

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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

Wednesday, May 12, 2004

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

Mr. Speaker: I would just like to inform the House that Hansard will be late. The printing press is down, and it will be about an hour and a half before they can deliver Hansard.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

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:

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.

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.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by Leonard Klassen, Darren Klassen, Hermann Grauer 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.

Minimum Sitting Days for Legislative Assembly

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wish 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 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 for a minimum of 80 days in any given calendar year.

* (13:35)

Signed by Fely Ines, Joe Buen, Annabelle Reyes 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.

Highway 227

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 accessible to emergency services due to the nature of the current condition of 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 (Mr. Lemieux) to consider having Highway 227 paved from the junction of highways 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 for the safety of all Manitobans and Canadians who travel all Manitoba highways.

Signed by L. Bullock, Barrie Tully, Don Walsh 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.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, 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 strategy in 2000 and was presented with nine recommendations in 2002, none of which have yet been implemented.

In the absence of a provincial Alzheimer 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 strategy.

Signed by B. Watts, C. Gill, A. Jacques 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 (Mr. Doer) 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 John Duerksen, Betty Duerksen, Terry Williams 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.

Highway 32

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Rural highways are part of the mandate of the Province of Manitoba.

Under a previous commitment, the Province of Manitoba would be covering the costs of four-laning that portion of Highway 32 that runs through Winkler, Manitoba.

The Department of Transportation and Government Services has altered its position and will now undertake the project only if the City of Winkler will pay half of the total cost of construction. The provincial government's offloading of its previous commitment will cost the City of Winkler several million dollars.

The City of Winkler has now been informed that it will have to wait several years before this project could be undertaken.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider honouring the previous commitment and complete the four-laning of Highway 32 through the city of Winkler, absorbing all costs related to the construction as previously agreed.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider the responsibility of the Department of Transportation and Government Services for the construction of rural highways.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider the significant and strategic importance of the completion of four-laning Highway 32 through the city of Winkler, especially as it relates to the economic growth and the development of the city of Winkler and its trading area.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider the valuable contribution of the city of Winkler and its trading area to the provincial economy and reprioritize the four-laning of Highway 32 for the 2004 construction season.

Submitted by Garry Wiebe, Jake Siemens, Vince Anderson, Ken Hildebrand 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. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): 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.

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.

* (13:45)

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 Ivan Stadnyn, Ann Bray, Roberta Linnett and others.

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I am pleased to table the Manitoba Labour and Immigration Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Departmental Estimates for 2004-2005.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Manitoba Day

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): I have a statement for the House.

It is my pleasure today to rise and provide a ministerial statement about today's celebration of Manitoba Day with Manitoba's youth. Mr. Speaker, 134 years ago The Manitoba Act received Royal Assent, officially creating our province as part of the young nation of Canada. Today is the time for Manitobans young and old to reflect on where we came from, what we have achieved in those many decades, who we are today and how we wish to shape our common future.

The youth of today are the generation who will shape the world of tomorrow, and their ability to meet that responsibility will depend on our ability as parents, teachers, leaders and role models to help Manitoba's youth understand what it means to be a citizen of this nation and a member of this community. Our commitment to this task is reflected in the recent change in the name of the department to include citizenship.

The change signals a greater emphasis on preparing youth to develop the knowledge, skills and values that are necessary to understand the role of citizens and to actively participate in shaping communities. Through a wide variety of initiatives in and out of school the Province has placed a special focus on assisting students and youth to understand the role of citizens and to encourage them to become fully engaged members of society.

We are reaffirming the role of education in preparing youth to become informed and involved members of our communities today and the guardians of our democratic legacy for the years ahead.

Manitoba Day is a moment to reflect on our past, our accomplishments, our shared achievements as a people and as a community. It is also a time to look to the future, to ask ourselves what are our hopes, our dreams, our aspirations for ourselves and those generations who will follow us on this journey. It is for this reason that we particularly want to celebrate Manitoba Day with Manitoba's youth.

I want to conclude by thanking the youth for joining us today in the Legislative Building to celebrate Manitoba Day. I also want to thank the performers affiliated with Manitoba Film and Sound who provided us with live entertainment, the Wailin' Jennys. Again, Happy Manitoba Day.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I am pleased to share a few remarks about Manitoba Day, celebrated today, May 12, in honour of Manitoba's 134th birthday. I was glad to be able to attend the celebration at the Grand Staircase earlier today and take some time to reflect on the great day in 1870 when The Manitoba Act created the province of Manitoba.

I did really enjoy the music of the Wailin' Jennys today. It was just beautiful. I am sure I speak for all members of the Chamber when I say this is an especially important day for all of us as we continue the work of our former colleagues, serving the citizens of Manitoba and representing their interests here in the Legislature. I trust that all members will take a few minutes to ponder the importance of remembering Manitoba's history and the people who made Manitoba what it is today.

* (13:50)

I recognize that we are putting increased emphasis on our youth today, as witnessed by the number of young people with us today. It is not only about celebrating Manitoba's history but also a time to reflect on our rich cultural traditions. Aboriginal people and immigrants from around the world have come together to make a cultural, diverse and culturally rich population for Manitoba. Although we share different customs, practices and languages, we are all proud to be part of the province.

I would like to take the opportunity just to reflect on a few highlights. As I mentioned, 1870, the province of Manitoba came into being with The Manitoba Act. In the 1880s there was a decade of expansion for the CPR, extending tracks through Winnipeg and across southern Manitoba. 1885 was the year Louis Riel experienced his final days. In the 1890s, Manitoba became home to Ukrainians, Russians, German Mennonites, Icelanders and other Europeans as well as U.S. and Ontario homesteaders. In the 1900s, Manitoba petitioned the federal government to extend the western boundary. In 1913, the foundation of the Manitoba Legislature was laid. In 1916,

Manitoba was the first province to grant women the right to vote. 1919 was the year of the infamous—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I regret to interrupt the honourable member, but our Rule 25(3) states the person may speak for no longer than the minister spoke, and I note the honourable member's comments are now considerably longer than those of the minister. I would ask the honourable member to please conclude your comments.

Mrs. Taillieu: In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, today as Manitobans remember our individual and collective past, we celebrate our accomplishments of our province thus far, and I would like to ask us all to say Happy Birthday to Manitoba today.

Happy Birthday was sung.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: I heard a no. Leave has been denied.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 211—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I move, seconded by the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), that Bill 211, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Veterans' Licence Plates), now be read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Eichler: This bill requires the Registrar of the Motor Vehicles Branch to make licence plates bearing veteran's graphic available to all soldiers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to

the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Mr. Eddy Lamoureux from Mississauga, Ontario who is the uncle of the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), and accompanying him is Ms. Cathy Lamoureux, who is the wife of the honourable Member for Inkster.

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Robertson School 19 Grade 5 students under the direction of Ms. Karla Yallits. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

Also in the public gallery we have from Springs Christian Academy 31 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Chris Budlong. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

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

* (13:55)

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Carman, on a point of order.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): On a point of order, Sir. I think I heard during ministerial statements the minister making a statement on Manitoba Day and then a member of the Opposition making a reply to the said statement. I did say no when you asked for leave. I was thinking of a different subject so I would ask for leave of the House to ask you to ask if there is leave one more time.

Mr. Speaker: First of all, I am asking leave to revert back to ministerial statements. Is it the will of the House to revert back to ministerial statements? *[Agreed]*

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave to speak to the ministerial statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

* * *

Mr. Gerrard: Happy Birthday, Manitoba. Today is a wonderful day to celebrate the extraordinary contributions and the extraordinary history of Manitoba. I believe it is fitting that we talk specifically about young people because young people are the future. Clearly, in this party we have talked for a long time about making sure that we change the nature of government, that we can change the approach of the provincial government to improve things for young people in this province.

We have a proud history with the First Nations making major contributions to our province, with the Métis and Louis Riel, with the Liberal premier, Thomas Greenway, leading the charge in getting immigrants to this province, with the Liberal premier, Tobias Norris, making sure that women could have the vote in Manitoba.

It is a wonderful province to live in. Happy Birthday, Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Now we will move on to Question Period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Alzheimer Strategy Implementation

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): In early 2000, the Health Minister (Mr. Chomiak) directed his department to develop an Alzheimer strategy for Manitoba. In October 2002, the minister received a report called *The Strategy for Alzheimer Disease and Related Dementias in Manitoba*. In March 2003, at the Alzheimer Society annual conference, the minister's representative announced the Doer government was committed to the implementation of the strategy, Mr. Speaker, yet here we are in 2004 and no action has been taken. Can the Premier explain why his Government has not moved on implementing the Alzheimer strategy?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I know, Mr. Speaker, that we have introduced a number of actions consistent with the strategy, including many drugs that were not covered in the past.

Mr. Murray: Early last year this Government, Mr. Speaker, told the Alzheimer Society that they accepted the Alzheimer strategy and they promised them that the stakeholder advisory committee would

be formed in the summer of 2003 to develop a proposed plan, an action plan to deal with the report's recommendation. Let us be clear. Prior to the last provincial election, the Doer government promised hundreds of Manitobans that they would quickly implement the Alzheimer strategy, but following the last provincial election campaign, this strategy has quietly been shelved.

* (14:00)

How does this Premier explain why his stakeholder advisory committee, which was supposed to start working on an implementation plan last June, has not even yet been established?

Mr. Doer: We have increased the capacity of personal care homes to deal with some people who are dealing with this challenge. As I mentioned before, many drugs that were not covered in the past are now covered under this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). We are still completing action on other areas of the plan, Mr. Speaker, and there is action that has been taken.

Mr. Murray: Manitoba has a growing aging population. We have more people in Manitoba that are being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia, Mr. Speaker. The Government supposedly recognized how important that was back in the year 2000. They promised that they would address it and yet, four years later, they have done nothing.

As a March 17, 2004, letter from the Alzheimer Society to the Health Minister stated, and I would like to quote from the letter, "The Alzheimer Society of Manitoba along with the people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia, their families and the people who care for them are frustrated by the lack of movement by your Government. We urge you to uphold your prior commitment and take immediate action to form the stakeholder advisory committee to begin developing the implementation plan." A direct quote from a letter sent to this Doer government.

Will the Premier tell us when his already long-overdue commitment will be established? When will he live up to his promise?

Mr. Doer: As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, three drugs that were not covered in the past are now covered, which was recommended by the organizations and is

now implemented and in the Budget. Secondly, there have been a number of legitimate improvements and upgrades to deal with recommendations dealing with individuals in personal care homes.

Mr. Speaker, those recommendations have been implemented. There is a third set of recommendations, nine recommendations that have been made to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. We have costed them out at being over \$3 million. We are working on prioritizing those recommendations—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about action. There would have been cuts to Alzheimer's and every other program in Government if we had implemented the 1% solution the member opposite proposed in the election.

Alzheimer Strategy Implementation

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): The Alzheimer association is complaining about the inaction of this Government. In early 2000, Manitoba's Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) directed Manitoba Health to develop an Alzheimer strategy in order to start planning for the future. Four years ago a steering committee was created. There were representatives from Manitoba Health, regional health authorities, the Alzheimer association of Manitoba, the Centre on Aging, Manitoba Society of Seniors and the Seniors Directorate, who sought opinions from over 3000 individuals.

In November 2000, nine key strategic initiatives were addressed and submitted to the minister. Mr. Speaker, nothing has happened on those nine strategic initiatives. There has been no meeting, there has been no contact. The Alzheimer association has written letters. Nothing has happened.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister responsible for Healthy Living): I am pleased to inform the member I met with the Alzheimer group twice. I also went and talked to the area GM. Mr. Speaker, we have been in communication.

The other thing is that our Government, unlike the members opposite, has moved forward on this

file. In the year 2000, we asked for the report to be developed. We have worked with all the stakeholders including the RHAs, the deliverers, everything else, government departments, and we have come up with a strategy.

Since then what we have done is the strategy has been sent out to all RHAs, all different organizations, and what we have asked the Government departments to do after we have developed the strategy is find out what best practices are happening in the RHAs. That information is currently coming to us and different RHAs are developing a plan currently to address those nine issues.

Mr. Reimer: Last year the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) told the Alzheimer association that a stakeholder advisory committee would be formed. That was last year, in 2003. This has not happened. They are asking when will the stakeholder advisory committee be formed so they can implement some of the recommendations. The minister is stating they are talking to all these associations. The biggest part of the association is the Alzheimer association. They are not being consulted. There is no action on the recommendations.

I am asking this minister when will they have the meeting. When will the stakeholder advisory committees happen? When?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the member again that I have not only met with them twice, but we have discussed how we are looking at the recommendations that were outlined in the report, how we are getting information from the RHAs to see what is happening already in the nine recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note there is good work going on in the field in regard to Alzheimer's and many other health-related aspects. What we have done is there is lots of good practice going on there. It does not make sense to re-create the wheel. What we have said to the Alzheimer strategy and to the association is we would get the information from the RHAs on what they are doing right now, right now what the areas are doing in relation to the strategy, and see how we can share best practice and not recreate the wheel.

Mr. Reimer: The minister is referring to his meetings with the association. I will table a letter that they sent back to the minister, the honourable

Minister of Healthy Living, and I will quote from the letter. They are saying, this is to this minister that was just speaking, "We are frustrated by your department's obvious misinformation regarding the origin of the report, and we are concerned about the unnecessary duplication of the two-year research process spearheaded by the Department of Health." The letter to his department and to the minister is saying that they are not satisfied. He keeps talking about consultation. The consultation is not working.

I am asking the minister when will there be some concrete action on this report. The report that was started in 2000, tabled in October of 2002 and nothing has happened.

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, I look at the actions that this Government did. We were one of the first provinces to expand the Alzheimer's drugs to all people in Manitoba. We were one of the first provinces to develop an overarching Alzheimer strategy and then ask what is happening in the regions to make sure the best practices are out there.

The member opposite does not have faith in the regional health authorities, the people who deliver health care services. We know good work is going on in the RHAs, good work is going on in personal care homes, and good practice is going on in home care throughout the province to help support not just the Alzheimer's patients but the families. We are looking forward, we have commissioned a study, we are moving forward on this important issue and we will continue to move forward unlike members opposite.

Conference of the Reducers Sponsorship

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): At a time when Manitoba Hydro is experiencing a minimum \$359-million loss, at a time when the Government has raided Manitoba Hydro for \$203 million and at a time when Manitoba Hydro has gone before the Public Utilities Board for a 7.5% increase in residential rates, why would this Government be demanding Manitoba Hydro provide sponsorship money for a conference in Toronto?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I reported to the House that Manitoba Hydro had provided a \$5,000 sponsorship to an international conference in the largest market

for energy in Canada that once again profiled what Manitoba Hydro and the Government of Manitoba are doing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this jurisdiction. This is giving us a first-class reputation not only in Canada but throughout the world. For \$5,000, it is very good value for this province.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, since the Manitoba Government is the only provincial government that is sponsoring this conference, and Manitoba Hydro is not even identified or receives any benefit from the sponsorship dollars that this Government demanded, will this Government indicate why they would force or demand that Manitoba Hydro pay sponsorship dollars when they get no benefit, when Manitoba Hydro is losing money?

* (14:10)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, there is an assumption there that Manitoba Hydro was forced to put \$5,000 into the conference. Anybody that knows the CEO and president of Manitoba Hydro, he only makes investments when he thinks it will serve the best interest of that Crown corporation which is owned by the people of Manitoba. I can tell you, that is a—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That Crown corporation has a world-class reputation, the lowest hydro rates not only in North America but now the lowest hydro rates in the world and one of the best greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies in the world. We are proud of the work they do. We are happy to showcase them in the largest market in the world and in Canada through Toronto.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, at a time when the Minister of Finance has said that they are looking for ways to reduce expenditures, why would the Manitoba government force Manitoba Hydro to sponsor a conference in Toronto to pay to get the Premier's name on the agenda when he is not even there to speak?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The member opposite would probably know that we do not ask our Crown

corporations to pay our airfare to Monte Carlo to study gambling procedures so she should be a little careful when she is being holier than thou in this Chamber. Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I know members opposite mothballed the Conawapa project. We had developed two sales to Ontario, the 200-megawatt sale that was agreed to in 1987, another sale that was agreed to in a feasibility study that was signed off by the former government, former Premier Filmon and former Premier Peterson.

Regrettably, Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba government cancelled that Conawapa project. It is very consistent with the Conservatives. They cancelled Limestone, they cancelled Conawapa. We are out selling Hydro. Hydro is out selling hydro because we believe in a future of economic growth. We are not the mothball party of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Conference of the Reducers Sponsorship

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance suggests that the chairman of Manitoba Hydro cannot be forced to make any decisions that the Government asks, but when they ask him and he does not do it, they force it by legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier, if it cost him \$5,000 to get on the agenda, can he tell us what the other ministers that are on the agenda to speak today paid to get on their agenda.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, members might recall that we had a Manitoba task force chaired by Lloyd Axworthy on how we can be among the leaders in Canada on greenhouse gas emissions reduction. Our Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale) is in Toronto explaining the Manitoba strategy on reducing greenhouse gases. We have received very positive editorials in the *Toronto Star*, as well as in the *National Post*, looking at how Manitoba Hydro can be a solution to greenhouse gas emissions and the brown clouds floating overtop of the city of Toronto. This is a tremendous opportunity for this

province. I am proud that our minister is down there making the case for Manitoba as one of the solutions to greenhouse gas emissions in this country.

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Speaker, the minister refers to a hired gun by the Province of Manitoba. Why is Lloyd Axworthy not down there making this presentation to the people then?

Mr. Speaker, I asked a question and I will ask the minister again, if it cost the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba \$5,000 to get on the agenda, what did it cost the Minister of the Environment for Canada, the Minister of the Environment to the United Kingdom, the Minister of the Environment for Australia. Is the Premier the only one that has to pay to get on the speaking agenda?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the whole premise of their question is completely wrong. We have a province here that is among the leaders in the industrial world on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We should be proud of the fact that people are coming from all over the world, from Australia, from Great Britain, from all sectors of North America, to see what we are doing in this province to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is something we should be proud of.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is getting very loud and it is getting very difficult to hear. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers. Once again, I would just like to ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

The honourable Minister of Finance, have you concluded your comments?

Mr. Selinger: If I had more time, I would be happy to—

Mr. Speaker: Yes, you have about 16 seconds.

Mr. Selinger: Sixteen seconds, well, I will see if I can get this quote on the record. In 1993, former Premier Filmon, "For that investment of \$15,000 at the real Earth Summit, I think there are some long-term benefits to the province of Manitoba in terms of keeping our leadership in sustainable development first and foremost." We did it for 67 percent of that cost, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the minister does not want to say why he paid \$5,000 to get the Premier (Mr. Doer) on the agenda. I will ask him why he would ask or force Hydro to pay \$5,000 to get on an agenda when they talk about it in the *Financial Post*. It talks about the reducers, the program they are putting on.

They are suggesting that it is a very scary issue they are dealing with. I just want to know why, when Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans are suffering to such great length, he is forcing Manitoba Hydro to finance a government bill? If the Government wants to go out and spread their propaganda, that is up to them but they should not demand and force Hydro to do it. I would ask him to respond to that.

Mr. Selinger: Yesterday we saw in this House the members ask a whole bunch of questions of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) that were based on absolutely no facts at all, completely wrong. I suggest the same thing is being done today. I suggest anybody that wants to phone the CEO and president of Manitoba Hydro and ask him whether he voluntarily made a \$5,000 contribution so the Minister of Hydro and the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, Mr. Tim Sale, could make the case for Manitoba in Toronto, we will understand that is a good investment for promoting this province in an international media centre on a global basis. *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before recognizing the honourable Member for Emerson, I want to once again remind all honourable members, when addressing ministers, it is by their portfolio, not by their name, and members by their constituency and not by names.

* (14:20)

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Compensation for Producers

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): As everybody in this Chamber knows, we are approaching, on May 20, the first anniversary of the one and only BSE case in Canada. The Government of Manitoba has told the people of Manitoba in a series of advertisements that they have made \$180 million available to offset the damages that have been incurred by BSE to livestock producers. During the Estimates, however, we found out that the actual amount of money paid out to

producers in programs was \$31.9 million. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) said they had allocated \$46 million, yet they advertised \$180 million. Can the Minister of Agriculture tell us which of these numbers is correct?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, indeed it is approaching the anniversary of the first case of BSE in Canada, and we are hopeful that we will see movement. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture said they would deal with this in an expedited way. We hope that she will live up to that word. The consultation period is complete. They are now reviewing the comments. If the U.S. government was going to make a decision based on science, there is no reason why our borders should continue to be closed. They should be open.

There also is a precedent that has been set. In no other country before, when there has been a case of BSE, has boxed beef ever moved. That has been moving, and we hope that we will see the border open very soon.

Mr. Penner: The Minister of Agriculture evades the number. There is good reason why. She has told us, through requests we made through her department, that they have actually only paid out \$31.9 million when they advertised that they had made \$180 million available. We know that they have driven farmers into debt by \$58.9 million in this province. We also know that the Minister of Finance has stated in Estimates that they only allocated \$46 million. Which of these numbers is correct? Which number is correct?

Ms. Wowchuk: We did make available a significant amount of money to producers. In fact, we made close to \$180 million available. Of those programs, that money was made available. Some of it is still available, and we have paid out on programs. People have certainly taken advantage of the programs.

It is quite interesting, Mr. Speaker. On one hand the Opposition is saying that we should not be spending money, on the other hand they are criticizing us because we are not spending enough money. In total about \$98.3 million has been spent by the Province on BSE programs. This does not include the money spent by the federal government. So the numbers that the member is quoting are wrong.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, I want to table for the minister's edification her own advertisements, and the numbers that I have received out of her office directly which she gave to me. They will prove that my numbers are correct, and if they are not, then she gave me the wrong numbers.

I want to ask the minister what damage do you think you have caused by repeatedly telling farmers of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Reluctantly, Mr. Speaker, I just wonder if you could remind the honourable member that questions and remarks in the House are to be directed through the Speaker, which means that rather than using words like "you" or "Mr. Minister" or "Mrs. Minister," it is a description in the third person. That is to reduce the tensions that sometimes develop in this House. It is for a good reason. It is a good tradition. I think we should try and uphold it.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, he does have a point of order. All questions and answers should be through the Chair, and I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

* * *

Mr. Penner: I want to ask the minister, then, through you, Mr. Speaker, whether she recognizes the damage she has done by repeatedly telling the farmers of Manitoba that the borders would open when she was in Minnesota, when she was in South Dakota, when she came back from Washington and others, and I believe that Washington trip was a U.S. holiday.

Mr. Speaker, we have also been told by the minister that the only amount of money that she has paid out of the \$180 million she advertised was \$31.9 million and borrowed or lent farmers another \$58.9, driving them deeper into debt.

What are farmers in Manitoba supposed to use for money to buy food for their children, to buy feed

for their cattle and to support the expenditures on an ongoing basis on their farms? What are they supposed to use for money, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the member opposite is also hopeful that the border is going to open very soon. All of us are hopeful that the U.S. will make a decision based on science. In reality, if the U.S. was making a decision based on science, the border would be open.

However, I want to say that the decision by the U.S. to open the border to boxed beef and for Mexico to open their border to boxed beef from Canada has been significant. The number of animals moving to market is very high, Mr. Speaker, and there are animals being slaughtered and farmers are having income. Under the loan program that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) called for, he said, "Put in place a loan program or cash advance." He called—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Gaming Facilities Brandon Casino

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, only two years ago, residents of Brandon voted against a casino for their city. Brandon residents have spoken, yet this past weekend, the minister responsible for gambling in the province told a Brandon newspaper that he would not rule out government moving forward with a government casino on its own or in partnership with someone else.

What part of no does the minister not understand? Will he today give residents of Brandon an assurance that his Government will not consider building or licensing a new casino independently or with another group in the city of Brandon?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): I think the member knows that we set in place a process in terms of First Nations casinos. One is up and running and despite the doomsday suggestions from members opposite, it is proving to be a major asset for the community. It is very strongly supported by the town of The Pas in addition to OCN and the R.M.

