included or that they did not acquiesce to that was, I think, unfortunate,

Mr. Chair, because I do think that Manitobans would like to get a sense, and certainly, those producers that are in tough times would like to have a bit of sense, as to what it is that the direction of the Doer government is with respect to this ruling that came down as of yesterday. We are disappointed that they would not want to allow the matter of urgent public importance to proceed, but that is their decision, and the public will be aware of their decision.

I do want to go through a couple of comments and then we will obviously get into some specifics. But, certainly we know, Mr. Chair, that in Manitoba, there is a tremendous amount of concern about the issue around the expansion of the floodway. We know that there have been a lot of things said by the government side, sometimes not always in agreement. I think it has caused some unrest in the public, because the unrest simply is that everybody wants to get on with building or expanding the floodway, and I think that everybody understands the importance of it.

We learned in the flood of 1997 that Manitoba was under some serious pressure. A lot of that pressure from the water that came up from the south could have caused, I think the numbers that are used are billions of dollars. I understand that to be the number. I understand it to be correct, and that billions of dollars of damage that could have caused had Winnipeg, in fact, been flooded. Unfortunately, as we know, a lot of communities south of Winnipeg were not saved and, in fact, were flooded. That was tragic in itself, but with the population base of Winnipeg, it could have been quite a disaster. I think Manitobans recognize that, during that time, what took place, was something quite extraordinary, and that was that companies pulled together to build what is now the sort of so-called famous Z-dike, which was really the saving grace for Winnipeg and was an incredible achievement of hardworking Manitobans working around the clock to do the right thing, which was to hold the waters back to save the city of Winnipeg.

The history is not that we have to go back to the Honourable Duff Roblin's time, the Premier of the province of Manitoba, who, through his foresight and leadership, wanted to build a floodway and did so. He had strong leadership and vision and fought some pretty tough odds at the time, Mr. Chair, to actually be successful in seeing that that floodway was built successfully. So he has been acknowledged and has

been documented that, really, at that time, Premier Duff Roblin, I think, deserves every adulation, every accolade, every opportunity of gratitude and thanks that is expressed on behalf of the people of Manitoba. He deserves this because he had the foresight and the vision to make this happen. That goes back into the fifties when that took place and, of course, Premier Roblin had the foresight to do the right thing and under some very, very difficult odds to ensure that Manitoba and Winnipeg had a strategy to deal with the excess water that was coming up the Red River.

We on this side of the House have been asking questions of the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) and, occasionally, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan): "What is the process with moving towards expanding the current floodway?" I raised this in Question Period. We are certainly going to be talking a lot, I am sure no surprise to the First Minister, in Estimates, the issue that there seems to be the forced unionization of companies with respect to the expansion of the floodway. What the industry tells us—I have great respect for the industry. I do not know what members on the government side feel about the industry, but I have great respect for the industry and I think that the industry is basically saying that, if there is any sort of project-labour agreement, something that will require companies to be unionized or require workers who, clearly, are part of a non-union company, to force them to pay union dues, there is going to be an additional cost.

Of course, always reminded, Mr. Chair, that whenever we are talking about costs of a project of this magnitude—and we know that we have heard different numbers on the Budget from members opposite that it could be \$660 million, \$700 million. It is a substantial amount of money. Again, the point being made is that I think nobody will argue that it is not the right thing to do. We should do it. We should absolutely get on with doing it.

I think that the fly in the ointment is that there is this issue about whether we are going to force companies to be members of a union, or force people to pay union dues. That, I think, becomes a major stumbling block simply because the industry, as I said earlier, which I have a tremendous amount of respect for because of what they did with the Z-dike, because of how they were able to come together, work together, work overtime to ensure that they

saved the city of Winnipeg. They are basically concerned that there could be additional \$40-million, \$50-million, \$65-million costs to the taxpayer because of this forced unionization. So not only is the issue wrong to force anybody against their will to pay union dues, I think it is wrong for taxpayers of Manitoba to have to bear the additional costs that are being discussed, as we have heard from the Minister of Water Stewardship.

So that, I think, is something that is going to be part and parcel—again, as I said, I do not think the First Minister would be at all surprised that we, on this side of the House, would very much like to move towards a resolution to get on with the process. But it is the issue that you are going to force companies to be members of a union, or to force people who, currently, are not part of a union, to pay union dues. We certainly disagree with that in the strongest way.

\* (15:20)

We hope that the Premier, who, I know, has asked that Mr. Wally Fox-Decent, a champion of Manitoba, frankly, somebody who has served both governments extremely well in terms of negotiating, I just think that the Premier has put Mr. Fox-Decent in a very, very difficult position because it is clearly something that this Premier could direct to get on with the project.

But we find ourselves now in a position where there are negotiations that are ongoing and those negotiations, frankly, are not leading to any resolution. I do not want to oversimplify this, Mr. Chair, but I would think that this process could probably be expedited and things could move along if the Premier would respect the wishes of a lot of Manitobans; certainly, a lot of Manitobans that I have spoken to.

Again, I said in the House the other day, and I made a speech on it, that this is an issue about politics in a sense of left ideology or right ideology; it is really, quite simply, a matter of right or wrong. Of course, we believe strongly that to force any company to be part of a union or force workers who are hardworking men and women, force them to pay union dues, we just think is wrong.

So, again, I hope, Mr. Chair, that, during the course of our Estimates, perhaps the Premier would direct Mr. Fox-Decent to ensure that those issues are

not part of any negotiation, but that the real issues about training, the real issues about ensuring that Aboriginal people have an opportunity to be part of the process, all of the issues which the industry does already and do not have to be brought into some kind of a project labour agreement are discussed.

I think it is fair to say, Mr. Chair, that, during the course of our discussions, I would like to get, perhaps, a better understanding from the First Minister as to why it is that we in this province are looking at a province-wide smoking ban, yet they are looking at exempting a new casino. One would argue, perhaps the Premier will argue, but what has that got to do with the Budget?

Well, I think it has everything to do with the Budget because I think we have seen a pattern with the Doer government that anything to do with casinos is something that they want to promote. They want to expand and so they are looking at expanding it. Why, Mr. Chair? Simply because the Doer government has a revenue problem.

We heard the First Minister in his Budget state that, quite loudly, I think, to be accurate, we heard him state quite loudly that this Budget that they have introduced does not have one cent drawn from the rainy day fund, from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Mr. Chair, the Premier, I know, would know that that was recorded. That is on record. That is what this Premier said, and we have a long way to go. We just passed the Budget. We have another 12 months in front of us. The only reason that I raise it at all in this discussion is because of past history. When we look at past history, this Doer government does not have exactly the best fiscal management ability. It has been proven that, even in this last budget, they made a decision around the Cabinet table that they would go into the balanced budget legislation and use a clause that has never ever been used before that would allow them to transfer some \$75 million to ensure that they were not running a deficit to balance their books for last year.

Of course, they are citing the issue that there is an emergency. The emergency that they talk about, of course, is the forest fires, and they were severe; there is no question about that. I do think that this Premier (Mr. Doer) would acknowledge in all of the years that he has been in the Legislative Assembly that Manitoba has forest fires every year. One will

debate and argue what degree those forest fires are, but the notion that you almost go from zero to forest fires, I think, is a little hard for anybody in Manitoba to understand if you are using it as an emergency requirement that took them into the clause of the balanced budget legislation.

The other point that I would make on that issue, Mr. Chair, is that when I talk to cattle producers throughout Manitoba, I think the issue that they are somehow being named, and I use this word not because it has ever come out of the Premier (Mr. Doer). I am not trying to put words in his mouth, but there is a sense that somehow there is blame for that crisis which would then translate into balanced budget legislation, which means that they are going to have to take the \$75 million out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to ensure that they do not run a deficit to balance their books for last year.

Mr. Chair, the issue again, and I will be asking the First Minister to shed some light, shed some factual information on this, is that the majority of programs, and we will get into some specifics, and I know our Agriculture critic will be asking the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk) the same question. If you are calling it an emergency with respect to the BSE crisis, and the majority of programs that were offered were low-interest loans, then what that says to me is that not only is the money that you have put out going to have to be repaid, but that money would actually be earning a low level of interest. So, at the end of the day, the Government is really acting like a bank and, as we know with banks, they not only make back what they get, but they add a little interest to it.

Again, I just am having some difficulty and I am hoping that through this process the First Minister will be able to explain why it is that the BSE crisis has caused so much turmoil on the Treasury, because that money on a low-interest loan is not as we wanted to give and recommended, and we tried to encourage this Government for some nine months, at least, I would say, Mr. Chair, during this time, to do the right thing, to give a cash advance. I understand that a cash advance, potentially, could have put the Doer government into a fiscal situation where, yes, they were just transferring straight-out cash against a sale of inventory and there would be carrying costs for the Government on that cash advance. That is quite different from having a low-interest loan,

because that really is just lending money that will be paid back that will have some interest passed on.

I think the other area, Mr. Chair, that would require some understanding is, and I would very much be asking the Premier for an update on Wuskwatim. We know that Wuskwatim at this point is before the CEC, and we always felt and believe and will still believe that it should go before the PUB, but that is an ongoing issue that is out there in the public and, of course, we would like to get some information from the First Minister on that.

There are a lot of other issues around the fact that the First Minister did say very publicly, and time and time again it was reported to me that during the state of the province address, the First Minister made a commitment to the audience. In essence, in that kind of a state, you are really speaking to all of Manitoba. During that speech, the First Minister was very emphatic that they would absolutely balance the Budget. That was the commitment he made. At that point, certainly, he made no reference about having to go into a special clause that had never, ever, ever been used before that would allow for a transfer of money out of that so that he, then, could what is called, legally not run a deficit. So I think that when you look at the fact that it is over four years and the Auditor General has indicated the current government runs a deficit, we will have some discussion around balanced budget legislation during Estimates.

I look forward to having that discussion with the First Minister because we, on this side of the House, believe that we should look at a model that is more transparent than what the current government is. Again, it is not, in any way, shape or form, as the First Minister likes to comment on, all about us somehow having a difference of opinion with our former leader, the former premier of the province of Manitoba, who was instrumental in 1995 to bring in balanced budget legislation. Clearly, there are some issues that need to be strengthened. I believe if you asked that of the former premier and the former Minister of Finance, they would agree we have got to look at how we strengthen balanced budget legislation. It is important because Manitobans have to have confidence that their Government is being open and transparent about how their tax dollars are being spent. So we are going to talk a lot about balanced budget legislation, some of the opportunities to strengthen it and, certainly, we will very

much appreciate the First Minister's comments on that.

\* (15:30)

Of course, we do know that we also heard the First Minister say very emphatically sometime during the last budget, not the one that was just introduced, Mr. Chairperson, but the 2003 Budget, that he was going to instruct his ministers to go line by line to look at those savings in administrative costs because that is where there should be savings. He was quite emphatic about it. I would have to say that he was about as emphatic that they were going to go line by line to find savings, or he was instructing his ministers to go line by line to find savings, he was as emphatic about saying that as he was just recently when he emphatically said that we will bring in a budget, and we will not go into the rainy day fund. We will not take a dollar out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Again, it raises the questions that what we did not see in this Budget, this budget document of 2004, we did see those administrative savings. In numerous departments those administrative costs have increased.

So I raise that to let the First Minister know we will be having a discussion around those issues, because it comes down to a sense of confidence and a sense of competence with respect to both the Premier and the ministers to see how they have been able to work through this budget document, how they have been able to be accountable through this process to all Manitobans. What kind of direction, in fact, did the ministers come back to the First Minister on when they were unable to, as he had instructed them to do, go line by line to find savings on the administrative side?

I do know that just yesterday, we saw the Doer government make an announcement of introducing \$100 million, as they did, on Cadillac-style VLTs. Again, I am prepared, frankly, to give the First Minister the benefit of his answer, but I will say that my question very much will be to the First Minister, somebody who, when he was standing on this side of the House, in fact, in this chair, was referring to VLTs as the crack cocaine, Mr. Chairperson. That is a drug that is very serious and has a tremendous negative impact on people, a very negative impact on families. Anybody who has been involved in that drug, it is not a good thing.

So to have that kind of a passionate sort of feel about how harmful VLTs are on family life and then to sort of turn around so quickly and make a massive investment into VLTs to the tune of \$100 million, I find that—as I say, I am prepared to listen to the First Minister's response to that question. It will be quite fascinating because I would not ever want to quote the First Minister back, but we have heard in this Chamber many times about that well-travelled road to Damascus.

I want to just end by saying that I look forward to the Estimates process, Mr. Chair, because I think it is a chance really to get down to the real important business of how government is run, how the Premier sees departments working, how he sees departments being accountable, affordable and how he sees issues that are important to Manitobans like health care, like agriculture and, I think, the one that he knows very, very well, I understand that he will be meeting with the Business Council sometime early next week, and I know that they as well as the Manitoba Chamber, the Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and the list goes on, have said numerous times, Mr. Premier, in this Budget please make us competitive. Please give us the opportunities for entrepreneurs to grow. Please give us as a business community the opportunity to create jobs. Please allow us to do what we do best and that is to allow business to grow the economy.

I think, Mr. Chairman, I will just close by saying, regrettably, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province of Manitoba have failed our young people, failed our businesses because rather than making us more competitive and again reminding the First Minister that he stood in this House, that in various places to say, I was not elected to raise taxes, and what did he do in the Budget and we will go through this; he raised taxes by some \$90 million. I look forward to a very spirited discussion as we go through the Estimates process.

**Mr. Chairperson:** At this point in time, we invite the Executive Council staff to join us in the Chamber, and we would ask the Premier to introduce those staff.

**Mr. Doer:** As they come in, I will introduce them. Maria Garcea is well known to members opposite and Jim Eldridge is well known to members



opposite. They will be ably assisting us in our discussions today.

**Mr. Chairperson:** On matters of procedures, does the committee wish to proceed through these Estimates in a chronological manner or do they prefer a global discussion?

**Mr. Doer:** I think we had a discussion on global just a moment ago. It was almost the whole Milky Way, so I would proceed accordingly.

**Mr. Chairperson:** It will be global discussion then? Is that agreed or is the global discussion done?

**An Honourable Member:** Milky Way.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Milky Way.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Chairman, I know that there are not a lot of lines, but usually I think in the past I have asked that we go line by line.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable opposition leader said he prefers line by line. Is that—

**Mr. Doer:** I am fine with that, then, and I will make sure that I follow the rules in terms of the rules being very consistent with only answering questions pursuant to the line.

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Chairperson:** We shall proceed, then, line by line.

We start with line item 2.1.(b) Management and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,205,500.

**Mr. Murray:** I would like to welcome Maria Garcea and Jim Eldridge to the Chamber, and echo the comments made by the First Minister, two very, very capable individuals. I am sure they will add tremendous harmony and wisdom to any of the answers and perhaps even some of the questions. So I am delighted to welcome them to the Chamber.

I know that the First Minister, in his opening statement, talked about staffing. I just would like to ask, again, not to belabour the issue, but just so maybe we can move through some of the items, I very much would like to get a full list of all of the

members of the Premier's staff in Executive Council, with their positions. I am not asking him to list them now. If he could ensure that I have those, I know that if I understand it correctly, we will be resuming Estimates on Monday of next week. If I could have that list before that date, that would be most appreciated. Then we do not have to go through the people one at a time.

**Mr. Doer:** Yes, we can provide that. There are very few changes from last fall except we have moved staff years, FTEs to Intergovernmental Affairs. As I said, it is much more consistent. It is similar to what Alberta has done, but not completely the same. We will try to tie in Intergovernmental Affairs more with some trade activity than we had in the past.

**Mr. Murray:** I thank the Premier for that. Again, just to expedite things, if he would agree to have that before Estimates on Monday, then, as I say, we can move quicker.

**Mr. Doer:** Yes.

**Mr. Murray:** I wonder if the Premier could just spend just a minute explaining. I know there was no increase in the International Development Program, but the thrust of that development program, I wonder if the Premier just give me a quick overview of that, please.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, I have not had an opportunity to directly visit the projects myself. I know former-Premier Filmon visited a number of projects in South America in previous years. I remember him reporting on it back to the House. The essence of this program is that the Government invests in a number of non-profit organizations who, in turn, determine the best projects to invest in.

The Mennonite Central Committee is a very, very strong body that has a number of people that they are paid for. I believe the return to investment is well over six or seven to one; it might even be higher. I might even recall the number thirteen to one, but I will try to bring out the last report to us. It was a significant amount of money. It is based on the theory that you give a person a fish and they eat for a day and you teach somebody to fish and they eat for life. I think it is a very, very active body. As I say, my predecessor visited a number of these projects. I have not had the opportunity to do so, but I am impressed with the group. I meet with them once a

year to go over their report. They do recommend that we expend more money. In past years they have helped us on major catastrophes where there has been money from the provincial government, on major catastrophes in the world, whether it has been in Central America with flooding or India.

There have been a couple of projects, I know, of major significance where money has been sent on an emergency basis, mostly from Canada, but some from the Province. We do not need an extra bureaucracy to administer it and to make sure it is going in the hands that need it the most. It is administered by a group of volunteers. Certainly, I think it has very worthy objectives. If there is anything that the member opposite is concerned about, I would certainly follow it up, but the feedback I get is very, very positive. I am very impressed with the dedication of the people I have met.

I think each year they also have displays in the Legislature to demonstrate the various projects, and I know that a lot of people give virtually their whole life or part of their life to help citizens of the world. I envy a lot of their human sacrifice, not sacrifice in the negative word, but in the most positive sense.

**Mr. Murray:** Is this done on the basis of a project by project? In other words, from time to time, there may be monies in there that are not required, or with that line item you might find that there is for whatever reason—it is not a bad or good reason. I am just wondering for whatever reason that money or a portion of it may get lapsed.

**Mr. Doer:** I am not aware of its lapsing, but I can check on it. I know that they have X number of projects and, quite frankly, they match those projects with money they raise in their churches, in their charities and in the private sector. So I do not think they leave much; they raise a lot more. The amount of money that is spent, as I recall the numbers, I forget the exact ratio, but we certainly get a compound benefit for it. I can get the number. I would doubt very much, they are too smart to lapse money, but I might be wrong.

Mr. Eldridge has informed me they give them instalment payments. They do account for it, but they use it to lever other money as well. Certainly, the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, makes the project decisions. It is not made by

government. They report back to former Premier Filmon; they report back to us; and they report back to the members of the Legislature and the members of the community.

I do believe they have a display here at least every second year, if not every year. They have had it either in the committee rooms or downstairs around the stairway. As I say, they have invited me every year to go to visit some of the projects. I have not been able to go, but I remember former Premier Filmon went and he was quite enthusiastic about what he saw and what he experienced. I think Janice went too, and I think they were quite impressed. I have always been left with that kind of—sometimes a former premier informs me of things that, if he had it to do over again, he would change, and some things he tells you with great enthusiasm, and sometimes he does not tell me anything. On this one, he has been pretty positive in the House, and then informally, and so has Janice Filmon as well.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Chair, the Premier and I had a brief discussion on this during the last Estimates, and we talked a little bit about Internet pharmacies. I just wonder if the Premier could share his views with us on how he feels about Internet pharmacies, and I know there have been some changes since we had this last discussion.

**Mr. Doer:** The Internet pharmacies arose completely on an entrepreneurial basis. It is not something that was specifically initiated by government. It was initiated by private entrepreneurs, who basically saw thousands of seniors coming to Canada for drugs, and they in turn established Internet operations.

There are lots of decisions and pressure in the United States from the food and drug administration. There are lots of issues before the federal Cabinet between the generic drug industry and the conventional drug industry in Ottawa, and there are lots of issues—*[interjection]* That computer might be a lot more interesting than my answers, and I can understand that. *[interjection]* I thought those were against the rules. I am just kidding. *[interjection]* Yes, I know. I think we are missing the action here.

\* (15:50)

I would like to further say about Internet pharmacies that this is being hammered out and fought out by a lot of forces outside of Manitoba.

When I was meeting with the flood group, the governors of North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota, particularly the Governor of Minnesota who has been here, they are very angry about drug costs being so much higher in the United States than they are in Canada.

They are very aware of the drug costs being lower in Europe than they are in the United States and they are trying to challenge the administration. I do not know what happened in the car between President Bush and Governor Pawlenty when they were heading in from the airport on Monday, but this is a huge issue in the United States obviously for the consumer. It is a huge issue for people that are working in Internet pharmacies here in Manitoba and in Alberta, in British Columbia and in Ontario. How the federal government resolves this, the U.S. federal Food and Drug Administration has met with Anne McLellan. Her position has been that the drugs are safe.

Not only the Governor of Minnesota, who is a Republican, but the Democratic governor of Illinois have said that the—

### Report

**Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Chairperson of the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254):** Mr. Chairperson, in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 considering the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Food, during a debate on a motion from the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), a point of order was raised by the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) regarding the relevance of the minister's comments.

As Chairperson, I ruled that there was no point of order. Mr. Chairperson, this ruling was sustained on a voice vote.

Subsequently, two members requested that a formal vote on this matter be taken.

### Formal Vote

**Mr. Chairperson:** A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

*All sections in Chamber for formal vote.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 considering the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Food, during debate on a motion from the honourable Member for Emerson, a point of order was raised by the honourable Member for Russell regarding the relevance of the minister's comment.

The Chairperson ruled that there was no point of order. This ruling was sustained on a voice vote.

Subsequently, two members requested that a formal vote on this matter be taken. We shall now vote on whether the ruling of the Chairperson shall be sustained.

\* (16:30)

*A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 28, Nays 18.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

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**Mr. Chairperson:** We shall now resume with the consideration of the Estimates.

We would like to re-invite the staff of the Executive Council to enter the Chamber, please.

This committee is on line item 2.1. General Administration (b) Management and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

We were proceeding line by line.

**Mr. Murray:** We were having a discussion about Internet pharmacy, and I appreciated the Premier's response. I would just like to say, and I gather the President and Governor Pawlenty spent some time just recently in Minnesota. I do not know if this issue was discussed or not. I certainly watched the report. I did not hear anything of it. I think that we all in this House agree, but I just wonder if the Premier has any knowledge of any instances with respect to Internet pharmacy where there have been issues of any sense of a drug shortage for Manitobans.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, I will have to refer that matter to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). Some of the entrepreneurs that are in the business have assured

us, and the member would know some of them, would be mutual contacts we have had over the years in the, for me, twilight of a mediocre sports career, so I run into some of them sometimes, informally [*interjection*]. Well, I have a friend called Mr. Rumsey. He has a comparable comment about your status in basketball, but I think you were a better basketball player than me, so I could not possibly repeat it, but it may not even be fair. Some comments are not fair. [*interjection*]

Anybody that can make the U of M Bisons the year they were the national champs is worthy of my respect, in basketball only. The bottom line is there is lots of sabre rattling and it is serious. Canada is responsible for the supply of drugs. It has had these discussions with the Food and Drug Administration. So the bottom line is this is a very, very high stakes disagreement between the drug companies, Canadian Internet companies, some parts of the U.S. consumer that want the drugs and some parts of the U.S. industry that do not want the drugs. I did discuss it with Governor Pawlenty, Governor Hoeven and Governor Rounds. They are quite concerned about the bureaucracy with the new drug bill that has just been passed where you need separate cards for each drug. They think this is even going to—they are obviously worried in the States, too, about their own druggists. They are worried about the survival of their own druggists in a rural community in South Dakota. So there are concerns that I respect.

As I say, this is not something the Government started and initiated. This is something that entrepreneurs started when they saw a void. They saw a lower price. They argued that it is a NAFTA trading environment, and they met a void that they saw. They moved into it. It is not something that the Government started in any way, shape or form. It is just something that arose out of a free enterprise opportunity.

\* (16:40)

I think that all these short-term discussions are, in my belief, short-term. This is all short-term because, ultimately, we have a situation where 10 percent of the consumers in North America have 10 percent less drug costs than 90 percent. There are much more powerful forces than the Government of Manitoba that will try to resolve this. I do not know exactly how it is going to be resolved.

I have spoken to Governor Pawlenty when he was here, and did tour a site. His people have assured him that the products are safe, contrary to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Anne McLellan said the same thing when the Food and Drug Administration was meeting with her in Ottawa a couple of months ago.

I, certainly, respect the individuals who have invested their dollars in the businesses here in Manitoba. It has caused pressure on the pharmaceutical costs, in the sense of pharmacists here in Manitoba and in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. Where that is going to resolve itself, that decision could be made in much higher levels in Washington or in Ottawa.

Our industry is advising us of what is going on, but we are trying to monitor both access to drugs, and access to drugs for our own citizens is still of paramount concern.

**Mr. Murray:** Has the Government in any way, shape or form been approached for any financial assistance?

**Mr. Doer:** I do not believe so, but I will double check. I, certainly, cannot recall any document that came to any institution of government. This has been an initiative taken by a lot of entrepreneurs. It has hired a lot of people in places like Minnedosa, in other communities, Niverville. There are people who have taken risks, and received some rewards. Consumers have received a benefit.

So far, generally speaking, the drug availabilities have been there. However, we are monitoring all three of those factors. We have to represent the patients in Manitoba. We have to represent the Internet drug company employees here in Manitoba. We have some sympathy with people that are paying extra as our neighbours.

As I say, this is something that was not initiated by overnment, but was rather initiated by people, seeing buses coming up here, using the internet. I am not so sure that solving, or dealing with just Canada is going to solve the problem. I think that with the Internet we have international ability to supply people. Whether it is Canada today, or Mexico tomorrow, or some country in the Caribbean the day after, or Europe, this is a bigger problem than just Manitoba. It does have obvious impacts either on

access or employment and investment here in the province. We know that.

**Mr. Murray:** I wonder if the Premier could just comment in a general way, because I am going to be—this is more of a hypothetical. If it was proven that there was some shortage of drugs that were available to Manitobans, is there a process that the Premier or the Minister of Health is aware of in the event that that ever took place?

I know that both the Premier and, certainly, we all share the fact that Manitobans are first, and I think that even the Internet pharmacists have indicated that that is their priority to ensure that is there, but, in the event that something did take place where there was a sense that there was proof that there was a shortage, does the Premier have anything, or the Minister of Health have any process in place either to monitor that and, if that is the case, to deal with it?

**Mr. Doer:** There is a lot of jawboning going on right now, and I think the people that have invested in this business, and the 3000 people that are working in it, want us to be very prudent on what I would say in the House or anywhere else.

I was very careful with Governor Pawlenty. I have not tried to provoke a fight with the drug companies, nor have I tried to undermine the Internet investors here and employees here in Manitoba, nor have I tried to forget that our first objective is to have supply. So I have been very careful.

I am sorry I was just chatting. We received support in Minnesota to go to the IJC, so this is a letter we just got an hour ago. Obviously, we had a pretty feisty discussion with them, with Governor Hoeven, so I want to make sure this gets to the Prime Minister in Washington right now. I want to make sure it continues to support us, and I do thank the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) for his support before. We do not want to go to court; we want it to go to the IJC. I know he has been helpful in the past, and the graders operate while we try to get due process. It is a hard process. So I apologize for my distraction.

**Mr. Murray:** Well, I appreciate that, Mr. Chair. I wonder if the Premier could just, at this time, because it is probably very important, and I did acknowledge that I thought it was important when I

saw on the news last night that Minister Graham stood in the House and raised the issue. I think that is quite a breakthrough, considering that there had been lots of discussions going on and wanting to raise it at that level, and I just maybe would ask the Premier if he could just update where we are with respect to Devils Lake.

**Mr. Doer:** We felt, and the member felt, that we should assert Canada's international view on the federal process, the federal project for the U.S. Corps of Engineers. There is no appropriated money for the federal process, so that is why North Dakota says, well, it may not have any—Secretary of State Powell had four conditions: sand filter, mercury analysis, biota data gap and existing conditions. There has been no money appropriated to that project on the federal level to the Corps of Engineers. It has been listed by the Taxpayers Association of the United States as one of the top 10 boondoggles in the U.S. budget. It has been raised by Senator McCain and Democrats, and motions have been placed to defeat the money. So we are getting that word out. We obviously have maintained support from Missouri, Mr. Chair, and today, very, very, helpful support from Minnesota following a meeting two days ago.