Mr. Speaker, discussions have been ongoing in terms of the other process. The member knows there

are no other Aboriginal casinos currently being looked at other than the Brokenhead Casino, which was one of the original five that were announced as part of the process back in 2000.

Mr. Goertzen: I am disappointed that the minister who represents the community of Brandon did not have the guts to stand up and answer this question. The mayor of Brandon, Mr. Dave Burgess, was quoted as saying that he would not support a casino in Brandon. The mayor respects the decision made by Brandon residents only two years ago. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Mihychuk), the same member who in 1999 said that there is nothing worse than gambling, has a responsibility to stand up for local municipal decisions.

Would she go to the minister responsible for gambling and tell him that no means no, and there will not be consideration given to building a casino in Brandon?

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable First Minister, I just want to ask the co-operation of all honourable members. The use of the words "having the guts" has been ruled unparliamentary by some Speakers and it has been ruled parliamentary by other Speakers, but any words used that could cause a disturbance in the House could be ruled unparliamentary by any Speaker. I just want to caution all honourable members, pick your words carefully.

* (14:30)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I was just going to point out to the member opposite that there is a Minister responsible for Lotteries (Mr. Smith) and there is an Acting Minister responsible for Gaming and, please, there are different responsibilities. The separation, I believe, was made after the Desjardins report. We have carried that out and we would like to live with that in this Chamber.

Mr. Goertzen: I am sorry for using that terminology. Apparently, the Member for Brandon just does not have the nerve to stand up and answer the question. The minister responsible for gambling has put out a request for a study to examine expanding gambling in the province of Manitoba.

Will the minister responsible for gambling today just recognize that what we need in Manitoba is not

more casinos, we need a long-term, economic plan and scrap any idea for building new casinos in Manitoba or in Brandon?

Mr. Speaker: I just want to remind members when referring to ministers, the proper titles are available to all members and it is the honourable Minister for Gaming, not minister for gambling. It is the honourable Minister for Gaming (Mr. Sale). *[interjection]*

Order. If members wish to have titles to ministers or constituencies of members, we will be happy to supply them for any member who is unsure of what the titles or constituencies are for members.

Mr. Doer: I would ask the member again to perhaps do a little homework before he comes into the Chamber and understand the difference between the Minister responsible for the Lotteries Corporation (Mr. Smith) and the Minister responsible for Gaming (Mr. Sale) and the Acting Minister of Gaming. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, he could address the question to the proper minister in the future.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is one thing for the Premier to scold us as to how we pose our questions, but the reality is that we pose the questions to the Government. Recently we have seen that the Premier has taken it upon himself to be the minister of all things and stands up on many issues that are asked of his Government. I suggest that if his minister is not capable of answering the question, then at least he should answer the question and not simply admonish this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised—the honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I just remind the House it is up to the Government to decide who answers questions. That is not a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all

honourable members that questions, when they are put through the Chair to the Government, it is entirely up to the Government which minister they choose to answer the questions.

Wuskwatim Dam Export Sales

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I table today testimony from Mr. Ken Adams, vice-president of Manitoba Hydro, before the Minnesota State Senate Jobs, Energy and Community Development Committee on March 12 of this year.

He said about Wuskwatim, "In fact, by the time we get this generating station in place, we will not be in a position to sell as much energy throughout our export customers as we do today." Mr. Adams said explicitly that Wuskwatim is not designed for export sales. It is designed solely to address rising energy consumption in Manitoba. I ask the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale) to confirm what the vice-president of Manitoba Hydro said with respect to the Wuskwatim dam. Is this dam being built solely for the purpose of the internal needs of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I will take this specific question as notice. *[interjection]* Well, Mr. Speaker, okay, I apologize because I know you cannot take it as notice and then answer so I will answer it on the next question.

Mr. Speaker: Just a reminder to all members or ministers, when taking a question as notice, you cannot use a preamble or post-amble. When taking a question as notice, there is no preamble to or post-amble after.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Adams' testimony in Minnesota was quite clear. He talked about correcting what he referred to as the misconception that Manitoba has plans to sell new power to the United States. But, strangely, Mr. Speaker, three days later, he testified before Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission to say that Wuskwatim dam is being primarily built for the export market to increase exports of Manitoba electricity to the United States.

I would ask the Premier, which is it. Is Wuskwatim dam being built for the internal market of Manitoba or for the export market?

Mr. Doer: Just in general terms, first of all, we are pleased that all the opposition to the second Northern States Power deal, the Xcel agreement, have now been cleared and we have confirmation of the \$1.7-billion sale to Minnesota. I am pleased the member has raised that because that is truly very important news for Manitoba. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the Northern States Power sale, which was opposed by members opposite, and the Limestone Dam had a component of the construction dedicated to export sales to the United States and a portion of the sale to deal with increased demand in Manitoba.

There have been three measures to deal with demand in Manitoba initiated by the hydro utility. Mr. Speaker, one has been the conservation measure for the 250 megawatts, the virtual dam that has conserved energy. The second measure is to introduce more renewable energy such as wind power, which has not quite concluded. Thirdly, the Wuskwatim dam will equal one third of that, one third of the total 750 megawatts to deal with the future needs of Manitoba.

It will mean that the gap of exports and domestic use will not be reduced in terms of domestic use as demand goes up.

Mr. Gerrard: I table further transcripts and testimony, Mr. Speaker, showing very clearly that Mr. Adams was saying one thing on March 12, and he was saying completely the opposite on March 15. I would ask the Premier, given that we are in the middle of the Wuskwatim dam review right now, that this is a critical process very important to the province of Manitoba, how can this process have integrity when the chief spokesperson for Manitoba Hydro before the Clean Environment Commission is saying so diametrically opposing opinions so close together.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the member opposite that the matter of Wuskwatim is before a quasi-judicial body. It is not the practice of a member of this Legislature to necessarily take views that the quasi-judicial body has been charged with taking. We have been very careful in our answers since the matter has gone to the panel not to prejudice the findings.

I think the Clean Environment Commission and the lawyers, there are lots of lawyers at the Clean Environment Commission hired by lots of people

who are opposed to Wuskwatim and in favour of Wuskwatim, will be able to identify in testimony, in cross-examination, the point raised by the member opposite. I understand what the two issues are in terms of domestic versus export sales because I understand it is the issue of, over the next 10 years, what the gap will be between domestic sales and export sales. I am sure that the Clean Environment Commission and the quasi-judicial body which is made up of members from the PUB will be equipped to deal with it.

I am surprised the member opposite would have so little respect for a quasi-judicial body that he feels he has to turn this Legislature into that forum.

* (14:40)

Red River Floodway Expansion Impact of Ground Water

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Water Stewardship. Recently I raised in this House constituent concerns regarding the potential effects a deeper floodway channel could have on ground water in the areas of St. Clements, Springfield and East St. Paul.

My question is to the minister: Will the minister update the House regarding the design of the floodway that will address these concerns?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): This is a very important question. I credit the Member for Selkirk for having raised it.

When the original floodway was built, there were significant impacts on ground water. When we announced the floodway, in fact, when the Premier (Mr. Doer) made the announcement, we made it very clear that, in addition to focussing on improved flood protection for Winnipeg and parts of the Red River Valley, Mr. Speaker, we would give prime focus to protecting against potential ground water impacts and mitigating against them.

I am pleased to report to the House that the design now from the engineers indicates that we may not have to go more than two feet deep if at all. That is going to have a very significant benefit in terms of minimizing impact on ground water. We will also be setting up a mitigation fund through the Floodway Authority.

The news that will be taken to the public over the next matter of weeks is that we may be able, in fact we probably will be able to now minimize the impact on ground water. That is very important to the member's constituents.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Minnedosa Rotary Club

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, on April 24 the Minnedosa Rotary Club celebrated their 60th anniversary of community service to Minnedosa and area. I had the honour of attending this extraordinary event at the Minnedosa Curling Club and was delighted to share a few words with those in attendance.

The Minnedosa club was most successful in bringing together members of the public and past associates of the Rotary Club at this event. With refreshments, speakers and displays about the club, everyone had the opportunity to relax and learn a little bit more about the history, commitments and hard work of Rotary Club members.

Founded in April 1943, the Minnedosa Rotary Club has worked on numerous projects in and around the community, Mr. Speaker, such as blood donor clinics, constructing recreational facilities and purchasing medical equipment for the local hospital.

Mr. Speaker, Minnedosa club members truly live out the Rotary motto, Service Above Self, which is evident in the projects they are committed to. Currently there are three noteworthy commitments of the Minnedosa Rotary, including the handi-van, adults' and children's literacy and youth programs. At the celebration the local Rotary Club announced their most recent community project, partnering with the Minnedosa Child Care Co-operative to raise funds and community awareness on this important community initiative.

I would like to thank all 19 Minnedosa Rotary Club members for their efforts in making the 60th anniversary celebration a success. I commend their efforts to serve the community and contribute to so many worthwhile causes, both locally and around the world. The community of Minnedosa would not be the same without the Rotary Club.

Once again, congratulations to the Rotary Club on 60 successful years of community service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

University of Manitoba Graduation Powwow

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members of the Legislature to the 15th Annual Traditional Graduation Powwow held at the University of Manitoba, which I attended on May 1. This ceremony recognizes the Aboriginal graduates of both the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg.

Hundreds of Aboriginal families, friends and supporters gathered to celebrate the achievements of the over 100 new graduates who participated. There were also over a dozen traditional singing groups. I was particularly proud to watch a dear friend of mine, Meredith Brownlee, be recognized as the sole graduate from the Faculty of Dentistry.

This celebration mirrors many promising trends and accomplishments in our province. Mr. Speaker, the University of Manitoba is graduating more Aboriginal doctors, lawyers and engineers than any other university in Canada. Manitoba's university Aboriginal enrolment has increased 7.7 percent from 2000 to 2004, and Aboriginal enrolment at our colleges is up 15.5 percent over the same period.

ACCESS programs began under the NDP government of the early 1970s. Sadly, these valuable programs suffered tragic setbacks in the 1990s when our predecessors, the provincial Tories and the federal government, cut support to the ACCESS programs.

I am very proud to say that this Government's 2004-2005 Budget increases our support by 3.5 percent, Mr. Speaker, including \$175,000 for the new ACCESS program, the Integrated Aboriginal Education Program. We are also committed to working with northern and Aboriginal communities to develop the University College of the North so that post-secondary education becomes even more accessible and viable for northern and Aboriginal people.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize the efforts of this Government's Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) and the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin), but, more import-

antly, on behalf of members of the House, I wish to extend our congratulations to the many Aboriginal students who have recently graduated from the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg. They are and should be justifiably proud of what they have accomplished. Thank you.

Amy Homestead

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Manitoba has a rich history. A few years ago, four Canadians were given the opportunity of a lifetime to become modern pioneers and live the life of early settlers for 11 months in a small community a few kilometres north of Stonewall.

Mr. Speaker, the Amy Homestead in Argyle has since become the subject of a celebrated historical documentary series called *Pioneer Quest*. There are many amazing and historical attractions in Manitoba and the Amy Homestead is definitely a stop that any Manitoban should take.

We are fortunate today to have such opportunities to experience what our early pioneers did to survive. When you arrive in Argyle, your first task is to hike a quarter of a mile down Old Faith Trail which, in the days of the pioneers, was an old Red River cart trail. Once you arrive at the homestead, you can explore and experience what the four modern pioneers did.

I encourage all Manitobans young and old to contact Charlie Amy and visit his homestead. The experience will enrich your appreciation of the trails that our pioneers had to face to settle our great province. This is one of our great historical tourist attractions and will prove to be a great learning tool for our youth over the years. Thank you.

Victoria Hospital Guild

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I rise before the House today to speak in regard to the annual fundraising bridge luncheon I attended on May 4 at the Waverley Heights Community Club. This event was held by the volunteer guild of the Victoria General Hospital. The bridge luncheon is one of many fundraising initiatives organized by the guild.

This year, 200 people came out to play many exciting games of bridge as well as to enjoy an appetizing lunch. The proceeds of this event helped to fund and finance equipment, furnishings and

scholarships for the hospital. I would like to thank the guild's volunteers and executive for organizing this important event. It was a delight to participate and experience the enthusiasm of all the bridge players.

I would also like to commend the guild on attaining their 50th anniversary. In 1954, the guild of Victoria General Hospital was established at the River Avenue location. In 1970, the auxiliary and the guild amalgamated under the name of The Guild of Victoria General Hospital. Since their inception, they have enhanced patient care and services in the hospital. We are all aware that a strong, vibrant volunteer community is an important asset, especially in regard to our hospitals.

The work of the volunteers of the Victoria General Hospital are no exception. They share their time, talents and life experiences to enrich the lives of the many patients and visitors. Their smiling faces and helping hands are a welcoming feature for all the people that visit the hospital.

I would also like to take this time to thank the organizers and many volunteers of the event and to commend the guild on the attainment of their 50th anniversary.

Once again, I would like to thank the organizers for their 50 years of service and dedication. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:50)

Wuskwatim Dam

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Wuskwatim Dam in northern Manitoba is an important dam for Manitobans, those in northern Manitoba and those in southern Manitoba. It is important that Manitobans know why the Wuskwatim Dam is to be built: for Manitoba's needs, or for export.

It is important that the environmental review be carried out to high standards so that the goal of the project and any environmental impacts can be clearly known and understood and so that appropriate mitigation measures can be undertaken to the extent that they are needed. It is also very important that there is a clear understanding of the project and its goals and impacts, Mr. Speaker, in order that public concerns can be adequately considered and met.

Mr. Speaker, it is to be regretted that the Manitoba government has changed plans on more than one occasion with respect to the procedure for the environmental review. Indeed, the Manitoba government changed the process twice partway through the procedure, hardly a good thing to do for an important quasi-judicial process.

It now comes to light that a senior official with Manitoba Hydro, the proponent, has sent very different messages when speaking at two different venues. Before the Minnesota State Legislature, Mr. Adams said the Wuskwatim Dam was being built solely for internal energy needs in Manitoba.

At the Clean Environment Commission three days later, the Vice-President for Manitoba Hydro said the Wuskwatim Dam is being built to supply the export market. The lack of clarity by the senior Manitoba Hydro spokesperson is causing confusion and putting at peril the integrity of the Wuskwatim Dam review process.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Would you please call Supply, according to the agreement yesterday, in one place. As well, in the House, Mr. Speaker, would you please call the following business: second reading, motions 49 and 50; debate on third reading on Bill 13; third readings on Bills 17 and 18; debate on second readings on Bills 9, 14, 20, 26, 29, 31 and 40.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, one section of the Committee of Supply will now meet concurrently with the House in Room 255.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 49—The Municipal Amendment Act

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): I move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 49, The Municipal Amendment Act, now be read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Mihychuk: I am pleased to introduce for second reading Bill 49, The Municipal Amendment Act. Bill 49 proposes amendments to The Municipal Act, which provides the legislative framework for all municipalities outside of Winnipeg.

Most significantly, the bill proposes to give new enabling authority, Mr. Speaker, to municipalities outside of Winnipeg to use tax incremental financing, an innovative funding model to support community and neighbourhood revitalization efforts. It will provide complementary broad authorities to municipalities to develop tax credit programs and grant programs.

Other proposed amendments will provide tools to municipalities that are contemplating restructuring by amalgamating and will give municipalities greater flexibility when dealing with mobile homes. These amendments demonstrate government's commitment to municipalities to making sure they are equipped with the right tools to manage their affairs efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), that we adjourn debate.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 50—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 50, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce for second reading Bill 50, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act. Bill 50 proposes amendments to The Municipal Assessment Act, which provides the legislative framework for the assessment of property in the province.

Two amendments are proposed in this bill. The first amendment gives municipalities and non-profit organizations the ability to work together to ensure

continued operations of municipally owned property, notably local community clubs.

Issues related to tax liability have hampered the ability of municipalities to devolve control over such facilities to non-profit groups that have expressed interest in operating them. This amendment addresses those issues.

The second amendment will exempt trails owned by the Manitoba Recreational Trail Association and similar non-profit organizations from taxation. The amendment removes a barrier to the growth of the trail system and enhances Manitoba's portion of the Trans-Canada Trail network.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that we adjourn debate.

Motion agreed to.

DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 13—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming)

Mr. Speaker: Resumed debate on concurrence and third reading of Bill 13, The Public Schools Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? There is no agreement? Okay, the bill will not remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 13, The Public Schools Amendment Act. Essentially, this bill requires school boards to provide appropriate educational programming to each pupil and in respect of that programming allows the minister to establish standards and a dispute resolution process.

These proposals that originated in the Special Education Review Initiative, known as SERI, were

started by the previous Progressive Conservative government in 1995 and were reported in January of 1999. Mr. Speaker, we have consistently encouraged this Government to act on the recommendations of the SERI report. I am glad that this bill has seen the light of day here in the Legislature. I recently sent a letter, however, to the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) requesting a copy of the regulations for this bill. I guess it is unfortunate that I have yet to hear back as to what the regulations are.

There are some concerns that came up during the committee process, Mr. Speaker, that the regulations could potentially cost a fairly significant amount of money to school divisions, depending on how the regulations are drafted. Also, there were some concerns with respect to lack of consultation in this process as well. I hope that the minister will agree to consult all stakeholders about the proposed regulations and certainly take their concerns into consideration while drafting the regulations.

* (15:00)

I would have hoped that the minister could have provided Manitobans with a copy of the regulations before the bill was passed. Unfortunately, this has not taken place. We have no idea what the impact will be on the school divisions at this point in time in terms of the costs associated with this.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we certainly on this side of the House support the principle of this bill and have encouraged the Government to bring this bill forward. We recognize the importance of the passage of this bill. So at this time I would like to suggest that we agree to pass this bill on. Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to say a few words on Bill 13. This bill is an important bill for people with special needs children in our school system.

Mr. Speaker, it provides the beginning of a legislative framework for children with special needs. It means that parents are going to be able to go to the school board and say that it is very important for my child with special needs that there be appropriate education provided.

Mr. Speaker, the critical part of this bill actually comes in the development of the regulations, which

we do not have here, which are very important, because they need to balance urban and rural needs and they need to make sure that there is a process in place which can individualize the plans, the educational plan for each child with special needs and be able to find a balance here in what is appropriate for the child and of course what is deliverable and affordable by the school system.

What is significant and, I think, important and one of the reasons why I support this bill is that it puts the child first. By saying that there must be a legal framework for special needs children, it means that the child has some legal protection, the parents and the family have some legal protection when they feel that things are not being done in the way that they should be done.

Let us hope that the minister will consult carefully and widely. I have already talked with the minister in the Estimates process and emphasized the need to have a process which is open and which, in fact, as many people as possible are aware of so that they can come forward with their ideas. The wide range of children with special needs means that it becomes very important to be able to adapt to the wide range of children and have a flexible enough approach so that it can give what this bill asked for, which is an appropriate level of education for special needs children.

It is, I think, significant here that in the change that we have seen in the last number of years to include special needs children within schools to make sure that they are part of the regular classroom, and to make sure that the opportunities are there for special needs children, that this bill can make a significant contribution. I believe that there is a wide variety of circumstances already in Manitoba, in schools in Manitoba and in other jurisdictions which can provide examples of what is an appropriate education. There are research studies which would suggest that for certain children with special needs there is a research base one can draw on in terms of making decisions and making individual plans.

So I am pleased to support this bill. We as Liberals are pleased to support this bill. I believe that whether we are dealing with children with physical disabilities, with mental disabilities, with problems like autism or Asperger's syndrome, conditions like epilepsy; that whatever the special need may be,

there is an opportunity to provide for that child an appropriate educational environment.

I think it is timely not only in the development of education in this province but, Mr. Speaker, I think, it is also timely in the development of educational assist devices, we might call them, whether it be computers, the Internet, instruments or technology that special needs children can use to help them with learning. We are at a time when there can be a lot more flexibility than there would have been possible say 30 or 40 years ago. So the timing of this bill, though a little slower I might add than the other provinces, nevertheless, comes now and we will be pleased that it is coming, is a step forward and a step forward that we as Liberals welcome.

Mr. Speaker: Any other speakers? No?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the concurrence and third reading of Bill 13, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

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

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 17—The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Ms. Mihychuk), that Bill 17, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, be concurred in and now be read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

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

An Honourable Member: No.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to just put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 17, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act.

I think this bill is a good one. It is strengthening an existing act and expanding the categories of people eligible to seek protection under the act to include persons in dating relationships and family members who have not lived together.

Interestingly, I was listening to a radio program the other day. On the radio program it talked about, at any given time in North America, 200 000 people are being stalked. Stalking often leads to domestic violence. But in the one particular instance that they spoke about, it was in an office situation where a young man was trying to date a young woman and she did not want to date him. Of course, co-workers could not understand what the problem was. He is a young urban professional, a nice-looking man. They did not understand. He kept pursuing her to the point where it became an obsession, that he kept phoning her. He showed up everywhere that she was. She became frightened. When she became frightened, then she became very afraid that he would show up at her door. This kind of thing leads to obsessions that can lead to violence. We certainly need to think that we could now protect people against people that would pursue people like this.

*(15:10)

Under this new legislation, I think that this person would likely be able to get a protection order before a violent or a fatal assault might occur. Another point is that stalking and domestic violence are not always perpetrated on the woman. Sometimes the woman is the one doing the stalking and in this case it is much harder to prove that a woman is stalking a man because it just does not seem that a man would be unfriendly to that idea, that a woman was pursuing him.

But in the case that they talked about, this was, Mr. Speaker, in fact, the case, where the man became very frightened of this woman who was always, always there, and he could not seem to get rid of her. In fact, she was a student of his, which even made it more difficult. I think we all remember the movie *Fatal Attraction*, where a physical attraction became one of aggression and control and ultimately death.

There are just a few concerns with the bill, I guess. That is, how is it going to be enforced? I think if a protection order cannot be enforced, then I am not sure that it is valuable. This protection order is valuable as long as there are the resources there to make sure that it is enforced and the people actually do get the protection they are requesting. Often, the offenders are released and then get to go back and re-offend. We have seen that time and time again with many cases, where someone has been released and they go and assault and actually kill people while they are out on bail.

Domestic violence and stalking are threatening. We need to protect those people who are vulnerable, and any step in this direction is a good one, but, as I say, it needs to be enforceable.

Mr. Speaker, when you talk about domestic violence and stalking, these are control issues, they are power issues and related to anger, jealousy, guilt and low self-esteem. There is a delicate balance between love and hate, and I think once two people have had any kind of relationship, particularly if it has been an intimate one, then the relationship lasts forever in some form and often becomes a pathological relationship, where one partner does not want to be kept apart from the other one. In fact, we see women constantly taking back men who have been abusive and violent to them because they want to believe that this person will change their ways. We have seen it in the case of Sheryl Zechel, from the member from Beausejour's area, where she let the man back into the house and he killed her.

I would just like to say that we do support this bill, anything that will help prevent stalking and violence toward women and men. Mr. Speaker, I think that enforcement is key here and enforcement of protection orders. There needs to be a corresponding increase in resources and to make sure enforcement happens. We do not see provision for that in this Budget, so we have some concerns. However, I would just like to say that I am in support of this bill.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Fort Garry.

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Oh, no. Sorry.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, because normally I go back and forth from

one side of the House to the other, so the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): We are very pleased to support the bill. We have supported this bill in second reading and in committee and again in third reading. We will support the bill. The bill itself broadens the scope of our legislation, the legislation that we introduced in the nineties when it was touted in fact as the strongest legislation of its kind with respect to anti-stalking.

The bill just simply broadens the scope of the legislation to include other family members other than just spouses. For that reason and for many other reasons in terms of protection of women who are in situations like that, we support the principle of the bill.

Our concerns were in second reading and in committee with respect to enforcement, monitoring and resources. Mr. Speaker, it is not good enough to simply expand the scope of the bill and to expand the kinds of duties that were expanded within this bill without in fact increasing resources to ensure that the bill is enforced. We have said time and time again that resources are important to allocate toward this initiative and without resources, of course, we can pass what we want, but if we do not enforce it, it is useless, so our concern with this bill itself is with respect to resources and the allocation of resources to ensure that the bill is enforced.

Another concern that I had, was in fact yesterday in Estimates when I brought up to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) with respect to the fact that Justice Scurfield about three or four weeks ago, declared some of the initial anti-stalking legislation, he proclaimed part of that to be unconstitutional. My concern was at the time that it took almost a month before the Justice Minister stood up and decided he was going to appeal that decision. I think that shows to me that he maybe has even weak support for his own bill. Why would he have taken almost a month to appeal a decision which directly affects Bill 17, the very bill that he is in fact introducing in the Legislature?

I was really concerned about that, and his answer was not very comforting. His answer was that they had to take time to make sure that they formulated an appeal in the proper format and in the proper language. Well, I reviewed that appeal. There is

nothing magic to that appeal at all. That appeal should have taken no longer than a day or two, not almost a month. That to me tells me that the minister himself does not seem to even support his own Bill 17. I have had some concerns over that.

I think that, hopefully in the future, when there are constitutional challenges to Bill 17 and even the bill that it is broadening its effect, the minister does go forward and he does make it a priority of his Government to ensure that the provisions are constitutionally defended and defended properly and within a reasonable period of time.

Having said that, as I have said before, we do support Bill 17. It does expand the scope of the legislation that we had in fact introduced in the 1990s, being The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Act.

This is simply an amendment to our existing legislation and it expands only the scope to which our existing legislation applies. I look forward to other submissions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I, too, wanted to say a few words on the record prior to this bill being given third reading, which appears to be coming to a vote, Mr. Speaker. The Manitoba Liberal Party supports Bill 17. We see it as a step forward. I want to make reference to in essence two parts that really come to mind. One is the expanding of the eligibility to seek civil orders of protection, which will help victims of violence. The second issue is the sunset of three years, once they have been issued.

* (15:20)

Both of these, Mr. Speaker, I think are ones that were discussed at meetings that I had within the constituency and I have had opportunity to discuss with others. All in all it is a positive bill. We do not have a problem in terms of its quick passage.

Having said that, there are other issues related to violence that I think that the government of the day does need to give more attention to, issues such as seniors and others that are in vulnerable positions, taking a more proactive approach at dealing with some of those day-to-day issues of violence.

I truly believe that government does need to do more. We wait for government to come up with

initiatives where we can contribute to the debate to encourage the Government, Mr. Speaker, to come up with initiatives that will really make a difference. With those few words, we are prepared to see the bill pass third reading. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any other speakers on the bill? The Member for Fort Garry? Are there any other speakers on the bill? Okay.

I am going to call the question. Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 17, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act.

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

Bill 18—The Improved Enforcement of Support Payments (Various Acts Amended) Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford), that Bill 18, The Improved Enforcement of Support Payments (Various Acts Amended) Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to put a few words on the record about Bill 18, The Improved Enforcement of Support Payments (Various Acts Amended) Act.

This legislation makes a number of changes with respect to Manitoba's maintenance enforcement system, including support payments for children and/or a spouse. For example, Mr. Speaker, penalties will be assessed when a person fails to make the required maintenance payments and this penalty will be payable to the person entitled to receive maintenance.

It also provides for up to \$500 in compensation to the person entitled to the maintenance payment

should the person required to pay maintenance miss payments. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, enhanced garnishment provisions will enable automatic and continuous paycheque deductions of child support payments where there has been a pattern of default.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the legislation provides that garnishing orders for support received from other jurisdictions with which Manitoba has jurisdiction, the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act, will be given legal effect in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, in an ideal world, legislation respecting maintenance enforcement would not be required. People would simply fulfill their monetary obligations to their children and their former spouses. However, we know that up to 50 percent of marriages will end in separation or divorce and often there will be children affected by marital break-up.

It is estimated frequently separation/divorces not only involve spouses but also involve children. I agree with the Minister of Justice that we need to send a strong message with respect to support payments and the obligation of parents to continue to financially support their children after the dissolution of family union.

It is the obligation of both spouses to support their children under the age of 18 years and it is also the obligation of both spouses to support children between the ages of 18 to 25 if the child is attending an educational program on a full-time basis or if the child has an illness or a disability which makes them dependent.

I daresay that there is not one member of this legislature who has not been in contact by someone who has encountered difficulty in collecting the maintenance enforcement payments to which they or their children are entitled. Mr. Speaker, their cases are heartbreaking and it is important that we take every opportunity to explore new and improved means of ensuring support payments are paid.

The amount of child support payable by a parent is determined by the rules and tables in the Manitoba Child Support Guidelines and is dependent upon the income of the parent and the number of children to be supported. The amount to be paid can be varied due to the demonstrated undue hardship on the parent.

Unfortunately, we know what happens when such support is withheld. It is known that more than 50 percent of clients in some Manitoba food banks are made up of single-parent families. Many of these clients are women with children who have separated or divorced from their husbands and are having trouble making ends meet.

All too often women with children are forced to seek help from social assistance or from food banks when they do not receive their support payments. Single parenthood discriminates. In 1996, 71.6 percent of single mothers in Manitoba lived below the poverty line and often women are the custodial parents in a marriage break-up.

Women often have lower paying jobs compared to their spouses and often they have no job at all. The Prairie Women's Health report of February 2004 indicates that mounting evidence shows that women with low incomes have acute housing needs, are at a greater risk of living in unsafe and unhealthy environments and require specific supports to achieve stable and affordable housing.

This stems from the high incidence of poverty among women. Mr. Speaker, one in five Canadian women live in poverty and the proportions of women in poverty who are Aboriginal, immigrants or refugees, disabled, seniors and youth have yet higher levels of poverty.

Penalizing those who do not pay child or spousal support is one way to reinforce the importance of meeting their legal obligations to pay support. It is also critical that garnishing orders and support orders can be enforced outside of Manitoba's boundaries so that a person who flees our province is unable to shirk their responsibilities to their children or former spouse.

People who entered into relationships must be cognizant of their legal and moral responsibilities. I agree that it is important that we regularly review and strengthen maintenance enforcement legislation so that children and families receive the support to which they are entitled. Mr. Speaker, those who would shirk those responsibilities must be held accountable. Maintenance orders are an obligation that must be met for the benefit of Manitoba children and families.

I look forward to a further discussion of Bill 18, The Improved Enforcement of Support Payments Act, when it reaches committee.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk to Bill 18, The Improved Enforcement of Support Payments Act. I do this today to speak particularly with the very significant problems that have occurred in The Pas as a result of the approach that this Government has taken in terms of maintenance enforcement.

What used to be a pretty simple system in The Pas, where on payday, usually the man, one spouse, brought in the maintenance support cheque and it was handed over to the other spouse, Mr. Speaker, and immediately the money was accessible very quickly in a user-friendly justice system approach, has now been turned into a system in The Pas which is anything but user-friendly to those who are involved on one side or the other with respect to maintenance enforcement payments.

* (15:30)

This is not to take away from the fact that this is an important process and that it is very important that a spouse who is receiving support, most commonly the woman, is well supported. But, Mr. Speaker, I speak today to urge the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), in implementing this legislation, to make sure that he in fact consults widely around Manitoba and specifically with people who are using the system in The Pas.

One of the problems has been that files which used to be in the same community for individuals are now in a different community. A series of files, for example, is now held in Thompson rather than being readily available in The Pas. It is not unusual for a lawyer in The Pas to have to sit on the phone for a long, long time to get the line in Thompson, the 1-800 number. It is a waste of time. It is anything but a user-friendly system. The way that the NDP have changed it has made it a system which has got more problems in a long way than it used to have.

The result has been a lengthened rather than a shortened process. A process which was simple has been made by the current Government much more complicated and not nearly as efficient or helpful for those who are involved and particularly for the mothers who are so critically dependent on the maintenance support payments.

There is a whole variety of circumstances. It is one thing if the spouse, Mr. Speaker, who is

contributing maintenance support payments, has got a steady job which continues day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. But where you have a much greater variety of working environments, where the contributing spouse may all of a sudden find that he or she is laid off or sick and cannot work, that their current system all too often does not have the kind of ability to adjust in a flexible way for the betterment, in particular, of the children.

You know it is going to be very easy to be having fines here, but what is most important is that the child, and the mother most frequently, as I say, is actually getting the support payments in a quick and easy, user-friendly way.

With the new tax on justice that the NDP government has introduced in the latest budget, what this will do is mean that whether it is a mother or a father, or whether it is one spouse or the other, they will both be paying an additional 7 percent on all these services. If you are not careful, all this money is going to get eaten up in the new justice tax of the NDP government. The tax on mothers, single mothers, who are trying to make their way in the world, and all the NDP can do is put another tax on them.

It would have been simpler if this Government had approached this in a different way. It would have been simpler if there had been a more effective look at how the system would actually work. I will bet that there are many, many other examples all over Manitoba of problematic circumstances which could have been easily adapted to had there been a more reasoned approach by this Government to this matter.

Certainly, we all want this to go very smoothly. It is not a matter, I think, that the intentions of the Legislature here, whether one side or the other or the third side of this House, have a view that is similar, that we want to make sure children are supported and the money gets promptly to the parent who is receiving the support payment. But the realities of life are often not quite so simple.

The realities of life mean that we need to make sure that we develop a more user-friendly justice system that does not need as much lawyers' time sitting for hours on the phone trying to reach the 1-800 number in Thompson. It is time that we have a

government which is a little bit more sensitive to people in northern Manitoba.

It is time that there was a government which did not want to put a 7% tax on mothers who are seeking maintenance support. It is time that we did not have a 7% tax on human rights and ordinary justice matters, people just trying to live their lives and work with circumstances that are not always easy to work with.

The reality is that many families where their maintenance support payments are facing problems, not only in the internal family dynamics but also problems in earning money, having steady jobs and in having good relationships. What we need to create, Mr. Speaker, is an environment which can be more user-friendly. So it is in this context that I suggest, politely, to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) that he look very carefully at how the regulations and procedures are developed around this legislation.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, and I mentioned this when I discussed this bill with a lawyer in The Pas, she said, "These people, the NDP government, are totally out of control in what they are trying to do." The reality is that it is not the intentions, it is how this Government is going about it. It is time that the representative of The Pas listened more closely and it is time that the Justice Minister listen more closely to the needs of people in Manitoba, and make sure that as this bill is implemented that it is implemented in a more user-friendly way than some of the other things this Government has tried to do in the Justice system.

So, although we will in fact not vote against this bill, we will urge the Minister of Justice to make sure that as it is implemented we have a situation which is better and not worse for families, for dependent parents who are supporting their children and for the whole system.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): We have supported this bill in second reading, and we have again supported it in committee. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in third reading we look forward to the passage of the bill in third reading as well.

We do have some concerns about the bill, though, and we have noted them in committee and in second reading. Mr. Speaker, that is with respect to resources again, similar to what we said in Bill 17,

that maintenance enforcement is already stretched to the limit. The budget is already stretched to the limit. The resources of that department certainly may need to be increased because of this bill.

Although it is important, I believe, to recognize that there are a number of reasons why we would support the bill. First of all, with respect to penalties for late or missed payments, I was very pleased to see that the penalties in fact do not go into general revenue, that the government does not in fact benefit from missed payments, but in fact it goes to support recipients, and I think that is an important principle to recognize.

Also, extra-provincial garnishing orders are now recognized in Manitoba. I think it is important that spouses that flee their particular province to get away from maintenance payments to support their children—If they flee into Manitoba that we do recognize extra-provincial garnishing orders so that a spouse who is left without payments has an easier way within which to collect on a spouse that flees into Manitoba. That is another reason why we support the bill.

* (15:40)

The third reason is that what we have seen in the past, in the courts, is that maintenance arrears, at times, are forgiven for lack of payment if they are left for any length of time. This bill, in fact, Mr. Speaker, when it does set a schedule for paying of maintenance arrears, which the payor does not pay, the full amount of the arrears can still be corrected. No arrears will be forgiven.

I think, for those three principles alone, that is worthy of our support. But again, cautioning the minister about the fact that maintenance enforcement already is stretched to the limit. Certainly resources ought to be allocated there to ensure that spouses and women in particular, those that may not be able to afford looking after children and in fact have maintenance orders for them, that they are in fact looked after.

Mr. Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 18, The Improved Enforcement of Support Payments (Various Acts Amended) Act.

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 9—The Manitoba Immigration Council Act

Mr. Speaker: Resumed debate on second reading of Bill 9, The Manitoba Immigration Council Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Springfield.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to put a few comments on the record. As the official critic for this bill, I have spent considerable time dealing with the individual items in the bill.

I have had a briefing with the minister in her department. I have also had the opportunity to send out some 736 letters to stakeholders across the province asking for feedback.

The suspicion that I had has been confirmed with this bill in that the premise of it is certainly something that basically everybody agreed with, but as the former Minister of Education used to say, "the devil is in the details." I believe other members of this House have spoken and they have also put on the record concerns they have with the problems in how the mechanics are supposed to work.

I will in a moment take some time and put some of those concerns on the record. I do, however, want to say that clearly as a son of immigrant parents, I appreciate the value of immigration to Canada and to Manitoba. Certainly, we have prospered as a nation and as a province, Mr. Speaker, with immigrants and with entrepreneurs.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

In fact, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) and myself were at the latest Citizenship Court held here in the Legislature and I happened to recognize some individuals from my community. I went to introduce the Leader of the Opposition to them and I pointed out that they are quite an artist family, they make incredible art.

Right away the individual got up and handed the Leader of the Opposition one of his business cards and said, "If you ever need some really good pottery or some art, contact us." We all started to laugh, because that is what immigrants bring, they bring new ideas, new entrepreneurs, they view things differently. They think outside of the way we normally think and certainly make Canada a better place.

In fact, I know that in some areas in Canada concrete was not poured in winter; in fact, that was an art that was brought over from Europe. I heard it first-hand from an individual from Alberta. They would pour steps and basements in the winter, giving them a leg up on all the other construction companies from Canadians until those companies complained and inspectors shut the whole system down, cut out a piece of the concrete and tested the concrete.

The way it was set, it was stronger than normal, but the inspector took a little bit of extra time until the Canadian companies had figured out how to do it, thus levelling the playing field, but everybody was fine with that and it was a technology that was transferred to Canada.

So immigration is very important and it is very important for a province like Manitoba where we have an aging population base, where we do have a frustrating statistic happening and it has been happening for a lot of years, for tens of years, where our young people seem to look elsewhere instead of looking here to look for opportunities.

So often what we do is we backfill those individuals with immigrants. It was under the previous Filmon government that the whole program was established between the Province and the federal government. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it then moved on to the current Government where the numbers have been increasing, those numbers designated to the Province of Manitoba, and I think the latest target is now 10 000.

The minister has indicated clearly that, if one could put it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Achilles' heel of the entire immigration coming to Manitoba is not that we are getting good numbers coming here, it is the fact that we are having trouble with retention, and out of that has come The Manitoba Immigration Council, certainly the premise of which we do support.

I used to be the chairman of the Manitoba Intercultural Council. Years ago, I was appointed and got to know the issues and the concerns of the multicultural community. Of course, I was there representing the interests of various communities.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, immigration is one of those really exciting areas that multicultural communities love to get involved in. They love to see newcomers coming here, whether it be through family unification, whether it be for economic reasons, whether it be because of persecution for beliefs or religious reasons. I believe that setting up the Immigration Council would have been a good idea if it would have been given more substantive legislation.

I am going to read for the record, and then I will conclude my remarks, some of the issues that were raised by individuals who we had corresponded with. One of the issues that was raised was that no provision was made for how these maximum of 12 persons are to be chosen or from where.

This is the second one. The Government will get the recommendations it wants to get by appointing people it knows thinks as it does. Again, the idea behind that criticism is, how are these individuals appointed? Is it directly a political appointment? The minister has indicated, yes, it is a direct political appointment.

The next one is who is to nominate the members who shall be appointed by the Government. The next one is, if they are all to be friends with the government of the day, we will fail to see how that will best serve the interests of the council. The next one is the broad base of membership that we believe is required should have the support of the communities they would represent.

The next comment was that they, the leaders, would not necessarily be the leaders of those communities, but those leaders should be asked to nominate people for the council.

The next one is that Bill 9 is lacking in this detail and the cynics amongst us, or are we realists, can foresee this council being nothing more than another patronage plum for friends of government. Again, Mr. Speaker, they are not specifying a political party. They are not specifying a political government. What they are talking about is governance and who will be appointing them.

The next point was, we welcome the proposed act. We would however wish the act to specifically stipulate that membership of the council will reflect the ethnic diversity of our province.

Another comment was there is nothing in it that defines either the composition of the council or the scope and nature of specific issues that it might consider in the future. It goes on to say in 4(1), not a mention about diversification of the council in terms of ethnic background and experience and also it does not talk about the minimum number of meetings.

They also mentioned that the minister "should" refer to the council instead of "may" refer and that deals with items 5 and 6, I believe.

There was another quote and it says, "Seems like a good idea, should receive support. I used to meet informally with Premier Filmon and Becky Barrett. A formal process might be better." Again, that sort of reiterates the feelings of all the letters we got is that the council was not a bad idea but just that it needed to be filled out.

Then the last one that I would like to put on the record is I feel immigration is important to our country and would certainly support any bill that would allow the people making immigration access to more information and advice.

So what the individual is saying there, to paraphrase, is that certainly we want immigrants to be able to access advice and get information about the complexities of our modern society whether it would be banking or legal services, et cetera.

*(15:50)

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to begin concluding my comments by saying that from everything we have heard from the community, that the council seems to have broad support, but how are these individuals going to be chosen. Who are they going to be representing?

The recommendations they make, are they just further addressing issues that are going to be sent to them by the minister or are they going to be allowed to branch out and recommend issues they see as being important to the Government? Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this purely and solely trying to retain new immigrants or is it going to be a tool by which we attract more immigrants?

What kind of resources are going to be added to them? I know the minister and her department indicated that there was no remuneration, they would cover some travel and lunch, a boardroom would be provided and perhaps a staffer, but those kinds of things should have been explained a little bit better.

When we get to committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would like to see the minister spend more time explaining what the intent is of government, how this is supposed to work. These things should get off on a positive footing. They should get off on a very positive kind of way and not be allowed to get bogged down by criticism that certain points were not well thought out. We would like to see that, at committee, the minister take some time and address the concerns that were raised. Certainly, we look forward to hearing from Manitobans at committee.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I am pleased to stand and put a few comments on the record regarding Bill 9, The Manitoba Immigration Council Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to provide a bit of history to the House on how we, when we were in government, recognized, under the leadership of our Premier then, Gary Filmon, that immigration was a significant component of our Manitoba makeup.

We were built on waves of immigration, as a province, and prospered as a result, and really felt that government needed to take or make or focus more on immigration and the positive impacts on our province. As a result, the Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation was changed. The name was changed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, with the new mandate under that re-named department becoming aggressively pursuing an immigration agreement with the federal government.

Negotiations started at that point in time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I was pleased and privileged to have had that opportunity to look at the kinds of positive impacts immigration could and should have on our Manitoba community and on our ability to be competitive, to attract people for the jobs that were available here in the province.

We were not able to accomplish that formal or final agreement in my tenure as the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, but I do know that my predecessor, Harold Gilleshammer, had the

opportunity to sign the first formal agreement with the federal government that helped us to move forward.

It is not only the issue of bringing immigrants to our province, but there are significant issues around settlement and having individuals feel comfortable coming to a new home. We looked at the settlement services that were available and tried to ensure that those were expanded and improved so that as people came to Manitoba that they were able to adapt and to adjust to their new country and their new way of life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, also there was the issue of English language services that were significant. I had many opportunities to be out in the community to see, first hand, how those that had difficulty understanding the English language had difficulty fitting in to our Manitoba society and community. Those kinds of support services are essential. They need to be expanded as we look to expanding our role as a province that welcomes and accepts and actively recruits immigrants to our province.

I am really pleased and proud that we have come as far as we have. We need to continue to move forward. If, in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the establishment of a Manitoba Immigration Council is another positive step forward, I welcome that, but I do hope that, as the Government moves forward and appoints people to an immigration council in the province of Manitoba, it will have meaningful input.

We do know, from time to time, when an act is as ambiguous, I think, as this act is, we are not really sure what the role and the mandate of this council will be. Will this council have teeth? Mr. Deputy Speaker, will the people who are appointed to the council be of a broad enough nature to bring forward constructive recommendations to government to improve our opportunities to attract immigrants and to retain immigrants here in our province?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we do not want to see is a revolving door where we do all the work in identifying skill shortages that we need immigrants come to fill, only to have them come and we, as Manitoba taxpayers, pay for the settlement services and the English language training, and get them settled in communities, only to have them find out that there is better opportunity in other provinces across the country. So they make this just a short stop in their move to a new country, and then move on to better opportunities in other provinces.

We want to make sure that all of those issues are being looked at. There is no point in creating a council unless they are going to be able to have meaningful input into the process and, indeed, ensure that we attract the immigrants that we need and that we want to our province, and that we have a strategy in place to keep them here in Manitoba once they arrive.

We just have to look around our province to several communities, not only Winnipeg, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that have been very successful in attracting and keeping immigrants in their communities. I know the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) takes great pride in some of the accomplishments that have been undertaken in his community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not just government that has a role to play. We have the private sector and those businesses that are looking to grow and to expand in Manitoba that want to have people with skills come to fill those positions. It is government having to play a role with the private sector in trying to ensure that any plan that we have in place for immigration is one that works and is of benefit to all Manitobans.

* (16:00)

I look forward to comments made by those that will come forward after this bill passes second reading to committee to indicate their support or their concerns with this piece of legislation. I guess my main point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to try to ensure that, as we move forward, as we continue to profile the need for immigrants to our province, that we have a government that is putting in place meaningful activities, meaningful councils with a role and a mandate to be open, to be transparent, and to ensure that all Manitobans know and are provided with the opportunity and the research that is needed in order to ensure that our immigration policies and our procedures and the settlement activities and the language support that is needed and must be available are in place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those comments, I look forward to hearing what Manitobans have to say and I look forward to holding this Government accountable to making sure that this immigration council, when it is set up, is set up for the right reasons for the benefit of all Manitobans. Thank you.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I am pleased to stand and put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 9, The Manitoba Immigration Council Act. This bill establishes the Manitoba Immigration Council to provide information and advice to government about immigration to the province.

Just to elaborate on the words of the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), who detailed how the Progressive Conservative government was proud to have brought in the immigration program through federal and provincial initiatives, in fact, I was just looking through some old news releases and I found, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where Rosemary Vodrey was quoted as saying, "Manitoba is a province built by the skills and determination of immigrants. These funds will help insure new immigrants have the supports they need to become part of the province's flourishing cultural and economic life." She said this when she was creating the International Centre which includes the Citizenship Council of Manitoba, and in 1998, our side of the House, the Progressive Conservative government, introduced the Provincial Nominee Program.

We recognize the need for immigration coming into the province of Manitoba and recognizing a goal of 10 000 over the present 6000 that come in now by the year 2006. We understand that, because with an ever increasing number of youth, our youngest and brightest who leave for greener pastures and more tax-friendly areas of Canada, we need to increase our people in Manitoba. We not only need to increase the number of people coming here, it has been stated many times that we need to not only to attract them, but to keep them here.

Interestingly, I was at the Citizenship Court yesterday, where 32 new Canadians took the oath of allegiance and just reflecting on that, I think, it must be very difficult to leave your home country and come to another country and choose where you are going to put down roots, so to speak. We need to encourage and help these individuals.

I think we should also remember that, you know, we all are immigrants here if we are not Aboriginal and many people came to Canada with not too much and they homesteaded and brought their cultural diversities and their honest values, and it has created a strong country and a strong Manitoba. Of course we welcome the new things, as the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) was talking about, the

entrepreneurial skills, the scientific skills, the knowledge skills, the artistic skills that new people bring to our country and add to our cultural diversity and our entrepreneurial base.