We have the Republican senator, Senator Coleman, and the Democratic senator, Senator Dayton, both supporting us as well in a bipartisan way. Now, of course, North Dakota is worried about the flood levels. There is action from the U.S. Corps of Engineers to protect some of the water systems. There is more money going into Devils Lake. So far the lake is one foot below where it peaked two years ago. It went down two feet; it has gone up a foot this spring runoff. On the one hand, we do not want any farmer in any part of our region to suffer a drought, but if it is a dry season, the lake is a dish.

So there is domestic pressure on Governor Hoeven to proceed. He has now announced his unilateral state proposal. The U.S. State Department has declared that this is not in their view—the judgment of Secretary of State Powell does not fit for the state proposal. Our goal now is to get this matter of the state proposal referred to the IJC. So far we have got support, as I say, for this going to the IJC. We just received support from Governor Pawlenty. Basically, there are other water disagreements in North Dakota. By the way, Montana feels that North Dakota has just got an agreement to get more water than they deserve from the west of them, and they

are going to divert water to the east of them and the north of them and then Missouri is opposed to them on the south side of them. I think that this should go to the IJC. I have tried to make it more of a Canadian issue, rather than just a Manitoba-North Dakota issue, because I actually believe that you have to get the Great Lakes states and provinces sometimes engaged in this.

We have the Great Lakes Water Commission people supporting us against the unilateral diversion. We are working on the Wildlife Federation whom you met when we were down in Washington. Still, hopefully, the Prime Minister can actually help the United States as well as help Canada, because if a state or a province can proceed on unilateral projects without consideration to a treaty that has been around since 1909, I think it is bigger than all of us.

\* (16:50)

I know that former Premier Filmon threatened to go to court. I have not wanted to go to court. We agreed that it should go to court as a last resort. Hopefully, we are willing to abide by the IJC and not put the Americans in a double jeopardy position, but we will have to see.

**Mr. Murray:** Just for clarity, so over on the Devils Lake issue, there has been no court action?

**Mr. Doer:** There is court action in North Dakota. It is not preferable to go to court in North Dakota. It is like cattle producers going—I should be careful of my comments. I will not say anything more because it can be used in a court of law. There is a case in North Dakota. We are looking at federal action, federal cases on the basis of federal wetlands legislation and, obviously, the NAWS case is in federal U.S. Court in Washington. These are not the preferred ways to go. The preferred way to go is the IJC, in my view, but the court is a remedy. We are not by ourselves; we are with the friends of Sheyenne and the Peterson Coulee coalition. So there are North Dakota people opposed to it as well. Now we have Minnesota people supporting the IJC reference basically saying: "Let's have an adjudication of this. That is what we want; we will take our chances."

**Mr. Murray:** So, when the Premier refers to double jeopardy, he is just saying having it in front of the IJC and making them look at getting involved and

putting a ruling while it sits in the courts in North Dakota.

**Mr. Doer:** It is our view from our legal advisors that, if the Americans say which avenue do you want it to be dealt with, the legal advice on the Devils Lake state outlet is the IJC. So we are following that advice because, in all fairness, I can understand the Americans saying: "Well, we don't want to have heads you win on the IJC and then we get another fight in the courts." But the court action is filed and I should be careful about saying anything more. The problem is with the more interveners you get in court, the more you are not by yourself anymore. It is just not Manitoba anymore and Canada.

**Mr. Murray:** I would like to get into the Budget a bit, the comments that were made by the First Minister in the last budget where he instructed ministers to go line by line through the Budget to look for savings. I think, particularly, his focus was on administrative costs. I think that it shows, particularly in the Budget that was presented, the 2004 Budget, that there were administrative increases in a number of departments. So I will reserve comments to go specifically by department by department.

But I wonder if the Premier, just in a general way, could share why, when he instructed his ministers to look for savings, in numerous departments on the administrative side, that was not forthcoming.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, sometimes the definition of administration may be different between the Opposition and us. Aboriginal training and curriculum to us is a statement of inclusion in Education and the administrative line being constant is not. So I am informed that the administration went up 0.9 percent, which is less than the general wage increase. In the Department of Education, by the way, in the past we have reduced the number of positions in the Department of Education over four years in the central department of education by 80 positions. So this is a continuation, but we have announced \$30 million in salaries to be reduced in this Budget. We have announced 400 positions. We have more than that that are vacant. Some of them are necessary like jail guards, people working in Manitoba development school, people working as emergency grader operators, ambulance staff. There are some that will have to be filled, but others will have to be vacant

through attrition, and not, therefore, as part of the \$30-million exercise.

**Mr. Murray:** I would, just on the Premier's comments with respect to education, and I know I asked this the last Estimate process, and I suspect that I will be asking it again next year. The First Minister talked about amalgamation, and talked about a \$10-million saving through amalgamation, and driving those savings into the front line, into the classroom. I think that it, certainly, was something that sounded pretty good to Manitobans, but I believe the First Minister would agree that that just has not happened.

So, again, I wondered if he could say now, or a couple of years down the road, of him making that statement to Manitobans. Why have you not been able to produce the \$10-million savings and put those costs, the \$10 million of savings into the front line in education?

**Mr. Doer:** I believe I said in the first set of Estimates in '03 that we would be willing to go to the people at the end of the mandate and demonstrate why it makes more sense to have six school divisions in Winnipeg instead of nine. We believe we will be able to do that. I think the public actually supports it. I note that there is no area in the last election where this may or may not have been a big issue where we lost public support. In fact, some of the areas that we gained support were in areas that had allegedly contentious school division mergers, south Winnipeg for example, southeast Winnipeg; Gimli had a merged school division. I am not saying this is the only factor, but we, certainly, road-tested this with the public, and the car got back in the garage.

**Mr. Murray:** Well, that is like saying to the person that you are selling a car to that you are going to be buying a Porsche and you turn out that what you are buying is a '97 Chevy Biscayne, not that there is anything wrong with Chevy Biscaynes, but what you indicated to Manitobans is that there would be \$10 million worth of savings, that forced amalgamations was the right way to go. I do not know that it was an issue that you indicated that the major reason was to reduce the number of school divisions per se, but it was on the idea that it was the right thing to do, because there would be \$10-million worth of savings.

The direct question would have to be: Did you do your homework and say that here is where the \$10-million worth of savings could be found,

because if you did, then you should be able to demonstrate here is where they are going to be. But, the fact that we see that, really, school divisions are, in fact, increasing their costs, it then, I think, is an analogy to say, "So we would look for any of those savings."

I think any time that you can show savings, as you indicated to Manitobans that you were capable of doing that, and the number was fantastic, \$10 million, a big number. A good number to be driven into the classrooms to ensure that Manitoba children are getting good solid education.

The fact that you failed to do that, and, really, we see costs going up, I just would ask the First Minister what sort of homework, what sort of study—and I will use the term "business case" because I want to use that term, and I do not mean the sense so that the First Minister turns around and says, "Well, you know, you cannot run schools like businesses." That is not the point. I use it in a vernacular, to say that, if you are going to be able to, sort of, look and show \$10-million worth of savings, somebody had to sit down and do some calculation that would come forward and say, "Well, here is where the savings can be had. Here is how it is going to work."

\* (17:00)

So that \$10 million that allows you to stand up and say, "Here is why we are doing it." That calculation should be forthcoming. It has gone, sort of, the other way, where we have not seen those savings. We have seen it across. So I just would say, "Where do you think you misjudged your \$10 million of savings?"

**Mr. Doer:** I said I would be accountable for it. I would note that the member opposite did not campaign on reversing the decision to go back to the mid-fifties, both in terms of the number of school divisions, and when you mentioned the Chevrolet. All we were trying to do was—we never promised the public a Porsche. What we did promise is to go from a fleet of 55 cars to a fleet of 37 cars, and we hope that they are economical cars.

You know, I meet with a lot of parents out there, and we knew it would take a little transition. We have gone through transitions at Hydro. We have gone through transitions at Centra Gas. You know, the world changes.

If the member opposite wants to go into the next election and say, "Elect me, and I will increase the number of school divisions," I welcome that debate. It is a good debate to have. I am comfortable where we are, and he can reverse it. I would not recommend it.

Six school divisions in Winnipeg, some could argue, is still too many, but we tried to have a reasonable approach to it to modernize. You know, government is not about status quo, and this Government is not about status quo, and we are not going to be about status quo. Everything we do is not about status quo.

I feel accountable for the decision we made. I would have preferred more volunteerism in the school divisions. We did not get it. I think we can move forward now. We feel that the reductions were fair. It was equal in the North, and equal in rural communities, and equal in Winnipeg.

We did not just go by only per student, because it would have been unfair to rural and northern Manitoba. I welcome the debate. I would love to have the debate in the next election. "Vote Conservative. We will increase the number of school divisions." I am betting right now that you will not do that, but I have been surprised before.

**Mr. Murray:** Well, the Premier (Mr. Doer) makes comment that we did not campaign on reversing the amalgamation of forced school divisions, and he is right about that.

I will not say that I have learned a lot from the First Minister, but one thing I have learned is to be careful, a little bit, what you say in public, because I believe he was going to reverse the decision to buy back MTS, and he, basically, told Manitobans that was what he was committed to. He was going to do that, if he became premier and, of course, I do not hear him, sort of, going down that road anymore.

So I certainly believe that when you want to be accountable to the public, I think there is truth in that, but I think that the notion to stand and try to reverse something that was forced, as you did with school divisions, I do not believe that you want to reverse that decision.

The First Minister wanted to do that with MTS, and was very passionate about, you know, "selling

MTS was wrong" and, if he became the Premier, he would, in fact, reverse that decision. So, no, Premier. I will not do what you said you were going to do, because I do not think that you should whipsaw the public.

I think that it becomes a nice whipping post, and maybe a good opportunity to stand up and give political rhetoric in front of the public, and say that you think it was wrong, and that you are going to reverse it. I do not know if, maybe, we have not seen all the legislation, maybe you are going to stand by your word and reverse the decision, and somehow buy back MTS. I guess that is possible. If that is the case, then maybe I would revisit my comments about undoing forced amalgamation.

Again, maybe the First Minister, in the next election campaign, will live by his word, and will campaign on the fact that he is going to go out and buy MTS. That would be an interesting debate to have, as well, I would say.

I am really more interested in your comments with respect to when you look at reducing school divisions, and understand where you are going. Again, you can stand in front of Manitobans and say, "You know, we have reduced the number of schools divisions." You indicate that you talked to people and think that is the right thing to do.

I would just like to be able to—I said this all along. I said this when the Minister of Education tried to bring this in, where you talk about a \$10-million saving. I mean, if somebody just, kind of, picked a number out of the air, I do not think it is a good answer, but it is an answer that one would accept.

I am a bit mystified as to how you would go through a process of coming up with a specific number that would say that we have done our homework. We are going to force these. We would like volunteerism. We understand that we, on the side, would have, I believe the previous government, my predecessor, looked at some volunteer school divisions that amalgamated.

I do think that the premise that the Premier went to the public on was not only to reduce the number of school divisions, but there was a financial positive windfall for doing that. That windfall was identified as a \$10-million saving.



I just would like to hear from the Premier. Was the homework that was done, was the idea that was done to do this, was it perhaps faulty accounting? The idea of reducing school divisions stands on its own merit. You have done that. There is no question, and the record shows very clearly that you have done it. But what the record does not show is that you were going to do it on the basis of saving some \$10 million. Of course, as I say, we have not seen any saving. There have been additional costs. So, if you could please just explain, what sort of homework showed where you were going to see those \$10-million savings.

**Mr. Doer:** The previous minister went through some of these numbers, the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

Secondly, Mr. Chairperson, certainly, in the height of the MTS debate we talked about repurchasing it for the people of Manitoba. What I did not expect was six months later the price to be utter and total robbery, the people of Manitoba with the under-evaluation of the company. Then I had to go back to our convention, when the stocks doubled in value, which, of course, none of our members bought any shares. Some of us even knew the value of that company, because some of us had been ministers of telephone systems, and all our caucus.

**An Honourable Member:** Mr. Schreyer?

**Mr. Doer:** He was not a member of our caucus. But it was given away. I think it was scandalous when the shares were so low. It meant companies made money on the sale of the shares. People have been convicted of breaching the security laws of Manitoba with the Barrett family, and others the member will know. So it is not Manitoba's proudest moment. Well, when the price of the shares was close to double what the Government gave away that asset for, I went back to the NDP convention, quite frankly, and had the guts to say to the party, and get a resolution passed, that we would not re-purchase the phone system. We could not afford it. And not only that, we went to the people in '99 without a false promise.

It is quite different that in 1995 when Mr. Filmon promised not to sell the phone system, then two months later had hired, through Julian Benson, people to start the due diligence to sell the company. We never could figure out all the factors of the

balanced budget legislation during that debate, but then all the pieces came together when we recognized that all those proceeds went into a fund. The first set of money went in from the Lotteries, of course, later commented on by the Auditor, and then the second set of funds came in from the telephone system. After the company was given away by the Tories, it would have been irresponsible for us to pay twice the price of what it was sold for. I could not, in all consciousness, do that. You can check the record. It was a front-page story in the *Free Press* after our convention where we had enough nerve in 1998 to go to the convention to say, "Listen, as much as we would love to have this back in public ownership, we cannot justify it economically." We passed the motion, and I went to the '99 election with platforms to the people that we would not repurchase it.

\* (17:10)

I would say to the member opposite, nobody in Manitoba will trust Conservatives again with their Crown corporations. You will be wearing, appropriately, this mistrust legacy on the sale of MTS, with Hydro, for a generation to come.

**Mr. Murray:** Well, I would say that I am always fascinated when we get around the MTS debate, because, I think, the First Minister always has a very interesting approach to it. He, apparently, as he said, had the guts to go to his convention to get a ruling on it. It sort of begs the question, which, you know, that there was a price point of which he, if he became premier, was prepared to pay, but not a nickel more and not a penny more, but he would, certainly, be prepared to pay a certain amount to get it back. So the fact that the value of the company went up, it excluded him from making the commitment that he had said he was going to do had he become premier, that he, in fact, was going to purchase back the company. There is, obviously, some sort of value that he sees that is worth it, and some value that he just sees, apparently, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, the caucus, that he would say, "Well, that is just too much, and we are not going to go down that road. I said I was going to do it, but I look at the value, and so, you know, it is not worth it. We are not going to do that."

I would say, on the same basis, and to use his words, he had the guts to be able to stand up in front of his caucus. Does he have the guts in this discussion, if I can use his own words, to explain

how it is that you could come up to a calculation of saving \$10 million through forcing school divisions to amalgamate, and fail to be able to provide those savings?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Chair, the member opposite has missed the point. It was not that the value of the company rose; it was that the value of the company was established by members opposite under the value of the corporation. They, basically, took a public asset without public permission. We called on the government of the day to have a referendum. They could not stand before the people, and they undersold the asset. As soon as I saw, I believe it was \$13 a share, I knew that they were giving it away. It is scandalous. At that point, I knew the value of the company would go up, and that would mean that we sold at a certain price, and we would have to buy it back at twice as much almost, because they went and undersold it.

The bottom line was, I knew at that point—I was shocked when I saw the share price established by members opposite, but everybody made a lot of money. The Jaguar sales—you wanted to talk about Porsches? Well, the Porsche sales did go up that month. The Wellington West brokers were in the newspaper talking about how well they did.

Well, it was a public asset. There was no permission. Even in a private company, you have to get permission from the majority of the shareholders. Even private companies have rules about assets, so that is the argument.

We agree to disagree about amalgamations of school divisions. I believe that you will not go back to the people of Manitoba, "Vote for me, and I will

go to nine school divisions in Winnipeg." But, if you do, I welcome that debate. I look forward to it. I love a good debate. "Vote for the Conservatives. We will increase the number of superintendents in your school division."

**An Honourable Member:** A promise made, a promise broken.

**Mr. Doer:** It was such a quiet conversation before the echo from Steinbach arrived, but—*[interjection]* Oh, good.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Please, follow some rules in this committee. Unless you are recognized, you are not supposed to participate. I am just cautioning everybody.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Chair, I understand that the Premier has an airplane to catch. So, on that basis, we will resume, I believe, on Monday. I think the Premier is away tomorrow. So we will resume our Estimate process on Monday.

**Mr. Doer:** I believe, by agreement in the House, the Department of Finance will be heard tomorrow in Estimates, and then we will revert back to the department of Executive Council on Monday.

**Mr. Chairperson:** As it has been agreed to by the House, when this section of the Committee of Supply resumes tomorrow, the Estimates for the Department of Finance will be considered. I am now interrupting the proceedings of this committee.

The committee will be in recess until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, April 29, 2004**

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

**Highway 227**

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PETITIONS**

**Minimum Sitting Days for Legislative Assembly**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Legislature sat for only 37 days in 2003.

Manitobans expect their Government to be accountable, and the number of sitting days has a direct impact on the issue of public accountability.

Manitobans expect their elected officials to be provided the opportunity to be able to hold the Government accountable.

The Legislative Assembly provides the best forum for all MLAs to debate and ask questions of the Government, and it is critical that all MLAs be provided the time needed in order for them to cover constituent and party duties.

Establishing a minimum number of sitting days could prevent the government of the day from limiting the rights of opposition members from being able to ask questions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider recognizing the need to sit a minimum of 80 days in any given calendar year.

Signed by P. Brar, Val Stark and Lynn Wagar.

**Mr. Speaker:** In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition.

It is unacceptable for the residents of Manitoba to travel the unsafe gravel roads of Highway 227 in the constituencies of Lakeside and Portage la Prairie.

Inclement weather can make Highway 227 treacherous to all drivers.

Allowing better access to Highway 227 would ease the flow of traffic on the Trans-Canada Highway.

Residences along Highway 227 are not as accessible to emergency services due to the nature of the current condition of the roadway.

The condition of these gravel roads can cause serious damage to all vehicles, which is unacceptable.

Residents of Manitoba deserve a better rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider having Highway 227 paved from the junction of 248 and 227 all the way to Highway 16, the Yellowhead route.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider supporting said initiatives to ensure the safety for all Manitobans and all Canadians who travel on Manitoba highways.

Submitted on behalf of Ken Tully, May Tully, Doris Tully and others.

**Mr. Speaker:** In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

### **Proposed PLA–Floodway**

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Province of Manitoba has tabled legislation in the Legislature that may result in the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway by the summer of 2005.

The Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA).

The proposed PLA would force all employees on the project to belong to a union.

Approximately 95 percent of the heavy construction companies in Manitoba are currently non-unionized.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association has indicated that the forced unionization of all employees may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

The chair of B.C.'s 2010 Construction Leaders Taskforce has stated, "Major industrial projects built under project labour agreements from the energy sector in Alberta to off-shore development on the East Coast have repeatedly incurred cost overruns, labour disruptions and delays."

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

Manitobans deserve an open and fair competition that protects taxpayers from unnecessary costs and respects workers' democratic choice.

Manitobans support the right of any company, both union and non-union, to participate in the expansion of the Red River Floodway.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his Government's forced unionization plan of companies involved with the Red River Floodway expansion.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider entering into discussions with business, construction and labour groups to ensure any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Signed Ashlee Heyens, Joanna Sallows, Jean-Guy Doiron and others.

In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

\* (13:35)

### **Alzheimer's Disease**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Alzheimer's is a debilitating disease.

Cholinesterase inhibitors are known to slow or even prevent the progression of Alzheimer's.

The provincial government asked for the development of an Alzheimer's strategy in 2000 and was presented with nine recommendations in 2002, none of which has yet been implemented.

In the absence of a provincial Alzheimer's strategy, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority put in place a policy in November 2003 whereby Alzheimer's patients entering personal care homes are being weaned from certain Alzheimer medications in a move that the WRHA's vice-

president of long-term care has referred to as a financial necessity.

The administrative costs of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority have more than tripled since 1999, to a total of more than \$16 million a year.

In a move that amounts to two-tier medicine, the families of Alzheimer's sufferers in personal care homes may request that the drugs continue to be delivered at the family's expense.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) to ensure that his attempts to balance his department's finances are not at the expense of the health and well-being of seniors and other vulnerable Manitobans suffering from this debilitating disease.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider reversing his decision to deny Alzheimer's patients in personal care homes access to certain medications.

To request the Minister of Health to consider implementing a provincial Alzheimer's strategy.

Signed by Karen von Hacht, Robert J. Sampson, Robin Stacey and others.

In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

#### **Proposed PLA—Floodway**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Under the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway, the Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA) which will require all floodway workers to pay union dues and which may require all non-unionized companies and workers to join a union.

This Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) has publicly stated a project labour agreement would automatically require all floodway workers to pay union dues, even if they are not part of a union.

Forcing all floodway workers to pay union dues may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his Government's plan to force all workers involved in the floodway expansion to pay union dues even if they are not part of a union.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ensuring any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Signed by Gary Coleman, Bonnie Dayment, Rejean Courcelles and others.

In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Province of Manitoba has tabled legislation in the Legislature that may result in the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway by the summer of 2005.

The Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA).

The proposed PLA would force all employees on the project to belong to a union.

Approximately 95 percent of heavy construction companies in Manitoba are currently non-unionized.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association has indicated that the forced unionization of all employees may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

The chair of B.C.'s 2010 Construction Leaders Taskforce has stated, "Major industrial projects built under project labour agreements from the energy sector in Alberta to off-shore development on the East Coast have repeatedly incurred cost overruns, labour disruptions and delays."

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

Manitobans deserve an open and fair competition that protects taxpayers from unnecessary costs and respects workers' democratic choice.

\* (13:40)

Manitobans support the right of any company, both union and non-union, to participate in the expansion of the Red River Floodway.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his Government's forced unionization plan of companies involved with the Red River Floodway expansion.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider entering into discussions with business, construction

and labour groups to ensure any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Signed by Paul Caron, Al Hardy, Randy Palsen and others.

**Mr. Speaker:** In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

## TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a Manitoba Liquor Control Commission Nine Month Report for the period April 1 to December 31, 2003.

I am also pleased to table a Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Third Quarter Report for the nine months ended December 31, 2003.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the following Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, the 2004-2005 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for Manitoba Finance.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill 19-The Public Schools Amendment Act

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), that Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living, that Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Bjornson:** This bill will contain a number of amendments to strengthen The Public Schools Act, including clarifying roles and responsibilities, streamlining administrative procedures, allow school boards to utilize modern technology to facilitate board meetings, address MTS's request that

parameters around how limited-term teacher contracts are to be established and general housekeeping matters.

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

#### **Bill 48—The Human Tissue Amendment Act**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), that Bill 48, The Human Tissue Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tissus humains, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Health, seconded by the honourable Minister of Healthy Living, that Bill 48, The Human Tissue Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, amendments to the act are meant to increase Manitoba's organ donation rate. However, donation rates nationwide are low and Manitoba's amendments to this legislation will help improve those rates to save lives and make the quality of life better for all Manitobans.

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

\* (13:45)

#### **Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Faith Academy 31 Grade 10 students under the direction of Mrs. Colleen Funk. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh).

Also in the public gallery we have from Isaac Brock School 25 Grade 9 students under the direction of Miss Heather Wright and Miss Darcie Mitchell. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Ms. Mihychuk).

### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

#### **Health Care Services Government Initiatives**

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has increased the health care budget by \$1 billion, yet services have only deteriorated. Eleven patients have died while waiting for cardiac surgery. Front-line doctors and nurses are telling us that there is an ER crisis. What is the Premier doing to fix this?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Part of the ER challenges, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we have hired and have in place now over 800 more nurses today than we did when we came into office. As opposed to having reductions of doctors in the nineties, the mid-nineties in particular right through to the end of the nineties, we have an increase in the number of doctors throughout Manitoba.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, despite this Premier promising to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million, it continues. In fact, it gets worse. Patients are waiting hours on end before receiving care. Tragically, others have died before receiving care. What is the Premier doing to address this problem, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, the reduction in patients in hallways was some 80 percent on average year over year from the 1999 period. I note in my own community hospital considerable reduction in the number of patients in the hallways and, of course, the minister has announced the emergency room task force report to co-ordinate our efforts even more effectively.

#### **Emergency Rooms Patient Deaths**

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this Premier if any other patients have died in an emergency room while on the waiting list in the last month.

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I know that, regrettably, every day is a life and death situation in the emergency wards. Many lives are saved, some lives are lost in ambulances, some lives are lost in operations and some lives are lost in the emergency ward.

### **Emergency Rooms Patient Deaths**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Eleven patients have died waiting for cardiac surgery. Sharon Horn fell through the cracks of the mental health system and froze to death in the snow. Dorothy Madden died in the St. Boniface ER after waiting six hours without being seen by a doctor. Last week in the St. Boniface ER another woman died after waiting two hours without being seen by a doctor.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health: Can he tell us why yet another patient has died without treatment under his watch?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, as we speak, the former head of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Alberta is investigating 88 alleged deaths in the ER at Saskatoon hospital. As we speak, our head of quality care from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority is in Calgary investigating two alleged deaths in the Calgary ER.

We set up a task force, Mr. Speaker, that is not a one-shot affair, but it is a task force that is designed to, "oversee the implementation of improvements to the emergency care; listen and learn from patients and families who have assessed emergency medical care; work with emergency staff, hospitals and office of Chief Medical Examiner to develop both short- and long-term improvements to emergency care in Winnipeg."

We have an ongoing group that is working now and into the future to improve the emergency care not in Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, I am dismayed at this minister's response to this question. This woman came in by ambulance, was triaged as a Level 3 but was not seen by a doctor until she went into cardiac arrest, just like Dorothy Madden.

Can the Minister of Health tell us why this patient triaged at a Level 3 was not seen by a doctor for two hours until she went into cardiac arrest?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, let me point out to the member that ever since the Sinclair inquiry came

about, we put in place a quality incident occurrence procedure. One of the reasons that a lot of information is provided now and was not provided during the 1990s is there was no such process in place.

\* (13:50)

We put in place quality assurance. When a critical incident occurs, Mr. Speaker, a system is set in, an investigation is undertaken, the family is informed, the investigation is undertaken. When there is a death, the CME is informed and in addition now when an occurrence occurs it goes to the emergency task force for review.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, I am asking about a specific case at St. Boniface Hospital and I think this minister has the responsibility and the accountability to respond to the questions. This patient came in by ambulance, was triaged and was put on a hospital stretcher. I would like to ask this minister: Did this patient die in the ER hallway at St. Boniface Hospital?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, there are regular critical incidents that occur in this system. In the last several weeks, there was a critical incident that occurred at St. Boniface Hospital. The ER task force was alerted. The family was informed. A review is taking place. It is being discussed with the CME, and the family has asked that it be maintained at that level. I have no authority to release any information other than to say the ER task force is reviewing it, the CME is reviewing it to see whether or not it is preventable.

The quality critical-incident team kicked in and met with the family, Mr. Speaker, and an outside person has been brought in to review as they do in all cases. There are cases that occur on a regular basis. Critical incidents occur and we intend to start putting those critical incident issues on the Web site so we can have some public acknowledgment of the process.

### **Emergency Rooms Patient Deaths**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** I guess my question for the Minister of Health is quite simple. How many more headlines on the front pages of the newspapers are we going to have to see under this minister's watch like, "Heart care in crisis,"



"Medicare system killed my mother," "Government secrecy fuels crisis," "Nine heart patients waited and died"?

How many more headlines are we going to have to see in the newspapers before this minister takes some responsibility and acts?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** First off, Mr. Speaker, one of the lessons from the Sinclair inquiry was that the information be made public and we do not go into a blame game when there are issues that occur. It has been the policy of this Government and our policy that when an incident occurs we look at it, we review it. If we can make improvements, we do. We try to learn whether it is preventable or not preventable. If it is preventable, we try to ensure that an incident of that kind does not happen again. That is one of the reasons why we alert the family and individuals.

As I indicated, there are 88 alleged deaths being investigated in Saskatoon right now by the Alberta registrar and two being investigated in Calgary by the Manitoba authorities.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Mr. Speaker, when this minister is asked questions and legitimate serious questions, he always points to some other jurisdiction or blames someone else or some former government for all the ills that are here in the health care system.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we continue to see patients die in emergency room hallways under this minister's watch. When is he going to stand up, take responsibility and act to fix the problems?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, there was no critical-incident reporting system-wide. There is now. There was no public disclosure. There is now. There was no review done and emergency task force. There is now. There was no process in place. There is now. The overriding lesson from Sinclair report, the tragedy that occurred in the 1990s, was that when systematic or other situations occur, you review them. You look if you can improve the system and you take steps accordingly. That has been our practice and we will continue that practice because that helps improve the health care system even though every day there are challenges we face.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** We have a Minister of Health who says that he is going to continue along the same

course, the procedures are in place. If the procedures are working, Mr. Speaker, why are patients dying in hospital hallways under this minister's watch when he said that hallway medicine has ended?