When people come to Manitoba, I think, it is important to know that we need to attract them to all parts of the province. We do not want them just to be in one place and I think that we have seen that happening as we have heard that there are many immigrants who have gone to the Steinbach-Hanover area. In fact, I think that Niverville is one of the fastest-growing communities in the province—

An Honourable Member: A young community.

Mrs. Taillieu: And a young community, having attracted and kept the youth through opportunities in the area. Of course, the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) was telling me yesterday about the number of new citizens who have come to the Morden and Winkler area in the last couple of years. I know that there are a hundred families waiting to go to the Dauphin area. Even in my own constituency, in and around Morris, in the Rosenort area, there are many people coming to settle into that area.

I think one of the reasons why people would remain here and keep to our province is because people, when they leave their home country, they want to settle in a place that is similar. They want similar cultures; they want to be around people that they are familiar with; they want similar climate and they want similar geography. So people that have come here from all over Siberia, as the member for Beausejour tells me, and I think that is a similar climate to what we see today with record snow falls yesterday, from Russia and from all over Europe and the United Kingdom, people who come to Manitoba stay in Manitoba because of those geographic and climate similarities. As well, we see other people come to Manitoba and maybe they do not stay here, they may tend to come here but migrate to Vancouver or to Toronto because of the same choices, whether that be climate or maybe there are better jobs down there because they are more competitive—

An Honourable Member: More conservative.

Mrs. Taillieu: —and more conservative down there.

Our province has always been multicultural in nature, and we celebrate that diversity. Mr. Deputy

Speaker, that is recognized by the many festivals that we have around the province. Every summer, in every town in Manitoba there is some kind of cultural festival, and those are augmented by new people who come in and bring new ideas, bring new things to celebrate, and bring that sense of volunteerism that is very important in the rural areas.

I have had the opportunity to attend many of those kinds of cultural events, Mr. Deputy Speaker, both in Manitoba and in the city of Winnipeg and been to many multicultural events, learned a lot and met a lot of fascinating people. Black Women's History Month is one example I can think of where I have made some contacts with people there that I have seen over and over and over again. We get to know each other, and we can appreciate each others' culture. I have also had the opportunity to go to the Ukrainian Malanka at New Year's and experience another form of another culture. I think that it is important that we celebrate each others' cultures.

That is what immigration brings to the province: more people and different skills. I think that is really important. The Provincial Nominee Program, as I stated, which was initiated by our government of the day, has been redesigned to strengthen partnerships with communities and regions, employers and service providers.

The eligibility and nomination criteria have been revised and that enables a greater number of people to come to our province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it allows them more flexibility and applicants have a wider range of opportunities. It just makes it less restrictive.

I think there are just a few points that I want to say in regard to the 12-member council representing, as the Government is saying, business, labour which will advise the Province on how to increase and retain the immigrants. We know from some of the stakeholders' comments that they are a little bit suspicious and a little bit sceptical of what the Government may do or how they may appoint these people. We need to have meaningful input on this council and ensure that these people are going to not just be a politically appointed board increasing political alliances of the government of the day.

So, with those words, I would like to just say that I am very, very pleased to support a bill that increases and retains, I think retains is the key, the

number of immigrants to our province and would like to support the bill.

* (16:10)

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): My comments will be more area-specific, although I certainly agree with immigration toward the total province of Manitoba. I want to relate, in just a few minutes, some of the experiences that I have had with the immigrants who have come to southern Manitoba.

Just to start, in 1996, I vividly remember. Mr. Deputy Speaker, meeting with the minister of the day, Rosemary Vodrey, who, together with the federal government of the day, worked on a partnership to enhance immigration within the province of Manitoba, together with Adele Dyck from Winkler who, again, was one of the proponents and really worked very hard at encouraging immigration to the province of Manitoba but, again, more specific to southern Manitoba because there was a great need for professional people, there were job opportunities out there. Those jobs needed to be filled.

So the way it started off, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and is being approached today or worked with today, is the fact that there had to be a job offer from an employer. This job offer together with a letter would be sent out and taken to Germany, or for those who were applying to come from that of the day, Germany to Manitoba, and there had to be a name attached with that as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is at the outset how this started. Adele Dyck, who herself was an immigrant, she immigrated a number of years ago from Paraguay, knew the experiences that new immigrants faced and some of the challenges that they had when they came to a new country.

What she did was that she, together with a group of people, people who were assisting her, established a forum and a way in which they would be able to assist the new immigrants when they came to Manitoba.

That included things like picking them up from the airport, taking them out, showing them the local area, meeting with the employers, the potential employers, and in that way also giving them the tour of the area and indicating to them some of the areas,

I guess possible challenges, if you want to talk about weather challenges, but also some of the benefits of moving to this area.

Just as I had the opportunity over the last number of years to meet with many of these people, it is interesting how when you track the area that they came from first of all, and this is the discussion that I had with them, but they came from Siberia, as was indicated before, and they moved to East Germany.

They lived in East Germany for a number of years, were able to get a job, but also with some of the opportunities that they got in East Germany where they lived together with their relatives and they would assist each other in building a home, this way they were able to gather some capital when they sold their homes in Germany and they had then moved to Manitoba.

This has given them the opportunity to have some money with which they can relocate and move into the province of Manitoba.

Now, what has happened and the thing that I am pleased with, again this is over a period of years, it is almost 10 years now that this has been taking place, but the retention has been fairly good within southern Manitoba.

Again, it is the fact that they are able to live in a climate which is similar to what they were used to when they were in Siberia, they are familiar with harsh winters, but the other part of it is the cultural, the ethnic groups that they have been able to relocate to within southern Manitoba.

I had a statistic that I received the other day. I will just see if I can find it but within the Pembina constituency, the population by ethnic origin, out of the responses the total would be 21 480, and 6750 of those are German-speaking.

As they have immigrated to the southern Manitoba area they have had an opportunity to move to people who are of the same ethnic background. I think that has been advantageous for them and has contributed to the fact of the retention. They are happy where they are living and so they feel very much at home.

Some of the challenges that these people have faced over the years, and I know that I mentioned

this to the Minister of Immigration and Labour (Ms. Allan), but the whole area of these are in many cases professional people who have moved into southern Manitoba, who have immigrated out there.

Yet the problem that they have is that the professional bodies within our province do not recognize the certificates or the degrees that they are bringing with them as they come to Manitoba. I have worked with a number of them, and just a case in point, a dental hygienist who has in fact more qualifications from her studies in Germany than would be required out here but she is not recognized within that trade.

Again, it is due to the fact that the professional body here is saying, "No, I am sorry but you need to go back to school. You need to take three years of training and then, upon completion of those exams, then we will recognize the degree that you have."

I believe that is unfair. With all of the people I have talked to, they have all indicated they would be absolutely in agreement to challenge the exam. No problem. They would like to challenge the exam that would be offered by the professional body.

However, in many cases the professional bodies are indicating that is not acceptable. Again, as I have indicated to the minister, I hope that she will continue to work on this; and that she will continue to support these people as they in turn are trying to get their accreditation, so that they can enter the work force in the areas that they are familiar with and have been educated for.

The other area that I would like to challenge this Government with, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that, again, as the area grows, as the southern Manitoba, the Winkler, Morden, Darlingford, Manitou, all of these people have settled in those areas and located in those areas.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

As the area continues to grow the resources have not been out there specific to educational facilities.

And again as I indicated to the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) yesterday, right now we have 600 students in huts. We are waiting for another seven huts. We are waiting for some response from the department. Yet it is not forthcoming. So, while

this Government continues to point to the growth that is taking place in southern Manitoba, and priding themselves with the fact that they have been a part of that growth—although I would challenge that part; I think it has grown in spite of some of the things this Government has done.

I will try and conclude my remarks. Mr. Speaker, the areas that I would like this Government to continue to work on, at least work on, is to provide the necessary resources regarding educational facilities and regarding our other infrastructures, systems such as roads that we need out there; which again is because of the rapidly growing area in the province of Manitoba.

So, again, I am not opposed to this bill. I would challenge the government of the day though to put the people on the board, on that committee who have a good cross-section and a good deal of experience with southern Manitoba.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I simply want to put a few words on the record regarding this bill. I will not spend a lot of time. Certainly, the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) covered off a number of the areas. Our areas have a lot of parallel concerns and a lot of parallel challenges in terms of its growth, and the fact that we both have a large amount of immigration within our area.

So I certainly thank the Member for Pembina for bringing up a number of the concerns that exist both in my constituency and in his constituency as well. But just to highlight a couple of the areas where we have concern, Mr. Speaker, not with the specifics of the bill, certainly related to the bill however in relation to immigration support services. I had the opportunity not long ago, about a month ago, to meet with about 40 to 50 recent immigrants to the Steinbach constituency.

A number of concerns were raised by that particular group on the amount of support services that were available and the funding that was coming from the Province. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, they had many good things to say about the city of Steinbach and the chamber of commerce and the settlement committee, what they have put forward and the work that members of that settlement committee have done to ensure that their integration and assimilation within the community has been successful.

* (16:20)

But there were still concerns, Mr. Speaker, of course, in relation to the amount of ESL funding and opportunity that they were afforded when they arrived in Canada. That is a concern that I want to bring to this Chamber on their behalf as I said that I would and ensure that the Government is aware of the importance of funding English as a second language for the new immigrants to Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Pembina raised the issue regarding certification and the recognition of certification for those coming from other countries and in their individual trades. That is certainly something that I have heard repeatedly in terms of frustration.

Those who are coming from other nations have the sense or, to some degree, an assurance that their individual certificates or their individual trades will be recognized here in Canada and they find out, much to their disappointment, and really to their economic detriment, that there is not that same recognition in our country and in our province that there is within the other areas that they have come from.

So there needs to be an education process, on the one hand, to ensure that those coming from other countries recognize what it is that they will or will not be able to do with the skills that they have obtained in their country of origin. But there also needs to be, Mr. Speaker, I think, work on behalf of the Government to ensure where there are individual bodies overseeing professional trades that there is work with those individual bodies to as much as possible and as much as applicable ensure that those certificates are recognized where there were similar skills obtained from individuals coming from other nations.

I do note that there are many people within the community of Steinbach, certainly within the rural municipality of Hanover and the town of Niverville who do great work with immigrants who are coming from other countries, Mr. Speaker, ensuring that it is a very welcoming community for visitors and for immigrants alike, and they do a good job.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, I note Mrs. Ann Friesen [*phonetic*], who does a good deal of work in ensuring that immigrants are settled well in our community, that they have the information that they need, that they have the paperwork done that they

need. Certainly, I would commend her for the work that she does on a daily basis to ensure that there is a good deal of information provided to those who are looking to come to our communities, in the settlement communities, in the settlement organization, in the city of Steinbach. They certainly deserve recognition for the work that they do and the important difference they make in the lives of many, many new Manitobans.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to say a few words on this bill. While the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) would like me to go on and say more, I will have to reserve that pleasure for another day.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 9, The Manitoba Immigration Council Act.

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

Bill 14—The Gas Tax Accountability Act (Financial Administration Act Amended)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), Bill 14, The Gas Tax Accountability Act (Financial Administration Act Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie? *[Agreed]* The bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

Now I will recognize the honourable Member for Fort Whyte to speak.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): With regard to this bill, Mr. Speaker, it is sometimes difficult in this House these days to know whether we are speaking to a bill or to a press release. That is sort of the feeling I have with regard to this bill.

It is a policy that was adopted by the previous Conservative government, that of course being to ensure that all the money that is collected in gas taxes in the province of Manitoba gets spent on roads. Mr. Speaker, it is a policy that has served the previous government well and would have served this Government well had they chosen to follow it.

Of course, typical of this Government, they said they were going to follow it and they said they were going to spend all the money that they collected on gas taxes on roads in the province. They budgeted for it, but then what did they do? We have seen in the last two years that this Government has lapsed \$14 million per year from highways. So once again they go out and make these bold statements that they are going to spend all this money on highways, they budget to spend all this money on highways, but when times get tight, when they spend too much money on other departments such as the Water Stewardship Department or \$5,000 to sponsor a conference in Toronto, what is the first place they go? They go to the department of highways and they say that, well, you cannot build that road, and you cannot build that road, and you cannot build this.

That money is going to have to lapse. Who suffers? Well, Manitobans suffer. People all over Manitoba suffer. They may suffer more in Manitoba. I know it was the minister of Indian and Aboriginal affairs who said, when he was opposition, that if he had it his way, he would not spend one nickel on roads in southern Manitoba. I think his vision is coming true, because when I travel the roads in southern Manitoba I sometimes wonder if this Government is spending one nickel on roads. Certainly the contractors I talk to are all pointing north in terms of the possibilities for new business.

While it is always good to spend proportionately throughout the province, and while it is certainly a good idea to repair and improve and construct roads in northern Manitoba, I would urge this Government to have a balanced approach. Well, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs wants to quote figures. He should look back at the numbers and understand that under the Filmon government, they spent proportionately for the population of Manitoba on roads.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if this minister wants to do something different, if he wants to do as he says and not spend one nickel on roads in southern Manitoba, well, that will be his legacy to the province of

Manitoba. But I will say that the roads in southern Manitoba are critical to our economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, if the minister and if the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) would take the time to read the latest economic report from Statistics Canada, he would see that economic growth in the province of Saskatchewan is predicted to be at 4.5 percent, significantly higher than Manitoba, and the basis for that is the agricultural sector. Their agricultural sector is rebounding from a drought, and that is going to happen in Manitoba as well one day. We need to be sure that we are prepared with well-constructed and well-maintained roads in the province of Manitoba to do that.

Mr. Speaker, there are some distinct issues with this bill that I take exception to. I mean, the minister again comes out with this grandiose statement that this is going to require the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) to spend as much on roads, require the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to spend as much on roads, as is brought in on motive fuel tax revenue, with the exception of aircraft gasoline and motive fuel used for railway locomotives. But, in fact, when we get into the details of the bill, it is not going to force the Government to spend the money; it is going to force the Government to budget the money. Then they can just lapse it and lapse it and lapse it and lapse it and lapse it. So there is no mechanism in this bill to force the exact expenditure of those funds year over year. It simply says that, if you do not spend the funds this year, well, sometime in the next four years, you have got to include it in your Estimates.

Well, I would remind this Government that in the last two years, they have lapsed over \$28 million in their Estimates, and that short-changed the people of Manitoba. That short-changed rural Manitoba. So that is one area that I take exception to.

* (16:30)

Also, I want to note, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation calls for the minister to prepare a report within six months, and that is a good thing. Then it requires in clause 67.1(2) that the minister must table the report in the Legislative Assembly along with his or her report under Section 67. Well, it does not give a time frame. So, he has got to prepare the report, but when is he going to table it? Our experience with this minister is, of course, he always waits until the very

last day, the letter of the law. We see that in the Hydro statements; we see that with the Province's financial statements. I just do not have faith that this minister is going to come forward in a timely fashion. So I would like to see this bill amended to force the minister to table the report with this Legislature, within six months of the year-end. We will be looking forward to that amendment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister has become well-versed in his ways of using loopholes, of avoiding the intent of the legislation. He has created another loophole in this legislation. Funny that when he refers to spending the provincial money that he receives on gas tax, he says that it must be spent on the operation and maintenance of transportation infrastructure for motor vehicles, and I stress for motor vehicles. He attempts to put in the same seed of a thought for federal money. But what does he say about federal money?

He said amounts received by the province as a share of federal fuel tax revenue are to be applied to support municipal infrastructures. No mention of infrastructure for motor vehicles; just municipal infrastructure. So again he is giving himself an out. He is saying we are going to get money from the federal government. He is telling the people of Manitoba, leading them to believe that he is going to spend that on highways and roads, but he leaves himself a loophole that he can spend it on any infrastructure he wants.

So he can take all the gas revenue he receives from the Government of Canada and he can turn it over to the minister responsible for Water Stewardship and that may not necessarily be a bad thing either. I would not question this clause if the minister would just simply stand up and be honest with this House, and say, we are going to get money from the federal government and we are going to spend it on municipal infrastructure. But, no, he stands up and says, "Well, we are going to spend it on roads and highways and improve the road systems throughout Manitoba." Well if he believes that, if he wants to follow that, put it in the legislation.

I must urge the members in this House that sit with him to go back to him and recommend that he bring forward his own amendments because it is important for the people of Manitoba that this bill matches the press release. It does not, it fails on all accounts I have identified and that is why I preface

my comments on this bill by stating, I do not know if I am speaking to a press release or to a bill. Because there is just no clarity in this piece of legislation at all. So, having said that, we need to move this bill forward to committee.

We need to get the minister in a place where he will actually answer some questions hopefully. He seems to avoid them most of the time in the House and in Estimates. But we will ask him to answer some questions on this bill and look for opportunities where we can make this bill more forceful and clearer. I think his intent is a good idea and we agree with that.

It is a policy that the previous Conservative government followed religiously. I mean, it did what the minister is asking to be done here, it just did it without this kind of loophole legislation that this minister has presented to the House. So, having said that, we look forward to comments from the public on committee.

Mr. David Fauschou (Portage la Prairie): I truly appreciate the opportunity to stand and debate Bill 14, The Gas Tax Accountability Act, Mr. Speaker, and to participate in enlightening the government members in the House today, because I just came from the committee of Estimates in which the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) is answering questions regarding the infrastructure in the province that we refer to as our roads and highways.

I would like to enlighten the members and perhaps if they want to listen rather than continue in their debates which are an attempt to distract myself this afternoon. I would like to say that the former Minister of Transportation is in the House and he did a good effort, as do all ministers of Transportation regardless of being of NDP or PC nature. It is a challenge to garner enough monies to reinvest and to improve our roadways here in the province of Manitoba.

Just in answer to questions today, the Minister of Transportation stated that it would require \$300 million of expenditure each and every year just to maintain the current infrastructure in the province of Manitoba. Those are the improvements and upgrades that take care of the wear and tear of a year's activity here in the province of Manitoba; \$300 million.

Mr. Speaker, all that is currently invested in repair, maintenance and upgrades to recover from the

wear and tear this year will be \$148 million, not even half of what is recognized to be needed just to keep up with the wear and tear. That is not addressing the improvements. Mr. Speaker, that is not addressing the needed upgrades to make our highways safer or to increase the capacity of our highway system which we all know is required.

There are a great number of vehicles registered each and every year here in the province of Manitoba, plus elsewhere within North America, where we have reciprocity with and expect that at some time during the future these vehicles registered elsewhere will travel to Manitoba. At least that is the hope because of tourism being an industry which we would like to see expand and grow.

Mr. Speaker, also of note, I would like to say that the greatest deficiency within our system and the greatest need for improvement is within our bridges and bridge structures. Many of these involve grade separation. I refer to grade separation as where the roadway and the railway are effectively separated so that crossing can take place in a very safe and efficient fashion.

Within this legislation, Mr. Speaker, it is specifically mentioned as an exemption. I ask why this Government is exempting the tax revenues from fuels garnered from the railway companies operating in and about Manitoba from participation in this particular fund because the Department of Transportation is in dire need of all the resources in order to provide these needed upgrades.

I know my fellow colleague from Fort Whyte has stood on numerous occasions and was very specific as to the need for grade separation on Kenaston Boulevard as it pertains to the CN mainline which travels through the honourable Member for Fort Whyte's (Mr. Loewen) constituency.

There would be great cost-effective expenditure in that regard as far as the fuel expended on waiting for trains each and every day, the time of the drivers, the delays in delivery of goods and services. The list goes on and on and on and that is just one example. I know that the 2010 projection for transportation needs in and about the city of Winnipeg also cites the need for grade separation in Transcona as well because there is significant concern.

In that regard, there has been development where now if a train is crossing the level roadway, at the

present time, Mr. Speaker, ambulance services are not available to significant development in the Transcona area, so persons' lives are being placed at risk and this document published by the Winnipeg City recognizes the need for grade separation.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), responsible for this particular document, recognizes the absolute vital need for reinvestment in the roadways of Manitoba, as well as improvements to the roadways here in Manitoba and will provide for an amendment that will include the fuel tax that is garnered from motive traffic here in the province of Manitoba.

Also, I have heard from the previous Minister of Transportation on numerous occasions the need to improve northern airport facilities because those facilities provide a vital link of persons residing in the North with services not afforded them in the North but for services that are available in the south of Manitoba, so, therefore, the airports provide this vital link.

* (16:40)

Again, in this document, a glaring deficiency: This document that cites the aircraft fuel tax that would be provided to the Government by activity out of the northern airports is exempt.

Why does the Minister of Finance want to take the revenues from this activity, vital activity involving northern airports, and put it in to general revenues when there is such a deficiency and outstanding need to improve those facilities that his own ministers have cited time and time again?

In conclusion, I would like to say that I hope the Minister of Finance listens to comments from this side of the House and affords us the opportunity to debate amendments that will clear up these deficiencies currently existing in this bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I just wanted to put a few words on the record prior to seeing Bill 14 pass into committee stage.

It is a bill and principle which we support and feel it is a step forward. One could question in terms of the amount of time that it has taken for the Government to realize that transparency is what people want to see in regard to the gas tax. This does

go a long way in ensuring that the taxpayer will have a better sense in terms of where the money is coming in from and ultimately where it is going.

Those are the two points which we want to really emphasize. On the issue of transparency, we want it to be fairly straightforward so that people can see the numbers and that those numbers are indeed the real numbers. Mr. Speaker, we do believe that some sort of an assessment or a report on those numbers could and should be incorporated into the budget document itself that is presented by government at the beginning of every fiscal year or at least when they present their Budget to the Chamber. Then quite possibly a more detailed explanation would be obligated to be presented, as the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) had made reference to.

So, with those few words, we are quite prepared to see it go to committee and see what sort of input can be received and possible amendments made to make it even more transparent and a better piece of legislation. Thank you.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 14, The Gas Tax Accountability Act (Financial Administration Act Amended).

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

Bill 20—The University College of the North Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford), Bill 20, The University College of the North Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell? No? Okay, that has been denied.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It is certainly a pleasure for me to rise this afternoon and put a few words on the record regarding Bill 20, The University College of the North Act. Certainly, I think this is the first opportunity that I have had as

the Advanced Education critic for my caucus to speak today. I appreciate the words of support and encouragement that I hear from all members in the House on the job that I am already doing in such an early stage of the new critic role.

I have had the opportunity, of course, to confer with the previous critic for our caucus, the honourable Member for River East. I always find the Member for River East gives good counsel on a number of issues. Certainly she did on this issue as well and shared with me many of the consultations that she has had over the last number of months in fulfilling her role as the critic for Advanced Education within our caucus. Mr. Speaker, I had the great opportunity of meeting with the member many times to discuss not only Bill 20, The University College of the North Act, but a number of other issues related to advanced education. I have taken that counsel to heart.

It is important I think to know and to set out early on my own perspective as it relates to advanced education within our province. I think that I probably at this early stage of my career still bring very, very much a student's perspective on it. It has not been that many years since I was in university. Mr. Speaker, I remember well the difficulties, as a student, to try to meet the challenges of tuition each year and the costs that come from being a rural student, the additional costs that come from that either in terms of transportation or in terms of lodging in the city of Winnipeg, if that is where one chooses to go to post-secondary education.

It is important to note that a lot of my comments are a reflection of that experience, and the experience that I had as a student at the University of Manitoba in both the Asper School of Business and at Robson Hall, the Faculty of Law at the University of Manitoba, and the challenge that it was to ensure that one could meet the needs, first just on tuition and of lodging and then, later on in life, of my family as well. Those experiences, I think, Mr. Speaker, are ones that members opposite, I know, sometimes think that they, somehow, have domain over issues of advanced education, that, somehow, those are their issues. But, certainly, I would say that that is not true.

I remember clearly in the 1990s, the many initiatives that the previous Conservative government brought in to help students in terms of credits, and in

terms of ensuring that there was recognition about the difficulty that students had in meeting the various financial challenges that they had, and also in terms of getting through their studies. So, Mr. Speaker, members opposite should know that the experiences that I bring, I think, are valuable in this particular position as critic and I know that all members respect that.

When we are talking about any institution, post-secondary or, really, even any educational institution these days, we are talking about access, to a large extent, and the need for different facilities. I reflect about the changes that have happened when it comes to access to education in a very short period of time, really, and those changes continue to happen at a very quick speed.

I mentioned my early years in university in the Asper School of Business, and I can recall in those early years, in the 1990s, how education was at that point. It was still, even at that stage, Mr. Speaker, very book-oriented, very intensive in terms of hands-on material, in terms of classroom instruction. That was just the way things were in the 1990s, but I am certain that they were quite different from the experiences students would have had five or ten years earlier in the 1980s.

I reflect back, then, when I was completing my law degree in the late 1990s, how much things had changed in a very short period of time, in only five years, in terms of how education was delivered, and the different kinds of roles of delivery and models of delivery that were available between the early 1990s and the late 1990s. Mr. Speaker, both were very much professional faculties that I attended. They certainly both had access to a lot of new technology in terms of delivering education to their students, but I reflect very clearly about the experience that I had in law school, and recognizing that there were courses that were entirely delivered on-line.

Mr. Speaker, I thought that that was quite remarkable, that entire courses in a professional faculty like the Faculty of Law could be done from your own home. Being a resident of Steinbach, that was interesting, to be able to be within my own home, in my home community, to complete an accredited course in the Faculty of Law without, really, having to ever leave the community, without, really, ever having to go to a separate bricks-and-mortar facility.

So that was quite a change from my experience in the Faculty of Commerce in the Asper School of Business because, certainly, at that time, only a few years earlier, that type of learning was not available. Now, I understand since that time, there are many, many courses that are offered on-line, accredited courses that are entirely offered on-line.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other programs that are made available in terms of Campus Manitoba, I understand, and throughout Manitoba, there are a number of different campuses that are set up in conjunction and in partnership with the University of Manitoba and different universities, Brandon University, different universities throughout our province, to ensure that people can have access to education within their own home communities.

* (16:50)

So there are different models of delivering that type of education, whether there is a Campus Manitoba model where an individual can physically go to a location and have a learning environment within their home community, or stay within their own homes and access education through means such as the Internet and that type of model of education. So, Mr. Speaker, there have been a lot of changes. I know, even speaking to someone today who was taking a look at articling and finishing off their legal process, I understand that next year there will be a substantial, if not all, of the articling component from the Faculty of Law that will be done on-line. This is done, in large extent, because of those law students who are articling in northern Manitoba, those who are doing their practicum work with lawyers, working with a principal in northern Manitoba, there will not be that same need to travel to Winnipeg on a weekly basis for the articling courses. They will actually be offered on-line, and that will prevent the need to do that kind of travelling.

Already we see that in Manitoba there is a great deal of outreach in terms of the type of education that is provided. That is certainly reflected, I think, in some of the media reports that we have seen. I recall an article that appeared in one of our newspapers in Manitoba, I believe it was the *Brandon Sun* in August of last year, that referred to how many more students were taking courses, post-secondary courses on-line. Enrolment, I think, had been moving up and up and going up over 20 or 30 percent in terms of the

access to education in different means. These were students who did not have to travel to a particular university, whether it was the University of Manitoba, whether it was the University of Winnipeg. They could really take those courses on-line. That is really, I think in a lot of ways, the future of education in the province and also in Canada and across and around the world.

It is remarkable that a student today can take a degree from the University of Manitoba regardless of where they are. Not only in Manitoba, but across Canada. Mr. Speaker, one can be a student, of Alberta or Saskatchewan or Ontario or in another jurisdiction, another country, and be able to take an accredited course, an accredited Bachelor's degree from the University of Manitoba. That is remarkable, and I think we are going to see the continued growth and expansion of that as we go forward.

Certainly, I know, for rural students there are different challenges than for those who live close, in an urban centre, to their institution of choice. There are additional travel costs; there is additional cost of lodging, as I mentioned a little bit earlier, and that is an area that the Government, I do not think, has properly addressed, that additional cost for students who have to leave their home communities, either on a daily basis to commute to the university—I know from my own experience, Mr. Speaker, I did the two hour commute, a one-hour drive one way, and then a return trip home each day when I was attending the Faculty of Law at the University of Manitoba, and there was an expense involved there and the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) suggested there were nights that I did not get home.

Well, it is not true. I think I did get home every night. But clearly there were some late nights, Mr. Speaker, some late nights done, studying, of course, in a studious way and ensuring that I was prepared for the assignments and the tests that were brought forward from different professors.

So, of course, Mr. Speaker, that is a recognition that needs to happen on the Government's side in terms of what do you do for students who are in that position where they are commuting on a regular basis or have to have an alternative residence other than in their home community. That is something, I do not think the Government has properly addressed in terms of helping students. I know members opposite have similar experiences. I see the Member

for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) has awoken in his seat and I am sure that he will recognize, as well, that there are students in his own area who travel to different institutions and bear a certain cost. The Government needs to look at ways, whether it is different access to student loans or whether it is a different type of credit program, that would help those students out.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are lots of challenges but also innovation within the advanced education field in terms of the cost of travelling but also the different access that students have, and one is certainly going to help to alleviate the other. Increased access to education through other means, like the Internet, will certainly alleviate some of the costs for students who otherwise would have to travel or move to a different institution, Mr. Speaker.

When we are talking about the specifics of this particular bill, there certainly has been some concern raised, and it is important to state that I think, Mr. Speaker, we all agree with the principal of providing education to all Manitobans. I can say from my own personal experience that advanced education has made a significant difference in my life.

Mr. Speaker, not everybody within my family had the opportunity to attend an institution past high school, and it was encouraged within my family, but not always an easy thing to do, simply because of economic means.

I certainly have a strong understanding that advanced education can help to shape and to change an individual's life. With that in mind, it is important that we always look for ways to ensure that all Manitobans will have that availability, have that access to that type of education.

How that is provided is a matter of some debate. There have been those who have raised concerns about the bricks and mortar component of a new university. When you set up a new structure, of course, you have all the administration and all the infrastructure that goes with putting up a new institution. That is of some concern during a time when the Government itself recognizes that it is a difficult economic year. Certainly, if we did a survey around the province of the institutions that we have now, post-secondary institutions, the major ones, I think almost all would say that they have a difficult time meeting the needs of their students right now

with the kind of funding that they are receiving from the current government.

I do have some clippings here from newspapers in Brandon. Mr. Speaker, I specifically note the Brandon University. I look back at a newspaper clipping from January 29, 2003, entitled, "BU facing budget crisis." In there it talks about a looming deficit of \$1 million. On October 4, 2003, the headline reads, "BU may have to slash jobs without funding." There again it talks about those who say that it is going to be a very challenging time for students to be able to find the kind of courses that they want, to get access to the courses that they want because of the cutbacks that are going to have to happen at Brandon University as a result of underfunding.

November 18, 2003, "BU prepares to make more cuts." It goes on. April 23, 2004, this year, "Fees sore spot for BU students." Here we see how the increased fees that are happening within the province are being borne by the students. Those students I think would probably be surprised to learn that we have a tuition freeze, apparently, in Manitoba, as were some of my colleagues in the Faculty of Law when there was discussion about raising tuition 200 percent.

April 22, 2004, "We are going to have some very significant cuts this year, greater than in other years." That is from officials at Brandon University.

Mr. Speaker, there are obviously concerns then in relation to where the funding from the Province is going to come. When we build another university, the University College of the North, it is going to add a degree of stress in the sense that there will be an additional university that will be looking for funding. I would ask the Government to give assurances that not only will there be additional funds provided to the current universities so that they will be able to meet the needs they are falling behind now but that the new university will not come at the expense of the current institutions.

I think in principle it is fair to say that we all agree with ensuring that there is access to high-quality education, advanced education for all residents of Manitoba. It is an important objective. We just put forward a caution, though, a caution in that the current universities are already saying that they are having a difficult time meeting their needs, having a difficult time providing the services that their own students need. That caution has to be made

very clear to the Government so that when they go forward with the new institution in the North that it is done with the recognition that, yes, we want to ensure that Manitobans across the province have that ability to tap into the benefit of advanced education but that there will not be an additional burden placed on the current institutions who are serving students very well in this province.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude my comments. I look forward to hearing the comments of other members in this House and also to the comments that will, I am sure, come forward at committee when the bill is reviewed there. Thank you very much.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to put a few words on record regarding Bill 20, The University College of the North Act. I think we have to look at this university as a new entity, as a historic entity. I think we have to look at it as part of the evolution of northern Manitoba. I was listening with interest to the Member for Steinbach. I think we should not be thinking in terms of this new university could be an impediment to the existence and the functioning of present universities. I am sure it will not be.

* (17:00)

I think the member has to realize though that in northern Manitoba we have grown up to the point we feel we have evolved to the need for this particular institution. It gives us a degree of independence. In fact, it makes us feel like we have grown up. It is sort of like a 16-year-old kid that you have in the family he says, "I am ready for a driver's licence," you have to believe him. Believe us when we say, "We are ready for the University College of the North."

Now it is about time, Mr. Speaker, that northern and Aboriginal people should be the primary decision makers regarding post-secondary education in northern Manitoba. For too long all the decisions were made in southern Manitoba regarding post-secondary education affecting our young people in northern Manitoba. Now post-secondary education in northern Manitoba has a long and venerable history and most of it has been very positive.

I need only to talk about institutions, Mr. Speaker, such as KCC, the Keewatin Community College, a wonderful institution. Inter-Universities

North which is basically the three universities: the University of Manitoba, the university of Brandon and the University of Winnipeg, working together to provide services for students in northern Manitoba. I had the honour in fact to teach for IUN for a number of years. I found it a very worthwhile experience, a very different experience from being on a campus in southern Manitoba let us say, or in Saskatchewan at a main campus. In a small town in northern Manitoba to teach university courses is really quite challenging and quite different. But it was a very positive experience for me.

Apart from that we have had distant education programs in the past, the Northern Nursing Program as well, other access programs, New Careers, BUNTEP, Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program, a wonderful program. All those can be encompassed or can fit under the umbrella of the new University College of the North.

We take education very seriously in northern Manitoba. Certainly the northern MLAs identified as a major issue as early as 1999 when we said we have to develop a strategy for northern Manitoba, a northern development strategy. Mr. Speaker, we isolated five key elements to that strategy: housing, health, transportation, economic development and education. So this falls within the five elements that we identified then.

As well, I am sure members of the House had heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) say over and over again that there cannot be an economic strategy unless it is accompanied by a good educational strategy; those two have to work together. Since northern Manitoba is a critical part of Manitoba, we not only have to have an economic and an educational strategy that work hand in hand, but we have to be treated as if we are of the same value as southern Manitoba. That our citizens up there get the same kind of service and have the same kind of chances as southern Manitobans have.

Now the minister in her remarks about this bill had pointed out that there are huge challenges. Northern Manitoba is a sparsely populated part of the world. She pointed out there are 200 000 square miles and for those of us that are still in the British imperial system that is roughly one person for every two and a half square miles. So it is not a densely populated part of the world. Of course that presents its own challenges. But the time has come where our

students can do better than simply having to go south as my own children had to do. My oldest son graduated from the University of Manitoba. My youngest son is actually in the process of graduating from the University of Winnipeg, and my daughter actually left the province entirely and went to Ryerson Polytechnic Institute.

But it was difficult, it was difficult. As the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) aptly pointed out, students from urban areas and from the North have to come to the city and it is expensive for parents. It is a challenge. It is not easy and it certainly was not easy for my wife and I, but despite that our children did get a good education. That is what we are trying to offer the students of northern Manitoba. I think this University College of the North is an integral part of that direction.

I want to thank the current Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) for bringing forth this bill, and I want to thank a number of people. One of those people I think that we need to give a special thank you to is Don Robertson. Mr. Robertson was part of the implementation team for the University College of the North. Mr. Speaker, I think we have to thank Verna Kirkness, who was very much involved as a facilitator and did extensive consultation across the province when it came to the University College of the North.

I am delighted that the governance model takes into account the realities of northern Manitoba. First of all starting with an interim governing council, but later, Mr. Speaker, a learning council as separate from the governing council; and additionally, I think this is critical, that we have a council of elders because it shows respect to the elders of northern Manitoba.

The culture of northern Manitoba is unique, Mr. Speaker, in that it values the wisdom of its older people, of its elders, something I think that many in the south could benefit from if they took that attitude as well. We take our elders very seriously. We listen to them very carefully. We think their accumulated wisdom is extremely important for how we live on a daily basis.

In fact, at this point I would like to take a second to thank a couple of elders from northern Manitoba that I am very, very close to: Ed Head being one of them, formerly living in my part of Manitoba,

actually, Cold Lake, Sherridon, and the second elder that I would like to express some gratitude to is Mrs. Margaret Head who currently is in Victoria Hospital. She had a heart attack but she is recuperating very well.

Mrs. Margaret Head has been, for me, a shining example of what an elder should be. She is always there when I need her. She gives me good counsel. She is a very wise person. She understands where people are coming from. She understands the unique needs of northern Manitobans. She speaks Cree fluently, obviously.

She was very much involved with Native Communications Inc. because she was aware how important it is for Aboriginal people to be able to communicate. Mr. Speaker, her and her husband were extremely critical to the development of the Manitoba Métis Federation in its infancy, in its early stage. Here is an elder that, although she is, in fact, this week becoming 87 years of age, has had a long and distinguished career, and we still need her.

I am so delighted to see that this model of governance does include our elders, Mr. Speaker. I think that is such a wonderful touch and an important touch and it shows the cultural sensitivity that we should all take pride in.

I regret to some degree that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) was not always as positive to University College of the North as he could have been, but I hope that has changed because I did notice the leader was in northern Manitoba not too long ago. I met him at the airport heading to Flin Flon. I was delighted to talk with him, and I think he understands the importance of northern Manitoba and I am hoping that he, along with his caucus, will support this bill. I certainly have indication from the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) that he thinks it is a relatively good bill. Although I did not get a wholehearted endorsement of the bill, I am still very optimistic. I guess it was more than tepid support; it was fairly warm.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that everyone in the House supports this bill. It is, certainly, important to us in northern Manitoba, and it would show a great degree of respect to our elders and to our people in northern Manitoba when they finally give us what, I think, we should have had quite a number of years ago, and that is a university of our own. So the University

College of the North, for northern Manitoba, is essential. I look forward to support from all sides of this House.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I want to preface my comments by saying that I certainly appreciate the comments from the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and I want to assure him that I agree with much of what he said and, in fact, if he happened to be the lead minister on this file, Mr. Speaker, I would have a lot more confidence in it moving forward in a progressive fashion than what I see from the members opposite so far. I want to congratulate him for his remarks.

I, as well, had a tremendous opportunity during the recent election campaign, and since then, to talk to a number of people associated with universities. The area I represent, Mr. Speaker, is home to a number of individuals who not only work as professors, but have association and work at in various capacities at the University of Manitoba. I would say that the people I talked to, as well as the members on this side of the House and, I know, the members on that side of the House, certainly believe that everybody in Manitoba needs access to post-secondary education in order to improve their position in life.

Mr. Speaker, it is becoming more and more important these days for those individuals who want to move ahead, who want to move society ahead, to have the opportunity to participate in a post-secondary education. Again, I believe that it is an important step forward to bring these educational opportunities to the people of the north.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the members opposite that it has been Conservative governments that have a history of providing post-secondary education to people throughout all of Manitoba, and, I daresay, even in this instance, although it is the New Democratic Party that is introducing the bill. Of course, once again, in their typical fashion, they have introduced a bill that they have not budgeted for. So I am sure that in three and a half years from now when we are on the opposite side of the House, we will be left with a challenge of bringing this kernel of an idea through to fruition. I am sure that it will be, once again, a Conservative Party that does the right thing and brings post-secondary education to more parts of Manitoba.

* (17:10)

I would say again, Mr. Speaker, that my big fear and the concern that was echoed by very many of my constituents who had these discussions during the election, is the penchant of the NDP party to set up bureaucracies, to set up unnecessary administrations that eat up costs, take a great deal of money and, in fact, take resources away from the front line where they are needed. We have seen that in health care, the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and the WRHA, where administration costs have tripled. Again, their promise was to fix health care, and what do they do? They pour money into administration and essentially deprive the front-line workers.

We are seeing the same thing happen in post-secondary education in the existing institutions. Mr. Speaker, we see the minister responsible for post-secondary education, for advanced learning who is, I believe, spending more time on the keno file than she actually is spending on post-secondary education. I would hope that now those responsibilities have been moved over to the minister responsible for, the member from Brandon East—

An Honourable Member: East or west.

Mr. Loewen: East or west, somewhere in Brandon. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I hope she would take more opportunity now to dedicate her time to the post-secondary education file and start to get a few things right. We are seeing just within the existing institutions that this is a government that is starving our existing institutions, and here they are talking about setting up a new institution. Unfortunately, they have really no idea where the money is going to come from to fund this institution.

On the one hand, Mr. Speaker, we see the University of Winnipeg in a chronic situation of underfunding. We have heard about that and we have read about that. I personally have spoken to the chancellor, and I have a lot of sympathy for the challenges that face the University of Winnipeg. They are fortunate to have a former mayor of the city of Winnipeg now involved in fundraising, and I am sure through her efforts with the private sector, we will see some improvements being made.

Mr. Speaker, we are also seeing the same situation and hearing the same complaints at the University of Manitoba and the university of

Brandon where both these institutions, I mean the University of Manitoba when you talk to the people who work there and you hear what they are having to deal with in terms of class size because the Government is not funding them enough to meet their needs in terms of hiring new staff. The class sizes are horrifically big. That, Mr. Speaker, takes away from the richness of the experience of the students attending the University of Manitoba.

The same thing is happening at the university of Brandon. As my colleague from Steinbach pointed out, chronic issues of underfunding at the university of Brandon. What is this Government's solution? Mr. Speaker, what they say is the Minister responsible for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs wants to send me over a hanky because he thinks somehow I have got tears. Well, if it is tobacco, we would have to take it outside the House, but I do appreciate it. Maybe we can share that at some point.

Back to the underfunding issue, Mr. Speaker, their solution to that is to say, "Well, we are going to increase funding." But what do we see? Instead of actually providing more funds for universities, they say, "We are going to increase funding by exempting them from property tax." Instead of doing the right thing and having the provincial government increase funding for universities, they simply put it back on the property taxpayers within the city of Winnipeg. That simply is not realistic.

What I would like to say in closing, Mr. Speaker, is that we on this side of the House are also very much onside with providing more opportunities for those all across this province, not only in the North but in all parts of Manitoba. In particular, in the North in this case, we applaud the initiative to bring it closer to home.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned particularly with the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) because I believe, unfortunately, he is looking at this as more of a legacy project than an enhancement project. It is his own personal legacy. I would encourage him to do the right thing, make sure that he takes advantage of the advances in technology, distance learning, the ability to provide this type of educational experience to people in northern Manitoba without a large buildup in administration costs because all that will do will be to suck money away from the students who could make use of it.

The Minister of Water Stewardship seems to be concerned with why I would raise this. Mr. Speaker, I would simply point him again to previous experience. The Department of Finance, the Finance Minister himself, who stands in this House on a regular basis and even in his Budget tells us that he is going to cut expenses. What do we see?

Mr. Speaker, his administration expenses have gone up 20 percent. Water Stewardship, the Health Minister, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, all over this province we see administrative expenses going up at the expense of providing good and valuable service to the people of Manitoba.

So, again, we will look forward to getting this bill into committee. We will look forward to hearing from many people. Mr. Speaker, I do encourage this Government to start moving ahead in a realistic way. *[interjection]*

The Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) wants to know—I have said a number of times I support the initiative. Mr. Speaker, what will be lacking from this Government, I believe, is in the follow-through.

I would like to see them budget some proper amounts for it. I would like to see them actually have a plan to move it forward. What we are going to hear from this Government is that they are going to have a plan to create a plan to maybe implement a plan some place down the road.

Again, while we are supportive of the initiative, we are also looking forward to a day, three years from now, when we will actually pick up the ball on this project and make it happen. Because I know, under this administration, there is not a hope that it will actually come to fruition in the next three years.

So, having said that, we will look forward to further debate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I do want to get a few words on the record prior to its passage and to committee.

I can recall having discussions with individuals as I was going to school. Maybe a number of people can somewhat relate when you would have, whether it is a parent or a grandparent, talking about when they went to school they would walk miles and go through all sorts of weather conditions and so forth

in order to go to school. You know something, the cold weather, we can think of the stories that we would have been told back then.

But even back then individuals recognized the importance of education, and we see that today as society evolves. We are seeing more and more, are getting more recognition in terms of the importance of education. One of the things that we have today, through both computer and telecom communications and technology, has really allowed us to do so much more today than what we would have been able to do 60, 70 years ago.

With those comments, we look at Bill 20 as a step in the right direction. The establishment of a university college in the North can be a very positive thing; will be a very positive thing. The ability to be able to get degrees and certificates and diplomas and so forth from up North is a positive thing, providing through joint academic programs. Again, it is a positive thing. Mr. Speaker, we are seeing colleges and universities work more and more closely together and technology has allowed for that to take place.

I know that the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party has talked at length in terms of the importance of telecommunications and ensuring that rural Manitobans from all corners of the province have access to post-secondary education.

When I was referring to the many number of years back, or generations back, you know people were quite pleased at that time if they could finish Grade 8, and Grade 12 would be absolutely wonderful. Mr. Speaker, I was in a generation in which the expectation was that you had to get your high school. You had better get your high school and it would be wonderful if you got post-secondary and the emphasis was put on to university.

Well today, you need to get that university degree. It is university or some form of post-secondary education. Expectation in society is that is what you are going to get one way or another. So again, what we are seeing here, I believe, is that next step, in ensuring that we get better accessibility to these post-secondary institutions. I think that if we look at the technology that is there, that there is no reason why, and it has to be done properly we would say, it is critically important that it be done properly.

* (17:20)

The Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) makes reference to the whole financing issue. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) raises concerns in regard to the financing and so forth. Well, equally you have to make sure that there are other infrastructure types of programming that is done so that what we ultimately do see established is going to be able to be recognized, not only in the province of Manitoba but across Canada, as a program, as an institution that stands alone in terms of its level of expertise.

It is of such a high calibre, Mr. Speaker, that others will want to, in essence, emulate or take from this particular institution into whatever sort of programming that they might be able to incorporate in terms of future Master's or PhD or whatever other institutions. Getting that recognition, Mr. Speaker, I think is critically important, providing the service to northern Manitobans, and I suspect, not only is it for northern Manitobans, I believe there are people who live throughout the province who see plenty of opportunities in northern Manitoba and, in fact, will see the establishment of this facility as maybe the type of enticement they would like that will, in essence, bring them up north.

So, Mr. Speaker, it can be a vehicle of economic growth; it can be a vehicle of fulfilling dreams for other Manitobans throughout the province. With those few words we are quite prepared to see it go to committee.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 20, The University College of the North Act.

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

Bill 26—The Certified Management Accountants Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 26, The Certified Management Accountants Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. It has been denied.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate that we on this side of the House are supportive of Bill 26, The Certified Management Accountants Act, going forward to committee. It is an important piece of legislation, and I would just ask all members of the House, when they hear in the next few days, and they may have heard already, that there are some discussions between the chartered accountants and the CMAs taking place.

Regardless of that, it is important that this bill moves through the House in an expeditious fashion. It may be that those talks will now come to a conclusion that they want and we will have to fall back on this act, but it is important that it moves through. It has been underway for two or three years, and so, having said that, we agree with the bill. We are willing to see it move forward to committee and hear representation.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 26, The Certified Management Accountants Act.