\* (13:55)

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, the statistics on hallways have been on the Web site ever since we came to office. The members often have referred to it. The member can see a 70% to 80% decrease since we came to office. Not perfect, but recognized by *La Presse* in Montréal and looked at as a model as to how to improve the situation in the ERs across the country. I might add, I also asked the Health Council of Canada to put this item on the agenda of the Health Council of Canada because all provinces are feeling the same pressures in this regard. Not all provinces have the same systems in place that we have in place in this regard.

#### **Emergency Rooms Patient Deaths**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Mr. Speaker, a Manitoban is brought into an emergency ward by ambulance, which indicates need. She is triaged and then left alone till she dies. What is remarkable is all kinds of people are now looking into the problem instead of looking after the patient. When will this minister take charge and see to it that this does not happen again?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot promise perfection. What I can promise is that the people in our system have learned from the Sinclair inquiry and have put in place systems, critical incident reporting, an emergency task force that looks at these situations, looks at improvements every single day. There have been improvements. They will continue.

I admit because we are human there will always be situations that occur. Our job and our duty to the public of Manitoba is to learn from those situations and where we can prevent it, to take all steps necessary to prevent that.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, nobody is asking for perfection. What we are asking for is action. A woman, a Manitoban, an elderly woman comes into an emergency ward by ambulance. She is in need. Emergency is your last place of hope, and all that we

are seeing in case after case is that emergency wards are becoming a place of no hope. When will this minister not look for perfection but take action, take responsibility and deal with the crisis in our emergency wards?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, at the end of May a report is coming out from the federal government that will say there are 10 000 deaths that occur in the system as a result of medical-related and other errors. That report is coming out. It has been a combination across the country. It will talk about 10 000 preventable deaths and strategies to deal with those. We have to deal with that, but we are ahead of that curve because we put in place a number of measures as a result of Sinclair.

Again, every single incident that occurs makes people in the system sick to their stomachs, including me. We have to do our duty to the public of Manitoba and make sure that every time an event occurs, we take steps to ensure that a repeat of that does not happen or we put in place those measures to make sure another event does not happen.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, no one takes satisfaction over these cases. These are hard and they are sensitive, but the families and Manitobans deserve some answers and we have yet to see any answers from the last cases. What do we hear about from this minister? We hear about reports. There is a report coming. We hear about the hush committee, more people involved in dealing with the problem than dealing with the patient. What Manitobans are looking for is action.

Will the minister get up and take personal responsibility and see to it that something is done, that when people come into an emergency they are dealt with in a proper fashion and not die on a gurney next to the desk? That is not acceptable.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, in the last few years we put in place a system when something that is judged a critical incident, which may or may not be a death but is a critical incident, the family is informed. In the instance that the member is referring to the family was informed and talked to.

Three processes are in place. The Chief Medical Examiner is always reviewing the case to see if it is preventable or not. Secondly, it has gone to our critical incident committee to review. That has

already taken place and started, and it has gone to our emergency task force to review.

I might add to the member, we have since put in place measures to hire more nurses and some more nurses are in place. We have put in place electronic triage across the system as only part of the changes that we are putting in place with regard to our ongoing task force to deal with emergencies.

Remember, in Saskatchewan they are investigating situations, in Calgary they are investigating situations. We have an ongoing committee and working as we—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

\* (14:00)

### **Emergency Rooms Patient Deaths**

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Mr. Speaker, I guess what we want to do in the House today is to hold the minister accountable for the many preventable deaths that have happened in emergency wards and in our hospitals over the course of time. People are dying in hallways under this minister's watch, and all he can do is point to other jurisdictions or point to somebody else as a blame game.

We are asking this minister and this Premier (Mr. Doer) to take responsibility, to show leadership. That is what we need, leadership in making sure that not one more person dies before they see a doctor while waiting in an emergency ward or in a hallway.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, that is why we put in place the emergency task force. That is why we have already put in place several of the recommendations. That is why they continue to meet. That is why they are meeting today. That is why they had a teleconference yesterday, and that is why electronic triage is in place and additional staffing has been put in place in this regard.

I think that members opposite ought to reflect on all of the care providers who work every single day under very difficult circumstances and make life and death situations, and to consider the results of the reviews that are taking place before they point fingers.

**Mr. Derkach:** Mr. Speaker, we are pointing fingers on behalf of Manitobans whose family members are dying. Every time this Government runs into a problem, they appoint a task force. Task forces are not going to prevent the death of someone lying in an emergency ward or in a hallway without seeing a doctor. When a person is brought in by ambulance and that person is triaged as a Level 3 case, I think everybody expects that immediate attention will be given by a qualified physician. If that does not happen, the minister better make sure that it does happen. So a task force is not going to fix that.

So I ask this minister why he is not taking responsibility for the deaths that are occurring and why he is not taking steps to prevent the situation from ever happening again in one of our major hospitals in the city.

**Mr. Chomiak:** An 80% reduction of people in the hallways, 879 nurses now hired since 1999, 156 additional doctors, millions in reconfiguration for ERs and other services, fast-track antibiotics provided in the home, enhanced home care. All of those are measures in place including recent measures of electronic triage, additional hiring of staff, additional training for staff and other advice; plus what is already in place that was not in place before, critical incident reporting where people feel they are able to talk about incidents and provide and learn from those incidents, something that is very crucial in the system that was, unfortunately, not available in the past.

**Mr. Derkach:** Mr. Speaker, this minister is failing. Manitobans are getting to the point where they cannot believe and cannot trust what either this minister or this Premier (Mr. Doer) say because their actions do not follow their words. We are asking that this minister and this Premier take responsibility for the health of people in this province so that no more people are going to die waiting for a doctor to see them in a hospital bed or in an emergency ward. What is this minister prepared to do today to prevent those situations?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier in my comments, while we would like to, we cannot promise a hundred percent perfection. There will be situations that we cannot deal with. That is why we have taken so many measures and put them in place since 1999, including critical incident reporting that is in place across the system. The whole question of

the emergency task force is already put in place: electronic triage, additional training, additional hiring of staff, plus investigations and reviews of every single situation so people are allowed to discuss the situation, to learn, so that it is not repeated.

I think that the Government has acted. It will continue to act and while we cannot promise perfection, the public knows, Mr. Speaker, that we respond and we try to improve the situation every time a circumstance occurs in Manitoba.

### **Emergency Rooms Patient Deaths**

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I have been listening to the lack of response from the Minister of Health, the lack of leadership from the Premier on a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker. What we have heard from both the Minister of Health and the Premier is about all of these supposed programs that are in place. We understand, and I think the Minister of Health said, "We want to do our duty, Mr. Speaker," but when is he going to do his duty as the Minister of Health who is responsible for the health and well-being of all Manitoba patients and ensure that not one more Manitoba patient dies in a hallway or dies while waiting in ER? When is he going to take action instead of just talking about it?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I think that if you talk to anyone involved in the health care system, whether they are front-line staff or in administration or anywhere in the system, the system is designed to deal with the need and the requirements to the best that can be offered and that is what Manitobans do. The 700 people who visit the ERs every single day in Winnipeg, the several hundred that visit outside of Winnipeg, that is what they do. There are thousands and thousands of contacts every day. There are incidents. There are occasions when there are situations that occur. We call them critical incidents. Every single one is disclosed to the family, reviewed. The incident the members refer to over and over again has kicked in a process that was not in place before.

**Mr. Murray:** We are clearly not getting any results from the Minister of Health. I am going to ask the Premier of the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, who said to Manitobans that if he were elected,

which he was, that he would end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. He said it to Manitobans. He said he had a plan to ensure that health care was looked after for all Manitobans.

The Premier has been now the Premier for five years, so my question goes to the Premier of the province of Manitoba: When is he going to take steps to ensure that we have a program in place that does not have people dying in the hallway or dying in ER waiting for care? When are we going to start seeing some results?

**Mr. Chomiak:** When the Canadian Institute of Health Information did its report, it said that Manitoba had made significant improvement in the hallway situation. This independent body, put together by all of the provinces and the federal government before we were government, an independent body that reviewed the situation said we had made significant improvements in the hallway, stats that we put on the Web site every week. Every week this information goes on the Web site allowing the members to judge on a weekly basis what the status is and, if you look, it is down 80 percent. While we have not achieved perfection, Mr. Speaker, there has been significant improvement.

I know no deaths occurred in Manitoba between 1988 and 1999. I know that did not happen, Mr. Speaker, but we are willing to admit the situation and to deal with every single situation as it occurs.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, once again I am going to direct my question to the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province of Manitoba because this is a very serious issue and clearly we have not been getting any answers from the Minister of Health. We know that the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Health said to Manitobans that they had a plan in place to solve hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. They made a specific commitment and they said they were going to do that to Manitobans.

Since this Premier has been in the province of Manitoba, has been the Premier, we have seen 11 patients die while waiting for cardiac surgery, Mr. Speaker. Now another family has lost a loved one and what we are hearing from the Minister of Health is all about programs, all about meetings, all about doing everything instead of making steps to solve the problem so it does not happen to another Manitoba family.

My question is very simple to the Premier of the province of Manitoba: What is he doing to solve this crisis that is happening in ER when he said to Manitobans he had a plan to fix it? Why has he failed and what is his plan to improve it?

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Chomiak:** The member inaccurately mixes up a number of issues. If the member wants to talk about the cardiac wait list, the last time that I checked there were 69 people on the cardiac wait list which is, if memory serves me correctly, 50 percent less on the cardiac wait list than when we came into office and, in fact, is below the 10% guidelines indicated by Doctor Koshal with respect to wait list for cardiac and, in fact, the member is confusing issues of preventable deaths and non-preventable deaths.

Let me just say this, Mr. Speaker. In the 1990s, no process is in place. No one died in Manitoba during the 1990s. According to members opposite that never, ever, ever happened. All we know is when we came into office we disclose, we report, we take action where there is ability to improve. The cardiac waiting list is another example of steps we have taken.

### **Provincial Sales Tax Referendum**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. We have a government which I truly believe is breaking the law. We have balanced budget legislation and I think we need to be very clear on this. We have a new retail sales tax on accounting services, legal services and others. The overall tax package that this Government is providing is not revenue neutral. There is documentation from this Government, the Budget documents themselves, and I would refer people to go to page D1 where it states the retail sales tax of 17.2 million for the '04-05 fiscal year and 23.9 million for the full year in the following, or if it was a full year.

We have, whether it is this document and other pages like B9, or the Manitoba Law Society, Mr. Speaker, that are contradicting the numbers that this minister is providing. My question is: Will the minister acknowledge that he has underestimated the amount of retail sales tax coming into this province?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I will acknowledge that we brought in a balanced budget under the existing legislation that is the law in this province. We have disclosed it all on page D1 as the member referenced, and all those numbers will be subject to confirmation as the actual experience unfolds after we implement the proper laws to bring this Budget into force.

If there is any question about that, I am always happy to answer for the members opposite. If the particular member from Inkster feels that there is anything that has been done that is untoward, he has the full recourse of the rule of law in this province available to him if he wishes to pursue it.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Great advice. In other words, you are saying, "Take the Government to court." If I had the resources I would, because I do believe, Mr. Speaker, this Government is wrong. Just because you print a number does not necessarily mean that we have to buy it.

Mr. Speaker, we are not buying it. I do not believe the Manitoba Law Society is buying it. They are underestimating, intentionally underestimating the retail sales and the reason why is because there is a four-million fudge amount here, and the Government has indeed exceeded it.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I need to be able to hear the question.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** The estimated revenue numbers are wrong and the Minister of Finance knows that. Will the minister ask for the provincial auditor to give an opinion on this issue and accept whatever his opinion is? I will apologize to this Chamber if the Auditor says that I am wrong, but I am not violating the law if I am wrong.

This Government is violating the law if he is wrong and I am telling you that this Minister of Finance is wrong. So the Minister of Finance needs to come clean and have the provincial auditor look at these numbers.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Inkster seems to have caught the same disease that the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) has, that if

you yell loud enough it will be so. But that is really not the way it is in the real world.

In the real world, Mr. Speaker, we brought in a new Auditor General Act in this province which gives the provincial auditor the right to pursue any dollar dispensed by this Government. We brought in the first summary budget in the history of this province and we have brought in Public Accounts that are done on a summary basis.

The provincial auditor can investigate anything he wishes in this province under the new powers he has been given.

### **Budget Advertising Campaign**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has a problem. If he prints a figure in the document, he expects us to believe it. This is where he is losing credibility. If your numbers do not jive you have a serious problem, and you are supposed to be the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the Government is: Now we have this document and we understand that they are on an advertising campaign.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, we understand the Government is now on an advertising campaign, promoting this document which obviously has flaws in it. My question to the Premier is: How much money, how much propaganda is this Government putting in tax dollars into promoting this Budget to all Manitobans?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the amount of money is down 40 percent from when we came into office in terms of public information. For Liberals to be asking any questions after the testimony of Mr. Guité last week about advertising, for any Liberal to stand up in this House and talk about advertising and propaganda, they should resign.

### **Legislative Building School Concert Series**

**Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry):** Mr. Speaker, I heard beautiful music in this magnificent building

today. I also noticed a calendar about music activities in schools at the foot of the grand staircase. Can the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth please advise the House about why he brought student music into the building?

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** Well, thank you for the question. On April 4, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to proclaim April Celebrating Music in Manitoba Schools Month.

I had the honour of attending concerts in Southwood School, at Collège Régional Gabrielle-Roy School. We also, of course, hosted several concerts here in the Legislature, which included River West Park, Collège Louis-Riel, Joie de Vivre choir, Suzuki string program, J.H. Bruns Collegiate guitar ensemble and today we concluded our concert series with the Windsor Community School.

Although we disagree on a lot of things in the House, I am sure that we all agree that it was absolutely a wonderful program and it was great to see so many people there supporting it, including the honourable First Minister, who joined us today. Celebrating music and the things that we do in schools is a very important part of what we believe in for our school system, as there is a very strong relationship between the arts and academic success. It is part of our promotion for the arts in our schools. Thank you very much.

#### **CAIS Program Manitoba Contribution**

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, the United Stock Growers of America were successful in obtaining a restraining order preventing Canadians from exporting beef into the U.S. over the next while. According to Canadian officials, a deal to lift the U.S. ban on live cattle will also not be struck in a meeting between our Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, our farm families are struggling. They have seen a 40% net decline in their net incomes.

Can this Minister of Agriculture tell us today what preliminary plans she has in place to deal with the discontinuance of meat products into the United States? Will she now put in place a program to

support fully the 40% reduction of net income suffered by the farm families of this province?

\* (14:20)

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed unfortunate that R-CALF has come forward with this injunction at a time when there are negotiations going on.

I want to wish our Prime Minister well as he goes to Washington to meet with President Bush. I know the issue of opening the border is going to be on the agenda. We have to only hope that those negotiations can be successful. We have to hope that a decision will be based on science. Secretary Veneman had indicated that there would be a short comment period and a decision would be made on science. We hope that we will go forward.

I want the member to know that the boxed beef, the boneless beef that was going over the border is still going. It is the new bone-in meat and the other cuts that are not able to go now.

**Mr. Penner:** Mr. Speaker, it is cold comfort to the farmers of Manitoba that have seen a 40% net income decline when this minister stands in this House and says that boneless beef will still flow across the border.

She has yet to commit fully to fund the 40% requirement under the CAIS program, which she has signed twice now; once, under the auspices of signing into the program that this program could be negotiated; No. 2, when the beef producers and the cattle producers were in serious trouble she, under the auspices, signed another agreement allowing some of the CAIS program to flow, which has not happened.

Will she today at least give comfort to Manitoba farmers that she will fully, without prorating, cover the 40% requirement under the CAIS program to the farmers of Manitoba?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Speaker, the member has asked the question about the funding for the CAIS program before. I have indicated to him that we have signed on to the program. Our money is in this Budget. We are going to be doing Estimates discussions soon. We will be able to discuss that further.

But I also want to commend the producers on the work that they are doing on Rancher's Choice to try to bring some solution to the challenges that we are facing with the export markets. I would hope the Opposition would get behind the producers on this one and see that this project becomes a reality, because the Government is in with them. We need the Opposition to show their support so that we can indeed start to do some processing or more processing in this province and not be so completely tied to an export market.

### **Drinking Water Safety Act Regulations**

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture again denies the comfort to the farmers of this province that she will sign on to an unqualified 40 percent on the one farm program that is left out there. She will not stand up and acknowledge that she will do that.

It is just like the water quality safety act. This Premier has been bragging for 18 months about the water quality safety act. Where are the regulations?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship):** I am really glad that the members opposite have taken the time now to acknowledge that this Government is bringing in an act that we believe will make us leaders in the country in protecting water.

In fact, not only through this act, but it builds on our legacy with The Safe Drinking Water Act in 2002 in being leaders in this country in protecting water. All the member has to do is read the act. He knows where regulations will be brought in. There will be full consultation. The act is there. Let us debate it, let us pass it, and let us protect Manitoba's water.

**Mr. Cummings:** This Government is on such thin ice, Mr. Speaker. They have been bragging and bragging about all their activities, just like the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), now the Minister—and the Premier—responsible for The Drinking Water Safety Act that was passed in this House in August of 2002. No regulations. Eighteen months later, what are they doing? Where are the regs?

**Mr. Ashton:** I do not know where the member has been, Mr. Speaker, but he will note, in addition to the

passage of the act, we have acted by putting in place 12 drinking water officers. We have a budget in this year's Budget of \$1.6 million. We are already protecting Manitoba in terms of drinking water.

We proclaimed the act earlier this year and we indicated there is one area left in terms of the semi-public facilities, and at the request of those that operate semi-public facilities, that is the last area that is going to be proclaimed. We need no lectures from members opposite about protecting Manitoba's drinking water. They did nothing. We have acted.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The time for Oral Questions has expired.

### **Speaker's Rulings**

**Mr. Speaker:** I have a couple of rulings for the House.

Following Oral Questions on Thursday, April 15, 2004, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) raised a point of order concerning answers to questions provided by the honourable Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), the honourable Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) and the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer), answers which the honourable Official Opposition House Leader contended were misleading the House.

He requested that the Speaker review the answers provided during Question Period. The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) also spoke to the point of order and suggested that a dispute over the facts does not constitute a point of order.

I took the matter under advisement in order to peruse Hansard. It has previously been ruled by Manitoba Speakers Walding, Phillips, Rocan and Dacquay that a deliberate misleading of the House involves intent to mislead and/or acknowledge that the statement would mislead.

Further, these Speakers have also ruled that when one member charges that another member had deliberately misled the House, the member making the charge must furnish proof of intent. Also, as ruled by Speaker Dacquay on April 20, 1999, short of a member acknowledging to the House that he or she deliberately and with intent set out to mislead, it

is virtually impossible to prove that a member has deliberately misled the House.

I have carefully read the Hansard transcripts for April 15 and can find no indication of an admission by the honourable Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) or the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer) of intent to mislead the House, nor was proof of the intent to mislead provided by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach).

I therefore rule that the point of order is out of order.

I have another ruling.

Following the daily Prayer on Monday, April 19, 2004, the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) rose on a matter of privilege concerning answers provided in the House by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) on the previous sitting day. At the conclusion of his remarks, the honourable Member for Steinbach moved that the Minister of Labour issue to this House and to the people of Manitoba an apology for putting forward incorrect information regarding the existence of and details on a proposed master labour agreement in relation to expansion of the floodway project, and that this matter be now referred to the Committee on Legislative Affairs and be reported to this House.

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh), the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) also offered advice to the Chair on this matter. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities.

\* (14:30)

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for a matter raised to be considered a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the matter raised at the earliest opportunity? Second, is there sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached to warrant putting the matter to the House?

Regarding the first condition, the honourable Member for Steinbach asserted that he raised the

issue at the earliest opportunity after having had a chance to peruse the Hansard from April 15. I do accept the word of the honourable member that he did raise the issue at the earliest opportunity.

Concerning the second condition of whether a prima facie case of privilege exists, there are a number of factors to consider. The crux of the argument by the honourable Member for Steinbach was that answers provided by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration appeared, according to the Member for Steinbach, to be at odds with comments from the CEO of the floodway and from a federal member of Parliament that appeared in a newspaper article.

In a comparable situation where a matter of privilege was raised in the Canadian House of Commons concerning whether a response given by the president of the Treasury Board was false in comparison with other available information, Speaker Milliken ruled on February 19, 2004, that it is not the Speaker's role to adjudicate on matters of fact as this is something on which the House itself can form an opinion during debate.

In addition, when Manitoba Speakers have been asked to rule on matters of privilege involving the alleged misstatements by members or the provision of misinformation or inaccurate facts by ministers, Speakers Phillips, Rocan and Dacquay have ruled that such situations appeared to be disputes over facts, which, according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 31(1), does not fulfil the criteria of a prima facie case of privilege.

It was also asserted that the information provided by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) impeded and prevented members from doing their jobs properly as members. As was noted for the House in a March 21, 1991, ruling by Speaker Rocan, *Beauchesne's* Citation 92 states, "A valid claim of privilege in respect to interference with a member must relate to the member's parliamentary duties and not to the work that the member does in relation to that member's constituency."

Joseph Maingot in his book *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* elaborates on this point. "There must be some act that improperly interferes with the member's rights, such as freedom of speech. The interference, however, must not only obstruct the



member in his/her capacity as a member, it must be shown that the member was obstructive in his/her work relating to a proceeding in Parliament and not simply while he/she was performing his/her representative duties in his or her constituency or in other myriad areas."

Though the honourable Member for Steinbach claimed that he was impeded and prevented from doing his job properly as a member, he did not explain how he was impeded, so it is difficult to ascertain whether the member's privileges were indeed breached. Just to be clear on this point, according to Marleau and Montpetit in *House of Commons Practice and Procedure*, the individual parliamentary privileges of members are freedom of speech, freedom from arrest in civil action, exemption from jury duty, exemption from appearing as a witness, and freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation and molestation. On the basis of the information provided, the complaint does not appear to fall in any of the enumerated categories of privilege.

I therefore rule that the matter raised does not satisfy the prima facie conditions of a matter of privilege.

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, I must challenge your ruling.

#### Voice Vote

**Mr. Speaker:** The ruling of the Chair has been challenged. All those in support of sustaining the ruling, say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Speaker:** All those opposed to sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Speaker:** In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

The ruling of the Chair has been sustained. Now we will move on to members' statements.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### St. James Community Volunteers

**Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James):** I am honoured to rise today during Volunteer Month to

recognize the extraordinary volunteers who make our community centres in St. James so vibrant and successful. We know that all community centres depend on volunteers, but this past bitter winter following untimely summer downpours, I have noticed extraordinary dedication. I am speaking specifically about the Sturgeon Creek, Deer Lodge, Bord-Aire and Silver Heights Community Centres. Volunteers who work at these centres every day provide services and programs to citizens in the St. James area. They have persevered through the severe summer and winter weather, through rain and snow. Their resilience is admirable.

The Bourkevale Community Centre does not participate in the same kinds of outdoor programs although they do offer important mental health and well-being social programs. Popularity of the centres becomes obvious when one considers the wide range of health and wellness programs offered.

For instance, the Deer Lodge Community Centre was open all throughout the winter holidays for youth. They organized five hockey teams and a basketball team. Another example is Silver Heights Community Centre where there were seven hockey teams this winter. Their winter carnival faced some challenges with the extreme cold, but there were 16 teams which competed in it. Of course, Sturgeon Creek Community Centre also had to reschedule its entire winter carnival because of severe cold. Pancake breakfasts and silent auctions are a part of the fundraising during these tournaments, and they require a lot of work and organization. I, for one, was only too happy to share in the fun and enjoyed a few pancake breakfasts myself.

Thanks to these parents and volunteers for countless hours of work in encouraging children, youth and adults in our community to participate in active living pursuits. They obviously know the importance of healthy living and community engagement.

Mr. Speaker, I heartily congratulate the many selfless volunteers who work at St. James community centres. They put together wonderfully valuable programs. Without their work and dedication, our community would not be what it is today.

**Arthur MacKinnon**

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today and

speak of a young lad, Arthur MacKinnon, who has just completed his first stage appearance at the Manitoba Theatre Centre where he played Ronnie Winslow, the Winslow boy, in a play based on a true story.

In 1908, a 13-year-old George Archer-Shee was accused of stealing a five-shilling postal note from a locker of a fellow cadet at the Osbourne Naval College, forging it and cashing it. Despite the young boy's claims of innocence, he was expelled from the college. His father believed his son was innocent and tried to have his name cleared and have him reinstated but to no avail. He could not file suit against the college because it was part of the King's domain and therefore immune from such actions.

The elder Archer-Shee hired the renowned Edward Carson, who had prosecuted Oscar Wilde, and although one of the highest paid barristers of the time, he took the case for a nominal fee. He made use of an ancient device, "The Petition of Right" which allowed a citizen to sue the government. King Edward VII received the petition and signed it saying, "Let right be done," allowing the prosecution to proceed. In 1909, the case went to the House of Commons where young George was debated with great emotion and passion.

Arthur MacKinnon, the 13-year-old who shared the part of Ronnie Winslow with Max Crispo, gave a stellar performance, as did the entire cast. I thought it fitting that this young lad himself be mentioned in the House, as was his character almost 100 years ago.

This MTC production and the actors and actresses who performed so well remind us that people will passionately fight for what is right regardless of personal costs, whether they be physical, emotional or financial. We as legislators should also live by the creed, "Let right be done."

### Guru Granth Sahib Scriptures

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** I am honoured to highlight the upcoming 400th anniversary of the compilation of the supreme scripture of the Sikh religion.

\* (14:40)

The Guru Granth Sahib is an ocean of spiritual and human values. It is the divine revelation of the Sikh Gurus and contains the messages of saints of other faiths and castes reaffirming the fundamental unity of all religions.

This year is the 400th anniversary of the first installation of the Guru Granth Sahib at the Darbar Sahib, commonly known as the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India.

The Sikh community is one of Manitoba's vibrant pioneering communities. It contributes significantly to the social, economic and cultural development and well-being of our province.

This spring, a chartered aircraft arrived in Canada with 150 holy books, known as "birs" of the Guru Granth Sahib. Each of these birs was moved from a "gurudwara," a Sikh temple, in a ceremonial procession with religious customs being duly followed. This is the first time they have been transported to another country.

The demand of these holy books from Sikhs is growing as the 400th anniversary approaches. It is an honour for the Canadian Sikh community that Canada is their first stop. I was happy to learn today that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) will be proclaiming September 1 as a day to honour the 400th anniversary of the compilation of the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib.

### Southwood Elementary School Celebrations

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to put a few words on the record about a delightful morning I spent at the Southwood Elementary School on April 22. I, along with my colleague, the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) and Mr. Domino Wilkins, the Garden Valley School Division superintendent, had the privilege of attending the school's assembly in celebration of Earth Day, Music Month and volunteerism.

The kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 6, Grades 7 and 8 bands all performed a variety of musical numbers for the audience. I heard pieces such as "Lean On Me," "Queenwood Overture," "Latin Fire," "Pick It Up," "The Crocodile's Toothache," an original recorder composition, "The Alphabet Song," "I Can Sing a Rainbow" and "Five Little Ducks."

It was wonderful for me to watch and hear the school children perform their selections after many hours of practice. As a former band director in Western and Garden Valley School Divisions, I can honestly say that Southwood truly has a talented group of young people, and just incidentally, my three grandsons attend this school.

I am proud to say that Southwood School is located in my constituency in the Village of Schanzenfeld, five kilometres south of Winkler. Currently, the school is bursting at the seams and the enrolment at the Southwood School continues to climb. Close to 600 students in Garden Valley School Division are presently in huts.

It was an opportunity for me to showcase the community and the accomplishments of the school. Currently, there are seven huts on that school's grounds and we are needing more space, and as of today, the Minister of Education has said that it has been postponed for another six months.