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

Bill 29—The Public Trustee Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 29, The Public Trustee Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Fort Whyte?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. It has been denied.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): It is my pleasure to speak on Bill 29. We are in support of Bill 29 in the sense that, first of all, it is a housekeeping bill and it is a bill that is very, very short. It clarifies the role of the Public Trustee. It allows the Public Trustee to act as litigation guardian for a child if no one else is acting as the guardian for

the child. I think that is an important aspect of the bill. But the balance really is a housekeeping bill. It clarifies the role of the Public Trustee under The Public Trustee Act versus The Queen's Bench Act, and for that very reason we look forward to moving it to committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, very briefly, in respect to Bill 26 and Bill 29, the bill that I am speaking on right now, as there seems to be a need to get them into committee, we will reserve our opinion on the bill until after committee. In principle, they are bills in which we support going into committee.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 29, The Public Trustee Amendment Act.

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

Bill 37—The Labour Relations Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 37, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Springfield? Remain standing?

Some Honourable Members: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Bill 37 will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Springfield.

Bill 31—The Floodway Authority Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 31, The Floodway Authority Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck). What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina? No?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave is denied.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It is a pleasure to speak to Bill 31 here in the Legislature this afternoon. If there was ever a bill that was timely to bring forward, I would say, it is this particular bill, timely in the sense that it needs to clearly have debate.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the creation of The Floodway Authority Act and the Floodway Authority to deal with the expansion of the floodway, I do not think it can be done in isolation or without reference to the current events that currently are going on before the Floodway Authority.

Certainly, all the members of the House will be well aware, some painfully aware, of the discussions that are happening in relation to our particular piece of legislation. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we have a great deal of concern in terms of what is happening with the expansion of the floodway and the process that is undergoing.

There is not a Manitoban in the province who has not heard of the disputes that are going on between labour and business, Mr. Speaker, and certainly the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) wonders when a particular long-awaited report will be brought forward to determine if there is going to be a resolution to this particular dispute, an acceptable resolution, one that will be agreeable to all parties.

When I say all parties, I include not only labour and business, but Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, because clearly that is a party that seems to be left out of the equation, is a party that the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) does not seem to be concerned about the taxpayers' dollars.

He has not been protecting their interests. He has clearly been discussing the issues with labour. We have no dispute, there is no dispute on this side that the Minister of Water Stewardship is clearly in tune with the interests of labour in this province.

Nobody will dispute the fact that this Minister of Water Stewardship keeps a door open, keeps his door open to members of labour, to labour leaders in this province, but money questions arise whether or not he gives that same access to other parties, to business within the community, Mr. Speaker.

We do not know who is protecting the taxpayers on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We have

heard comments. We have heard comment from the CEO of the Floodway Authority that it is not really his responsibility to determine what is going to happen in terms of the economic impact with that particular discussion of what is going on now between the dispute on how the floodway will be built and what the status of the individual labourers will be under the particular agreement.

So, it was under that context, and context is important in every debate in the Legislature, but no more so than in today's debate when we look at the context and what is going on. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Water Stewardship has a great deal of responsibility of the difficulty that is happening in Manitoba here today.

He sits there and he smiles in his seat while there are disputes going on, while radio ads are going on, while TV ads are going on, on a daily basis, while there is a dispute over how the floodway will be built. The minister sits coyly in his seat with a smile on his face and does not care if the sun goes down on the British Empire.

It does not seem to bother him, Mr. Speaker, that these different disputes are happening throughout the province. He sits there kind of oblivious to the concern, and I say shame on the—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Steinbach will have 27 minutes remaining.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

TRANSPORTATION AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

* (15:00)

The Acting Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Good afternoon. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order? This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will be continuing with consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Transportation and Government Services. It was previously agreed by this committee to consider this department globally. The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): There is one other person joining the staff today. She was not able to

attend yesterday. Her name is Marlene Zyluk, and she is the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. We would welcome her today. Just for the information of members opposite. I thank you, and I am certainly open to all questions and hopefully we can have a constructive day today.

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Acting Chair, I just want to ask the minister, seeing that the chief registrar is joining us today, is this the last occurrence of her presence under this portfolio? Maybe you could clarify that point with the recent announcement between MPIC and the department of Vehicle Licencing.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Madam Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Lemieux: I thank you very, very much for the question. Madam Chairperson, this is something that, when we have taken a look at the issue of DDVL, and I know I mentioned it in the House on a number of occasions, that the move from DDVL to MPI was looked at on a number of occasions. In fact, it was looked at, I understand, in the 1990s by the previous government.

Madam Chair, there was a Deloitte & Touche recommendation, bringing the two organizations together in 1993. This is something that these both organizations have a lot in common.

The Deloitte & Touche report to the previous administration stated that they felt that, by bringing these two organizations together, they would produce savings through operating and technical efficiencies, that there would be customer service and delivery improvements, road safety and accountability, also with regard to an opportunity to a better package of products and services and having a different goal and looking more futuristically at the operations.

So the long and the short of it is that Marlene Zyluk, since the member opposite raises it, has done a tremendous job for the province of Manitoba, and we are very, very pleased that she has been able to do that job. I do not think anyone would dispute that fact, and we certainly would not do that. But again, we are looking at the total picture when we take a look at DDVL going over to MPI, because we believe that all the goals that were set forward with regard to DDVL going over to MPI will be reached, we hope. As I mentioned before, Deloitte & Touche

in '93 raised the issue about making this move, and, also, in '97 there was an internal group looking at the change, as well, and they recommended that should happen. I know the previous government did not decide to move it. That was their choice.

We decided that because we are looking at essentially four major benefits of doing that, the improved customer service and operational savings through reduced overlap and duplication as well as cost avoidance and better safety and co-ordination overall, we are hoping that these will come to fruition. So the long and the short of it is that DDVL did an excellent job. Both organizations have a lot in common. We just feel that this move is imperative at this time, Madam Chair, for all the previous benefits that I mentioned.

* (15:10)

Mr. Faurschou: I do appreciate the good work the chief registrar does and how she goes about her duties in making certain that fairness is afforded all persons that currently have drivers' licences and those that have made application.

Madam Chairperson, I would like to ask the minister's department if they can clarify—I know we had the opportunity to ask questions about capital investment versus infrastructure, maintenance versus ongoing programming. I would really like to be fully apprised with a very clear and distinct understanding of the expenditures the department of highways is budgeting.

Madam Chair, there are references on page 160 of Transportation and Government Services looking to expend \$87 million. There are also referenced estimates of capital investment, \$26 million. The first figure is on page 160; the second figure was referenced on page 157.

In addition to the overall expenditures that are referenced within the Transportation Department expenditures on page 134, which denote \$65 million for Highways and Transportation Programs, I think that is fairly clear. As I understand, that is all personnel support services, involving surveys and engineering and the like, but then referring to the Infrastructure Works, which is \$125,609,900 as an estimate for this year, now, is that a stand-alone figure and those other two figures I referenced earlier in addition to those or are they within this figure?

I would also like to ask the question as it relates to the figure that was provided yesterday that approximately \$300 million would be required to keep up with the current \$7.2 billion worth of assets within the department and the wear and tear that those assets incur on an annual basis.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, just to make a comment on the \$300 million, that would just keep us at a kind of stable or stationary rate. I do not know whether that is a good number to be talking about, in a sense, because that might be a pie-in-the-sky number, because we have never been able, no matter what government has been in this Legislature, to attain those kinds of funds. So you need those kinds of dollars.

So, Madam Chair, what we are talking about is realistic numbers. I know the Member for Arthur-Virden asked yesterday about the \$600-million budget commitment that we had made dealing with RoadWorks that the previous minister from Brandon West and the previous minister from Thompson were responsible for until my coming into this portfolio in November.

Well, I hate to call it a kind of pie-in-the-sky wish number, but, essentially, we have never been able to attain those kinds of dollars, that \$300 million. Now, if the feds come on board and they give us that \$165 million of gasoline tax they take out of the province, maybe we will have a shot at it.

But just with regard to the honourable member from Arthur-Virden asking about the \$600-million commitment on RoadWorks and what are we going to do with that essentially. As I began to say yesterday, the department will meet and exceed this commitment.

Madam Chair, the RoadWorks commitment was to provide a \$120-million budget for preservation and enhancement for five years, for a total of \$600 million over the five-year period. The preservation and enhancement budgets were formerly shown together in the 120-million construction program under the part (a) operating expenses.

Now in order to meet our ongoing commitment, Madam Chairperson, to comply with generally accepted accounting principles and to comply with the recommendations of the Auditor General, the Auditor General asked us to implement a budgeting

and reporting for Highways infrastructure's tangible capital assets. I believe the member from Portage touched on that yesterday. As a result of this decision, Madam Chair, the department's funding is separated into two votes. One is the part (a), which we started talking a little bit yesterday, Expenditures appropriation. It is 15.4.(a), and it provides for the overall maintenance and preservation of the provincial transportation system. We can make some references to some page numbers shortly for you, to help you out.

The investment is focussed on surface repair and preventative maintenance such as micro-surfacing, grout- and crack-fill and seal-coating, along with operational activities like snow and ice control, pavement marking and sign replacement.

Madam Chair, the honourable member will note that the combined maintenance and preservation budget has grown by \$2 million this year, from a budget of \$109.3 million to \$111.5 million.

Madam Chair, the enhancement budget is now shown as a Part B Capital Investment in vote B.14. The projects included under B.14, are: (1) there is the reconstruction of existing roads; (2) the new construction of such as the twinning or intersection improvements or interchanges, et cetera; and (3) the provincial and federal projects such as the Strategic Highway Improvement Program, like SHIP, and the Prairie Grain Roads Program, the PGRP, and the Airport Capital Assistance Program. This would fall under the Part B Capital Investment which is vote B.14.

Madam Chair, the budget figure is now shown net of federal contributions. The Capital Investment budget has grown by \$10 million this fiscal year as we committed to, and is expected to grow by another \$10 million next year. The growth in both the preservation and maintenance budget and the Capital Investment budget for enhancements will ensure that the RoadWorks commitment will be met and exceeded over the five-year commitment period.

So, essentially, what you are looking at is a part (a) and a part (b) expenses. Just to address the point of whether or not we will meet the 600, yes, we will meet the 600 and exceed it. But, next year, no matter what kind of accounting principles you use, the fact of the matter is it will be \$10 million more this coming year and \$10 million more next year.

So it will certainly help us on our way to better improving the highway infrastructure of Manitoba but will nowhere get us close to what is really needed. I am not telling the members opposite anything that they do not know. It is just that we often make reference to the federal government and their funding, and our lack of it, or the gas taxes they should be putting back into the province. So with that point I just wanted to thank the member for the question and look forward to another one.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Just for clarification, if the minister is talking about putting another \$10 million into the budget this year, is that over and above the \$120 million then that he has indicated would be the average of the five years? The \$10 million this year would be \$130 million in 2004-05's budget and another 10 in '05-06.

Mr. Lemieux: Just to address a couple of points that were raised, the short answer is yes.

I just want to go back to a couple of questions the member from Portage asked about the Part B Capital number, I believe it was on page 160, that \$78,917,600—that is Part B Capital—and the answer is yes. Also, on page 142, dealing with Part A Infrastructure, the \$125,609,900, the answer is yes. So, in other words, yes, that will be.

Madam Chairperson: Which member would like to speak?

Mr. Faurshou: Madam Chair, in regard to then expenditures referenced on page 159, Transportation and Government Services (a) Transportation Capital Projects and Equipment \$26 million in total, Transportation reference 9.27, that would be 11.(a). Is that over and above the 125?

* (15:20)

Mr. Lemieux: Just to clarify the question, Madam Chair, the number on dealing with Transportation Capital Projects and Equipment, Less: Third Party Recoveries, you are referring to that \$9,227,400; you are asking whether or not that is over and above. The answer is, yes, it is over and above.

Mr. Maguire: So the minister is indicating that the share of the capital budget will be, basically, you will be looking at \$620 million over a five-year period,

the 10 extra for each of the two years, or is it \$30 million?

Mr. Lemieux: Just to address the question, Madam Chair, I believe we have it correct, that the budget for the preservation and enhancement over five years will total approximately 620 million which is correct. That is right.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate what are the capital projections on that then, I mean, as far as new construction out of that particular share of the Budget, or is that all new capital projects? Madam Chair, it would certainly appear that both the capital budget and the previous maintenance budget are in there.

Mr. Lemieux: Madam Chair, just to address the question of the member from Arthur-Virden, if you take a look at new capital there is \$87 million of new capital and this does not include the preservation part which was formally included in the \$120-million construction program before. So the \$87 million is essentially new capital.

Mr. Maguire: Under the minister's previous years' budgets then as well, the \$120 million that they had listed for construction programs, would it have been the same percentage in those programs?

* (15:30)

Mr. Lemieux: In percentage terms the answer is yes, but it is a little bit higher because we added the \$10 million, so it would be slightly higher but essentially that is right.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chairperson, I guess we have a number of questions. A couple of weeks ago, you announced a capital budget for, I guess it was the \$36.7 million for northern Manitoba roads in that area. Obviously, a lot of work to be done on PTH 6 as part of the \$600 million overall RoadWorks Manitoba program, \$16.4 I believe was what was announced there. Can the minister indicate if there are other amounts to be added to this for that region?

Mr. Lemieux: The announcement that took place in Thompson, which I was very, very proud to do—northern Manitoba we have been very supportive of, not only in winter roads, but trying to help out with regard to northern airports.

It is not just roads that we are doing. We are looking also at doing bridges. Madam Chair, part of that announcement was the bridge to Cross Lake. There is a Pimicikamak bridge there. Also the road to Norway House.

Madam Chair, the Fairford structure we are assisting in. So it is not just roads. Those are some of the projects that we are working on and part of that announcement.

Now that announcement is not just an amount of money just what we are going to be spending this year; that is over a period of time. So it is not just a solid announcement just for a couple of projects. That announcement is over a period of time.

There are other projects as well that have been tendered and will be starting this summer. Madam Chair, they were tendered last fall under the Minister of Transportation at that time, the member from Brandon West. Hopefully, by tendering them early, I know the construction industry itself is very, very pleased that we are tendering it early, they will be starting that work this summer. Hopefully if we can have some of this snow disappear they will be able to start doing some of this highway infrastructure work very, very shortly.

So there are a number of different projects happening, Madam Chair. There are a few that were announced in the North, in the one announcement. But there is also work that has been tendered last summer and fall, which will be proceeding this summer. Thank you.

Mr. Maguire: You alluded to the member from Brandon West, and I see that he has other areas to go and deal with this afternoon. I was just going to make the comment that he did a good job of getting 18th Street done in Brandon while he was minister. In fact he did it twice. Rather good.

It is certainly in better condition. I guess I am wondering about in the city of Brandon now. Is there further work contemplated for the 18th Street area, from the railroad crossing bridge, I guess the overpass there, north to No. 1. In fact, I know work was done on that bridge, well I remember five, six, seven years ago work being done on that bridge. I am wondering if there is further work to be done in that area. I did not mean to be facetious there with the member from Brandon West. But I think the circumstances were from virtually Rosser Avenue

south in Brandon all the way to Richmond that there has been repaving and doing the boulevards, turning lanes, that sort of thing.

Madam Chairperson, there will be needed to be work done on that area in regard to the new hotel being built at the Keystone Centre, Canad Inns being built there, I understand. I wonder if I could get an indication from the minister just exactly what or whether his department is involved in any of that, as well as anything that might happen from the overpass bridge north on 18th.

Mr. Lemieux: Just to respond to the question from the member from Arthur-Virden, the Transportation critic. Madam Chair, I am sure he will not mind my saying that it is also that minister from Brandon West that extended the Highway No. 1, the twinning, right to the Saskatchewan border which, I believe, goes through Arthur-Virden constituency, but I might be corrected.

But I just want to say that, also, Madam Chair, it is our Government that decided to move that up one year earlier and it will be completed one year earlier. I know that people in not only western Manitoba, but eastern Saskatchewan, will be much appreciative of that particular structure being completed a year earlier. I think it is not only for safety but also for the economics of the area and for trucking, I know a lot of people will appreciate that.

With regard to Brandon itself, we are doing some clean-up work in Brandon at Queens Avenue and Victoria Avenue, there is some pavement to be done. Also, at Braecrest Drive in Brandon, Madam Chair, there is some clean-up work to be done there with intersection improvements.

I understand there is supposed to be some work done with regard to a Home Depot, there is a Home Depot there. I am not sure if it is new or not, but I believe that there is supposed to be some work done around that area as well.

* (15:40)

Mr. Maguire: We will get to No. 1 shortly in regard to the accuracy of the minister's statement. He is right. It does go through Arthur-Virden.

But in regard to Brandon and Kirkaldy Heights, the area around the new Home Depot, the new mall

that is being built in that particular area, can he give me any indication of the kinds of dollars that his department will be putting into the restructuring of, obviously, the lane accesses there and a similar figure for, perhaps, the area at the Keystone Centre in regard to the new hotel being built?

Mr. Lemieux: Just to comment on the Home Depot. Just to let the member know it is the developer that is paying for their portion of that development there. I trust that answers the question.

Mr. Maguire: My question was more to do with is there a change in access roads that will be needed or asked for by the city. Madam Chair, I am assuming that any approaches and lanes and roadways along the front of the stores will certainly be covered in their development costs, but what access has the Province been asked to provide?

Mr. Lemieux: Madam Chair, the changes that are taking place to 18th. That is what the developer is asking for; that is what they are paying for.

Mr. Maguire: Then, Madam Chair, can the minister indicate to me what those changes are?

Mr. Lemieux: I mean there is a turning lane in there that I would know of, but I do not know of the exact detail. I can get back to the member with this, with further detail, but I know there is a turning lane for sure and some median improvements as well.

Mr. Maguire: It would certainly seem that there are no major changes then to 18th Street as far as it goes. Can the minister give me an indication of where they would be at in regard to the lights on Braecrest Drive? There have been major improvements to lane changes and turning in that area on the North Hill in Brandon, what is called the North Hill in Brandon, on 18th Street. My understanding is that they may still be looking at some changes to the light process in that area and can he indicate if that is still going ahead?

Mr. Lemieux: We are not aware of exaggerated changes of any kind there, but we do want to make sure that the traffic flow is improved. That is something that the department participates in, but there are no drastic changes being looked at with regard to that particular intersection at all.

Mr. Maguire: Just in regard to the announcements that the minister made on the 27th of April in

Thompson and the northern communities, as he had indicated \$10 million more has been pledged this year and next year in regard to their budget. But he had indicated that the \$36.7 million was part of this year's capital project or was he saying that was spread over a number of years?

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the critic for the question.

Madam Chair, as a number of projects go, they are often spread over a number of years. You may start a portion of it, just like the northeast Perimeter. You are starting by doing engineering and you are doing other aspects of it, so it is often phased over a few areas. I will give you an example of the project in Flin Flon. I think it was Highway 10A, I stand to be corrected, but I think it is Highway 10A from Flin Flon to the Saskatchewan border, that is a project that is going to be over, I believe, three years. But that is an example of, often, what takes place with regard to transportation projects or in infrastructure projects. They are all not brought in the same year. As previously mentioned by the member, he is very much aware of this, so it does not all come in in one year. Yet this is the norm and has been the norm for a long time.

* (15:50)

Mr. Maguire: I am aware of that. I guess I would ask the minister on the \$16.4 million that they have for upgrades here on PTH 6, I am very well aware that those numbers that he announced, I would assume, would be numbers that would be spent this year. I am looking at the one that he just gave us as an example of projects in other areas of northern Manitoba. Of course, the PTH 10 through from Flin Flon to the Saskatchewan border, a good project, is a \$4.8-million project in total. That is what they are indicating, in his own announcement. I am assuming that the \$1.8 million that he has targeted for this year would be this year's payment of a portion of that project.

Mr. Lemieux: Just to let the member know, Madam Chair, the projects that will be going ahead this year are the \$2.5 million for the grade widening and shoulder gravel from north of Minago River to Hargrave River, also the \$3 million for the paving and shoulder gravel from 50 kilometres north of Grand Rapids to 75 kilometres north of Grand Rapids, also the \$3.1 million for paving and shoulder gravel from PR 373 to south of Wabowden. We are also doing some work on the Fairford bridge, as I

mentioned before. In regard to the Oak Point one, we are doing some culvert work north of Oak Point.

I am just trying to look, Madam Chairperson, at No. 6 highway now because that was what the question was related to. Some of that work is spread out as I mentioned. It is staged and it is something that the department does and that is No. 6 highway. Thank you.

Mr. Maguire: Well, notwithstanding, I have the minister's announcement before me and certainly it adds up the number of items there. There are about six or seven items, six there that do add up to \$16.4 million ongoing upgrades, but certainly the statement is that RoadWorks Manitoba, the third-year budget for it is \$16.4 million. The minister made that announcement and I am assuming that the previous two years announcements were on other parts of the road, or perhaps of the same projects, just that these are ongoing parts of those same projects that are being built. I mean, \$2 million for the first stage of upgrading from north of Oak Point to north of PR 229. I am assuming that they will put \$2 million into that this year.

The minister has just indicated that next year there will be an announcement for another portion of that particular road if it is ongoing. I understand that. I guess I just wanted to confirm that those were the dollars allocated for this year. I think the minister has just given me the answer that they are, so I certainly would not be arguing with him.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, but with regard to the RoadWorks Manitoba program, the five-year commitment is \$600 million. We said, "yes, absolutely we will reach that target." I would hope that the member understands that whether it be weather, sometimes it is paving projects and other projects, and weather like today, people cannot start to do the work. Sometimes those projects are put off from fall to the next spring because they cannot complete the paving, and so on. So a number of these issues do arise when you are involved in construction. You cannot point the finger at the contractors or anyone. It is just that Mother Nature and weather affect when these dollars will actually be rolled out to these people, when the jobs will be completed.

The bottom line is the commitment was made for the \$600 million over five years. Manitobans as

well as the member from Arthur-Virden and his colleagues and others should rest assured that that amount and that figure will be spent in that particular time towards Manitoba's infrastructure.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Madam Chairperson, I would like to ask the minister a few questions regarding the Minnedosa constituency. I have recently met with the community of Souris. I just want an update on Provincial Highway 250 and connecting Provincial Highway No. 2, highway completion. I believe that the Province had indicated they wanted some drainage infrastructure in place before they would bring the infrastructure of No. 250 over Highway No. 2. I just want to know what the status is of the Province's intent to continue with that project. I know that the town has indicated that they feel they have done their due diligence and now are waiting for the Province's intent.

* (16:00)

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member from Minnedosa for the question. Before I get to the specifics, I just want to say that there are a number of different projects going on in the area, of course, but with regard to that 250 between PTH 2 and PR 349, part of the fall program that we had, we are looking at putting around 300,000 into that particular stretch of road.

I am not sure if the community is not aware of it or they are not sure what is happening, because in your question you mention that the community felt that they did their portion or their part of it. I hope members opposite will bear with me. I am becoming very familiar with a lot of highways I never thought existed before, since November. So it will take me a couple of minutes to look up some of these highways they are making reference to if I do not recognize them.

The long and the short, the answer is with regard to road No. 250, there is and it is intended that there be work done this summer, I understand. At least that is what I have been advised.

Mrs. Rowat: Just for clarification, to ensure that I asked the question properly. There was a drainage infrastructure issue. They had to address that. The town has indicated they have addressed that. So the project will be going forward this fall, but the Province's portion of the job will be done.

Mr. Lemieux: Just a question, I am not sure what the drainage issue is. Can you clarify that? I mean, is it culverts that have to be put under a road? I am not sure what that means, what that is.

Mrs. Rowat: It is more than culverts. There is an infrastructure issue. They did not want the water to be crossing the highway. So they want to ensure that the water or the drainage from I guess the north side of No. 2 to be draining south on No. 2. They wanted to make sure that infrastructure was in place. I know that there were discussions between highways and the community.

So they just want to ensure, now that they have got their ducks in a row and agree that they will do the infrastructure portion of it, that the Province will be moving forward on completing the highway. There is a bit of community pressure to get that done.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes. The money is in the program, and so the money has been dedicated to that. If there are some concerns that have to be ironed out, I am sure that can be done. I am sure the department will be working on that, if it is not. Generally, these issues are, you know, all the strings are usually attached before these projects go ahead. Drainage is often one that does come up. But I thank the member for clarifying that.

We will have the regional people contact the local community to explore this further to find out what is happening and where this project is at.

Mrs. Rowat: On an issue regarding a Bunclody bridge, which is in partnership, I guess, ownership of, there is a partnership in the ownership of it, of three municipalities: the R.M. of Oakland; the R.M. of Glenwood; the R.M. of Whitewater. Madam Chair, the three districts own the bridge. The bridge is in need of major repair and a decision is needed before it can be moved forward.

I want to know the status of the department's involvement in getting this bridge repaired. I know that they were asking the Province if they would do some cost-sharing on that.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, Madam Chair, again I beg the member's indulgence. I am not familiar with the bridge or the roads. If you could provide me with something, if you provide me with a letter or something that shows me the descriptions of the

roads or the bridge, I would be pleased to look into it. I would have the department look into it as well, just to find out what is going on. I am not sure if that is our bridge, in other words, a provincial bridge, or it is on a provincial road.

Those things would be very helpful if the member would not mind providing that to me, if you give me a letter or just some detail so I have the numbers and I can make sure the department looks into that and people from the region look into it as well. Thank you.

Mrs. Rowat: Madam Chairperson, I appreciate the minister's discussion on that. It was a sidebar on it. I had met with the R.M. of Glenwood and they indicated that that was an issue that they needed some discussion on. I will provide him with some correspondence and background on that and work with him on that.

Another highway that is in my constituency is on the other side of No. 1. It is Provincial Road 355. This road has had a committee struck for a number of years. This committee is becoming more and more concerned with the quality of the road, especially with several new infrastructure projects coming up along or accessing Provincial Highway 355.

With the new Agricore United building, Heritage Co-op Redferns [*phonetic*] in the community of Rivers, and also with the ethanol plant expansion in the future, there seem to be a number of major arteries that are accessing 355. We need to move on this highway for repair or maintenance.

I am wanting to ask the minister if this is a road that he will be considering in his proposals for the future, and, if not, if he would be willing to meet with a delegation from this committee to see what can be done to move this project forward.

Mr. Lemieux: Madam Chairperson, I guess I am not clear on exactly what has to be done or what the committee is recommending that should be done with the road. What R.M. is this again? I am sorry, I missed that. What did they want? What were they asking should be done with the road?

Mrs. Rowat: Madam Chairperson, this is a road that is within the municipality of Miniota; Hamiota; Blanchard, Saskatchewan; and town of Minnedosa. It is a committee made up of those communities, and

355 is the provincial road that is used by these communities quite extensively. This is a project that has been ongoing.

I am lobbying on behalf of the community for consideration to be given on this. I know that they had met with the former Minister of Highways in 1992 and were not successful in meeting with the minister in 2003. So I am encouraging this minister to give some consideration to this group and meet with them, please.

Mr. Bidhu Jha, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Lemieux: I know that this particular working group has met with the department on a number of occasions at AMM. They continue to lobby as well to have something done. I know that the department will continue to maintain it. I mean, it is a provincial road, and they will continue to maintain this road. To the extent of what has to be done or what the group is asking for, the province of Manitoba has 19 000 kilometres of highway. Regrettably, Mr. Acting Chair, we have also over a billion dollars of requests every year of what people want. It is part of a backlog—I guess there is no other word to use for it—of highways in the province of Manitoba that may need addressing, and yet the finances may not be there.

I know that the federal government, I mean, the money that we get from the federal government now, and I hate to keep looking at the federal government, but essentially what we are talking about here is if you are going to get a substantial sum of money to be able to address highways like this, we are going to have to get more of that federal gas tax back in to the province.

* (16:10)

The moneys that they give us are restricted almost essentially to major routes and roads like this, like 355, I think it is, the one that goes through Minnedosa to Isabella, I think. The communities that are on that road feel that it is a priority for them. I appreciate it. Believe me, over the last six months, I have met with a large number of municipalities that have such a long list of roads that add up to being that \$1 billion, over a billion dollars.

I guess what I would like to say is that the department is certainly committed to talking and

working with the group, but it is part of the highways that we have in our system, the 19,000 kilometres of highways that need addressing. It is a huge amount when we take a look at the dollars we have to spend compared to over a billion dollars we get requested. I do not want the MLA for Minnedosa—she should not feel dejected. I mean, she is lobbying on behalf of her constituents. She feels strongly about the community of Minnedosa as well as the communities of Cardale, McConnell, Decker and Isabella all along that route that are on this particular stretch of highway. I commend her for it.

Mr. Acting Chair, this is the dilemma. I know I have got broad shoulders, but I can tell you it is really quite burdensome, because you just do not have the dollars to deal with all the requests that are coming in. Many, many of them have merit, yet we cannot address it. I am hoping that our federal cousins will come forward in Ottawa.

I know Paul Martin already made a commitment of putting some money in, but he left it wide open. I think he said 5 cents a litre that he would put toward municipalities, but he did not say if there were any strings attached to that. He did not say how that would be spent. He did not say exactly what the Province should do. I mean, is he asking for cost-sharing? When you put that number out, it looked good, but we have not heard much since.

In fact, there was a federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting in Ottawa. This issue came up. The provincial ministers raised this with Tony Valeri, the federal Minister of Transport, pleading with the minister that Ottawa has to do something, because it is fine for Ottawa to say that roads like this are economic enablers and how we depend on it for industry, trucking, farming and tourism, but they are not assisting us. They are not helping us in any way. The monies they often give to us are with the Prairie Grain Roads Program or the SHIP program and our attached to certain roads that we have to match. That is not giving any flexibility to the Province whatsoever.

I thank the member for the question. I am sure that the working group have all these communities at heart and want to do something for them. I am trying to tell the member from Minnedosa that when you are restrained with regard to the finances and balanced budget legislation we have and the dollars that we have available in our Budget, we are not

always able to address the \$1 billion in requests that come in every year.

I thank the member for the question. I believe the second part of her question was would the department still meet with them. I am not sure she asked would I meet with them. I do not have a problem with that if the timing is fine. In other words, what I would like to do is possibly maybe meet with them when I go out to Brandon, if that is possible, and try to co-ordinate it with this. I cannot make a commitment. I do not think the member expects me to meet next week or the week after. I would try to co-ordinate it with a trip I have got planned for the Brandon-Minnedosa area, and so on. I would be okay with that.

Mrs. Rowat: I am encouraged by the minister wanting to meet with them. I know that the former Minister of Highways had indicated an interest in meeting with them and then declined the meeting. I would encourage him to hold to his commitment to meet with them, as the community is very frustrated. We are disheartened by the inability to meet with the minister last time when they had been encouraged that that meeting would occur.

This highway is deteriorating to the point where it is almost impassable. It is a major artery for school buses, emergency vehicles and residential traffic. There could be a very serious accident or put somebody at risk if it is not being considered. I encourage the minister to give this very serious consideration. This is not a road that has been recently considered for repair, and it is something that has a strong committee of individuals and communities wanting attention to it.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, when the minister was talking about commitment from the federal government for the highway infrastructure, it made me think of another project within my constituency that needs addressing and that is Highway 340, which is the highway to Shilo. That is a community that is receiving a major influx of families to that area and the Shilo community has received a substantial amount of federal dollars to help that community grow.

I am hoping that the community of Wawanesa, which is represented in my riding, can at some point receive the ear of the minister on the upgrade of that highway. Mr. Acting Chairperson, in discussions

with Base Commander Doucette and in discussions with the committee that is working with 2PPCLI as well as the mayor of Wawanesa, they have lobbied the Government very hard to consider 340 to be upgraded.

Wawanesa is a community of approximately 400 people. Mr. Acting Chair, they are going to be losing some government positions within the Education Department, which has caused a setback in their fairly aggressive economic desire to enhance their community. They have a new development, a geothermal development in their community, which has recently sold three sites. They have a new health facility, and to have Highway 340 upgraded to address potential military personnel to live in their community I think is something that this Government should be looking at if it wants to help rural communities grow and prosper.

I know that this is something that this minister and this Government has decided not to support at this point, but I would strongly recommend he reconsider that stand and look at the opportunities that will play out if they do support it.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member from Minnedosa for the question and the comment. Again, this particular stretch of road, the 340, initially I believe, when the department started looking at it, the future of Shilo was really in doubt. People were not sure exactly what was going to happen with the German troops pulling out, what was going to happen with Shilo. It looks like Shilo will be having a number of troops going there. It is currently not in the program, as rightfully was mentioned by the member, so this is something that may have to be looked at because of the number of people and the influx of people going into Shilo and who will be going there. I cannot make any commitment or promise. I know that the department previously looked at it, and it is certainly not on the program right now. The member is correct, but once things start to happen in Shilo, maybe then there will be reason for having another look at it. Currently, it is certainly not on the program right now, and I do not think the member expects me to make any commitment to doing that today, but once Shilo is up and running, I think there may be an opportunity to take a look at Shilo once again or the 340 at that time. As I mentioned, the department previously looked at it, and it was not put on the program. We shall wait and see. It cannot be ruled out.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

* (16:20)

Mr. Faurchou: I would just want to further ask in regard to Provincial Road 340 that you look to the minister's comments, Madam Chair, by both the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) and the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), because this road involves protected areas as well as designated marshland areas, and there are complications involved in the redevelopment of Provincial Road 340. I want to emphasize the remarks made by the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) that it is important that we recognize this deficiency in our road system and the potential increase in traffic, not only of military vehicles, but of DND personnel and their families. I know that this road is a dangerous one and does require upgrade. Heaven help those who travel that road because it is a dangerous one.

I do want to just ask if we can follow up on the macro side of things here before our own colleague from Arthur-Virden goes on. That is insofar as 15.5, and that section outlines infrastructure assets of the Department of Transportation and assigns an amortization expense as well as an interest expense. Now, if that interest expense is part of the Government's \$300-million-plus interest expense annually that has been recorded, I would like to ask how much of the provincial debt is, then, assigned to the Department of Transportation that this interest charge is being attributed to.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question. The member was referring to page, I think it was 143, were you looking at the (d)(2)? Is that what you were looking at, the 55? If I could refer the member to page 134; it is looking at the public debt; it talks about \$54 million. That is on past infrastructure. In other words, the net book value is approximately \$1.04 billion. Madam Chairperson, \$1.04 billion is the amount that the Government recognizes on its balance sheet for infrastructure assets.

Mr. Faurchou: I thank the minister. So \$55 million in interest is attributed to approximately an assigned debt of the Province of \$1.04 billion.

Insofar as the amortization expense, Madam Chair, which we all see in our own businesses that are equal to depreciation, is this actual expense paid towards the debt or is it a book entry toward the

unused depreciation, or what exactly is the amortization expense? If I was looking at this, I would expect that the Department of Transportation is paying \$64 million towards the \$1.04 billion in debt. Am I correct in saying that, so therefore, next year, we will be under a billion dollars with this \$64 million being paid?

Mr. Lemieux: With regard to the amortization expense, the member would be correct if we were not adding any assets to the Province's infrastructure asset file, but we are. The moment you start to twin highways or add bridges and so on, your asset value goes up. So we are going to be adding. Yes, we are going to be paying an amortized expense, but we are also going to be adding to our infrastructure asset portfolio. So I would expect that, instead of \$1.04 billion, the amount or the value we had in our infrastructure asset portfolio is going to rise.

Mr. Faurchou: Yes, I appreciate that you are adding \$26 million of registered assets to this figure and that will climb, and yet the other is going down. But I just want to clarify, on the macro scale of things, exactly the positioning of the department, and I appreciated the minister's answer. Thank you.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Yes, I would like to ask the minister a constituent concern with respect to Provincial Road 304. This is not the first time I brought it up. I presented a petition to the Legislature about a year-and-a-half ago.

Madam Chair, in addition, I have been writing various letters to various ministers within the last couple of years about Provincial Road 304. It is a very important road because it progresses in a southwesterly direction from Powerview-Pine Falls, a populated area of my constituency, to Provincial Trunk Highway 59. The first 12 kilometres south of Powerview and Pine Falls is really in bad need of a repair. There have been a number of traffic accidents there, in terms of a lot of personal injury, property damage. There have been a number of deaths over the last few years.

It is a very narrow road, a road with hardly any shoulders. It is in very, very poor condition and it is the most direct connection by the community to the south going toward Winnipeg. It is heavily travelled by pulp trucks, trucks that are bringing in chips to the Tembec pulp and paper mill, and it is heavily travelled as well by the residents of the Pine Falls-Powerview area.

* (16:30)

I believe it is the priority road within our constituency to be rebuilt and I note that last year, the department held a public forum in Pine Falls, which I attended, detailing three or four different alternate routes and the cost of reconstruction on each alternate plan.

I have asked for a copy of that report. To date, I have not gotten it. I wonder first of all whether the minister will be able to provide me with a copy of that report in terms of what is recommended. Secondly, what is identified within this year's Budget toward Highway 304 and can he give me some idea as to the progress that will be made over the next few years toward rebuilding Highway 304?

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question. Once again, I just want to repeat that, in this particular case, it is a little bit different because people were looking at a functional design study and the report has not been finalized yet. I have not seen it. The department, I have been advised, has not seen it.

Yet there are a lot of needs, and I know I have mentioned this to your colleagues that have been here before. I know the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) has heard me say this, and I guess I will repeat it. I have had a chance to meet with a lot of the R.M.s, not only recently but over the last six months as I have become minister.

What I have asked them to do, and I do not think they are shocked by it, but I have had to ask them to try to prioritize what kind of roads they are looking at. I do not know whether or not if the member from Lac du Bonnet could tell me, Madam Chair, from a personal note, what kind of priority this has for the member in your Lac du Bonnet constituency, because it is, as you mentioned, you have got Tembec.

You have, coming out of Pine Falls, Sagkeeng First Nation, you have others who use that road and that is the access to Winnipeg, but again, Madam Chairperson, I have to state that the amount of money that we have is really limited compared to the need that we have, over a billion dollars of requests every year that come in on roads all over the province of Manitoba, 19 000 kilometres of roads that we have.

Yet you try to address them but, in this particular case, it has been looked at. It is being looked at. It currently is not on the books as a project to do. I mean, there are preliminary views that have been expressed as to what needs to be done and so on, but until the actual report is finalized and the department has the chance to take a look at it, then they will be able to determine what needs to be done.

There is not a highway that an R.M. or anyone has raised to me out of the 19 000 that, in principle, everyone can make an excellent case for it. I mean, that to me is not something that really is at question, because people, no matter who the people are, whether they are MLAs or people who are R.M. councillors or reeves or mayors, all have roads and highways that they need addressed.

Regrettably, our highway infrastructure system is not what it should be, and I do not have a magic solution for it. I do not think anybody does, I guess, nothing that some money could not help to address. I keep putting the position forward about the federal government needs to step up and help out.

We are not asking them to put in the whole \$165 million they take out of the province in road fuel tax, but at least some of it, more than 10 or more than 15 that they put back in. So, Madam Chair, there may be an opportunity for that question to come up very, very shortly, in the next couple of weeks. I certainly plan on posing it and seeing what positions people have with regard to it.

So I just want to tell the Member for Lac du Bonnet that we await the report to be finalized so the department has a chance to look at it. Obviously, there has been a need there that has been recognized. That is why the functional study is being looked at.

Mr. Hawranik: Yes, just in answer to the minister's question as to priorities within Lac du Bonnet, I can tell him unequivocally that Highway 304 really is a priority, in my view, for the entire constituency. I think we have to look at also the possible long-term traffic patterns that are going to occur in that particular area. We are talking about Highway 304 being extended on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. That is going to bring a lot of traffic directly into Powerview and Pine Falls and directly down that road into Winnipeg.

I think from that perspective we have to plan within the next few years, particularly if Highway

304 is extended north to join the Aboriginal communities to the north and east of Lake Winnipeg to our community. I think that is another concern that has to be addressed as well. It is a priority. There is going to be more traffic flow coming down that area. I think that particular road should be a priority. It is a priority to me, just so that the minister knows that it is a priority for me. I think that he should be looking at that.

Going on to the next concern that I have in terms of Park Avenue in Beausejour, if the minister has travelled through Park Avenue, he knows what condition that road is in. It is in terrible condition. There are potholes everywhere. I do not think there is a street in Winnipeg that has more potholes than Park Avenue in Beausejour, even though we kind of joke about how many potholes there are in Winnipeg. It is the main business section of town. It is the section that tourists and people who come into the community see first. First impressions are lasting impressions.

The town council has spent a lot of money in terms of paving streets off of Park Avenue. Yet Park Avenue remains the same. They are concerned about that. It is an extension of Provincial Trunk Highway 44 and 215, so it is a provincial responsibility. The Town of Beausejour has passed a by-law to go to parallel parking from diagonal parking. That was a concern at one time, but they already have passed that by-law. As I understand it, they have committed some funds toward the cost of reconstruction of Park Avenue. I would like to know what the minister's position is with respect to Park Avenue.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question. I should note also north of Pine Falls on 304, the Sandy River bridge, which cost about just under a million dollars. I think it was between \$600,000 and \$700,000. So 304 is a concern for us too. We know the importance of it. I just want to note that there was money put towards that, 600,000 or 700,000.

Madam Chair, I had the opportunity to meet with Beausejour, their town council and with the mayor, Mr. Giesbrecht. I think he was able to eloquently put forward their case on why they had to do it. They were prepared, even though they realized that there might be some friction with regard to changing the parking on the community. They were willing to take that step. They were also, I understand, willing to put some money forward, because it is a bigger project

than just putting a thin layer of pavement. They need to do sewer and water, they need to do a lot of other things there as well. They know the infrastructure is run down and they are trying to, I think, actually making a very, very good case for that community on why something should be done and the need for it.

Again, the challenge that I have or at least the Department of Transportation has is there are so many requests coming into the Province that what you are trying to do, essentially, and this is a good example of instead of building something new, for example the northeast Perimeter, to expend \$65 million on that particular portion of road really hits, I believe, the department fairly hard. We know that there are safety reasons for it, tourism, industry reasons why that portion needs to be twinned. But it really does hit the department hard, because it is communities like Beausejour or communities like Virden or communities like Oakbank or many other communities in the province of Manitoba that need some assistance to do it. They have the willingness to go ahead and do it, but it is a matter of how you juggle the money, in a sense, to be able to address these situations.

* (16:40)

There are many needs all over the province, as I soon found out, meeting with many of the rural councils. I am not going to commit or say anything today that would either encourage or jeopardize anything happening with Main Street in Beausejour, but anyone who has travelled it and been through that community knows exactly what the MLA from Lac du Bonnet is talking about, because it is a beautiful community. I think people understand that it needs some work. Essentially this is, I am not saying anything out of school in any way that I did not share with them, with the council, that someday something is going to have to be done there in that community to address it, because it is getting to the point where it is a larger community, has great potential with regard to tourism and many other aspects, and yet their showpiece, their Main Street, is crumbling, and a lot of things have to be done.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): If I could get the minister and his departmental staff to come with me into East St. Paul on Hoddinott Road, we have the East St. Paul Curling Club. There is a sign that has been in front of that club probably as long as I can

remember. It just sort of blends in at this point in time. I cannot even remember when it was not there. It is a Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure sign, two steel posts, about a four-by-eight screwed onto it. It is bad enough that this project has long been completed and one of the names on it is a former NDP Cabinet minister, Jean Friesen. I am sure she is at the point in time in her life where she would probably not mind her name coming down. More importantly, on the sign is the late, the Honourable Ron Duhamel. I would suggest, probably in good taste, it is probably time the sign comes down.

If the minister would be so kind as to instruct his staff to go and pull it down, it is one of those things nobody quite knows who put it up, how it got there and who is supposed to take it down. It is near a crosswalk and probably should not have been put there in the first place, but it was. In good taste, could we have the sign taken down?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you. I am sure the sign was put up because Jean Friesen was responsible and Ron Duhamel was responsible probably for putting a substantial amount of funds within that curling club. That is probably why the sign was put up and dealt with probably the infrastructure program that both of them participated in. Madam Chairperson, I know that this Government has tried to do what it can with the federal government with regard to infrastructure. That is probably the reason why it was up.

I know after the '99 election there were a number of signs that still remained up with Darren Praznik's name on it on different highway projects. Eventually those particular signs have come down. I am not the person responsible necessarily for those signs, I believe, Madam Chair, but I certainly can find out and find out whether or not what the necessity is of that sign being there. I am sure it is to show that the two levels of government or the three levels of government funded either the curling rink or the community centre or did something with it. I will certainly enquire into the sign and find out what the purpose of the sign is there.

Mr. Schuler: The second point that I would like to raise with the minister and his department has to do with the Garvin Road reconfiguration. Madam Chair, My first question to the minister I, on the Garvin Road project. Where did the genesis of that project come from?

Mr. Lemieux: I think the genesis of the project itself, or at least Garvin Road—if anyone has travelled on Garvin Road and turned onto Garvin Road, heading either to Oak Bank or heading to Elmhurst or Pine Ridge golf course using that particular road, they have encountered many, many gravel trucks and a lot of traffic on that particular road—but really where it came from was probably Mr. Glen Findlay, who is a previous MLA for the area, or Mr. Darren Praznik. I mean that is essentially where it came from. Then there was a community meeting, I understand, and individuals had an opportunity to come forward and to comment on the road. But I understand it was the previous administration where initially it started from there, to take a look at it.

Having said that, just because a community meeting takes place and you get looking for input from people, it does not mean that the project will go ahead. Some people feel that just because you have a community meeting and that the department is there and the maps are out and they are showing people what may happen in the future—it does not mean that the project actually will take place.

Yet I know, Madam Chair, that I have certainly had some feedback not long after the community meeting took place and not all people are enthralled with that project going ahead. I think that, if they had their druthers, they are saying, "Instead of spending 6 or 7 million there, why do you not put it on No. 15 and do something with 15 instead and take a look at the traffic on that road, and the volumes of traffic and the kind of traffic on that road, whether it is tourism or whether or not it is truck traffic, and so on?"

I know I had the opportunity to travel on 15 over the bridge and into Winnipeg on a number of occasions from where I live, and No. 15 has a tremendous amount of traffic on it. Many people have commented to me about No. 15, not only members of the R.M. but others in the community who live either in Oak Bank or Dugald. They are saying if you really want to take a look at it, really take a look at 15 as opposed to Garvin Road.

If the Government were to take a look at 15, I do not think it would change the circumstances of Garvin Road. Garvin Road still has a tremendous amount; when you start mixing gravel trucks and big trucks with regular vehicles, it can be a real hazard, especially when they arrive at Highway 59. Now

there are lights there, but when they arrive at 59, it was really quite hazardous to zip across that road and try to get across the road and to turn either going to the lake or getting into Winnipeg. So there are a lot of merits to taking a look at Garvin Road, but, having said that, there is some merit to taking a look at 15 as well.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Chair, the proposed Garvin Road project, does the department or the minister see that proceeding within a year or is that 10 years down the road, or was that just a preplanning for 15 years down the road? Sort of, where is it in the structure? Again, the minister is absolutely right, that it is one of those very controversial projects, and the community certainly spoke loud and clear in one voice indicating they did not favour a lot of the things that were being proposed.

Before the community gets too much into their angst, I just want to know from the department: Is it even a project that they see on the horizon? Is it a 10-year lag or what would be the lag in timing?

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question.

Well, it is currently not exactly on the drawing board, in other words, ready to go ahead next summer. But what really will determine this is that, from the intersection of the corner of 207 and Highway 59, there are roughly around 6200 vehicles a day on that stretch. That is a tremendous amount of traffic on that particular road. So, I guess, the project itself will be determined by what kind of traffic flows continue to grow on that stretch. Again, safety is a priority for the Government. We are trying to address many, many different aspects related to safety on our highway infrastructure. What will really drive this and, I think, what will determine it is the traffic flows. Right now, 6200 vehicles, that is a tremendous amount of traffic on a road like Garvin Road.