So it was an opportunity for me to indicate to the Minister of Education the need that we have out there regarding housing and accommodation for our students. Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Southwood School for organizing such a lovely ceremony and for the opportunity to attend.

### May Day

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Mr. Speaker, May 1 celebrates the solidarity of the international labour movement. May Day was first celebrated in Winnipeg in 1920, one year after the General Strike. The commemoration of May Day as a working class holiday finds its origins in the struggle for the eight-hour workday in 1886.

On May 1 of that year, national strikes in Canada and the United States were called by the Knights of Labour to advance the cause. The following day, an explosion in Chicago's Haymarket Square which killed several city policemen culminated in the unjust arrest, trial and execution of eight anarchists who later became known as the Haymarket martyrs. Three years later in Paris, the International Working Men's Association declared May 1 an international working class holiday to remember their sacrifice.

May Day was first marked in Winnipeg on May 1, 1920 to protest the imprisonment of the 1919 General Strike leaders and the oppressive social, economic and political conditions of the day. Mr. Speaker, 10 000 Winnipeg workers walked in a march through the streets of the city.

May Day parades were held in Winnipeg throughout the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, attracting thousands of workers every year to march, speak and peacefully advocate social change and the creation of a better world. With the revival of this tradition in the 1980s, Mayworks has evolved as a month-long festival of events intended to honour and promote the many contributions that working people and their unions have made to progressive social change in our province.

There are many events taking place as part of the 2004 Mayworks Festival. I would encourage all of my colleagues here in the House to attend as many as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the organizers of the Mayworks Festival for their commitment in celebrating the many positive contributions of unions and working people. Let us remember their lives and struggles on this 85th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike.

### MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to seek leave of the House to set aside the regular business of this Chamber and to deal with the matter that is of significant urgent public importance. There are two conditions to be satisfied for this matter to proceed.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I was advised that I should move the motion first.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, I move, seconded by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) that, under Rule 36(1), the regular business of the House be set aside to deal with a matter of urgent public importance, that being the issue of the hardship being faced by the agricultural industry and the rural communities and families as a result of the BSE crisis and the continued closure of the U.S. border to live cattle.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable Member for Emerson, I believe I should remind all members that, under Rule 36(2), the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other parties in the House are allowed not more than five minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately. As stated in *Beauchesne* Citation 390, "urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer."

**Mr. Penner:** I think it is important to note that the closure issue of the U.S. border to bone and beef and hamburger is of a very recent nature and all of us recognize that this issue arose yesterday. The other matter is, of course, that the U.S. border, to live cattle, has been and does remain closed and this is creating very significant hardships and financial downturns in the economy of the province of Manitoba. We have seen over the last year a drop of 40 percent of the net income which I understand, according to the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, is the lowest in history in the province of Manitoba. It is the first time in the history, Mr. Speaker, that the net income of farmers in general is below the positive line and that is historic in matter.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that those two issues clearly demonstrate the need to bring this matter to the legislative chambers and debate what could be done for the agricultural community in this time of crisis. I would suspect that the government members of the Chamber will support the matter of having a debate and sharing comments and ideas as to how we could mitigate the economic crisis that is pending in the province of Manitoba.

\* (14:50)

We know that farm families need some sort of income mechanism. They need some sort of income, and when farmers and their farm families have to go to the bank and borrow money to live on I think it is clearly a demonstration of what the needs are in this province. I believe that has been indicated clearly by the amount of money that the Government has currently forwarded under the BSE crisis programming through the MACC program. They have, I am told,

extended some \$60 million to farm families, and again, I believe that that is a matter and recognition of the difficulties that farm families are facing. Clearly, they have borrowed much of that money to be able to just live on to pay for the education of their families, to pay for the food on the table, and indeed to pay their hydro bills and their telephone bills.

It is a matter I believe that is of most urgent importance, that we recognize that difficulty, and that we deal with those matters, and debate those matters personally and publicly in this Chamber. It is the only time, Mr. Speaker, that our rules allow this matter to be brought before this House, and the urgency of this cannot be overstated because there are many farm families that have run out of the ability to borrow money and to continue existing or keeping their families in existence on their farms.

So I would ask, Mr. Speaker, the indulgence of the government members of this Legislature that we let this matter be debated before the Assembly today to bring the urgency of this nature home to the people of Manitoba and demonstrate clearly to them the consciousness we have and that we respect the need for the assistance to the farm community. Thank you.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I think the point that has to be made in response is that the matter raised is certainly one of importance, and it is of public importance. Indeed, this Government has recognized the challenges facing the agricultural economy and therefore all of Manitoba as one of a paramount concern. But that is not the issue under the rules.

The question is whether the importance merits putting aside the other business of the House and whether there are other opportunities available to discuss the issue raised.

Mr. Speaker, the ordinary opportunities for debate in this House have allowed and will continue to allow for this matter to be raised. First of all, we note that in Oral Questions there actually have been very few questions raised about the agricultural economy and the challenges being faced. Second, we have just come through the budget debate. It was concluded yesterday, and the members of this House have had full opportunity to talk about those important challenges. Some did and some did not.

Mr. Speaker, that is a free and wide-ranging debate that has allowed full discussion on issues. Now, what was most important is today we are scheduled to embark, and the Opposition knows this, of course, on Agriculture Estimates and the Estimates of Executive Council.

Not only is there every opportunity for a debate even today, even within a few minutes, but the Budget debate has allowed for full opportunity. Well, I think I will just leave it at that. I just wanted to speak to the threshold that is set out in the rules. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), I would just like to remind the House that, under our rules, 36(2), a member making motion or subrule 1 may explain arguments in favour of the member's motion but not more than five minutes.

One member from each of the other parties in the House may state the position. We had already heard from the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

If you listen very, very carefully to our rule, which is 36(2), and I ask members to listen very carefully, a member making a motion under subrule 1 may explain arguments in favour of the member's position in not more than five minutes, and one member from each of the other parties in the House, the other parties. *[interjection]* I believe you are from the same party; I believe that.

So our rule states one from other parties in the House may state the position of the party in respect to the motion for five minutes. First of all, the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), if he is rising to—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Can I have order, please? If the honourable Member for Inkster is rising to speak for the five minutes to this motion, the honourable member in this House is an independent member and is not a member of a party. So, if the member wishes to speak, the honourable member would have to seek leave of the House in order to address this issue.

So the honourable Member for Inkster, are you rising to ask for leave?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay. Does the honourable Member for Inkster have leave to address this motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes? No? Okay, I heard a no. So I would like to now, if I could have everyone's attention again. If I could please have everyone's attention.

I thank honourable members for their advice to the Chair on whether the motion proposed by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) should be debated today. The notice required by Rule 36(1) was provided. Under our rules and practices the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter.

Although the honourable Member for Emerson has already used his grievance, I would suggest that there are other opportunities where this issue could be raised. I would note from the Estimates sequence that was tabled in the House on April 27 that the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives are first on the list in the sequence of consideration in committee room 254. The issue could be raised there.

In addition, questions could be addressed during Question Period. There is also the option of having this topic presented as a subject of an Opposition Day motion.

Respecting the second aspect, will the public interest suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. Although this undoubtedly is a serious issue that the member has brought forward, I do not believe the public interest will be harmed if the business of the House is not set aside to debate the motion today.

Therefore, I must rule that this matter does not meet the criteria set by our rules and precedents and I rule the motion out of order as a matter of urgent public import.

\* (15:00)

### Point of Order

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader):** Well, Mr. Speaker, will you allow me to stand on a point of order?

**Mr. Speaker:** Well, is the honourable member standing on a point of order pertaining to the rules and procedures of the House, that is every member's right, and you know on points of order we do not allow debate of any issue. But, if it is to point out the breach of a rule or the practices of the House, that is every member's responsibility and, hopefully, they would not hesitate to rise on a point of order. But, if there starts to be debate on a point of order, then I must intervene.

The honourable Member for Russell, on a point of order.

**Mr. Derkach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I only rise to raise the issue of why this is of such urgent public importance. Again, I will defer to your judgment, Sir, if I am out of order in speaking to this, but I only want to address the issue of urgent public importance.

**Mr. Speaker:** I would have to kindly rule that it would be out of order, because it is not a departure of our practices or a breach of the rule that conducts us in the House.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Russell, on a point of order?

**Mr. Derkach:** No, Mr. Speaker, I simply am rising to once again, regrettably, challenge the ruling of the Chair.

**Mr. Speaker:** I just want to be very, very, very clear on this. The honourable member had stood up on, to me it was a point of order. I had given you the information of what a point of order was, and that is a departure of the practice of the House or a breach of a rule. You asked me if you departed from that if you would be out of order. So I have to ask for

clarification if when you said you challenged my ruling you are challenging the ruling on a point of order or are you challenging the ruling I made on the MUPI.

**An Honourable Member:** Both.

**Mr. Speaker:** It cannot be both. We can only deal with one at a time.

**Mr. Derkach:** To provide some clarity, Mr. Speaker, what I was doing in the challenge was challenging the ruling of the Chair regarding the matter of urgent public importance.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, and in our rules, our Manitoba rules, our rules are very clear that the ruling of a Chair dealing with a MUPI cannot be challenged. *[interjection]* That is fine?

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

Now we will move on and we will revert back to continue Orders of the Day.

\* (15:00)

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Could you please call Committee of Supply, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** In accordance with Rule 23(5), the House will now resolve into the Committee of Supply.

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Concurrent Sections)

### AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL INITIATIVES

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairperson:** You have the floor, Minister.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Thank you. As Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, I am very pleased to present my department's Estimates for the year 2004-05. Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives takes great pride in serving farm families, rural communities and the agriculture industry as a whole.

The agriculture agri-food sector is an important pillar in Manitoba's economy in terms of small business and community development, and my department is fortunate to have knowledgeable, qualified staff who are committed to the well-being of our farm families and dedicated to advancing the economic health of the industry.

There have been a number of changes in the department over the past six months, including a new name. Making rural initiatives a part of the department's responsibilities highlights the value we place on rural communities in the province and their importance to the agriculture and food industries' successes. We believe that by bringing agricultural and economic development more closely together, this helps us better co-ordinate and develop the industry.

Another change, as well as changing the name of the department, is a new deputy minister, Mr. Barry Todd, whose experience in agriculture will be and is a great benefit to the department. This is indeed an exciting time for my department as we move forward to renew our goals and commitments to the betterment of the industry.

Agriculture is much in the news lately, and some of the news is not good. Certainly, the last year has been a challenging year for people in the industry. BSE, avian flu, low grain prices, a high Canadian dollar affecting our exports, changes to the PMU industry and our potato industry have all given us cause for concern. However, I am pleased to say that there have also been some very good success stories in agriculture this year, particularly in the area of soybeans, in honey and in exports, just to name a few.

I would like to comment on a few areas within the '04-05 Estimates for Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. Our new budget reflects our Government's continuing efforts to support the priorities of rural residents and rural communities.

Responsibilities for rural communities and development activities were added to the department in November of 2003. The department has an organizational review underway to ensure that our programs focus on the priority needs of our clients. We have called this new review Growing Opportunities to reflect the opportunities and challenges in serving our clients. I expect the review process will increase the effectiveness and the responsiveness of the priority programs and services that we deliver to farmers and to rural communities.

Our total budget in 2004-05 is approximately \$146 million. Overall, there is a slight increase of \$104,200 in this Budget over what we saw in the vote of '03-04. There will be a net reduction of 17 positions through attrition. Within the budget amount of \$145.7 million, we have allocated \$78.4 million for safety nets to aid our farm population. This \$78.4 million is equivalent to 55 percent of our overall requested budget.

Manitoba signed the Agricultural Policy Framework Canada-Manitoba Implementation Agreement with the Government of Canada in Winnipeg on September 19, 2003. The agreement sets out detailed terms and conditions for identifying programs to be delivered, funding commitments, expected results, delivery mechanisms and reporting requirements over the five-year period beginning in the fiscal year 2003-04. This agreement goes beyond the safety net program to working together to further strengthen food safety, food quality systems, advances in science and technology, renewal and the environment. The safety net program under the Agricultural Policy Framework agreement is the Canada Agriculture Income Stabilization program, which is CAIS, and production insurance. CAIS represents the old NISA and CFIP programs that were budgeted for last year and provides an additional \$7.2 million in funding.

The Province's Crop Insurance Corporation production insurance premiums are expected to decline by \$7.9 million based on new programs, program variabilities and program changes. These include an increase in insured acres, changes to coverage levels, crop yields and premium rates, decrease in dollar value of crops and a change in the cost-sharing formula.

I am pleased to announce a new Livestock Industry Development Assistance program that will

give producers and processors targeted financial and operational support to foster the sustainable expansion of all parts of the livestock industry. This program will help, in partnership with the agriculture and agri-food industry, to develop new markets and clients for livestock and meat products.

Our 2004-05 Budget provides for an enhanced infectious disease surveillance service through our Veterinary Services Branch. As has been dramatically demonstrated with the BSE outbreak, an outbreak of a foreign animal disease can quickly close international borders to trade in livestock and livestock products.

Manitoba is a heavily export-dependent province. We are very vulnerable to border closures. The resulting financial impact on primary and secondary producers is very significant. We have all seen the impacts of that.

Disease prevention and mitigation is a key component to the animal health system in Manitoba. This system requires both a surveillance program and laboratory infrastructure. Three diseases in particular require increased surveillance and monitoring: West Nile virus, chronic wasting disease and BSE.

An unused portion of the current Veterinary Services Branch building will be upgraded to bio-security Level 2 status. There is an additional investment of \$745,000 in 2004-05 for this project. This includes capital costs of \$442,000 to renovate the existing laboratory space, of which \$350,000 is included in the Government Services budget request of '04-05.

Our Budget also provides for three new positions and additional laboratory equipment. Manitoba will then be able to conduct testing for these diseases in-house instead of sending samples to Saskatoon or to the federal government. This will result in fewer delays and reduce shipping costs and ensure that Manitoba's samples are tested as a priority.

To ensure the safety of our elk game products, the department has proposed amendments to the elk game production regulation under The Livestock Diversification Act.

Under these amendments, the Government will pay for all required testing for chronic wasting disease and spot-check and monitor an estimated 500

animals per year. This will be significant support for the elk industry, which is struggling as many other of the livestock sectors are struggling.

The lower budget amount for the Agricultural Credit Corporation reflects a decrease in the net interest cost as well as lower administration costs. While the interest costs of the BSE recovery program are expected to be another \$360,000, there will be savings in other areas.

There are adjustments to the Young Farmer Rebate program given to the level of demands. When the program was set up there was a higher amount set in there. We have adjusted the program to what the demand is at this time.

The costs of the management training credit have also been adjusted downward. The one-time adjustment in the Budget for irrigation development reflects past producer demand for irrigation and more funding available due to federal partnering under the Agricultural Policy Framework and the National Water Supply Enhancement Program. This department is working actively with producers to increase demand.

The budget allocation for rural initiatives has decreased by \$1.2 million due in part to the lower VLT revenues available to fund Rural Economic Diversification Initiatives. REDI funds are used to invest in the rural economy to support economic development and diversification. An example of this is the new roof for the Keystone Centre and infrastructure assistance to many rural communities.

In 2004-05, \$300,000 has been allocated to community enterprise development through the Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit program. This program was previously announced in the 2003 Budget. The tax credit will provide community based enterprise development projects with an incentive to raise necessary local equity capital to bring about investment, jobs and economic development in their communities.

Tax credits will be provided for both the direct investment in a specific community enterprise and a pool fund called the community development investment fund.

\* (15:20)



This concludes the few comments that I want to put on the record in my introduction of these Estimates. I selected just a few areas that I want to highlight within our Government's programs. There are numerous programs and services that we deliver that support the agriculture and agrifood sector and the Rural Economic Development division in Manitoba.

I look forward to having a discussion with members of the Opposition on the various sectors. This is a very important sector. We had a debate this morning on awareness in agriculture. Many of us had an opportunity to put on the record the value of this industry. Certainly, there are challenges. I look forward to continuing working with the industry and providing them the supports that they need.

The one point that I want to make before I conclude my comments is the fact that we all know that it has been a very challenging year. I want to commend the staff in each of the divisions of this department for the work they have done. As we have gone through the BSE crisis, it has been hard on us as government, but it has also been very hard on staff. It has been very hard when we realize we have to address issues. With a major crisis like this, you have to work very quickly. Governments are trying to do a job, put forward programs. We cannot do it without staff.

Before I conclude my comments, I want to recognize people throughout the department who have worked very hard over the last year. I hope that we get through this challenge and then can continue to work on the new agenda that we have for the department. I hope that people will have a little bit more relaxing time in the upcoming year.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments. Does the Official Opposition critic, the honourable Member for Emerson, have any opening comments?

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The floor is yours.

**Mr. Penner:** I am rather interested in the comments that the minister made and, secondly, far more interested in the lack of comment on the agricultural industry, as a whole, in the speech the Finance

Minister made to the House when he presented his Budget. I have never in the history of this province seen a government ignore the main engine that drives much of the economy of this province in one form or another being ignored the way this Government has ignored agriculture. I cannot understand how this minister could sit idly by when the Throne Speech was delivered and no more than once was agriculture mentioned even in a passing way.

The main criticism that was levelled at the agricultural community was for the disastrous results that it had demonstrated because of the BSE crisis, blaming farmers for the budgetary deficits that were created by this Government. I have never seen a Minister of Finance stand before the general public in this Chamber of this House and condemn a part of society and single them out as the main reason for the budgetary deficits clearly created by the Finance Minister, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the rest of his Cabinet. So I would suggest that, No. 1, the minister, the Premier and Cabinet owe the farming community of this province an apology.

Before I go there, I want to say to the minister that I believe it is time that she actually consult and take recommendations from the numerous farm organizations that she has continually met with. I give her credit for one thing. She has met with the farm organizations, but very little of their advice has been incorporated into the policies that I see have been enunciated by this Government, except the issue of announcing and putting out press releases that far, far overstated the support that she and her Government have given the agriculture community during the BSE crisis.

I can list the programs that have been announced by the minister, and I can also tell her how much she paid out. The Canada-Manitoba BSE Recovery Program was a cost-shared program between the federal and provincial government, the Manitoba Feeder Assistance Program, which the Premier made a great, great to-do about going to special warrant of \$17 million to underwrite this program when, in fact, that program barely paid out \$2 million through the program. The total amount paid out under that program, according to your department and your office, Madam Minister, was \$6.2 million out of the \$15 million announced. It went on and on and on and at the end of the day they were advertised, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars advertising that there was \$180 million paid out to the farmers of

Manitoba when in fact the actual amount was probably closer to between \$30 million and \$35 million-plus, driving the farmers about \$60 million into debt through MACC.

I want to say this to you, Madam Minister, that you have portrayed the support through the loans programs as a similar program as a cash advance. You did that in a speech to Brandon. How unfortunate that this Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) does not even know the difference between a cash advance and an interest-bearing loan. I find it inconceivable that a Minister of Agriculture would appear before a large gathering such as happened in Brandon at the forum, especially in front of young people, and blatantly lie to the general public in this province, indicating clearly a cash advance and an interest-bearing loan were similar or the same. I think the minister owes the people of Manitoba an apology.

Not only does she owe the people of Manitoba an apology for that, I think she also owes the people of Manitoba an apology for the huge advertising campaign, the costs they ran overstating the support by hundreds of millions of dollars because the actual support was just over \$30 million, not \$180 million. Those of you who are ministers of this Government should remind your Minister of Agriculture that it is unforgivable to be deceitful, as she has been, in trying to portray the support she has given to the farm community, especially to those people in the city of Winnipeg that do not know better.

They are convinced this Government paid out \$180 million when, in fact, you did not. I think it is deceitful and disgraceful that this Government portray themselves in that manner.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. I would just like to take a moment to caution all honourable members on their language here in the committee today. Let us not cross the line. While I recognize that at times discussion in committee can become heated, let us be careful and keep our remarks tempered and worthy of this Assembly. Thank you.

\*(15:30)

**Mr. Penner:** I just want to clearly indicate to this committee as well as the rest of the people in this province that never in the history of this province have I seen a greater attempt to try and deceive the

people of Manitoba into what has been portrayed as support for the agricultural community when that in fact did not happen.

I think this is, you know, one would not want to use the word "lying," but it comes as close to lying and it was deceitful to the worst degree of actions that she perpetrated in this province. I think this minister should at least stand in front of the Legislative Assembly and apologize to the members of this House.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We should all become silent. I will just take a moment again to caution all members on their language here in the committee. I recognize that at times discussions can get heated. Keep your remarks tempered. Do not cross the line.

**Mr. Penner:** Mr. Chairman, under the circumstances that we have seen over the last eight, nine months, under the circumstances that we have seen as late as yesterday and under the circumstances that the minister and their Government even refuse to allow us to debate this matter in the House, I think it is important to recognize the economic disaster that is currently prevalent in the Legislature.

I know there are many people in this House or in this province that would use language far worse to describe the economic situation than what I have used. I think it behooves this minister to apologize to the people of Manitoba.

In light of the recent announcement of the U.S. border closure to stem again the export of ruminant products into the United States with bone in and hamburger and those kind of issues, I think in light of that and the minister's refusal to allow for an all-party debate on this matter, even though there was a signal given by the Government that a debate of this nature would be welcome, I would move, seconded by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), that this minister be admonished for her lack of understanding of the crisis being forced on our livestock producers and the rest of agriculture and that she specifically apologize to the farmers of Manitoba now.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Could we have that motion in writing?

Order, please. The motion moved by the Member for Emerson is that the minister be admonished for her lack of understanding of the

crisis being forced by our livestock producers and that she publicly apologize to the farmers of Manitoba. The motion is in order. The floor is open for debate.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I listened to the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) make his comments and talk about the lack of understanding on this Government, and I have to tell him he is wrong. We as a government have taken this issue very, very seriously. When the first case of BSE broke out in Alberta we were in an election. Right after that election I was at the western premiers' meeting with the Premier (Mr. Doer), where we met with the Cattle Producers to talk about what they felt the first programs should be.

That first program that was put in place was the BSE recovery loan. The total program was supposed to be \$18 million. It was to assist the animals getting to slaughter. We raised the issue of how difficult it would be to get animals to slaughter, because we do not have enough slaughter capacity in this province. We supported the program on the advice of the Cattle Producers that the first animals that needed support were those that were on feedlots.

The member was critical of our programs when he was introducing his motion. I want to outline the programs we have put in place and why we put them in place. It was on the advice of the Manitoba Cattle Producers that we put in place the first BSE recovery loan and then took some of that money to put into the Manitoba Feeder Assistance Program.

### Point of Order

**Mr. Chairperson:** A point of order, the Member for Russell.

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, the motion that was put forward by the Member for Emerson requested that the minister immediately apologize to the farm producers in this province for not allowing a debate to be carried on in the House on this matter of urgent public importance.

The border was closed yesterday to some of the beef products that are going across the line. The Opposition, Her Majesty's Royal Opposition, asked that we have a debate regarding the impact this is going to have on producers. That debate was not allowed to go on by the Government.

We feel very strongly about this. In light of that refusal my colleague the critic for Agriculture has moved a motion to not only admonish the Minister of Agriculture but to ask her to immediately, not tomorrow, not an hour from now, but immediately apologize to farmers and rural Manitobans for this kind of lack of understanding and this heartless action that was taken by the Government.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Now, the Member for Burrows, on the point of order?

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay, excuse me. These points of order are turning into debates. Let us make them quick and to the point.

**Mr. Martindale:** I will be very succinct, Mr. Chairperson. I believe it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts. The member did not refer to any point of order in the Manitoba rule book. The only point that he was trying to make had to do with a ruling of the Speaker in the Chamber, and the Speaker was only following the rules of the Manitoba Legislature.

In fact, if this member really wanted to debate BSE, he would be asking questions or making speeches about it in Estimates, and not personally attacking the minister.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Next, I will recognize the Minister for Advanced Education.

On the point of order, let us not turn it into a debate. Okay, comments.

\*(15:40)

**Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** On the same point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I just wanted to make the same point that the Member for Burrows has already made. So I think that you can have another speaker.

**Mr. Chairperson:** On the same point of order, the Member for Emerson.

**Mr. Penner:** Mr. Chairperson, I think it is clear that the motion addressed the resolution that is before the committee and the motion that is before the

committee, and the motion is very clear. The motion asks for the immediate apology of the minister on not allowing the debate to take place on an urgent matter in the House because of the closure of the U.S. border to some of the ruminant products in the U.S. yesterday.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Chairperson, that you rule that the minister should be required to meet the request of the motion and therefore that you demand that the minister offer an apology to this House and to the people of Manitoba.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Same point of order, the Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services):** Mr. Chairperson, I just want to say that there is no point of order.

I know it has been mentioned on numerous occasions, but when the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives began to speak and started to talk about everything that she has done, not only personally but her department, and the hardworking individuals in the department, trying to address the challenges of BSE and others, she was continually being interrupted and was trying to make a case and trying to show why. She was dealing with the admonishment, as the member from Emerson stated, yet she was trying to show why, in dealing with that motion, she should not be admonished in any way, in fact, should be praised for what she has been doing in working with agriculture.

I will try to be quick. Certainly, building rural Manitoba and reducing farmland education taxes, building rural infrastructure and committing to the Agricultural Policy Framework are her top priorities, as well as our Government's. She has been doing a lot of these, Mr. Chairperson, not only personally, but her department and others in the Government have been working very hard.

I would just second and follow what the member—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Just finish off.

**Mr. Lemieux:** I would just say that the Member for Emerson does not have a point of order on this at all. The Minister of Agriculture was addressing the

current motion and was attempting to and they kept interrupting her. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I thank everyone for their contribution, but please do not use points of order for debate.

I just want to caution all members to make relevant comments to the motion which reads that the minister be admonished for her lack of understanding of the crisis being faced by our livestock producers and that she publicly apologize to the farmers of Manitoba.

I do not believe there was a point of order, but I just want to have all members make relevant comments to the motion before us.

There was no point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Penner:** Mr. Chairperson, I challenge the ruling of the Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Could I have your attention, please. The honourable Member for Emerson wishes to challenge the ruling of the Chair.

#### Voice Vote

**Mr. Chairperson:** Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained? All those in favour of sustaining that ruling, please say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those opposed to sustaining the ruling of the Chair, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Chairperson:** In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

The ruling of the Chair is sustained.

**An Honourable Member:** Yeas and Nays.

**Mr. Chairperson:** A formal vote on this matter has been requested by two members. This section of the

committee will now recess to allow members to proceed to the Chamber for a formal vote.

*The committee recessed at 3:53 p.m.*

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*The committee resumed at 4:34 p.m.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. We are currently considering the motion moved by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

Is the committee ready for the question, or do members have further comments on the motion?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** On the motion, the member indicated that there was a lack of understanding on the part of this Government and on the part of myself with regard to the crisis. I do not accept that comment, quite frankly. Our Government has worked very hard. Our Government has worked with the industry and lobbied very hard to get the border open. We worked with the federal government. We have worked with farm organizations. We have put in place programs. We have flowed cash to producers to help get them through this difficulty.

Certainly, I am surprised that the member would look for a motion today to have an emergency debate. We have just come through the budget debate, and, quite frankly, I was quite disappointed with the Opposition that they really did not raise agriculture issues. In the whole time of our budget debate, there was a time to raise questions about BSE and a time to raise questions about the expenditure. There were a couple of times when the issue was raised, but the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) did not even ask an agriculture question.

Today, on a day when they wanted to do an emergency debate, they did not make agriculture the issue of the day. With respect to our Government not understanding the issue and with respect to my department not understanding the issue, I would have to tell the member that he is wrong. I can tell you that I have been out in rural Manitoba, in all parts of the province where people are facing very difficult challenges, but they certainly appreciate the work that we have done and the programs that have been put in place. Is it enough? Well, it is never enough.

I was at a meeting in Ashern yesterday with the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) and the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell). I want to recognize the Member for Interlake for the work he has done and information he has provided during the time that we were in that whole drought situation. It was the Member for Interlake that encouraged us to put in a freight assistance program to help with the transportation of hay. When I was in the Interlake last night, people showed their appreciation and said how that program had worked for them and helped them with the movement of feed to keep their stocks going.

There is no doubt that there are still challenges out there. There is no doubt that we will still have to do a lot of work. I hope that the decision to open the border is made soon. I hope the decision is based on science, and I wish our Prime Minister well as he goes to Washington tomorrow to raise this issue with President Bush. I am counting on Ann Veneman living up to her word when she said that decisions would be based on science, and after the comment period, there would be a short review. There is no doubt that there are groups of people, particularly R-CALF, that do not want to see the border open, but I can tell you that there are many groups that we met with when we were in Washington and in Boise who indicated that they want the border open. There are processing facilities that are suffering because they depend on Canadian cattle.

I also know that when the border opens, and even before the border opens, we have to continue to work on getting some slaughter capacity in this province, and certainly the people involved with Rancher's Choice are key to this. Again, staff from my department and the staff from Industry, Trade and Mines are working very hard on this. I would just say that the member is not listening to rural Manitobans when he put his motion on the floor, and I am speaking against this motion.

**Mr. Penner:** Mr. Chairperson, I guess the normal rules would prevail that the mover of the motion close the debate. Is that correct?

**Mr. Chairperson:** I think the Member for Emerson is referring to House rules, but you can speak to this as many times as you want.

**Mr. Penner:** Thank you for the clarification.

I just want to say to the committee and the rest of the people in the province of Manitoba that the reason we did not raise the issue in Question Period until toward the end of the Question Period was because the 14th person had died in the hallways of this province when the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province promised during the election campaign almost five years ago that he would end hallway medicine, and that he would end people even having to lie in the hallways.

He said to the people of Manitoba, "Give us \$15 million and six months and we will have cured what ails this health care system." Yet, now, after 14 deaths, we thought the matter urgent enough, Mr. Chairperson, that we in fact did do the first six questions in Question Period today on the matter of health and the inordinate action—

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. I am having a difficult time hearing people speak. Please let the person speak that has the floor. If you wish to speak, you can speak back there or in the hallways.

**Mr. Penner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson. I think it is imperative that the people of Manitoba know that 14 people have died in the hallways of the hospitals in the province of Manitoba during the time that the NDP government has been in power, even after the people elected them on the promise that they would end hallway medicine.

I suppose they are trying to end hallway medicine, because they are letting the people die instead of curing them. I think that is unfortunate.

However, we did raise the matter in Question Period of the border closure that has happened just recently, as of this morning, I understand, on court action that the R-CALF organization in Billings, Montana took.

I believe that it is important to note—*[interjection]* Well, the minister is quipping on the left side of where I sit, and that is where she belongs too, on the left side of where I sit, but she is quipping that it was three days ago.

Yet, when we asked her, the minister, yesterday whether she knew anything about it, she did not know anything about it. She should have been one of

the first ones to know something about the border closure. Why did you lie to us then when we asked you that—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please.

First of all, I caution people at the language they use. Please use parliamentary language. We are crossing the line. Also, there is too much talking here. We just want to hear the person that has the floor talking, okay?

**Mr. Penner:** I apologize, Mr. Chair, for using the term "lying." I think that is not appropriate that I used that language, but I know that, if the minister had known, I think she would have shared that with us, and of course she did not share it with us. I find that also unfortunate. That has been the model that the minister has used instead of sharing the information that she is aware of.

I think it is unfortunate also that she tried to indicate to the people of Manitoba when the Premier of this province went to Washington the first time with an all-party committee, including an all-party committee, to try to convince the people in Washington that the border should be open.

Yet, when the all-party committee got there, they found in Washington that the Americans had a national holiday and there was nobody in Washington. They just walked from door to door and it was all closed. So I found that very interesting that the Premier (Mr. Doer) would not even know that there was a national holiday in Washington.

Secondly, I also found it very interesting that just a couple of weeks ago the Premier and a number of ministers went to Washington again on a Thursday, on the Thursday before Good Friday, trying to meet with people in Washington that would be decision makers and leave the impression that they in fact had met with substantive people when we all know that most people in Washington would leave early on Thursday to go home to their constituencies or to their states and be with their families for Good Friday and most of them would attend church on Good Friday morning. They would have to leave early in order to get home.

Yet this Premier and his ministers were not even aware, unless maybe, unless just maybe they thought that they could make an Easter holiday of this, and

maybe they did. I do not know. I only ask that question. But we can find out whether they stayed the week or the weekend or whatever, and we might do that.

However, I want to get back to the real issues that are before us. That is, of course, the recent closure of many of the products that we were hoping would be able to be exported to the United States. It was on a court action. I think it is unfortunate that the Premier of this province has initiated action through the U.S. federal court on taking the U.S. federal government to court on other matters. I suspect that part of the problem that we are incurring, especially in Manitoba now, and, I believe, even as Canadians, because whether we are Manitobans or not, we are seen in the United States and in Washington as Canadian. So, if there is federal court action mounted on one hand by the Canadian government, it does not surprise me at all that organizations such as R-CALF would want to challenge us in the courts.

Well, I think the Premier has taken the NAWS project to court in a federal court in Washington, and I would suspect that the Americans are seeing this as Canadians taking them on on a given issue, and we will play tit for tat. I would suspect that the Canadian government might, in fact, be seen as doing the right thing. We would certainly support the Manitoba government in their effort to try and stop Missouri water coming into Manitoba out of the Garrison project.

We have made this very clear. I have made this very clear on numerous occasions when I met with North Dakotans, when I met with the governor of North Dakota, that we were not supportive of a pipeline being built from the Garrison to Minot without the water being treated before it hit the pipe. I think there was an opportunity to negotiate that with North Dakota. As a matter of fact, some of the people that are influential over there told me this, that if Manitoba would have come to them with a proposition, they would have accepted that proposition.

Yet our Premier chose not to take the diplomatic route. He chose to take court action. I think we are now seeing the results of that, and, whether we are right or wrong, it is totally immaterial. What is evident is that we are receiving the results of that

because the R-CALF organization is now using the same process to stop us from exporting meat.

That is what you get when you set aside diplomacy and use the legal system and the court actions to drive home a point. I think the newness of the Government, of many of the ministers in that government, or of the backbenchers is evident by those kinds of actions, and I think it is being reflected in the kinds of results we get now in those kinds of things.

So be it. I would suggest that the questions that the minister asked as to why we had not raised, during the budget debate, the agricultural issue to a larger extent, we were debating the Budget, and there was one word called agriculture in that Budget, just one.

**An Honourable Member:** There was a whole book, Jack.

**Mr. Penner:** No, there was not a whole book. Look at the minister's speech. When the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) made his speech in the House, he mentioned agriculture once, and he mentioned the BSE crisis as being the reason why they were running a deficit, and blaming the farm community for running the deficit and the livestock producers in this province. How utterly irresponsible and how unfortunate that a government of Manitoba, especially the Finance Minister, would use a crisis to drive home the point that they had the right to run a deficit. I thought it was, to say the least, not done in a tasteful manner. Specifically, using less than three lines to describe the whole agricultural initiative in this province in the budget speech, demonstrated clearly how much of a relevance this Government paid to the importance of agriculture.

When you really look at how and what kind of a contribution the primary agriculture producers in this province make towards the economy, the kind of revenues that are generated because of the raw product production that happens, and all the processing, manufacturing, and all the jobs that are secondary right through the food chain to the grocery store, and even beyond the grocery store, they are huge, and the economic effect of that is huge.

\* (16:50)

Yet, when a crisis develops, those very farmers that are in the deepest trouble are being blamed for the deficit that this Government has run. If it had only been a one-time deficit that this Government had initiated, we might have let it go at that. We might have responded differently, but this is the fourth time that this Government has run a deficit, and they still refuse to admit it. They have had all kinds of excuses. I believe the health care system was one excuse that was used. It was all kinds of excuses that have been used, but to blame the agricultural community for that deficit, I think, is unfortunate. I think it is unfair to the farmers of Manitoba.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. I just want to ask the Member for Emerson. Are you speaking to the motion or your opening remarks?

**Mr. Penner:** I just want to say to you, Mr. Chairperson, that I think it is unfortunate that the government of the day would not recognize the importance of the debate that needed to take place in the House. I think I need to raise some of the issues that are relevant to that debate. I would suspect that the minister should have gone to her Premier and her House Leader and suggested very strongly that the debate should be allowed to take place. I think that would have given all of our members in our caucus, indeed, a chance to reflect on what the crisis was all about and how it was affecting those communities in rural Manitoba; how, indeed, it was reflected and affecting the city of Brandon, the city of Winnipeg and all the cities in this province and, obviously, affecting the revenues of this province dramatically because they had to run a deficit.

Mr. Chairman, that is why we chastised the minister today when we started this process, and that is why we moved the motion. So I suspect that it is clearly a reflection of the Government's lack of intent to fund and finance the agricultural crisis in a proper manner.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is the committee ready for the question, or do members have further comments on the motion?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The question, I will read the motion again.

The motion of Mr. Penner, that the minister be admonished for her lack of understanding of the crisis being faced by our livestock producers and that she publicly apologize to the farmers of Manitoba.

### Voice Vote

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Chairperson:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chairperson:** I will ask the Member for Emerson to conclude his opening comments.

**Mr. Penner:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. As I indicated before we broke for the vote, I believe that—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Excuse me. I just want to say that the motion was accordingly defeated. Thank you.

**Mr. Penner:** I would like to suggest to the committee that, in my remarks when I started my opening remarks on the budget, the Agriculture budget, that the 40% reduction in income in this province of Manitoba, I think, is reflective of the lack of understanding of the agricultural situation in the province, the lack of income in this province and the large drop in income and pricing in the province in the year 2003. I think government totally ignored what was going on all around them and forgot to recognize that the significant commodity price declines that were happening all around them had a very dramatic effect on the agricultural community and farmers in this province.

The one, and I will let the minister and the member for—

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

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please.



**Mr. Penner:** The interesting part is that the Government did not recognize the effect of the commodity price declines that were happening around them and I think other provinces did. When the federal government announced the changes to ag support and ag policy and put forward the proposition to put in place the Ag Policy Framework, I think there was clearly an indication by government that they would recognize what had to happen and the economic impact that would happen from the shift from the CFIP program, the AIDA program and the NISA program and what kind of difficulties farmers would incur through that transition. They put, I think, almost a billion dollars in place as a transition program dependent on 40% participation from the provinces. The Province of Manitoba made it quite clear that they would not contribute their 40 percent to that transition program.

Mr. Chairman, had the Province of Manitoba contributed its 40 percent to that transition program, the net income of farmers would have reflected the, roughly, it would be between \$45 million and \$50 million that would have accrued to the farmers of Manitoba through that program, if the Government of Manitoba had chosen to participate. That would have increased the net income fairly significantly in the province of Manitoba and would not have put farmers in a net minus-income situation which has never, I understand, happened in this province before. I think this is clearly an indication of how and why NDP governments have not understood how agriculture functions, nor how it operates, and that it must be allowed to be competitive with the international community.

I find it relatively interesting that the United States spends about \$90 billion a year in income support programs in one kind or another, and yet when we talked to our federal government about that kind of income support for our farmers, relative to the numbers of farmers we have compared to theirs, the federal government tells us they cannot afford to compete with the U.S. Treasury. When we talk to our NDP government about those kinds of things, they tell us they cannot afford to compete with the U.S. Treasury. Yet we have no difficulty subjecting our farmers on an individual basis to compete directly with that U.S. Treasury. That is the only way that they can be in that business. I think the income figures are a direct reflection of the huge U.S. subsidies that have gone on and the downward drive in prices that that has caused. Forcing our farmers to

have to sell their products at those depressed prices because of the U.S. subsidies and the European subsidies in the world market have driven our grain prices down, have driven our oilseed prices down, have driven our livestock prices down.

I believe the net income reflects very clearly on that. I think it is important that the people around this table and in our Chamber recognize that, because they are the decision-makers. They have been given the right to govern by the people of Manitoba and I respect that, but surely, when economic crises such as we have seen this last year develop, then government must step up to the plate in a more significant way than they have.

\* (17:00)

I opened with a statement and I want to go back there for a bit. I found it distasteful, quite frankly, that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and the Government of Manitoba would announce a whole raft of programs, and the farm community is courteous enough that they have actually complimented the Government from time to time on trying to bring forward initiatives that would help them. Some of them would tell you very clearly that they have been helped and that they have received benefits of this, but there are many, especially the cow-calf operators that have virtually received no benefit at all from government, and this is a cow-calf province. This is a cow-calf province.

When Canada and the provinces announced that first BSE Recovery Program, the total amount that should have accrued to the province of Manitoba was fairly significant. Yet the Province of Manitoba recognized early on that very little of that money under the terms of the agreement could flow to Manitoba producers and did. There was very little money flowed to the producers.

I think there was roughly about \$18 million according to the Department of Agriculture and the minister's office, who forwarded this out of a portion of 184 million that should have accrued to the program, if the Province, I believe, would have negotiated properly with the federal government. However, that did not happen and the amount announced of 460 million combining the federal and provincial contribution, 40 percent of that portion is a very, very significant amount of money that our producers did not get. Again, I think that was a

contributing factor to the net income decline that we saw last year.

The Manitoba Feeder Assistance Program: When the Premier made a big to-do about doing a \$17-million draw on the Treasury, was announced at \$15 million. He made it sound as if they were drawing 17, but only paid out 6.2 million because the criteria around this program did not allow the payouts to be any larger than that. Again, when the advertisements came out, it came out as a \$15 program and the actual delivery was 6.2, according to the minister's office.

The Manitoba Slaughter Deficiency Program: An amount that was announced at \$10 million, and this one came close to the amount that should have been paid out. This one came out at \$9.3 million, according to the minister's office. I asked, by the way, the Crop Insurance department whether they would release those figures to me and the first response was, "Yes, I think we can because we have all of them." Then I was told that you have to talk to another person. That person told me, "No, we cannot. It has to come through the minister's office."

I found it very interesting that a member of the Legislature could not go to a corporation owned by the Province, which is not directly responsible to the minister, and request information from that corporation without having to go through the minister's office. That is unusual because until now we have been able to go to MPIC and ask for information. We have been able to go to Workers Compensation for information. We have been able to go to Crop Insurance or MACC for information without any questions being asked. Why should they not give us the information?

But not on this program. This program, the staff was told, "No, you have to get that information from the minister." I think that sets sort of a bit of a precedent and I find that unusual.

The Manitoba Drought Assistance Program was a \$12-million program that was announced, and I believe the minister announced it knowing full well that she would not have to pay out the whole 12 million. In fact, they did not even pay out 4. They paid out \$3.9 million, according to the minister's office, not according to Crop Insurance, but according to the minister's office.

The Manitoba Cull Animal Program was a \$6-million program and it only paid out 4.7, again, according to the minister's numbers, not Manitoba Crop Insurance numbers.

The Manitoba BSE Recovery Program was a \$100-million program. What I found most interesting about this loans program, that farmers were not entrusted with the money that was extended to them through the loans program. It was required that the farmers submit the bills, and I think this is the first time in the history of this province where you are required to submit the bills and that the MACC office would pay the bills when receipts were submitted to MACC.

It reminded me of a story I heard when we visited Ukraine for the first time. We visited a collective farm and that manager, we spent the whole day with this manager. He showed us his whole farm. Then, that evening, his wife prepared supper for us, and he told us this story about how they operated. This was almost exactly reflective of how the USSR forced its farmers into a controlled position, and the minister made the decision on how the operations would run and how the bills would be paid, and how they could acquire goods.

This time around, farmers tell me they were issued a loan, and that they had to go out and buy hay, and that the farmers they were buying from were told, "I am sorry. I cannot pay you, but you have to give me a bill. I then will go to the minister's office or MACC and submit the bill, and they will then send you a cheque." They did not trust their farmers.

This minister did not trust her farmers with the money to allow them to write the cheque, very similar to the situation in the USSR and their collective farms. They were not allowed to go out and spend the money that they raised on their farm. They were not even allowed to get the money. Same as this program did, they were not allowed to get the money. They were allowed to make the order, and then they were allowed to submit the bills. The government paid the bills. The government told them exactly how much they would get to buy fertilizer, as we did here. We told the farmers here exactly how much they would get to buy hay. Boy, the comparison was so real. I said to many farmers who have told their story to me, "How reflective of a socialist government forcing farmers to come and

kowtow and bow to the minister." I think it was so unfortunate.

Then the minister included the Feeder Financing initiative, the Stocker Loan Program, the Made-in-Manitoba Beef Fund. She rolled that all into the spending, which, I think, is unfortunate. I think it is somewhat unfair and does not reflect fully the BSE program. But, in total, they paid out 96.2, if these numbers, in fact, are correct, because they came out of the minister's office. I am not sure that I could trust the minister's office. I would not trust them nearly as much as I would trust MACC and their staff.

\* (17:10)

**An Honourable Member:** Attack the servants. They cannot defend themselves, so you attack them.

**Mr. Penner:** No, I am not attacking. I am attacking the minister—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. We will all get our chance to speak when we have the floor. Let us allow the person who has the floor to speak.

**Mr. Penner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I say to this committee, and I say to the minister, that if you had trusted your department, you would have said, "Certainly, release the data," instead of having to funnel it through the minister, so reflective of what we heard in Ukraine and the USSR, so reflective of a similar—I trust the staff of the department. I trust the MACC people. I trust the Crop Insurance people. I deal with them every day. They are some of the finest people that we have in this province—total trust and total respect. However, the minister, obviously, did not trust her own staff in her own department, in the Crop Insurance Corporation, to allow them to release the numbers to us. I found that very interesting.

I want to reflect on the impact of the agricultural industry to the economy of the province of Manitoba. It is well known that the agricultural sector directly employs between 30 000 and 35 000 people, depending on what time of year it is. Have we ever done a study on how many people are indirectly employed in this economy, in this province, in a secondary and beyond in a tertiary manner because of the primary agriculture sector? I do not think we have ever really done that, and I think we should do that. I think we

would be surprised at how many people are actually dependent on that primary agricultural production. If we would recognize that in this province and truly appreciate that, I think government would look differently upon agriculture. I am not reflecting only on this Government; I think governments in the past, too, would have reflected differently on the agriculture community and the agricultural needs than we have in the past. Yet we have nickelled and dimed the Department of Agriculture to the point where they are forced to rationalize the programs that I believe should be first and foremost.

Our Soils and Crops department, I believe, has been nickelled and dimed to death. I think that is unfortunate because that is where the future lies. The research that needs to be done just to keep up with the pace of change that is happening, I think must happen, and governments of all stripes must recognize the importance of that.

I think the educational side of the department is sadly underfunded. I think the agriculture producers, the primary producers working together with the department needs to be encouraged to a much greater degree than they are now. I think many farm organizations would agree with me on that but, yet, we have not seen an effort made towards that.

I also find it interesting that this Government would now roll part of intergovernmental affairs into the Department of Agriculture. I am going to be listening very carefully to what is said, or what comes out of the meeting that the minister is going to hold with her staff in Brandon on the 30th. I suspect there are some surprises going to come out of that meeting. We are going to look forward to those surprises and how they affect the department but, more so, how those will affect the workings of the department and how they will affect the decision making in agriculture and the agriculture community. I would hope that the government of the day recognizes the importance of the department and its needs and the needs of the agricultural industry.

I understand that I have two more minutes to make my remarks. I want to say that I find it most unfortunate that the potato industry under the NDP administration is indicating the cutbacks that they are making. I found it, also, very unfortunate that the PMU industry made the decisions that they did when they made them. I think the Government of Manitoba should have played a much larger role in talking or

trying to convince the PMU industry to keep its processing in this province.

I also find it very interesting that the Government of Manitoba and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) have not paid a much greater degree of attention to the TB situation in Riding Mountain National Park and that she has not spoken much more strongly on the issue of trying to eradicate that disease in Riding Mountain National Park. Our livestock industry is far too vulnerable. I think the case in La Broquerie demonstrates that. When part of a herd was bought by a dairy farmer in La Broquerie and had an outbreak in tuberculosis because there was a case of tuberculosis, the herd had to be annihilated in La Broquerie. The animal came from Riding Mountain. I think that just demonstrates how vulnerable our whole industry is to the TB situation in Riding Mountain National Park.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order. I thank the member for his opening statement.

We will continue on. Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary should traditionally be the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of the line item 3.1.(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining referenced in Resolution 3.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce her staff in attendance.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairperson, I had a discussion with my critic about the order of Estimates, and we have had the tradition where we will deal with the corporations first. The first corporation is the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation. I am joined at the table by my Deputy Minister, Barry Todd; Neil Hamilton, of the Manitoba Crop Insurance; Marvin Richter, who is Director of Financial Administration; and Jim Lewis, Director of Finance from the Crop Insurance Corporation.

Before we get into discussion on the corporation, I would like to respond to a few comments that the member opposite made. I was just intrigued with his—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable Minister, I just want to know if there is agreement from the committee that we move to the corporations' continuing of Resolution 3.2: Risk Management and Income Support before we go ahead. Is there agreement that we start with—there is agreement. Thank you.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** As I was saying, there are a few issues that I would like to address before we get into the Crop Insurance Corporation. It was with interest that I listened to the member opposite compare the programs that we have here in Manitoba to programs that they have in Russia or the Soviet Union at the time.

**An Honourable Member:** The process, ministerial process.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Pardon me. He talked about the ministerial process and the fact that under our loan program, the BSE Recovery Program, we required bills provided before money would flow. I think the member opposite must have been in touch with the Soviet Union before they put their program in place because, under the Manitoba Producer Recovery Program under the previous administration, it was required that producers provide their bills before their money flows. I believe the same thing applied under the floodproofing loan assistance program. Before producers got their money, they had to provide receipts. I just wanted to clear the record. The member is implying that something is being done very differently under the programs here than it was done under their administration. The requirement under the loan program was the same.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I just want to remind people, let us keep our debate on the resolution. Our opening statement has been completed. So we would like to get on with the resolution.

\* (17:20)

**Mr. Penner:** I intend to do that. I want to remind the minister that there was a vast difference between flood compensation and damages incurred and payment of damages incurred than there is for buying supplies for your livestock to feed your livestock on your farm or supplies or for that matter loans to run your farm operation with than the two items that the minister indicated.

Certainly, if she does not recognize that difference, I will excuse that. That is, of course, up to her if she wants to make that comparison.

First of all, there is under the Risk Management and Income Support Programs an issue that I think we need to deal with. I want to make mention of it. That is that the Keystone Agriculture Producers has said that farm families can no longer afford to be used as a cash cow—that is their term—by the Government of Manitoba to support their spending habits.

They reflect directly on the huge increases in the taxation of farm properties that they have incurred over the last number of years. The education tax increases have been nothing but a very severe negative impact on the income of farmers.

Farmers are by far the largest individual contributors to the education tax process and pay a far larger portion of the education tax or contribute a far greater portion of the education cost to the Province of Manitoba in Manitoba. I believe that it is imperative that the education tax from farmland be removed entirely.

Any government that takes a realistic look at how government raises money for education purposes should have an understanding that that needs to be reviewed and removed. I believe that the special levy of farmland gives the school divisions in this province an opportunity to use the funding that they derive from property tax to change the levels of education that are offered to the pupils of this province.

I believe we are probably far closer to operating 57 private school operations in this province than we are to providing funding equally to the children of the province of Manitoba. I say this with all due respect. We are going to in our area, for instance, next year see a 20% increase in property taxes by the school division to our properties. They have already told us that. Next year's increase would have to be 20 percent over what they applied this year. This year I believe it was very close to 8 percent that they increased the tax this year.

Their administrative cost went up 13.8 percent, the administration cost in the division. That was after the minister and her Government said the administration cost would drop dramatically and that is why

they were forcing the amalgamations. It is unfortunate that Borderland voluntarily decided to merge, except that Sprague School was forced into this merger, and has caused very significant economic difficulties for the division and is now causing very significant economic difficulties for the taxpayers of that division. There are going to be large cost increases. The minister has not given any indication that he is going to provide special funding to that division and I think that is unfortunate. I believe, as I have indicated before, that the 30th of this month is going to be a D-Day for the department, and we look with interest into how that is going to be managed.

Mr. Chairperson, I want to ask the minister about the operations of Crop Insurance. I want to ask the minister whether any administrative costs of the BSE programs have been accrued to the Crop Insurance Corporation and whether the administration costs came out of the funds of the Crop Insurance Corporation

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairperson, I said earlier that I wanted to recognize the work of our staff, and I certainly want to recognize and commend the people at the Crop Insurance Corporation for the work they did to administer this program.

It was a difficult time and government was putting a lot of demands on all staff. In this case, a tremendous amount of work was picked up by the Crop Insurance people and I really appreciate that. I am sure that they felt a tremendous amount of pressure from government when we wanted to deliver the programs as quickly and as best we could. The administration of the programs that Crop Insurance took on the responsibility for was paid for by the program. Costs were not paid for by Crop Insurance.

**Mr. Penner:** So the minister is telling me that there was no cost accrued by the Crop Insurance Corporation to fund and deliver the program. The inspectors and everything were paid for out of the funds of the program.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The Crop Insurance took on that extra responsibility, and their costs will be paid from the program. The inspectors and all of the people that did the work, that cost comes out of the programs, not from the corporation.

**Mr. Penner:** I apologize, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson, so no costs would have accrued to the corporation for the delivery of the many BSE programs that were delivered through Crop Insurance and no costs would have accrued to the corporation.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, certainly the administration of Crop Insurance incurred costs as they were doing the program, delivering those programs, developing the programs, putting together the computer program that had to go with it, but those costs were then calculated and accrued back to the programs.

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

Mr. Chairperson, can the minister tell me what the changes in operation in Crop Insurance are going to be or what the changes farmers can expect by the changes that are going to be required under the CAIS program, the APF agreement, and how Crop Insurance is going to configure itself to be able to provide the service to the farmers that might in fact be required by government in delivery of the CAIS program?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I wonder if the member could clarify if the question is: Is Crop Insurance going to have to make some changes to deliver the program? Crop Insurance is not delivering CAIS. The federal government is delivering that program. But, if I did not understand the question, the member could clarify it.

**Mr. Penner:** I apologize for not being more clear. I understand that there might be requirement for CAIS participants to actually subscribe to crop insurance.

Can the minister indicate to me how that will be delivered, and how the programs will be designed under crop insurance to tie into the CAIS program? If I said the delivery of the program—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. The time being 5:30, I am interrupting the proceedings. The Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow (Friday) at 10 a.m.

## HEALTH

\* (15:10)

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

section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Health.

Does the honourable Minister of Health have an opening statement?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Madam Chairperson, I welcome the members of the committee again to another round of Estimates debate. I am going to forgo an opening statement, insofar as there is a new addition to the Department of Health in the form of a new Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), who, I think, would like to make some opening comments.

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister responsible for Healthy Living):** Good afternoon, Madam Chairperson, colleagues, staff, and guests from the public. I am pleased to join you here today. Last November, the Premier (Mr. Doer) announced that there would be a new minister with a focus on healthy living to help the province concentrate on prevention and health promotion. This will help improve the quality of life and, potentially, offset more costly medical care down the road for thousands of Manitobans.

It was a premise of medicare originally that prevention was a very important part of the whole basis on which medicare was based. My mandate includes the promotion of health and wellness, safety and injury prevention, chronic disease prevention, as well as responsibility for the Seniors Directorate and Healthy Child Manitoba.

I am excited about this opportunity as I have been getting out and talking to Manitobans about healthy eating, physical activity, smoking cessation, safety, injury prevention, and, in general, how to live healthier lives.

What is healthy living? For individuals, healthy living is all about adopting health enhancing behaviours or living in a healthier way. Healthy living means making positive choices about personal health practices, such as eating healthier foods, not smoking, becoming physically more active, and taking more precautions to prevent injuries that are preventable.

Our vision for Manitoba is a healthy province in which all Manitobans experience the conditions that support the attainment and maintenance of good health. We want to help Manitobans improve their

overall health status and reduce the health disparities within our population. This cannot be done without the involvement of others, as healthy living is the shared responsibility of all government departments, as well as communities, private industry, social networks, families, individuals, everyone in society.

For example, soft drink manufacturers are voluntarily removing pop from vending machines in elementary schools. This is a good start. If they provide healthier alternatives, not just sugar-rich fruit drinks and sports drinks, this will support children in making good, healthy decisions.