* (16:50)

Mr. Schuler: So, Madam Chairperson, is it being looked at potentially in the next five years or how does it rank with other areas that also have heavy traffic? Obviously, there is a priority setting that has to take place. What would be the priority of this project and second question to that is the concerns that the residents raised, have they been factored in?

I know they have made a submission to the department. Where is the department in regard to the request that the citizens made?

Mr. Lemieux: I just want to comment, as well, to the member from Springfield that the reason why the lights went up on 59 was because of that traffic flow. I have heard mixed messages with regard to that particular stretch of road. Certainly, Madam Chair, there are people that are residents that live close to the road that do not want to see anything happen or have it twinned or anything else. They live right adjacent to the road. People vary. There are varying views on that particular stretch.

So right now there is nothing that is imminent with regard to going ahead on that stretch of road. I think what would really drive it is the traffic. The traffic flow itself, it is amazing. Madam Chair, I am not sure what kind of development is planned for that area, but it continues to grow. If Oakbank continues to grow, and those communities grow, as much as is purported to be happening, something may have to happen sooner than later. There were also mixed views on that road. Some people want it.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Some of the people that do not live adjacent to the road want it and yet some people who live right on the road, beside the road, have nice properties beside the road, do not necessarily want it to be a four lane or have something else happen to that stretch. That is fair enough.

But, as the Department of Transportation, we have to take a look at safety. We have to take a look at truck traffic and the ability for in-and-out traffic to happen, a lot of gravel trucks and a lot of pits there, and so on. You are mixing gravel trucks with regular vehicles. It can be a bad cocktail. We are concerned with safety. That is what will drive it.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Acting Chair, I would like to raise two more quick issues with the minister. One of these issues we spoke with the former minister last year, and there seemed to be some confusion. I am going to meet with one of the individuals tomorrow morning. Unfortunately, I did not have time today. It has to do with the fire hydrant in Dugald. For some reason, what they told me, and what I passed on to the department, and what got back to them, I guess, were 18 different stories. So I apologize if I did not

explain it correctly. I will try to meet with them tomorrow morning early, and I will try to bring, at least—I wish they would provide a schematic.

What it is, is there is a water pump in Dugald that the fire trucks right now have to back up against to get water into their vehicles, rather than creating a loop and being able to drive up, get the water pumped into their trucks, and keep going the loop. Mr. Acting Chairperson, what it means is they need permission to put a culvert, and another access onto—the highway number escapes me.

But, I will try and get a schematic again tomorrow. I think it is 206. I will try and get a schematic, and maybe my colleague from, the critic, will allow me five minutes tomorrow.

I will try to present that. Even with the fire yesterday at HiQual, I mean, it shows you how quickly a fire does get out of hand—not that they were using this pump, please, I am not indicating that—but water is of the essence. When you do not have access to it quickly, right now, what happens is they have to pull in, they have to back up, then they have to fill the truck, and then they keep going. They just want to do a loop.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, somehow, I must have explained that wrong, because what came back from the department, I guess, was not quite what they were looking for. So, if the minister will bear with me on this one, I would love to raise that issue again tomorrow. I will endeavour to get something tomorrow, though, from them. If not, then I will just do it in writing. I do not know if the minister wanted to comment on that. I do not know if the department had a chance to look at it.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes. Just a quick comment on that. I can appreciate a volunteer fire department trying to do their job to the best of their ability. They do not want any impediments in their way, but I understand that the region is working with the department trying to address this.

Again, Mr. Acting Chair, since my becoming Minister of Transportation, there are many, many different municipalities and different communities that want access off of the provincial highways. You have to be careful with that, because if you are putting too many for whatever reason, you know, again, it is a safety concern.

But the region is working with the department trying to address it to the satisfaction of both. So I would be pleased to take a look at this tomorrow. If the member wishes to raise it at a different time, we will see what we can do. Maybe we can get some more on it.

Mr. Schuler: One last issue that I wish to discuss with the minister. That is the expansion of the Perimeter Highway between Dugald Road and No. 59, the big announcement. The minister announced the first \$5 million. What will that first \$5 million in this year's Budget—what will we see from the first \$5 million?

Mr. Lemieux: The project itself, is, and I am not going to go at length on it, but this is a tremendous project. It is a very expensive project. It certainly takes away from a lot of other projects in Manitoba. It has a huge amount of dollars expended on this project. I know members opposite have been asking that we go ahead with it. I think almost every year since '99 the question has been raised, "What is going to happen with the northeast Perimeter?" I know that the study that was done in 1988 by the previous government, and then, finally, after that study was done, they started to work on it in '95, so it took a while to get started.

Having said that, what we are looking at doing this summer is looking at doing the engineering for the overall project. We are looking at doing the base to get ready for paving for, I believe, next summer, and we are also looking at doing the one bridge right now. Having taken a look at that, it certainly will be at least \$5 million this summer to get it started.

* (17:00)

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Acting Chair, I want to thank the critic for giving me the opportunity to ask a few questions. I want to say to the minister that I just got off the phone with two industries in, as a matter of fact, south central Manitoba. The one industry was Parent Seeds at St. Joseph, the other one was Seed-Ex at Letellier, and the other one is Calchier Trading [*phonetic*] just a mile north of St. Joseph. Between those three industries, Mr. Acting Chairperson, I would venture to say that there is, probably, anywhere between \$50 and \$70 million worth of product moved into export position every year, out of those three industries.

Parent Seeds, as you all know, is probably the major bean processor in the province of Manitoba and specialty crops processor. Calchier Trading [*phonetic*] deals largely in sunflowers and other specialty crops such as canary seed and the likes. Seed-Ex, we all know, is a major feed supplier into the export position, and much of their product goes south into the United States, such as malting barley and the likes, and most of it is on-time delivery.

We had, again, as of yesterday, and I should say that St. Joseph's Parents uses a gravel road when 201 is restricted, as it has been over the last six weeks, I believe. The gravel road heads straight north to 14 which is a RTAC route, but yesterday and today they have not been able to use the gravel road, because of snow and snow pack, and the trucks simply refused to come in on that gravel road. It is narrow, as your highway's people know, and it is a dangerous road. So the product simply is not moveable. I want to ask the minister whether he thinks that the credibility of delivery and the \$70 million industry should be put in jeopardy, and the, probably, 100 employees at stake in these three industries should be put in jeopardy, because we cannot provide a decent road that will carry the weights that these trucks must carry in order to remain economically viable.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, most of the product out of there moves by container into either intermodal transport in Winnipeg or directly to eastern, and some of it to western seaboard ports by truck, but not that great deal, but it all has to move out of there by truck and container. All three of the industries are in a similar kind of situation.

I wonder if the minister could tell me whether it would be possible to do what we did on 306 from Plum Coulee south, to do an overlay of about—I think it was what?—the deputy minister would know. I think on 306 we did an overlay of six inches, and that gave us, I believe, RTAC standard on a roadbed that was exactly the same as 201 is. I would wonder if that would be possible to give these people a decent route to maintain their industries year-round on a reliable basis. It is only when we have situations such as yesterday and today and a few times during the year that trucks simply cannot get in and out and they must deliver. So I will say to you that some of the loads that went out of there over the last couple of days were illegal. It was a good thing the inspectors were not around because it could have

been very costly to the industries. I would ask that sometimes, when you have conditions like yesterday, the inspectors might close their eyes until such a time that we can get the road in shape that we can carry the loads.

So, Mr. Acting Chair, I am asking the minister for a special consideration in light of the large number of jobs that are at stake there and the industries. Do not be too surprised that at some point in time these industries will say, "Well, if this is not possible, then we will move south." They only need to move south nine miles and they are out of our system and they can get access to excellent routing. This has been discussed by the way. I am not saying this frivolously. There are serious implications here if these people cannot deliver. We, those of us that farm in that area, depend on these industries for our product to be processed. We also depend on them to be able to deliver on time.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member from Emerson for the question, and, rightfully so, he should be raising a question, because these are businesses that are in his constituency. Had he not called them, I am sure they would be calling him.

Yes, the Province of Manitoba is very supportive of businesses, whether they be agri-business, or other businesses. We certainly do not want anyone to leave Manitoba, but yesterday was an unusual situation. I mean, airlines did not fly yesterday. Mother Nature does not always co-operate with us, Mr. Acting Chair, and this is regrettable for businesses and other modes of transportation. I hate to see the damage on these roads if the trucks were running on those roads, on that 420—sorry, 201. If they were running on 201, I am not sure what kind of damage took place on that particular stretch of road with the trucks still running on them, but it is regrettable if they did.

Again, this falls into the category of—and I will not categorize it as a "wish list"; I think it is insulting these companies. They set up their businesses where they see fit. Had they gone on No. 14 on an RTAC road, you know, if they set up their businesses there, they would have access to an RTAC road, but I am not going to tell them how to do business. They are in the business of, and they know where to set up and where not to set up. Even if they were to set up, Mr. Acting Chairperson, this is not to say that they should look at it, but there are not a lot of RTAC

roads in North Dakota as well if they want to move to the States.

I can tell you that, and the member from Emerson is correct, what we are finding now is that not only are there companies that have really grown in Manitoba, which is a real plus and a positive comment about our economy, but that we are finding that a lot of operations are really growing now where either they set up business on their homesteads or start—there is a business near Angusville that is facing a similar challenge where this particular business is set up on their homestead. They are growing. I mean, that is where they set their operation up; now the operation has grown to the extent where they are requiring much stronger roads for their trucks. They want to haul in and out.

So the challenge, of course, is what you do about it and how you address it. Probably the most difficult part of the whole question is how you address a situation like this; and, if you are going to spend that kind of money on 201 to bring it to RTAC level, it is very, very expensive to do.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

So it is something that I appreciate the comment from the member. I will certainly raise it with the department, and it is something that will need to be looked at. Again, I have asked members, not only members of R.M.s, or rural municipalities, with regard to their priorities.

When you have over a billion dollars worth of requests coming to the department about what roads need to be done or addressed, and you certainly do not have—you have just a small portion of that that you actually have in real money to be putting towards construction and maintenance—it is a huge challenge, and it is not an easy one.

Mr. Penner: I appreciate what the minister said. The minister should, however, know that this road was prioritized by all the municipalities, and, when I say all municipalities, I include Franklin, Montcalm, Rhineland. All the municipalities set this road as a priority, because that is where major heavy traffic travels virtually year round.

It needs to be done. It is not only the loads going out of there; it is the loads going in year round to bring product off the farms into that facility. If this Government deems it a non-essential item, then let

us say so, and we will deal with it in that manner. But, surely, Madam Chairperson, when you have those kinds of industries—and I should give the minister a bit of background on the Parents' operation.

I mean, Mr. Parent, many years ago, some 30 years ago, started with a very little seed plant on his farm because he wanted to employ his sons. He had four sons that he thought he would like to keep off the street, so he built this little seed plant. Never had he in his wildest dreams imagined what would happen.

About a dozen years ago, I walked into Norbert and Renald's operation and I said, "Renald, we are getting into the bean business. Are you going to expand your plant or am I going to build one?"

"Well," he said, "we have been sort of discussing it." "Well," I said, "so have we because we need a bean processing plant in this area." They decided that they would do the expansion which was a great idea because they were already a significant operator.

They have done an absolutely exceptional job, not only of processing, because they put out some of the best quality in the country, as do some others, Madam Chairperson, but these people have done a marvellous job of expanding the market not only into the United States but into Europe and Africa and southeast Asia. They ship all over the globe.

* (17:10)

For what we would call maybe a small operation in a very small community, that is, I think, an exceptional achievement by that family, and it was not by design that this was put there, sir. It was probably by accident and by a lot of very hard work and very, very intricate marketing that this industry has grown to the point that it has.

Madam Chairperson, it is not their fault that it has grown; it is because they were innovative and because they took advantage of opportunities. They were true entrepreneurs, and now we as a province are stopping them.

It is your job, Mr. Minister, to see to it that those kinds of industries have proper ins and outs. If that kind of an industry was established here in the city of Winnipeg, you would do everything in your power to

see to it that proper transportation were routed in and out of that industry, but for some silly reason, we in rural Manitoba seem to have difficulty convincing the highways department that these things sometimes happen by accident, and sometimes by design, and sometimes by a lot of hard work. I think all three applied here.

So I am begging the minister to take a trip with me. Jump in the car with me, I will take you down there. You will be totally astounded at what you will see, and then make the decision after that. I will take your deputy with you, as well. As a matter of fact, I have had him out there and he has seen it. So I do not think he has to go out again, but I would welcome both of you. I will put you in the car and I will take the directors along, too, if need be. I have a big vehicle.

I will take all of you on a trip down there. We will spend the day there, and you will be amazed at the hospitality you will receive at all three of those industries, then make the decision as to whether you might want to spend a couple of million dollars to give access to those people, because we are not asking for a superhighway.

We are asking for an overlay to give us the weight-carrying capacity on a roadbed that will carry it. If you only put an overlay on it, you will be amazed. That is what we did on 306. You would be amazed at how that stands up. Have we got big, wide shoulders on it? We do not need them.

Give us an overlay that will give us the weight-carrying capacity, and we will be happy. We will never bother you about that road again. I do not think it will cost you \$5- or \$10 million. It will probably cost you a lot less, if you do a simple overlay to give it the weight-carrying capacity. We do not want a Cadillac; we just want a plain old four-door Chevy-type of road that will carry the load.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member from Emerson for the question. I know that the rural municipalities have talked about 201. They have talked about 201 more from Letellier, I think, towards Stuartburn, that particular section. I have heard from a number of them.

I hope my comments are not taken out of context with regard to any entrepreneurs, because, as I mentioned before, though, some family businesses

start up on their homestead and then they go from there. They should be congratulated for it. There are many countries, for example, looking for bean products, and Africa, in particular. So they need to be congratulated. Often, you will hear me say that transportation is an economic enabler, and it is great for our economy, not only with regard to the trucking industry or agri-business, but also for tourism and so on. You will not get any argument from me from that particular point of view at all.

The challenge that I see, it is not Ron Lemieux's money; it is the taxpayers' money of Manitoba. The department has X amount of dollars. You have projects that are already put in place. When you have huge projects like the northeast perimeter that need to be done, I do not think anyone questions whether or not they need to be done; it has to be done. Madam Chair, that really is very difficult on the finances of the Department of Transportation when you start doing that, because there are other parts of the infrastructure in our province that need to be taken care of. Yes. It is starting to fall apart; it has been, over a number of years, through a number of different governments.

We do not have a plan yet. We do not have a national plan to take care of this infrastructure deficit. Hopefully, there will be one. Hopefully, with this coming up election, whenever that may be called, that our federal counterparts, all parties, would be asked the question on how do you address this infrastructure deficit that is across the country, whether it is gas taxes or whatever has to happen. The federal government has to get involved with helping the provinces, whether it is Saskatchewan, Ontario, or Manitoba. A lot of provinces are feeling this right across the country. We need a partner, not only in health care, which we hear all the time.

We hear about health care and, yes, there are a lot of needs in health care, but it does not take one very long to soon recognize that transportation is another area that needs to be put on the drawing board. It needs to be put on the radar screen for all levels of government; they need to be addressed. It is only going to get worse before it gets better.

I appreciate the comments made from the MLA from the area. I know he is not getting a commission for raising this on behalf of those organizations and companies, or donations, but he is doing this because he cares about the business. That is fair. That is a fair comment.

Madam Chair, I do not know whether or not that can be addressed. I cannot make a commitment today, but certainly these are the roads that 1 out of the 19 000 kilometres that Manitoba is responsible for, Transportation is responsible for, that we have over \$1 billion of requests every year that end up with the Department of Transportation trying to address them.

It is very frustrating. It is not easy to answer because it is a difficult one, where you are talking about businesses and the livelihood or employment of a number of people. There are many of them. Whether it is dealing with, I am trying to think of the cheese plant, New Bothwell cheese. There is another one. You get Pizzey's who are located by Russell or Angusville, who have businesses that have started up off the main routes, the main traffic routes that we have or the major routes. They have to get to those routes to get to market.

It is a huge challenge that is before us. Madam Chairperson, I do not have the answer today for that but I can tell you we are working on it, because we believe that transportation, roads are an economic enabler, whether it deals with trucking, tourism, agri-business, you name it. It is a challenge that I certainly have and the department has to try to address.

Mr. Penner: I appreciate what the minister has said—

Madam Chairperson: I am sorry. Is that all right, the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings)?

Mr. Penner: Sorry about that.

I appreciate what the minister has said and I think we all sympathize. However, it is seldom ever that we have seen previously, and as long as I have been in government, that we have seen ministers blame either federal infrastructure money, or point at that one, or additional gas tax money needed, and those of kinds of things.

I have seen ministers construct a lot of roadways in southern Manitoba where the need was the greatest, because that is where most of our economic development comes out of. You know that and I know that. Yet we have seen in my constituency not one stitch of road done in the last five years, not one mile of road in the Emerson constituency.

I think it is unfortunate that this Government chooses to ignore the needs of the areas that drive a

large part of the economy of this province. I would suggest to the minister that if he would have looked at the money he lapsed last year and used just a portion of that he would have done the road.

Secondly, Madam Chair, the 201 going east and the road straight south of La Broquerie, equally are load carrying capacity. There is a large hog industry in that area, and the cattle industry in southeast Manitoba, these people need access. The minister lapses large amounts of money in his Budget to accommodate the budgetary requirements of other departments in government. We know that and the minister knows, that he was ordered to do that.

I ask the minister why would you not have taken a bit of that and at least accommodated those that are large employers.

I want to close by making one other comment, that the Government of Manitoba had very little difficulty in coming up with \$20 million to save a bus plant in the city of Winnipeg. These industries that I have just mentioned employ as many people as that bus plant did. What are we going to do for them?

* (17:20)

Mr. Lemieux: I do take some exception with regard to the comment about rural Manitoba. There are a number of projects taking place in rural Manitoba that had not been done—well, Highway 59. The twinning of Highway 59 south is not Winnipeg. This is dealing with trying to give people better access, whether it is tourism or trucking, to southern Manitoba. We have also announced the next phase of it. That is a major route heading down to southeast Manitoba.

I am not going to get into a debate on why the previous government did not, in the 11 years they were in government, continue going on that highway straight south right all the way down. Highway 59, very little, if any, was done at all.

The problem is, as I see it, there are a lot of challenges. I am not pointing the finger and blaming the federal government. If I am pointing the finger at all, I am pointing in the direction of come over here. In other words, let us partner and let us work together in doing something. I am not pointing the finger of blame at them. I am just saying, look, you have a responsibility here as the national government

not just to deal with health care, but there are other things that need to be done in the country, too. I think it is about time that they need to be taken to task for it. This is a government that has tried to work with the federal government in many ways. We are somewhat disappointed on the transportation side, why they have not come forward.

We heard Paul Martin make the comment. Madam Chair, I do not know if members here can enlighten me, but I certainly have not heard anything since that five cents a litre was dropped on the table to municipalities. We have not heard any further explanation as to where that is supposed go, where the strings are tied.

Madam Chair, I do not know where the alliance or the Conservative Party stands with regard to gas taxes. Maybe we will hear it in the upcoming campaign. I am not sure where the New Democratic Party stands on the federal scene with regard to gas taxes going into the province. I would like to have all these parties have their feet held to the fire and say, okay, it is time to stand up and be counted.

I am looking forward to seeing where the Conservative Party stands on federal gas taxes coming back to the province. I am not pointing the finger at them. I am just saying, stating a fact I think many people have stated we need to have some assistance here. We cannot do it alone, especially when that \$165 million, plus or minus a few million, leave this province. They have a duty to put some of that money back into the province, especially when we have introduced a law, legislation, saying that we are going to put all of our road fuel taxes back in.

Madam Chair, we are one of the only provinces to do that. Others are looking at doing that as well, making a commitment that those dollars will go back into the transportation system and the transportation infrastructure system.

Infrastructure is important. Madam Chair, we know that. I know the member has a number of different highways in his constituency that need addressing, but, again, out of 19 000 kilometres of highway in the province of Manitoba we are trying to deal with, it is a huge challenge.

It is a huge challenge for any government. We are certainly putting in our share of money with regard to rural Manitoba. Yet, Madam Chair, you

depend on engineers, you depend on different people within your department to make those decisions as to where those dollars will go. Madam Chair, even though they are few and far between, you are trying to expend those dollars, not only building new projects, but trying to keep the system together, whether it be just maintenance or refurbishment of different roads that already exist.

Madam Chair, we are putting in \$10 million more this year. We are going to put in another \$10 million next year. I know it is a drop in the bucket compared to the billion dollars, but it is a move in the right direction, if nothing else, to show our federal counterparts that we are trying to put more monies in our Budget anyway, trying to show them that transportation is important and transportation infrastructure is important to the province.

I will just close my comments just saying that. I know that a number of other members want to ask questions. I do not want to take time away from their questions.

Madam Chairperson: My apologies again to the Member for Ste. Rose.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Madam Chair, my question is fairly direct. I know the minister and I discussed this briefly. I have trouble understanding why the department appealed an approach road on the No. 5 just south of Ste. Rose, especially when that area is being slated for reconstruction and maybe reconfiguration. It sends a very mixed signal in that area. I would be interested if there is any information on that, or I can wait until concurrence, if there is not at this point.

Mr. Lemieux: Madam Chairperson, I thank the Member for Ste. Rose for the question again, actually, because he did ask me another time about this. Essentially, my understanding is that the development plan itself had an access to it. There was a bulk plant. I cannot remember what the bulk plant was at the time, whether it was Esso. I am not sure of the company that was there.

This is a huge challenge for the department. A number of different situations have come up where people want access. The Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) raised the question earlier today asking that the volunteer fire department in Dugald wanted to have a better access, instead of having to back up

a fire truck to access their fire hydrant system to load up with water. They wanted to be able to put another culvert in and another access to this property so the truck could just essentially make a circle and they would not have to back in and take the time to do that. I think it was on Highway 206.

The challenge still is there, Madam Chairperson, whether it is Highway 5 or 206, how safe it is to have all of those accesses on a major highway. It is a major highway leading to Ste. Rose and to Dauphin and there is a lot of traffic on that road.

The department does not have a lot of the details right at their fingertips today, so I would ask the indulgence of the Member for Ste. Rose, if he would not mind, if we could get that information for him tomorrow. We will gladly be able to present it at that time, or the critic, for example, from Arthur-Virden, could ask that question, or I could relay the answer to the critic.

Mr. Cummings: I do not expect a lengthy and complicated discussion at this point. I will seek further information. I just want to indicate on the record that, because of the reconfiguration that is anticipated in the area and because there is slated to be access granted through an access, either turning the existing road into an access or an additional road for that purpose, I think it was a confusing situation to have the department go to an appeal to overturn a decision to make available an access there. I will look forward to getting more detail on that.

With only a couple of minutes left, Madam Chair, I am wondering, I know it is not a turnkey situation, but in terms of DDVL, is that going to be

phased in, the transfer of the responsibility, or has that already moved forward and is it considered a complete transfer to MPI, or is it going to be gradual in terms of the responsibility being assumed by the different management?

Mr. Lemieux: I know we only have a couple of minutes left for today. I will try to be brief.

Your question essentially is when will all aspects of the mergers be completed. There is a transition phase. While a great deal of the activity will occur during the next six months, as a formal transfer date is negotiated with Manitoba Public Insurance and the Manitoba Government Employees Union, a number of other changes could take up to 18 months to complete. So there is a transition phase to get people there.

The transfer will be managed through, I guess, a number of different transition teams. They will be overseeing a number of different areas with regard to that transfer. The move of DDVL over to MPI has probably been long overdue because we have had a number of different studies in the nineties that said this should be done. I know the previous government did not do it, I am not sure why, but they did not make that move. We think it is a positive move.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 5:30, committee rise.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5:30, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 12, 2004

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