Children and youth are also targets of aggressive advertising campaigns and marketing techniques, because of their spending power, purchasing influence, and their future consumer habits as adults. I have a little bit of an anecdote here where my niece, when I was talking to her about where to go eat for lunch, her comment was, "Good food, priced right. Let's eat at McDonalds." So, therefore, we do have strong influence of advertising in how to get kids to eat properly.

Foods like candy, chocolate, fast food, convenience foods, are all heavily advertised, but how many times do we see advertisements for fruit, vegetables, healthy food?

Milk becomes very, very important in the development of kids when they are around puberty so that we ensure that people have strong, healthy bones. We have to make sure that people are getting good, balanced diets. That is all stuff that we have to promote, and it is stuff that we have to do early so that people have good, long lives, healthy lives.

Physical activity is also important. The environments where Canadians live, learn, commute, work and play must be able to support regular physical activity. It does not just start in the schools; it starts at birth. We have to make sure that people are active from birth throughout their whole life. We know that activity promotes better lifestyle. It gives you less chance of getting diabetes early, other chronic disease, such as heart attacks, et cetera. Very, very important if people are active, so we must get our community and everyone more active.

Things like safe routes to school, bike paths, the provision of shower facilities at work might encourage more Canadians to be more active. It is

not one size fits all. We have to work together on multifaceted approaches to make sure that Manitobans have a whole variety of activities that will keep them healthier.

The idea is prevention. The idea is to get people more active. If you look at the alliance of chronic disease, we have to work with multiple groups to make sure that we get more active. I must commend PACOM, the Physical Activity Coalition of Manitoba, established by the Heart and Stroke Foundation, which comprises over 30 groups that are trying to encourage physical activity throughout the province.

When Manitobans require medical care, it is the job of Manitoba Health to ensure that the most up-to-date medical services are available when and where they are needed. But we also need to continue to promote health and well-being in this province to help Manitobans live longer, live healthier lives before they find themselves using their health care system.

Prevention makes fiscal sense. It also makes huge sense in human terms. This is a direction that we are currently leaders in, and we are moving further ahead on.

The role of the individual in making healthy choices is also vital to the success of these kinds of initiatives. Some of the items that we have been working on include the following: A bill has been tabled, Bill 21, to amend The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act to implement a province-wide ban on smoking in enclosed public places and indoor workplaces. The bill will also amend The Municipal Assessment Act and The Workplace Health and Safety Act. This legislation was recommended by the All-Party Task Force on Environmental Tobacco Smoke and calls for a complete ban on smoking in the enclosed public and indoor workplaces where provincial government has clear jurisdiction. We are aiming to have this ban take effect October 1, 2004.

\*(15:20)

I would like to publicly commend the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) for his leadership in this, where he has actually moved very, very forward on this and, actually, single-handedly moved the agenda faster. It is nice to see the co-operation of all parties on this important health concern.

Currently, there are about 2800 people who suffer smoking-related deaths. What we want to do is make sure that we decrease that number.

Emphysema is terrible. It robs people of the active lives they have. Lung cancer, throat cancer, nasal cancer are all things that can be preventable. What we want to do is make sure we decrease the number of people who are suffering from these ailments.

We have developed a framework and a process for the development of healthy living strategies for Manitoba. There are six guiding principles that will ensure that the work we do reflects the needs and opinions of Manitobans.

The first one is injury prevention. I am pleased that just this week we had a conference on injury prevention. We try not to call it accidents, because if you are speeding, doing silly things around the house, if you are not talking about proper precautions, they are not accidents. They are things that you take a chance or a risk on. What we are trying to do is injury prevention, which involves making people understand what the risks are, what their behaviours are, so that they can take appropriate actions so that they are not hurt or injured in their activities. So, a lot of injuries can be prevented. We have to work together. It is something that we can work with the department of highways, with MPIC, with businesses, with parents, with schools. Everyone can work on this to prevent injuries.

Smoking cessation. It is nice to see that we have gone from a 35% to a 28% smoking rate, and we continue to work on it. We have some wonderful initiatives that we began. Some of them were targeted in junior high schools, where we have a number of commercials which are talking about the anti-smoking commercials. We have those in the schools that are, basically, talking about how kids view the commercials. They then give their assessment of which are the best commercials. They also, at the same time, think about all the damage that it does, the personal damage, the biological damage, because that is how the commercials are set up, and it is wonderful.

I would like to commend Manitoba Health staff. Andrew Loughead has done a wonderful job on this non-smoking youth committee. They are doing a lot of things to promote non-smoking and healthy

lifestyles. He has done an excellent job. I am pleased that again we worked on an all-party basis to move this forward.

The other items, like healthy living and lifestyles, are also important. What we want to do is make sure that people eat well, are active, and they focus on the positive things to keep themselves well. I would like to comment about the important part of our Healthy Child and Healthy Baby programs where mothers are entitled to supplement. Low-income mothers are entitled to a supplement so that they can ensure that they have proper nutrition and proper support.

We also have a program where we have about 1300 families that are visited by professional staff, so they get the support and the information they need to make positive choices for their child. That is a really good program. I hear wonderful things about it. We are talking about less FAS. We are talking less underweight babies. We are talking about proper nutrition, proper parenting. We are developing skills in parents, and working with them in a co-operative method to develop skills so that we have better, more healthy generations.

We are also working on reproductive sexual health care. What we are trying to do is develop programs where people have the information and the resources so that they can, therefore, make appropriate reproductive health choices. We also are concerned that a number of tests, like cervical examinations, pap tests—I think that we can encourage women to get proper reproductive health care, take appropriate action, so that we do not suffer larger consequences, because we do not have up front diagnoses, up front examinations, and then we have to take more radical action. I think what we want to do is make sure that people have appropriate tests at the appropriate times so that they move forward in this important area.

I am also responsible for seniors. Being responsible for seniors is a very important job, because what you want to do is you want to make sure, we have a large portion of seniors, and we want to make sure the Government is listening to them, that government is reacting to them, and that government is sympathetic to what they need to make sure they age healthily. The advancing age strategy is wonderful, because it is dealing with government across all the bounds, and so we are not dealing with silos of



government departments. We are dealing across all departments to make sure that we have policies and processes and supports for seniors, so that they can age at home healthily.

I am also working on the area of chronic disease prevention. I think what we need to do is work with organizations like CancerCare, Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Alliance for the Prevention of Chronic Disease, to make sure that we have programs where we are promoting good health, promoting early detection, so that we try to decrease the amount of chronic diseases that we have to deal with and, also, if we can delay it, such as diabetes. Through just good diet and activity we can delay diseases like diabetes. If a person is predisposed to get diabetes at the age of 35, and we can delay it till 55, the health outcomes, I am sure you agree, will be wonderful.

An important part of the strategy will be the new Healthy Living Web site. I encourage all of you, Myrna, the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), if you have a chance to view it, it is a wonderful Web site. It was launched earlier this week. Links to information on active living, healthy eating, injury prevention, smoking cessation will be available on the Web site, making this important information accessible to all Manitobans. We plan to continue to work on this Web site so that it becomes a resource that all people can access.

We also have undertaken the production of a report called "Injuries in Manitoba: A 10-Year Review" also released earlier this year. This report analyzes the 10 years of injury, hospitalizations and deaths in Manitoba, and provides important information about who was injured, where they have been injured and how they are being injured. This allows RHAs, organizations, businesses and parents to actually look at what is going on, what the history of injury is and then take proactive action. It provides us with baseline data that we need to guide our planning and activities, and to measure our progress.

We are also very pleased to announce the funding of three childhood vaccines to be added to the routine childhood immunization schedule over the coming year. The three new vaccines are conjugated meningococcal, conjugated pneumococcal and varicella. The conjugated meningococcal prevents bloodstream meningitis infections. The pneumococcal prevents infections with seven types of

pneumococcal bacteria that cause bloodstream meningitis, middle ear infections. Varicella prevents chicken pox and its complications, skin infections, et cetera. These new vaccines will be provided at no cost to vaccine recipients similar to other childhood immunizations as part of Manitoba's universal immunization program.

I would like to publicly commend the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), who took this initiative to the national agenda in 2001. Manitoba took the lead in pushing this agenda item forward. It is nice to see that he led the country. It is also nice to see that we were able to focus, in the Healthy Living Ministry, where what we would do was we wrote a letter to the new federal public health minister. What we tried to do was bring this again to the agenda.

It is nice to see that our officials in the Manitoba Public Health branch also push this agenda. Because of it, I think, we have added a lot of pressure from the doctors, pediatricians, GPs. Everyone has been pushing this. I think that the federal government reacted. For the first time they have put money into the actual delivery of vaccines to our population. It is nice to see that we are actually moving forward on this very, very important health initiative.

Our Government has finally been able to nail it down and move forward on vaccines. It is not just with the three-year money that the federal government has coughed up. What we have done is we have taken the three-year money and we have made a long-term commitment to fund vaccinations.

We will be working with First Nations, Inuit health branch. We will be working with RHAs, multiple partners to move this important initiative forward.

Other things that we have done are we have funded the Reh-Fit Centre for \$1.2 million, which is wonderful, because it is talking about access to activity. The Reh-Fit does a wonderful job turning around people who have suffered heart attacks, but, also, I used to coach a volleyball team that played at the Reh-Fit Centre. That is called healthy living.

\*(15:30)

We have funded the Turnabout Program for \$94,000. That is getting kids out who have been involved in crime to get away from crime. I was very

pleased to work with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) and make that announcement just this week.

We have launched a Web site regarding fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, FASD, at a meeting of the ministers responsible for the Canada Northwest Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Partnership in November.

Actually, as an MLA, I was able to open up or announce with the federal and civic areas the new expansion of the Centennial Pool project. It is wonderful. The Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) and I, I am sure, will get lots of positive responses, because what we are doing is we are taking a proactive approach to keeping people healthy.

I have also been leading the review on The Personal Health Information Act. We have launched a new approach on improved children's therapy services by initiating a number of projects in Winnipeg, Brandon, Central and NOR-MAN. I was at the announcement for the awarding of the tender for the construction of the \$2.5-million prostate cancer centre.

I know that the members opposite once made a comment that I am the minister of ribbon-cutting. I am proud to see that, as Manitoba Health, what we are doing is we are cutting ribbons. We are cutting ribbons on new MRIs; we are cutting ribbons on new CAT scans; we are cutting ribbons at Misericordia hospital; we are cutting ribbons in rural areas. We are expanding the Reh-Fit Centre. We are working together to provide the financial assistance to make people healthy.

I am also pleased to chair the Healthy Child Committee, to let you know that we were working very hard to keep kids busy. So we gave small grants to each school, and we had about 480 schools apply for the grants this year for active living. Previously, we have worked on nutrition so that schools apply for small grants and they promoted nutrition and healthy eating in their schools.

So, you can see, it is a ministry that crosses all boundaries. It is a ministry that works with all departments. It is a ministry that works with government, business, all sorts of organizations, to promote health and to move the prevention agenda forward.

That is what we are doing. I think it is very, very proactive. There are only two healthy living ministries in Canada; one in Nova Scotia and one here. What we are trying to do is work across all departments, across the entire spectrum, so that what we are trying to do, and we are succeeding in bringing the agenda of health promotion, awareness, and prevention forward.

I think if we want to look at a good way of sustaining health care, we have a choice. We have a choice between adding money, in other words, having a separate tax. We have a choice of privatization, that some of the members opposite wish, or we have another choice, a choice that is fundamentally different. That is the choice of having people become aware of what keeps them healthy, focuses to keep healthy, and promotes wellness.

By promoting wellness, we put less strain on the acute care system, less strain on the tertiary health care system, and then focus on having people stay well at home. I think that is the area that we believe is important because we want people to stay healthy longer. We want them to focus on their own good health, and take responsibility for good health, and move that agenda forward.

**Madam Chairperson:** I thank the Minister of Healthy Living for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Charleswood, have any opening comments?

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** I do have just a few comments that I would like to put on the record, and I certainly would like to firstly welcome the ministers to the table, particularly to our new member, the Minister of Healthy Living, to his first set of Estimates.

I also want to indicate, at this time, acknowledgment of the good work that is happening at the front lines of health care, whether it is in the hospitals, the community, personal care homes, within the RHAs and within Manitoba Health. There are an awful lot of people out there that are giving their very best to our health care system. I think so many put their hearts and souls, really, into their jobs and they do want to give the best care to patients, often in a very challenging environment in today's health care system.

I know that everybody is certainly making best efforts, and I do want to acknowledge that. I do want

to thank them for that. Having been a front-line health care worker for a lot of years, I do know the personal challenges that you face in all of that, and certainly, on behalf of Manitoba patients, I want to acknowledge the sincere efforts that are being put forward by so many people.

I also want to indicate that I appreciate the challenge of the health care portfolio to both of these ministers. It is probably one of the more difficult portfolios in government, and I do know the challenges they face on a day-to-day basis. I do wish them well in facing the increasing daily challenges that are before them. I know that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), in particular, tries hard and cares very much, and that is very obvious.

Certainly, I also truly in my heart, though, do not feel that things are going to improve a great deal until this Government gets away from making decisions for political or ideological reasons. I think that that sometimes interferes in the direction they choose to go, and I think decisions need to be made because they are going to be right for patients. I do appreciate that this is easier to say than it is to do, but I believe it is the course we must set for ourselves. We have to remember that, when we look at a model for health care, the centre circle is very, very patient oriented, and those decisions need to be made in the best interests of a patient. Sometimes those decisions may not fall within our ideology, but it may be the best decision for the patient.

I think things also are not going to change without a plan. People need to know what a government stands for and the direction that they are taking and what their priorities are. I think this Government tends to drift day to day without a plan or a grand scheme, as this Minister of Health has said in the past, and what we see is a government going crisis to crisis. The minister has indicated he does not feel he needs to put forward a plan from on high, that that is not his role. I think that this will lead to a continuing movement down the road of crisis management and just flying by the seat of his pants on a day-to-day basis.

I am certainly getting a lot of calls from the public, far more than I did have ever in the first term of this Government. Since the second term of this Government, I have to indicate that the calls, not only that I am getting but that my colleagues are getting, have grown in number and have grown in

seriousness of what is coming forward. There is a very fast-growing dissatisfaction with how this Government is managing the health care system.

I think it is going to be extremely important to look critically at these Estimates in health care to find out where all of the spending is occurring and for the ministers, both, to justify these expenditures. I will also be asking the minister—he committed in the last set of Estimates that he was going to be able to identify exactly where the last, whether it was \$73 or \$75 million that the federal government gave—about a commitment he had made to be able to itemize that right down to the dollar as to where all of that money has specifically gone.

CIHI says we spend the most in Canada per capita on health care, and the most disconcerting part of all of that is it does not seem to be making a difference. The Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) just made a comment about looking at the outcomes, and right now the outcomes are not indicating that a billion dollars has made a difference. I would like to think that it would. I would like to think that putting that kind of money into the health care system would make a significant difference, but patients still are in hallways, despite this Government and this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) sitting there, saying, "Oh, we fixed it. We fixed it by 80 percent. This newspaper said we did a good job; this organization said we did a good job." Well, they changed the numbers of how patients are counted in hallways. Nurses are now told what to count and how to count, and it is not the same as it used to be counted. We are not looking at apples and oranges.

\* (15:40)

I understand the Victoria Hospital also has a more unique way of counting within the last few months that has dramatically changed the numbers. Nurses from there are telling me that what you are getting out of their numbers is not a true reflection of actually what is happening. I spoke recently to a patient that was in the ER hallway at the Victoria Hospital for two days. He said the hospital hallways, the ER hallways are full, and it was full when he was there.

I think while this Minister of Health tries to spin that he has fixed the problem, it is a long ways off. In fact, not that long ago, within the last few months, I

had doctors and nurses calling me saying that they had never seen it so bad.

Waiting lists for diagnostics in four of the five categories have skyrocketed. They are far higher than where they were when this Government took over. There are long waiting lists to see specialists. Cardiac surgeries are still being bumped. The minister is indicating that there are some efforts that have been made, but we will be certainly talking about the cardiac surgery program in this set of Estimates, because I have some huge concerns as to where that program is not going and should be going, because we are still seeing surgeries that are still being bumped in that area.

I think in today's Question Period we certainly heard of another patient that had died in a hospital emergency room. This time it appears that this patient died in a hallway. That is so far removed from probably the biggest failed health care promise in the history of this province, and that was that the NDP were going to fix health care. They were going to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. I think in the end that is probably going to go down in history as the biggest failed promise in political electoral history in this province.

This Government has put a billion dollars more into health care. It begs the question about sustainability of our health care system. Even the Premier of this province has indicated that health care will hit the fiscal wall in 10 years or even less. All the premiers from across the country are giving this same indication, that it is not sustainable as it is. Roy Romanow does not have any problem with more money coming in. He would like to see more money coming in, but he indicates that it is to buy change. It is not just money that he wants to see coming in to prop up the status quo. We can see that the status quo is not working. To just keep throwing money at the system is only going to maintain that status quo.

I have to recall that before this minister became the Minister of Health, it was prior to the 1999 election, he was on CJOB with Charles Adler. Charles Adler asked him, "How much more money are you going to need to fix health care, to address the challenges in the health care system?" Did the Minister of Health say a billion dollars? No, he did not. In fact he told Chuck Adler, "Oh, I do not think it will take that much more money to do what needs

to be done in health care." And after the election, what did we hear?

After the '99 election, what did we hear the minister say a month or two after he became the Minister of Health? He said, "We do not have any control over spending. The buck stops nowhere." In fact, he said at the time that when the budget was only \$2.1 billion that spending was out of control in health care. He said that spending was out of control in health care. He called it a disaster. In fact, those were his words. He called it a disaster. So now, a billion dollars later, I have to wonder what he calls it now.

Those statements should be haunting the Minister of Health, but they should also be asking for some accountability and an explanation of what he meant then and what is happening now. If he felt so strongly about those issues at that time, why has he not had any control over his budget since he became the Minister of Health? The financial burden of health care is growing beyond our ability to fund if the status quo is maintained. There is absolutely no doubt about this.

To continue to pour more and more money into health care—and the challenges are there and I do realize that for sure in the short term there is no doubt that more money is going to be needed with the technological challenges, the pharmacological challenges, the aging population, new equipment, baby boomers are going to be hitting the system—there is no doubt that we are going to be facing incredible funding issues within health care. But, if we do not address them and find, perhaps, money within the system itself, where, if we cannot do that, are we going to find the money?

It is going to have to come out of other departments. Are we going to take more money away from roads? Are we going to take money away from Education? Are we going to take money away from Justice? Are we going to take money away from Conservation? There are some very serious challenges in all of those areas.

Health care is like a black hole and will take every cent we throw at it, so the responsible thing is to find a way to make this work better, to find a way to sustain this without hurting other departments. I have fears that I do not see the kind of reforms being

put in place by this Government that are going to address these areas.

I think it is going to place a huge burden on other areas of the Budget and, therefore, on people in this province. I think the current government, though, sees health care as frozen in time and they do not seem to truly understand that the money for it will not be there at the rate they are going.

I really urge them to wake up to this fact before it is too late, before it becomes totally, totally out of control, but it is hard to do that without a plan. Without a plan or a road map or a vision, you get lost. Patients will continue to fall through the cracks. Spending may be unwisely put into place.

I recall listening to a presentation by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation actually not long ago. I believe it was maybe to the Kirby commission, where they said there is enough money in the system, it depends how you spend it.

Reg Alcock recently was quoted in the paper making reference to the constant whining for money by our Premier (Mr. Doer) to the federal government, and he made a reference that perhaps what this Government needs to do is to look at its own management of health care.

What we have, Madam Chairperson, is a Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) that is like a dog chasing his tail, and that is not going to change unless more controls are being put in place and unless there is a plan and a vision for what needs to happen.

I think this Minister of Health is like the Red Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, running as fast as he can to stay in the same place and we cannot afford to be in the same place anymore. We have to find a way to sustain a health care system that is facing just huge challenges.

I urge the minister to strive for a vision, an increased focus on strategy and policy and less on fire fighting and crisis management. I think there needs to be visibility, transparency, accountability to the public that key issues are being addressed in a timely, effective way and I firmly believe that we desperately need to see a health care plan for the future.

Sadly, for Manitobans, I do not see that there is a vision in place by this Government to strengthen our health care system and that is only going to make things worse for the future.

\* (15:50)

**Madam Chairperson:** We thank the critic of the Official Opposition for those remarks. Under Manitoba practice, debate of the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of a department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of this item and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in Resolution 21.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask the minister to introduce their staff present.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, as has been the past practice, I am joined by the Deputy Minister, Milton Sussman, and the Chief Financial Officer for the Department of Health, Heather Reichert, who report both to myself and, of course, to my colleague minister.

**Madam Chairperson:** We thank the minister. We will now proceed to the remaining items contained in Resolution 21.1 on page 91 of the main Estimates book. The floor is open for questions.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Madam Chairperson, I would like to ask if we are going to be using a global approach, as we have in the past, and do that for several days, and then approach it on a line-by-line basis. As in the past, we will certainly make every effort to accommodate the minister's staff, appreciating that there may be times when they cannot be here. I do not have a problem in working co-operatively to try to see that we can work best around that.

So, other than that question, one other question I do have is some direction as to how Estimates are going to be carried out this year with two different ministers, and whether the two ministers will be here throughout this or whether there will be certain times where they will split their shifts.

**Madam Chairperson:** Is it the will of the committee to debate globally? Mr. Minister?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, Madam Chairperson. I think it has always been a function of practice, at least since I have been minister, to function in that way, and I appreciate the co-operation of the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) in that regard. We have had good co-operation and advance notice with respect to staff, and I see no reason—I do not think all committees function like this, but I think that it is useful to function in this fashion. So I suggest we do function in this fashion and proceed on that basis.

I think it is our intention, generally, to have both ministers present during the course of the Estimates process to accommodate questions.

**Madam Chairperson:** We do have the permission to discuss globally. Agreed? [*Agreed*]

**Mrs. Driedger:** I would just like to thank the minister for that. I appreciate that.

**Madam Chairperson:** The floor is open for questions.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Madam Chairperson, I guess the first thing I would like to address, which is normally the first line of questioning, I think we have had over the last few years, and that is to look at the organizational chart. The first question I would ask, out of all of the people listed here on this chart, could the Minister of Health tell me if there are any secondments, if any of the people in any of these positions are here on secondment from some place else?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, there have been no changes with respect to the secondment on this chart, to the best of my knowledge, from that when we last discussed this matter, which was August.

**Mrs. Driedger:** If my memory serves me correctly, would it be accurate to say then that Mr. Sussman and Ms. Reichert are still on secondment from the WRHA?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the Minister of Health also indicate if Arlene Wilgosh is also on secondment from the WRHA?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No, not from the WRHA, from RHAM.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister tell me when she went over to RHAM, when Ms. Wilgosh went over to RHAM and perhaps she has been there for quite some time, I do not know, and when she got seconded back then as an ADM?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson. I believe we discussed this during the course of last year's Estimates, and, if memory serves me correctly, she was an employee of the Department of Health and was seconded to RHAM at the time of its formation, which would have been around 1999. If memory serves me correctly, she was seconded back to the Department of Health in the year, approximately, 2000. I will verify those numbers.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister give some indication as to why these positions are still in a secondment position and have not become full staff within Manitoba Health?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, the practice was developed between the Regional Health Authorities and the Department of Health prior to my assuming the role of minister. An individual by the name of Linda West, I believe was her name, was seconded—

**Madam Chairperson:** A count-out vote has been requested in another section of the Committee of Supply. This section is now recessed to attend the Chamber for a count-out vote. The committee is recessed.

*The committee recessed at 3:57p.m.*

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

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, as I indicated, the precedent was set with an individual by the name of Linda West, who was seconded from one of the regions, and worked at the Department of Health. I actually think the idea of employees moving back and forth between the region and central government is a very valuable exercise, given the nature of how the system works. I think it is a very useful way of obtaining information from both the operators and the policy advisers as we move along the recommendations from the Sinclair report, that called for some structuring of the Department of Health with

regard to be a rural setting and the policy-setting body, and less an operational body.

\* (16:40)

**Mrs. Driedger:** Does the minister not feel that there is some potential there for conflicts of interest to arise when you have got, for instance, your deputy minister on secondment from the WRHA, the biggest spender in the health care system, and you have got your deputy minister on secondment from the WRHA, supposedly to be non-biased, and looking at everything totally in the system, looking at it in a very balanced way, and not having to have any particular commitments to anybody? I mean, he supposedly reports to the Minister of Health, but it is on secondment from the WRHA.

Does the minister not see that in some of that there could be a potential conflict of interest?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, certainly there is, depending on the eyes of the beholder, and in the public sector, one always has to be conscious of the issue of conflict of interest.

For example, when that employee from one of the regions, her name was Linda West, she handled negotiations with the doctors for the Department of Health, even though she was an employee of a region. But, nonetheless, I do not think that that biased the particular views. As I understand it, there is an agreement signed whenever there is a secondment. I have encouraged, and I will encourage continuing.

Madam Chairperson, the question of conflict of interest with respect to caregivers in the health care system is a diverse one, and if one looks across the spectrum of the system, one could find "conflict of interest" in almost every application of every principle on every decision-making process. I think that the people are professional enough to rise above that, and to function effectively in that regard.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Perhaps the Minister of Health knows Linda West better than I did. I thought she worked at a Pinawa hospital and not for a region and then was brought here. I do not recall that it was ever on a secondment. But perhaps the minister knows her better and knows the situation better. I certainly am not aware of that.

But that is quite a different level. If the minister is correct in saying that she was seconded and came here in that particular job, quite a different level of responsibility and authority than what is currently happening with two significant positions within the Department of Health that are seconded from the WRHA, and Arlene Wilgosh seconded from RHAM. Those are fairly significant positions, and I would wonder why the minister would allow that to remain on secondment and not create permanent jobs.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, the individual in question, Linda West, I believe, undertook negotiations and negotiated the collective agreement for the previous government and continued into our regime. I am surprised the member does not know her because I think she ran as a candidate for the member's party during the last provincial election. I think she is running for the leadership of the provincial Conservative Party at this point.

Having said that, Madam Chairperson, I will accept the member's suggestion. I will reflect on the member's suggestion.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Maybe I could just ask: Is the deputy minister seconded from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority? Can the minister indicate how his salary is paid?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, as I indicated in this committee in August, it has not changed from the arrangement that it is paid by the region and reimbursed from the department.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Can the minister also indicate if the Chief Financial Officer, H. Reichert, I believe, is also seconded from the health authority? Can the minister indicate how she is paid?

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I indicated in August of last year during the course of these Estimates, it is the same arrangement.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I guess it is Arlene Wilgosh too, seconded from RHAM. How is her salary paid?

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I indicated last August when the same question was asked, it is the same arrangement, that it is through RHAM via administrative apparatus of the WRHA and the same arrangement.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Could the minister tell me, then, whether those salaries are included in administrative costs through the Regional Health Authority?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Could the minister indicate to me, then, whether they are included in administrative costs in the Department of Health?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister indicate whether Manitoba Health is paying exactly the same amount of money that shows up in their salaries that are paid to them by the WRHA? Is that the same number that appears in the Manitoba Health documents, financial statements?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I will have those figures for the member when we next sit.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I guess I have a little problem with that. The minister has the deputy minister and the chief financial officer right here, both of whose salaries we are discussing. I do not think that should be a very difficult discussion for us to have right now.

**Mr. Chomiak:** No, it is not a very difficult discussion to have. I just thought that we would be able to expedite proceedings and move along. I will provide that information, but that is fine, if the member wants the information now, I will undertake to provide that information to the member now.

The deputy minister, the chief financial officer and the ADM for Regional Affairs, Ms. Arlene Wilgosh, are paid at the level shown in the public accountability act through the WRHA, which is for Mr. Sussman 140 plus benefits; Ms. Wilgosh, 103 plus benefits; and Ms. Reichert, 130 plus benefits.

\* (16:50)

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Where do we find those salaries in the minister's detailed Estimates?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, Mr. Sussman is listed under contract on page 23; Ms. Reichert under contract on page 27; and Ms. Wilgosh under contract on page 63.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chair, can the minister indicate then, the employee benefits that are in the

next line under the contract on page 23, what the breakdown of those employee benefits are? Who are those benefits paid to?

**Mr. Chomiak:** It is employees that are included under those FTEs on that page of the Supplementary Estimates.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I guess I am just trying then to understand why the significant jump in the Estimates from last year to this year are under Salaries and Employee Benefits. The same number of employees, eight employees, and a \$250,000 increase in—why the increase in cost?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, I think the note on sub 1 of page 23 indicates an increase in funding for support staff of the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau).

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** It does not indicate that there are any more staff, so why not, if in fact it is support staff for the Minister of Healthy Living?

\* (17:00)

**Mr. Chomiak:** The allocation is for administrative support and, because we are in transition, it is being looked at with respect to placing SYs against that particular administrative support. But we are not through the process yet with respect to earmarking the specific SYs with the administrative support, even though there is an additional functioning minister in this regard.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I might be a little slow, but I am not sure that I understood that answer. There is a \$250,000 increase. Are there people that are being paid that \$250,000? We are talking about a budget that has just been introduced; we are talking about a minister that has been appointed; and we are talking about this year's Budget.

So, somewhere, I mean, the department may be in the process of moving people around, but should this budget document and these detailed Estimates not reflect what is going to happen over the course of this year? Where are the people that are being paid the \$250,000 more in administrative costs?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, as the member will well know, the department is trying to, there are cases where we are double booking and utilizing



cross-resources, but, in order to actually reflect the fact that there are additional costs being attributed to the Minister of Healthy Living's (Mr. Rondeau) office, it is being shown in this particular line as administrative support numbers.

That is only appropriate, given that it is a new operation that came in a partial year through and that we are giving the best information that is available to us for the member who has had some experience in this regard.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chairperson, I do not recall having these kinds of issues to deal with when I was a minister in the government.

Can the minister provide for us today then the people, the names of the Professional/Technical staff that make up the four SYs in the Estimates?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I will endeavour to supply that information.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** This is executive support to the minister. I would imagine that these are people that work very closely with the minister, and I would think that those individuals would be at the top of the minister's mind. So I would hope that he could provide that information right now.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, the FTEs would be considered within the Professional/Technical support area that consists of four FTEs. They would be the communications director, the special adviser, the special assistant and the senior adviser.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chairperson, I think the minister indicated that was the communications person, special adviser, special assistant and senior adviser. Okay, and those would all be direct Order-in-Council appointments?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No.

\* (17:10)

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Could the minister indicate which of those positions would be direct Order-in-Council appointments? I would believe the special adviser, special assistant.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, I believe the member is correct. If memory serves me correctly,

the special adviser and the special assistant are Order-in-Council appointments.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chair, could the minister indicate who those individuals are?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes. Alissa Brandt and Jeff Sulymka

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** So the special adviser would be Alissa—

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, Brandt.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** And the special assistant?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The special assistant would be Jeff Sulymka.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** And the communications person?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Would be Joseph Czech.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chair, could the minister give us again the fourth position and the person that is in that position?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The fourth person that I identified was the senior adviser and that would be Suzanne Ring.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chairperson, is the senior adviser an Order-in-Council appointment?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Is the senior adviser a ministerial appointment, a direct ministerial appointment? What would be the role or the function of the senior adviser?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, the senior adviser is an adviser to the deputy minister.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** So that person then is hired by the deputy minister to advise him. The communications person, is that a new position or is that a position that has been ongoing?

**Mr. Chomiak:** That has been ongoing.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Chair, can the minister indicate to me how long Alissa Brandt has been his special adviser?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, upwards of a year.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Could the minister indicate to me who his special adviser was then before Alissa Brandt?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Previously I believe that that particular position was filled by Jean-Guy Bourgeois.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Could the minister indicate where Jean-Guy Bourgeois has gone?

**Mr. Chomiak:** For purposes of accuracy, since it is not in my department, I will just take that as notice and get back to the member tomorrow with the specific location.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** So the minister is indicating that he is in the bureaucracy of the Government of Manitoba, but not within the Department of Health?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, and I will confirm the details for the member.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Can the minister indicate to me where his executive assistant's position would be located?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The FT, as I understand it, is located in the administrative support component.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Could the minister indicate who his executive assistant is?

**Mr. Chomiak:** It is Evelyn Livingston.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** So then, I am to assume, can I ask what the eight positions in administrative support would entail? What kind of support? To whom?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Those positions would be support to the minister and the deputy minister. As that footnote notes on page 23 as well, there is increased funding with respect to administrative funding for the Minister of Healthy Living.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** So that is secretarial support for both the minister and the deputy?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Chairperson, yes.

As I indicated, that is administrative support to the deputy and the minister and there is additional, as

is noted in the footnote 1, increase in funding for support staff for the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau).

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Thank you.

Just for some clarification, Madam Chairperson, how many administrative staff, secretarial support, would the minister have in his office, and how many would the deputy have in his office?

\* (17:20)

**Mr. Chomiak:** There are three administrative support in the deputy's office, four in the minister's office and one in the Minister of Healthy Living, but, as I indicated earlier in my response, the FTs do not correspond to the actual payment shown, as is indicated in the footnote, because of the increased funding for staff and some of the allocations between offices, et cetera, which is still being worked on with respect to specific staff years.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** This is absolutely unbelievable. I mean, it took the minister five minutes to tell me how many secretarial supports were in his office and in the deputy's office. I guess, by that answer, he is indicating to me that there is only one administrative support staff for the Minister of Healthy Living. Does the Minister of Healthy Living have an executive assistant and a special assistant, and if so, where are they located?

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I indicated, because of the new establishment of the new minister's office, et cetera, the FTs are not booked directly in the Estimates book, but, as the footnote indicates at the bottom of page 23, there is an allocation for funding for additional positions.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** This is absolutely bizarre. These are the Estimates of Expenditures for the upcoming year. The Minister of Healthy Living was appointed several months ago. Is the minister telling me that he and his department are so incompetent that they do not have any estimate, or that either the Minister of Healthy Living has no one working for him on the administrative side right now, or they cannot estimate. They have got \$250,000 more in this line in the Budget, and they have no idea who or how those positions are going to be filled, that there is no one in those positions right now. If, under administrative support, as the minister has indicated to me for the

Minister of Healthy Living, he has political staff, and I would presume there may be two political staff positions, where are they located in this Budget? This is absolutely unbelievable.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I outlined for the member already that there was additional allocations that were made, and the footnote at the bottom of page 23 says increase in funding for support staff of the Minister of Healthy Living.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Again, this Budget is extremely misleading, because, in fact, the \$250,000 is allocated, but there is no staff allocation here. What is the minister trying to hide? This does not reflect the true picture of this year's Budget.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I think what the member is having trouble understanding is that these Estimates of Expenditure numbers are put within the Expenditure book. That is the number the member is looking at. That is where the member got the information from. It is unbelievable that the member has to keep repeating this whole issue about some kind of great revelation. If the member looks at the footnote, as I have indicated to the member on several occasions, it says increase in funding for support staff of the Minister of Healthy Living and the SYs are not yet re-allocated. There are a variety of tasks that are performed both—let me perhaps explain to the member, for example, there is a deputy minister of Health now that has the responsibility of providing support services to both a Minister of Health and a Minister of Healthy Living. The deputy minister has to report to two ministers.

There are reallocations of staff and reallocations of resources around the system. There have been changes in terms of staff coming and staff leaving. The actual staff-years that are denoted in there are a result of the actual FTE allocations. The actual expenditures as estimated by the department are in the budgetary Estimates. I point out to the member that a footnote at the bottom of page 23 supposedly alerted the member to this inconsistency by pointing out there is about a \$250,000 increase. I will again quote from the footnote at the bottom of the page. It says, "An increase in funding for support staff of the Minister of Healthy Living."

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Maybe the Minister of Healthy Living could tell me how many support staff he has in his office presently.

**Mr. Chomiak:** If I understand correctly, the member is asking for the first time how many support staff are in the Minister of Healthy Living's office. For the first time now the member now is asking that particular question. I will just consult with the Minister of Healthy Living on that issue.

**Mr. Rondeau:** I have three staff in my office. The money is marked in the allocation in the Budget. There have not been staff-years allocated to those people as yet, though, but the money is in the Budget.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Thank you, but that is just a conflicting answer to what the Minister of Health gave us a while ago when he indicated that under the eight staff-years that are written in the book that there were four in his office, three in the deputy's office and one in the Minister of Healthy Living's office. Now the Minister of Healthy Living is telling us that he has got three staff.

How many political staff, besides your secretarial support, are in your office?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I think the member is having trouble understanding.

**Madam Chairperson:** The time being 5:30 p.m., I am interrupting proceedings. Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow at 10 a.m.

## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Executive Council.

Does the Premier have an opening statement?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** I guess I have a very short statement, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Doer:** Yes, I would like to thank the members of the Chamber for their participation in the Executive Council. I would also like to formally thank them for the fact that I have to be participating in a NASCO meeting with the Secretary of

Transportation. That meeting was changed. It was originally scheduled earlier, so I do apologize. I do not normally agree to speaking engagements during the middle of Estimates. So I thank you for the participation. The Secretary of Transportation from Mexico, Mr. Bush's Secretary of Transportation and myself, on behalf of Canada, which is obviously advantageous for NASCO, will be participating along with senators and congressional representatives along the valley, and, of course, members of the business community from Winnipeg involved in transportation. So I thank you for that indulgence. I appreciate it.

Certainly, the Estimates are fairly straight forward. We have increased the spending expenditures in the Estimates by 2 percent. That is adjusted because of the fact that it is an adjusted vote based on apples-to-apples. We have transferred, since the last set of Estimates, positions in the Intergovernmental Affairs branch to have some more co-ordination with Trade and they rest in the Intergovernmental Affairs Department of government. We have transferred the protocol office into that office, too, to have greater co-ordination of protocol with Economic Development.

Beyond that, Mr. Chairperson, the staff levels are comparable. The grants to the international bodies are comparable to past years and many of the same people that were working in, discussed in Estimates about six months ago, are the same people as today. So I did not want to repeat everything today. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the Estimates before you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Does the Leader of the Official Opposition have any opening comments?

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Yes, I do. I would like to say that I look forward to this very important process of Estimates with the First Minister and acknowledge that he has a meeting which he has made a commitment to go to. I think on behalf of Manitobans, as the Premier of the province of Manitoba, it is an important meeting that he should attend. We hope that there is some positive outcome from the session or the meeting and whatever takes place.

I also want to just say that at conclusion of my remarks, I know that the Premier will be bringing in

staff, and look forward to discussions with that staff. I do think that this is an opportunity, and I know that during the course of Estimates, we will get a chance to sort of look at some of the issues that not only come out of Executive Council, but, as the Premier is aware, I will be asking various questions on some of the other areas. I hope that, with his staff available, he will be able to respond to some of those other areas that we will be discussing. I know, from time to time, he likes to say that those questions should be directed to the specific minister. I do believe, though, that the Premier is responsible for the overall well-being, financially and direction, economics, of the province of Manitoba. So I hope that we will be able to have that kind of a discussion.

I would just like for the record, Mr. Chair, to say that I know that the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) raised an issue here in the House that we wanted to speak on. It was obviously to do with lifting the U.S. ban on live cattle. We understand it will not be struck at the meeting between Prime Minister Martin and President Bush, I understand, a meeting that is taking place tomorrow, and of course, as was referenced in the House earlier, just the issue on the R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America that they apparently, were successful in their lawsuit in a U.S. District Court in Billings, Montana, to seek a temporary restraining order on Canadian imports of edible bovine meat products including ground beef.

I am not here to take length at talking about that because I think there is clearly issues with respect to Estimates. I do not want to spend a lot of time because there is obviously important issues on the Estimates that we want to get at, and we want to talk about, and we want to get a sense of some of the expenditures that the Doer government is looking at in this Budget. But I do think it would be inappropriate if I did not say how disappointed I was that something of this importance to Manitobans, to our rural economy, to our rural producers—I believe that it is probably the most important issue facing our economy with respect to some of the challenges that are being faced out there.

So I know that the honourable Member for Emerson stood on a matter of public importance and was not successful. Of course, to have a matter of public importance go ahead, I think we need consent from the government side to be part of that debate, and the fact that that was not included or that they did not acquiesce to that was, I think, unfortunate,

Mr. Chair, because I do think that Manitobans would like to get a sense, and certainly, those producers that are in tough times would like to have a bit of sense, as to what it is that the direction of the Doer government is with respect to this ruling that came down as of yesterday. We are disappointed that they would not want to allow the matter of urgent public importance to proceed, but that is their decision, and the public will be aware of their decision.

I do want to go through a couple of comments and then we will obviously get into some specifics. But, certainly we know, Mr. Chair, that in Manitoba, there is a tremendous amount of concern about the issue around the expansion of the floodway. We know that there have been a lot of things said by the government side, sometimes not always in agreement. I think it has caused some unrest in the public, because the unrest simply is that everybody wants to get on with building or expanding the floodway, and I think that everybody understands the importance of it.

We learned in the flood of 1997 that Manitoba was under some serious pressure. A lot of that pressure from the water that came up from the south could have caused, I think the numbers that are used are billions of dollars. I understand that to be the number. I understand it to be correct, and that billions of dollars of damage that could have caused had Winnipeg, in fact, been flooded. Unfortunately, as we know, a lot of communities south of Winnipeg were not saved and, in fact, were flooded. That was tragic in itself, but with the population base of Winnipeg, it could have been quite a disaster. I think Manitobans recognize that, during that time, what took place, was something quite extraordinary, and that was that companies pulled together to build what is now the sort of so-called famous Z-dike, which was really the saving grace for Winnipeg and was an incredible achievement of hardworking Manitobans working around the clock to do the right thing, which was to hold the waters back to save the city of Winnipeg.

The history is not that we have to go back to the Honourable Duff Roblin's time, the Premier of the province of Manitoba, who, through his foresight and leadership, wanted to build a floodway and did so. He had strong leadership and vision and fought some pretty tough odds at the time, Mr. Chair, to actually be successful in seeing that that floodway was built successfully. So he has been acknowledged and has

been documented that, really, at that time, Premier Duff Roblin, I think, deserves every adulation, every accolade, every opportunity of gratitude and thanks that is expressed on behalf of the people of Manitoba. He deserves this because he had the foresight and the vision to make this happen. That goes back into the fifties when that took place and, of course, Premier Roblin had the foresight to do the right thing and under some very, very difficult odds to ensure that Manitoba and Winnipeg had a strategy to deal with the excess water that was coming up the Red River.

We on this side of the House have been asking questions of the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) and, occasionally, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan): "What is the process with moving towards expanding the current floodway?" I raised this in Question Period. We are certainly going to be talking a lot, I am sure no surprise to the First Minister, in Estimates, the issue that there seems to be the forced unionization of companies with respect to the expansion of the floodway. What the industry tells us—I have great respect for the industry. I do not know what members on the government side feel about the industry, but I have great respect for the industry and I think that the industry is basically saying that, if there is any sort of project-labour agreement, something that will require companies to be unionized or require workers who, clearly, are part of a non-union company, to force them to pay union dues, there is going to be an additional cost.

Of course, always reminded, Mr. Chair, that whenever we are talking about costs of a project of this magnitude—and we know that we have heard different numbers on the Budget from members opposite that it could be \$660 million, \$700 million. It is a substantial amount of money. Again, the point being made is that I think nobody will argue that it is not the right thing to do. We should do it. We should absolutely get on with doing it.

I think that the fly in the ointment is that there is this issue about whether we are going to force companies to be members of a union, or force people to pay union dues. That, I think, becomes a major stumbling block simply because the industry, as I said earlier, which I have a tremendous amount of respect for because of what they did with the Z-dike, because of how they were able to come together, work together, work overtime to ensure that they

saved the city of Winnipeg. They are basically concerned that there could be additional \$40-million, \$50-million, \$65-million costs to the taxpayer because of this forced unionization. So not only is the issue wrong to force anybody against their will to pay union dues, I think it is wrong for taxpayers of Manitoba to have to bear the additional costs that are being discussed, as we have heard from the Minister of Water Stewardship.

So that, I think, is something that is going to be part and parcel—again, as I said, I do not think the First Minister would be at all surprised that we, on this side of the House, would very much like to move towards a resolution to get on with the process. But it is the issue that you are going to force companies to be members of a union, or to force people who, currently, are not part of a union, to pay union dues. We certainly disagree with that in the strongest way.

\* (15:20)

We hope that the Premier, who, I know, has asked that Mr. Wally Fox-Decent, a champion of Manitoba, frankly, somebody who has served both governments extremely well in terms of negotiating, I just think that the Premier has put Mr. Fox-Decent in a very, very difficult position because it is clearly something that this Premier could direct to get on with the project.

But we find ourselves now in a position where there are negotiations that are ongoing and those negotiations, frankly, are not leading to any resolution. I do not want to oversimplify this, Mr. Chair, but I would think that this process could probably be expedited and things could move along if the Premier would respect the wishes of a lot of Manitobans; certainly, a lot of Manitobans that I have spoken to.

Again, I said in the House the other day, and I made a speech on it, that this is an issue about politics in a sense of left ideology or right ideology; it is really, quite simply, a matter of right or wrong. Of course, we believe strongly that to force any company to be part of a union or force workers who are hardworking men and women, force them to pay union dues, we just think is wrong.

So, again, I hope, Mr. Chair, that, during the course of our Estimates, perhaps the Premier would direct Mr. Fox-Decent to ensure that those issues are

not part of any negotiation, but that the real issues about training, the real issues about ensuring that Aboriginal people have an opportunity to be part of the process, all of the issues which the industry does already and do not have to be brought into some kind of a project labour agreement are discussed.

I think it is fair to say, Mr. Chair, that, during the course of our discussions, I would like to get, perhaps, a better understanding from the First Minister as to why it is that we in this province are looking at a province-wide smoking ban, yet they are looking at exempting a new casino. One would argue, perhaps the Premier will argue, but what has that got to do with the Budget?

Well, I think it has everything to do with the Budget because I think we have seen a pattern with the Doer government that anything to do with casinos is something that they want to promote. They want to expand and so they are looking at expanding it. Why, Mr. Chair? Simply because the Doer government has a revenue problem.

We heard the First Minister in his Budget state that, quite loudly, I think, to be accurate, we heard him state quite loudly that this Budget that they have introduced does not have one cent drawn from the rainy day fund, from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Mr. Chair, the Premier, I know, would know that that was recorded. That is on record. That is what this Premier said, and we have a long way to go. We just passed the Budget. We have another 12 months in front of us. The only reason that I raise it at all in this discussion is because of past history. When we look at past history, this Doer government does not have exactly the best fiscal management ability. It has been proven that, even in this last budget, they made a decision around the Cabinet table that they would go into the balanced budget legislation and use a clause that has never ever been used before that would allow them to transfer some \$75 million to ensure that they were not running a deficit to balance their books for last year.

Of course, they are citing the issue that there is an emergency. The emergency that they talk about, of course, is the forest fires, and they were severe; there is no question about that. I do think that this Premier (Mr. Doer) would acknowledge in all of the years that he has been in the Legislative Assembly that Manitoba has forest fires every year. One will

debate and argue what degree those forest fires are, but the notion that you almost go from zero to forest fires, I think, is a little hard for anybody in Manitoba to understand if you are using it as an emergency requirement that took them into the clause of the balanced budget legislation.

The other point that I would make on that issue, Mr. Chair, is that when I talk to cattle producers throughout Manitoba, I think the issue that they are somehow being named, and I use this word not because it has ever come out of the Premier (Mr. Doer). I am not trying to put words in his mouth, but there is a sense that somehow there is blame for that crisis which would then translate into balanced budget legislation, which means that they are going to have to take the \$75 million out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to ensure that they do not run a deficit to balance their books for last year.

Mr. Chair, the issue again, and I will be asking the First Minister to shed some light, shed some factual information on this, is that the majority of programs, and we will get into some specifics, and I know our Agriculture critic will be asking the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk) the same question. If you are calling it an emergency with respect to the BSE crisis, and the majority of programs that were offered were low-interest loans, then what that says to me is that not only is the money that you have put out going to have to be repaid, but that money would actually be earning a low level of interest. So, at the end of the day, the Government is really acting like a bank and, as we know with banks, they not only make back what they get, but they add a little interest to it.

Again, I just am having some difficulty and I am hoping that through this process the First Minister will be able to explain why it is that the BSE crisis has caused so much turmoil on the Treasury, because that money on a low-interest loan is not as we wanted to give and recommended, and we tried to encourage this Government for some nine months, at least, I would say, Mr. Chair, during this time, to do the right thing, to give a cash advance. I understand that a cash advance, potentially, could have put the Doer government into a fiscal situation where, yes, they were just transferring straight-out cash against a sale of inventory and there would be carrying costs for the Government on that cash advance. That is quite different from having a low-interest loan,

because that really is just lending money that will be paid back that will have some interest passed on.

I think the other area, Mr. Chair, that would require some understanding is, and I would very much be asking the Premier for an update on Wuskwatim. We know that Wuskwatim at this point is before the CEC, and we always felt and believe and will still believe that it should go before the PUB, but that is an ongoing issue that is out there in the public and, of course, we would like to get some information from the First Minister on that.

There are a lot of other issues around the fact that the First Minister did say very publicly, and time and time again it was reported to me that during the state of the province address, the First Minister made a commitment to the audience. In essence, in that kind of a state, you are really speaking to all of Manitoba. During that speech, the First Minister was very emphatic that they would absolutely balance the Budget. That was the commitment he made. At that point, certainly, he made no reference about having to go into a special clause that had never, ever, ever been used before that would allow for a transfer of money out of that so that he, then, could what is called, legally not run a deficit. So I think that when you look at the fact that it is over four years and the Auditor General has indicated the current government runs a deficit, we will have some discussion around balanced budget legislation during Estimates.

I look forward to having that discussion with the First Minister because we, on this side of the House, believe that we should look at a model that is more transparent than what the current government is. Again, it is not, in any way, shape or form, as the First Minister likes to comment on, all about us somehow having a difference of opinion with our former leader, the former premier of the province of Manitoba, who was instrumental in 1995 to bring in balanced budget legislation. Clearly, there are some issues that need to be strengthened. I believe if you asked that of the former premier and the former Minister of Finance, they would agree we have got to look at how we strengthen balanced budget legislation. It is important because Manitobans have to have confidence that their Government is being open and transparent about how their tax dollars are being spent. So we are going to talk a lot about balanced budget legislation, some of the opportunities to strengthen it and, certainly, we will very

much appreciate the First Minister's comments on that.

\* (15:30)

Of course, we do know that we also heard the First Minister say very emphatically sometime during the last budget, not the one that was just introduced, Mr. Chairperson, but the 2003 Budget, that he was going to instruct his ministers to go line by line to look at those savings in administrative costs because that is where there should be savings. He was quite emphatic about it. I would have to say that he was about as emphatic that they were going to go line by line to find savings, or he was instructing his ministers to go line by line to find savings, he was as emphatic about saying that as he was just recently when he emphatically said that we will bring in a budget, and we will not go into the rainy day fund. We will not take a dollar out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Again, it raises the questions that what we did not see in this Budget, this budget document of 2004, we did see those administrative savings. In numerous departments those administrative costs have increased.

So I raise that to let the First Minister know we will be having a discussion around those issues, because it comes down to a sense of confidence and a sense of competence with respect to both the Premier and the ministers to see how they have been able to work through this budget document, how they have been able to be accountable through this process to all Manitobans. What kind of direction, in fact, did the ministers come back to the First Minister on when they were unable to, as he had instructed them to do, go line by line to find savings on the administrative side?

I do know that just yesterday, we saw the Doer government make an announcement of introducing \$100 million, as they did, on Cadillac-style VLTs. Again, I am prepared, frankly, to give the First Minister the benefit of his answer, but I will say that my question very much will be to the First Minister, somebody who, when he was standing on this side of the House, in fact, in this chair, was referring to VLTs as the crack cocaine, Mr. Chairperson. That is a drug that is very serious and has a tremendous negative impact on people, a very negative impact on families. Anybody who has been involved in that drug, it is not a good thing.

So to have that kind of a passionate sort of feel about how harmful VLTs are on family life and then to sort of turn around so quickly and make a massive investment into VLTs to the tune of \$100 million, I find that—as I say, I am prepared to listen to the First Minister's response to that question. It will be quite fascinating because I would not ever want to quote the First Minister back, but we have heard in this Chamber many times about that well-travelled road to Damascus.

I want to just end by saying that I look forward to the Estimates process, Mr. Chair, because I think it is a chance really to get down to the real important business of how government is run, how the Premier sees departments working, how he sees departments being accountable, affordable and how he sees issues that are important to Manitobans like health care, like agriculture and, I think, the one that he knows very, very well, I understand that he will be meeting with the Business Council sometime early next week, and I know that they as well as the Manitoba Chamber, the Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and the list goes on, have said numerous times, Mr. Premier, in this Budget please make us competitive. Please give us the opportunities for entrepreneurs to grow. Please give us as a business community the opportunity to create jobs. Please allow us to do what we do best and that is to allow business to grow the economy.

I think, Mr. Chairman, I will just close by saying, regrettably, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province of Manitoba have failed our young people, failed our businesses because rather than making us more competitive and again reminding the First Minister that he stood in this House, that in various places to say, I was not elected to raise taxes, and what did he do in the Budget and we will go through this; he raised taxes by some \$90 million. I look forward to a very spirited discussion as we go through the Estimates process.

**Mr. Chairperson:** At this point in time, we invite the Executive Council staff to join us in the Chamber, and we would ask the Premier to introduce those staff.

**Mr. Doer:** As they come in, I will introduce them. Maria Garcea is well known to members opposite and Jim Eldridge is well known to members



opposite. They will be ably assisting us in our discussions today.

**Mr. Chairperson:** On matters of procedures, does the committee wish to proceed through these Estimates in a chronological manner or do they prefer a global discussion?

**Mr. Doer:** I think we had a discussion on global just a moment ago. It was almost the whole Milky Way, so I would proceed accordingly.

**Mr. Chairperson:** It will be global discussion then? Is that agreed or is the global discussion done?

**An Honourable Member:** Milky Way.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Milky Way.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Chairman, I know that there are not a lot of lines, but usually I think in the past I have asked that we go line by line.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable opposition leader said he prefers line by line. Is that—

**Mr. Doer:** I am fine with that, then, and I will make sure that I follow the rules in terms of the rules being very consistent with only answering questions pursuant to the line.

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Chairperson:** We shall proceed, then, line by line.

We start with line item 2.1.(b) Management and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,205,500.

**Mr. Murray:** I would like to welcome Maria Garcea and Jim Eldridge to the Chamber, and echo the comments made by the First Minister, two very, very capable individuals. I am sure they will add tremendous harmony and wisdom to any of the answers and perhaps even some of the questions. So I am delighted to welcome them to the Chamber.

I know that the First Minister, in his opening statement, talked about staffing. I just would like to ask, again, not to belabour the issue, but just so maybe we can move through some of the items, I very much would like to get a full list of all of the

members of the Premier's staff in Executive Council, with their positions. I am not asking him to list them now. If he could ensure that I have those, I know that if I understand it correctly, we will be resuming Estimates on Monday of next week. If I could have that list before that date, that would be most appreciated. Then we do not have to go through the people one at a time.

**Mr. Doer:** Yes, we can provide that. There are very few changes from last fall except we have moved staff years, FTEs to Intergovernmental Affairs. As I said, it is much more consistent. It is similar to what Alberta has done, but not completely the same. We will try to tie in Intergovernmental Affairs more with some trade activity than we had in the past.

**Mr. Murray:** I thank the Premier for that. Again, just to expedite things, if he would agree to have that before Estimates on Monday, then, as I say, we can move quicker.

**Mr. Doer:** Yes.

**Mr. Murray:** I wonder if the Premier could just spend just a minute explaining. I know there was no increase in the International Development Program, but the thrust of that development program, I wonder if the Premier just give me a quick overview of that, please.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, I have not had an opportunity to directly visit the projects myself. I know former-Premier Filmon visited a number of projects in South America in previous years. I remember him reporting on it back to the House. The essence of this program is that the Government invests in a number of non-profit organizations who, in turn, determine the best projects to invest in.

The Mennonite Central Committee is a very, very strong body that has a number of people that they are paid for. I believe the return to investment is well over six or seven to one; it might even be higher. I might even recall the number thirteen to one, but I will try to bring out the last report to us. It was a significant amount of money. It is based on the theory that you give a person a fish and they eat for a day and you teach somebody to fish and they eat for life. I think it is a very, very active body. As I say, my predecessor visited a number of these projects. I have not had the opportunity to do so, but I am impressed with the group. I meet with them once a

year to go over their report. They do recommend that we expend more money. In past years they have helped us on major catastrophes where there has been money from the provincial government, on major catastrophes in the world, whether it has been in Central America with flooding or India.

There have been a couple of projects, I know, of major significance where money has been sent on an emergency basis, mostly from Canada, but some from the Province. We do not need an extra bureaucracy to administer it and to make sure it is going in the hands that need it the most. It is administered by a group of volunteers. Certainly, I think it has very worthy objectives. If there is anything that the member opposite is concerned about, I would certainly follow it up, but the feedback I get is very, very positive. I am very impressed with the dedication of the people I have met.

I think each year they also have displays in the Legislature to demonstrate the various projects, and I know that a lot of people give virtually their whole life or part of their life to help citizens of the world. I envy a lot of their human sacrifice, not sacrifice in the negative word, but in the most positive sense.

**Mr. Murray:** Is this done on the basis of a project by project? In other words, from time to time, there may be monies in there that are not required, or with that line item you might find that there is for whatever reason—it is not a bad or good reason. I am just wondering for whatever reason that money or a portion of it may get lapsed.

**Mr. Doer:** I am not aware of its lapsing, but I can check on it. I know that they have X number of projects and, quite frankly, they match those projects with money they raise in their churches, in their charities and in the private sector. So I do not think they leave much; they raise a lot more. The amount of money that is spent, as I recall the numbers, I forget the exact ratio, but we certainly get a compound benefit for it. I can get the number. I would doubt very much, they are too smart to lapse money, but I might be wrong.

Mr. Eldridge has informed me they give them instalment payments. They do account for it, but they use it to lever other money as well. Certainly, the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, makes the project decisions. It is not made by

government. They report back to former Premier Filmon; they report back to us; and they report back to the members of the Legislature and the members of the community.

I do believe they have a display here at least every second year, if not every year. They have had it either in the committee rooms or downstairs around the stairway. As I say, they have invited me every year to go to visit some of the projects. I have not been able to go, but I remember former Premier Filmon went and he was quite enthusiastic about what he saw and what he experienced. I think Janice went too, and I think they were quite impressed. I have always been left with that kind of—sometimes a former premier informs me of things that, if he had it to do over again, he would change, and some things he tells you with great enthusiasm, and sometimes he does not tell me anything. On this one, he has been pretty positive in the House, and then informally, and so has Janice Filmon as well.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Chair, the Premier and I had a brief discussion on this during the last Estimates, and we talked a little bit about Internet pharmacies. I just wonder if the Premier could share his views with us on how he feels about Internet pharmacies, and I know there have been some changes since we had this last discussion.

**Mr. Doer:** The Internet pharmacies arose completely on an entrepreneurial basis. It is not something that was specifically initiated by government. It was initiated by private entrepreneurs, who basically saw thousands of seniors coming to Canada for drugs, and they in turn established Internet operations.

There are lots of decisions and pressure in the United States from the food and drug administration. There are lots of issues before the federal Cabinet between the generic drug industry and the conventional drug industry in Ottawa, and there are lots of issues—*[interjection]* That computer might be a lot more interesting than my answers, and I can understand that. *[interjection]* I thought those were against the rules. I am just kidding. *[interjection]* Yes, I know. I think we are missing the action here.

\* (15:50)

I would like to further say about Internet pharmacies that this is being hammered out and fought out by a lot of forces outside of Manitoba.

When I was meeting with the flood group, the governors of North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota, particularly the Governor of Minnesota who has been here, they are very angry about drug costs being so much higher in the United States than they are in Canada.

They are very aware of the drug costs being lower in Europe than they are in the United States and they are trying to challenge the administration. I do not know what happened in the car between President Bush and Governor Pawlenty when they were heading in from the airport on Monday, but this is a huge issue in the United States obviously for the consumer. It is a huge issue for people that are working in Internet pharmacies here in Manitoba and in Alberta, in British Columbia and in Ontario. How the federal government resolves this, the U.S. federal Food and Drug Administration has met with Anne McLellan. Her position has been that the drugs are safe.

Not only the Governor of Minnesota, who is a Republican, but the Democratic governor of Illinois have said that the—

### Report

**Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Chairperson of the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254):** Mr. Chairperson, in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 considering the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Food, during a debate on a motion from the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), a point of order was raised by the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) regarding the relevance of the minister's comments.

As Chairperson, I ruled that there was no point of order. Mr. Chairperson, this ruling was sustained on a voice vote.

Subsequently, two members requested that a formal vote on this matter be taken.

### Formal Vote

**Mr. Chairperson:** A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

*All sections in Chamber for formal vote.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 considering the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Food, during debate on a motion from the honourable Member for Emerson, a point of order was raised by the honourable Member for Russell regarding the relevance of the minister's comment.

The Chairperson ruled that there was no point of order. This ruling was sustained on a voice vote.

Subsequently, two members requested that a formal vote on this matter be taken. We shall now vote on whether the ruling of the Chairperson shall be sustained.

\* (16:30)

*A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 28, Nays 18.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

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**Mr. Chairperson:** We shall now resume with the consideration of the Estimates.

We would like to re-invite the staff of the Executive Council to enter the Chamber, please.

This committee is on line item 2.1. General Administration (b) Management and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

We were proceeding line by line.

**Mr. Murray:** We were having a discussion about Internet pharmacy, and I appreciated the Premier's response. I would just like to say, and I gather the President and Governor Pawlenty spent some time just recently in Minnesota. I do not know if this issue was discussed or not. I certainly watched the report. I did not hear anything of it. I think that we all in this House agree, but I just wonder if the Premier has any knowledge of any instances with respect to Internet pharmacy where there have been issues of any sense of a drug shortage for Manitobans.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, I will have to refer that matter to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). Some of the entrepreneurs that are in the business have assured

us, and the member would know some of them, would be mutual contacts we have had over the years in the, for me, twilight of a mediocre sports career, so I run into some of them sometimes, informally [*interjection*]. Well, I have a friend called Mr. Rumsey. He has a comparable comment about your status in basketball, but I think you were a better basketball player than me, so I could not possibly repeat it, but it may not even be fair. Some comments are not fair. [*interjection*]

Anybody that can make the U of M Bisons the year they were the national champs is worthy of my respect, in basketball only. The bottom line is there is lots of sabre rattling and it is serious. Canada is responsible for the supply of drugs. It has had these discussions with the Food and Drug Administration. So the bottom line is this is a very, very high stakes disagreement between the drug companies, Canadian Internet companies, some parts of the U.S. consumer that want the drugs and some parts of the U.S. industry that do not want the drugs. I did discuss it with Governor Pawlenty, Governor Hoeven and Governor Rounds. They are quite concerned about the bureaucracy with the new drug bill that has just been passed where you need separate cards for each drug. They think this is even going to—they are obviously worried in the States, too, about their own druggists. They are worried about the survival of their own druggists in a rural community in South Dakota. So there are concerns that I respect.

As I say, this is not something the Government started and initiated. This is something that entrepreneurs started when they saw a void. They saw a lower price. They argued that it is a NAFTA trading environment, and they met a void that they saw. They moved into it. It is not something that the Government started in any way, shape or form. It is just something that arose out of a free enterprise opportunity.

\* (16:40)

I think that all these short-term discussions are, in my belief, short-term. This is all short-term because, ultimately, we have a situation where 10 percent of the consumers in North America have 10 percent less drug costs than 90 percent. There are much more powerful forces than the Government of Manitoba that will try to resolve this. I do not know exactly how it is going to be resolved.

I have spoken to Governor Pawlenty when he was here, and did tour a site. His people have assured him that the products are safe, contrary to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Anne McLellan said the same thing when the Food and Drug Administration was meeting with her in Ottawa a couple of months ago.

I, certainly, respect the individuals who have invested their dollars in the businesses here in Manitoba. It has caused pressure on the pharmaceutical costs, in the sense of pharmacists here in Manitoba and in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. Where that is going to resolve itself, that decision could be made in much higher levels in Washington or in Ottawa.

Our industry is advising us of what is going on, but we are trying to monitor both access to drugs, and access to drugs for our own citizens is still of paramount concern.

**Mr. Murray:** Has the Government in any way, shape or form been approached for any financial assistance?

**Mr. Doer:** I do not believe so, but I will double check. I, certainly, cannot recall any document that came to any institution of government. This has been an initiative taken by a lot of entrepreneurs. It has hired a lot of people in places like Minnedosa, in other communities, Niverville. There are people who have taken risks, and received some rewards. Consumers have received a benefit.

So far, generally speaking, the drug availabilities have been there. However, we are monitoring all three of those factors. We have to represent the patients in Manitoba. We have to represent the Internet drug company employees here in Manitoba. We have some sympathy with people that are paying extra as our neighbours.

As I say, this is something that was not initiated by overnment, but was rather initiated by people, seeing buses coming up here, using the internet. I am not so sure that solving, or dealing with just Canada is going to solve the problem. I think that with the Internet we have international ability to supply people. Whether it is Canada today, or Mexico tomorrow, or some country in the Caribbean the day after, or Europe, this is a bigger problem than just Manitoba. It does have obvious impacts either on

access or employment and investment here in the province. We know that.

**Mr. Murray:** I wonder if the Premier could just comment in a general way, because I am going to be—this is more of a hypothetical. If it was proven that there was some shortage of drugs that were available to Manitobans, is there a process that the Premier or the Minister of Health is aware of in the event that that ever took place?

I know that both the Premier and, certainly, we all share the fact that Manitobans are first, and I think that even the Internet pharmacists have indicated that that is their priority to ensure that is there, but, in the event that something did take place where there was a sense that there was proof that there was a shortage, does the Premier have anything, or the Minister of Health have any process in place either to monitor that and, if that is the case, to deal with it?

**Mr. Doer:** There is a lot of jawboning going on right now, and I think the people that have invested in this business, and the 3000 people that are working in it, want us to be very prudent on what I would say in the House or anywhere else.

I was very careful with Governor Pawlenty. I have not tried to provoke a fight with the drug companies, nor have I tried to undermine the Internet investors here and employees here in Manitoba, nor have I tried to forget that our first objective is to have supply. So I have been very careful.

I am sorry I was just chatting. We received support in Minnesota to go to the IJC, so this is a letter we just got an hour ago. Obviously, we had a pretty feisty discussion with them, with Governor Hoeven, so I want to make sure this gets to the Prime Minister in Washington right now. I want to make sure it continues to support us, and I do thank the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) for his support before. We do not want to go to court; we want it to go to the IJC. I know he has been helpful in the past, and the graders operate while we try to get due process. It is a hard process. So I apologize for my distraction.

**Mr. Murray:** Well, I appreciate that, Mr. Chair. I wonder if the Premier could just, at this time, because it is probably very important, and I did acknowledge that I thought it was important when I

saw on the news last night that Minister Graham stood in the House and raised the issue. I think that is quite a breakthrough, considering that there had been lots of discussions going on and wanting to raise it at that level, and I just maybe would ask the Premier if he could just update where we are with respect to Devils Lake.

**Mr. Doer:** We felt, and the member felt, that we should assert Canada's international view on the federal process, the federal project for the U.S. Corps of Engineers. There is no appropriated money for the federal process, so that is why North Dakota says, well, it may not have any—Secretary of State Powell had four conditions: sand filter, mercury analysis, biota data gap and existing conditions. There has been no money appropriated to that project on the federal level to the Corps of Engineers. It has been listed by the Taxpayers Association of the United States as one of the top 10 boondoggles in the U.S. budget. It has been raised by Senator McCain and Democrats, and motions have been placed to defeat the money. So we are getting that word out. We obviously have maintained support from Missouri, Mr. Chair, and today, very, very, helpful support from Minnesota following a meeting two days ago.

We have the Republican senator, Senator Coleman, and the Democratic senator, Senator Dayton, both supporting us as well in a bipartisan way. Now, of course, North Dakota is worried about the flood levels. There is action from the U.S. Corps of Engineers to protect some of the water systems. There is more money going into Devils Lake. So far the lake is one foot below where it peaked two years ago. It went down two feet; it has gone up a foot this spring runoff. On the one hand, we do not want any farmer in any part of our region to suffer a drought, but if it is a dry season, the lake is a dish.

So there is domestic pressure on Governor Hoeven to proceed. He has now announced his unilateral state proposal. The U.S. State Department has declared that this is not in their view—the judgment of Secretary of State Powell does not fit for the state proposal. Our goal now is to get this matter of the state proposal referred to the IJC. So far we have got support, as I say, for this going to the IJC. We just received support from Governor Pawlenty. Basically, there are other water disagreements in North Dakota. By the way, Montana feels that North Dakota has just got an agreement to get more water than they deserve from the west of them, and they

are going to divert water to the east of them and the north of them and then Missouri is opposed to them on the south side of them. I think that this should go to the IJC. I have tried to make it more of a Canadian issue, rather than just a Manitoba-North Dakota issue, because I actually believe that you have to get the Great Lakes states and provinces sometimes engaged in this.

We have the Great Lakes Water Commission people supporting us against the unilateral diversion. We are working on the Wildlife Federation whom you met when we were down in Washington. Still, hopefully, the Prime Minister can actually help the United States as well as help Canada, because if a state or a province can proceed on unilateral projects without consideration to a treaty that has been around since 1909, I think it is bigger than all of us.

\* (16:50)

I know that former Premier Filmon threatened to go to court. I have not wanted to go to court. We agreed that it should go to court as a last resort. Hopefully, we are willing to abide by the IJC and not put the Americans in a double jeopardy position, but we will have to see.

**Mr. Murray:** Just for clarity, so over on the Devils Lake issue, there has been no court action?

**Mr. Doer:** There is court action in North Dakota. It is not preferable to go to court in North Dakota. It is like cattle producers going—I should be careful of my comments. I will not say anything more because it can be used in a court of law. There is a case in North Dakota. We are looking at federal action, federal cases on the basis of federal wetlands legislation and, obviously, the NAWS case is in federal U.S. Court in Washington. These are not the preferred ways to go. The preferred way to go is the IJC, in my view, but the court is a remedy. We are not by ourselves; we are with the friends of Shyenne and the Peterson Coulee coalition. So there are North Dakota people opposed to it as well. Now we have Minnesota people supporting the IJC reference basically saying: "Let's have an adjudication of this. That is what we want; we will take our chances."

**Mr. Murray:** So, when the Premier refers to double jeopardy, he is just saying having it in front of the IJC and making them look at getting involved and

putting a ruling while it sits in the courts in North Dakota.

**Mr. Doer:** It is our view from our legal advisors that, if the Americans say which avenue do you want it to be dealt with, the legal advice on the Devils Lake state outlet is the IJC. So we are following that advice because, in all fairness, I can understand the Americans saying: "Well, we don't want to have heads you win on the IJC and then we get another fight in the courts." But the court action is filed and I should be careful about saying anything more. The problem is with the more interveners you get in court, the more you are not by yourself anymore. It is just not Manitoba anymore and Canada.

**Mr. Murray:** I would like to get into the Budget a bit, the comments that were made by the First Minister in the last budget where he instructed ministers to go line by line through the Budget to look for savings. I think, particularly, his focus was on administrative costs. I think that it shows, particularly in the Budget that was presented, the 2004 Budget, that there were administrative increases in a number of departments. So I will reserve comments to go specifically by department by department.

But I wonder if the Premier, just in a general way, could share why, when he instructed his ministers to look for savings, in numerous departments on the administrative side, that was not forthcoming.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, sometimes the definition of administration may be different between the Opposition and us. Aboriginal training and curriculum to us is a statement of inclusion in Education and the administrative line being constant is not. So I am informed that the administration went up 0.9 percent, which is less than the general wage increase. In the Department of Education, by the way, in the past we have reduced the number of positions in the Department of Education over four years in the central department of education by 80 positions. So this is a continuation, but we have announced \$30 million in salaries to be reduced in this Budget. We have announced 400 positions. We have more than that that are vacant. Some of them are necessary like jail guards, people working in Manitoba development school, people working as emergency grader operators, ambulance staff. There are some that will have to be filled, but others will have to be vacant

through attrition, and not, therefore, as part of the \$30-million exercise.

**Mr. Murray:** I would, just on the Premier's comments with respect to education, and I know I asked this the last Estimate process, and I suspect that I will be asking it again next year. The First Minister talked about amalgamation, and talked about a \$10-million saving through amalgamation, and driving those savings into the front line, into the classroom. I think that it, certainly, was something that sounded pretty good to Manitobans, but I believe the First Minister would agree that that just has not happened.

So, again, I wondered if he could say now, or a couple of years down the road, of him making that statement to Manitobans. Why have you not been able to produce the \$10-million savings and put those costs, the \$10 million of savings into the front line in education?

**Mr. Doer:** I believe I said in the first set of Estimates in '03 that we would be willing to go to the people at the end of the mandate and demonstrate why it makes more sense to have six school divisions in Winnipeg instead of nine. We believe we will be able to do that. I think the public actually supports it. I note that there is no area in the last election where this may or may not have been a big issue where we lost public support. In fact, some of the areas that we gained support were in areas that had allegedly contentious school division mergers, south Winnipeg for example, southeast Winnipeg; Gimli had a merged school division. I am not saying this is the only factor, but we, certainly, road-tested this with the public, and the car got back in the garage.

**Mr. Murray:** Well, that is like saying to the person that you are selling a car to that you are going to be buying a Porsche and you turn out that what you are buying is a '97 Chevy Biscayne, not that there is anything wrong with Chevy Biscaynes, but what you indicated to Manitobans is that there would be \$10 million worth of savings, that forced amalgamations was the right way to go. I do not know that it was an issue that you indicated that the major reason was to reduce the number of school divisions per se, but it was on the idea that it was the right thing to do, because there would be \$10-million worth of savings.

The direct question would have to be: Did you do your homework and say that here is where the \$10-million worth of savings could be found,

because if you did, then you should be able to demonstrate here is where they are going to be. But, the fact that we see that, really, school divisions are, in fact, increasing their costs, it then, I think, is an analogy to say, "So we would look for any of those savings."

I think any time that you can show savings, as you indicated to Manitobans that you were capable of doing that, and the number was fantastic, \$10 million, a big number. A good number to be driven into the classrooms to ensure that Manitoba children are getting good solid education.

The fact that you failed to do that, and, really, we see costs going up, I just would ask the First Minister what sort of homework, what sort of study—and I will use the term "business case" because I want to use that term, and I do not mean the sense so that the First Minister turns around and says, "Well, you know, you cannot run schools like businesses." That is not the point. I use it in a vernacular, to say that, if you are going to be able to, sort of, look and show \$10-million worth of savings, somebody had to sit down and do some calculation that would come forward and say, "Well, here is where the savings can be had. Here is how it is going to work."

\* (17:00)

So that \$10 million that allows you to stand up and say, "Here is why we are doing it." That calculation should be forthcoming. It has gone, sort of, the other way, where we have not seen those savings. We have seen it across. So I just would say, "Where do you think you misjudged your \$10 million of savings?"

**Mr. Doer:** I said I would be accountable for it. I would note that the member opposite did not campaign on reversing the decision to go back to the mid-fifties, both in terms of the number of school divisions, and when you mentioned the Chevrolet. All we were trying to do was—we never promised the public a Porsche. What we did promise is to go from a fleet of 55 cars to a fleet of 37 cars, and we hope that they are economical cars.

You know, I meet with a lot of parents out there, and we knew it would take a little transition. We have gone through transitions at Hydro. We have gone through transitions at Centra Gas. You know, the world changes.

If the member opposite wants to go into the next election and say, "Elect me, and I will increase the number of school divisions," I welcome that debate. It is a good debate to have. I am comfortable where we are, and he can reverse it. I would not recommend it.

Six school divisions in Winnipeg, some could argue, is still too many, but we tried to have a reasonable approach to it to modernize. You know, government is not about status quo, and this Government is not about status quo, and we are not going to be about status quo. Everything we do is not about status quo.

I feel accountable for the decision we made. I would have preferred more volunteerism in the school divisions. We did not get it. I think we can move forward now. We feel that the reductions were fair. It was equal in the North, and equal in rural communities, and equal in Winnipeg.

We did not just go by only per student, because it would have been unfair to rural and northern Manitoba. I welcome the debate. I would love to have the debate in the next election. "Vote Conservative. We will increase the number of school divisions." I am betting right now that you will not do that, but I have been surprised before.

**Mr. Murray:** Well, the Premier (Mr. Doer) makes comment that we did not campaign on reversing the amalgamation of forced school divisions, and he is right about that.

I will not say that I have learned a lot from the First Minister, but one thing I have learned is to be careful, a little bit, what you say in public, because I believe he was going to reverse the decision to buy back MTS, and he, basically, told Manitobans that was what he was committed to. He was going to do that, if he became premier and, of course, I do not hear him, sort of, going down that road anymore.

So I certainly believe that when you want to be accountable to the public, I think there is truth in that, but I think that the notion to stand and try to reverse something that was forced, as you did with school divisions, I do not believe that you want to reverse that decision.

The First Minister wanted to do that with MTS, and was very passionate about, you know, "selling

MTS was wrong" and, if he became the Premier, he would, in fact, reverse that decision. So, no, Premier. I will not do what you said you were going to do, because I do not think that you should whipsaw the public.

I think that it becomes a nice whipping post, and maybe a good opportunity to stand up and give political rhetoric in front of the public, and say that you think it was wrong, and that you are going to reverse it. I do not know if, maybe, we have not seen all the legislation, maybe you are going to stand by your word and reverse the decision, and somehow buy back MTS. I guess that is possible. If that is the case, then maybe I would revisit my comments about undoing forced amalgamation.

Again, maybe the First Minister, in the next election campaign, will live by his word, and will campaign on the fact that he is going to go out and buy MTS. That would be an interesting debate to have, as well, I would say.

I am really more interested in your comments with respect to when you look at reducing school divisions, and understand where you are going. Again, you can stand in front of Manitobans and say, "You know, we have reduced the number of schools divisions." You indicate that you talked to people and think that is the right thing to do.

I would just like to be able to—I said this all along. I said this when the Minister of Education tried to bring this in, where you talk about a \$10-million saving. I mean, if somebody just, kind of, picked a number out of the air, I do not think it is a good answer, but it is an answer that one would accept.

I am a bit mystified as to how you would go through a process of coming up with a specific number that would say that we have done our homework. We are going to force these. We would like volunteerism. We understand that we, on the side, would have, I believe the previous government, my predecessor, looked at some volunteer school divisions that amalgamated.

I do think that the premise that the Premier went to the public on was not only to reduce the number of school divisions, but there was a financial positive windfall for doing that. That windfall was identified as a \$10-million saving.



I just would like to hear from the Premier. Was the homework that was done, was the idea that was done to do this, was it perhaps faulty accounting? The idea of reducing school divisions stands on its own merit. You have done that. There is no question, and the record shows very clearly that you have done it. But what the record does not show is that you were going to do it on the basis of saving some \$10 million. Of course, as I say, we have not seen any saving. There have been additional costs. So, if you could please just explain, what sort of homework showed where you were going to see those \$10-million savings.

**Mr. Doer:** The previous minister went through some of these numbers, the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

Secondly, Mr. Chairperson, certainly, in the height of the MTS debate we talked about repurchasing it for the people of Manitoba. What I did not expect was six months later the price to be utter and total robbery, the people of Manitoba with the under-evaluation of the company. Then I had to go back to our convention, when the stocks doubled in value, which, of course, none of our members bought any shares. Some of us even knew the value of that company, because some of us had been ministers of telephone systems, and all our caucus.

**An Honourable Member:** Mr. Schreyer?

**Mr. Doer:** He was not a member of our caucus. But it was given away. I think it was scandalous when the shares were so low. It meant companies made money on the sale of the shares. People have been convicted of breaching the security laws of Manitoba with the Barrett family, and others the member will know. So it is not Manitoba's proudest moment. Well, when the price of the shares was close to double what the Government gave away that asset for, I went back to the NDP convention, quite frankly, and had the guts to say to the party, and get a resolution passed, that we would not re-purchase the phone system. We could not afford it. And not only that, we went to the people in '99 without a false promise.

It is quite different that in 1995 when Mr. Filmon promised not to sell the phone system, then two months later had hired, through Julian Benson, people to start the due diligence to sell the company. We never could figure out all the factors of the

balanced budget legislation during that debate, but then all the pieces came together when we recognized that all those proceeds went into a fund. The first set of money went in from the Lotteries, of course, later commented on by the Auditor, and then the second set of funds came in from the telephone system. After the company was given away by the Tories, it would have been irresponsible for us to pay twice the price of what it was sold for. I could not, in all consciousness, do that. You can check the record. It was a front-page story in the *Free Press* after our convention where we had enough nerve in 1998 to go to the convention to say, "Listen, as much as we would love to have this back in public ownership, we cannot justify it economically." We passed the motion, and I went to the '99 election with platforms to the people that we would not repurchase it.

\* (17:10)

I would say to the member opposite, nobody in Manitoba will trust Conservatives again with their Crown corporations. You will be wearing, appropriately, this mistrust legacy on the sale of MTS, with Hydro, for a generation to come.

**Mr. Murray:** Well, I would say that I am always fascinated when we get around the MTS debate, because, I think, the First Minister always has a very interesting approach to it. He, apparently, as he said, had the guts to go to his convention to get a ruling on it. It sort of begs the question, which, you know, that there was a price point of which he, if he became premier, was prepared to pay, but not a nickel more and not a penny more, but he would, certainly, be prepared to pay a certain amount to get it back. So the fact that the value of the company went up, it excluded him from making the commitment that he had said he was going to do had he become premier, that he, in fact, was going to purchase back the company. There is, obviously, some sort of value that he sees that is worth it, and some value that he just sees, apparently, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, the caucus, that he would say, "Well, that is just too much, and we are not going to go down that road. I said I was going to do it, but I look at the value, and so, you know, it is not worth it. We are not going to do that."

I would say, on the same basis, and to use his words, he had the guts to be able to stand up in front of his caucus. Does he have the guts in this discussion, if I can use his own words, to explain

how it is that you could come up to a calculation of saving \$10 million through forcing school divisions to amalgamate, and fail to be able to provide those savings?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Chair, the member opposite has missed the point. It was not that the value of the company rose; it was that the value of the company was established by members opposite under the value of the corporation. They, basically, took a public asset without public permission. We called on the government of the day to have a referendum. They could not stand before the people, and they undersold the asset. As soon as I saw, I believe it was \$13 a share, I knew that they were giving it away. It is scandalous. At that point, I knew the value of the company would go up, and that would mean that we sold at a certain price, and we would have to buy it back at twice as much almost, because they went and undersold it.

The bottom line was, I knew at that point—I was shocked when I saw the share price established by members opposite, but everybody made a lot of money. The Jaguar sales—you wanted to talk about Porsches? Well, the Porsche sales did go up that month. The Wellington West brokers were in the newspaper talking about how well they did.

Well, it was a public asset. There was no permission. Even in a private company, you have to get permission from the majority of the shareholders. Even private companies have rules about assets, so that is the argument.

We agree to disagree about amalgamations of school divisions. I believe that you will not go back to the people of Manitoba, "Vote for me, and I will

go to nine school divisions in Winnipeg." But, if you do, I welcome that debate. I look forward to it. I love a good debate. "Vote for the Conservatives. We will increase the number of superintendents in your school division."

**An Honourable Member:** A promise made, a promise broken.

**Mr. Doer:** It was such a quiet conversation before the echo from Steinbach arrived, but—*[interjection]* Oh, good.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Please, follow some rules in this committee. Unless you are recognized, you are not supposed to participate. I am just cautioning everybody.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Chair, I understand that the Premier has an airplane to catch. So, on that basis, we will resume, I believe, on Monday. I think the Premier is away tomorrow. So we will resume our Estimate process on Monday.

**Mr. Doer:** I believe, by agreement in the House, the Department of Finance will be heard tomorrow in Estimates, and then we will revert back to the department of Executive Council on Monday.

**Mr. Chairperson:** As it has been agreed to by the House, when this section of the Committee of Supply resumes tomorrow, the Estimates for the Department of Finance will be considered. I am now interrupting the proceedings of this committee.

The committee will be in recess until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).