

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

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 3—The Healthy Child Manitoba Act

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin), that Bill 3, The Healthy Child Manitoba Act; Loi sur la stratégie "Enfants en santé Manitoba," now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'm proud to re-introduce a bill that sets out in formal legislation or strategy, to work across government departments and with community partners, to put children and families first.

Bill 3 is based on our belief that all sectors must work together to support families and parents as they raise their children to reach their fullest potential.

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

Bill 7—The Insurance Amendment Act

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 7, The Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce this bill today. This bill modernizes The Insurance Act in order to improve governance requirements for Manitoba insurers, provide more authority to the superintendent and the insurance councils, to deal with unlicensed activities and update provisions for consistency with other jurisdictions.

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

PETITIONS

Provincial Trunk Highway 2—Glenboro

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

As a result of high traffic volumes in the region, there have been numerous accidents and near misses along Provincial Trunk Highway 2, near the village of Glenboro, leading to serious safety concerns for motorists.

The provincial government has refused to construct turning lanes off PTH 2 into the village of Glenboro and on to Golf Course Drive, despite the fact that the number of businesses along PTH 2 have increased greatly in recent years.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider implementing a speed zone on Provincial Trunk Highway 2 adjacent to the village of Glenboro.

This petition is signed by Earl Malyon, Steve Collins, Armand Vallotton and many, many others.

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

Provincial Nominee Program

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:

Immigration is critically important to the future of our province, and the 1998 federal Provincial Nominee Program is the best immigration program that Manitoba has ever had.

The current government needs to recognize that the backlog in processing PNP applications is causing additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families and friends here in Manitoba.

The current government needs to recognize the unfairness in its current policy on who qualifies to be an applicant, more specifically, by not allowing professionals such as health care workers to be able to apply for PNP certificates in the same way a computer technician would be able to.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his government to recognize and acknowledge how important immigration is to our province by improving and strengthening the Provincial Nominee Program.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by D. de Leon, Jay de Leon and Jay Cruz and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the following reports: the Annual Progress Report for the Canada-Manitoba Economic Partnership Agreement 2006-2007. In addition, the Annual Report for the Manitoba Development Corporation. I'm also pleased to table the Annual Report for the Manitoba Opportunities Fund Limited.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the 2006-2007 Annual Report of the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council and the 2006-2007 Annual Report of the Department of Labour and Immigration.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Annual Report 2006-2007, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Healthy Child Manitoba Annual Report 2006-2007, as well as the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat Annual Report 2006-2007.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2007-2008 Departmental Expenditure Estimates Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Department of Water Stewardship.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Location of Hydro Power Line UNESCO World Heritage Site

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer), from some time before the election campaign in May until last week, made his decision on the west-side detour, the centrepiece of his political legacy. He's

compared his decision on this issue to the establishment of Assiniboine Park and to the building of the floodway. He's made this decision without regard to the finances of the province, without regard to the fact that he's going to leave a legacy of massive debt to future generations and that he's making a decision that in the end will damage Manitoba's environment.

Now, I know, Mr. Speaker, and his minister made it clear last week in the *Winnipeg Free Press* that the NDP does not believe that financial impact should be considered when government decisions are made. But I do want to say that we disagree that financial impacts and future generations of Manitobans must be considered.

Now, one of the key reasons the Premier's given for the decision to go with the far longer west-side route is his desire to see a successful UNESCO World Heritage site designation, which is something that we commend. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the Premier didn't research whether it would make more sense to pursue both an east-side power line and a UNESCO designation for Manitoba.

Professor Bryan Schwartz, who is Manitoba's leading constitutional lawyer, has prepared an opinion that says that not only are the goals of an east-side power line and a UNESCO World Heritage site compatible, but from UNESCO's perspective, it may even be desirable to run the line down the east side of Manitoba from an economic and environmental and a social perspective, Mr. Speaker.

So, in light of the fact that the leading constitutional lawyer in Manitoba is taking the position and has offered an opinion that both a UNESCO site and an east-side line are not only compatible but desirable from the perspective of the economics and the environment of our province, will the Premier today commit to doing a U-turn on his position and do the right thing for future generations of Manitobans?

* (13:40)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I will check to see if the expert cited by the member opposite is in fact employed by people on the east side that are proposing ownership of a line, but I want to double check that point.

Having said that, there are experts in Parks Canada. There were about 125 proposals that have been submitted to Parks Canada, and the UNESCO World Heritage site of the spectacular area east of

Lake Winnipeg on the boreal forest was listed in the top 10 under their recommendation. So there's going to be lots of opinions on this issue and lots of experts that can be cited. There's no question, Mr. Speaker.

We've been honest in the election campaign. We said the east side would be a, quote, cheaper route, because it's a direct line, if you could ever build it. We also stated there were serious challenges with the east side and with the boreal forest, with the UNESCO World Heritage site. The west side was a longer route, but it was a route that had much more developed areas, 90 years of history of developments on the west side: mining, highways, existing transmission lines, other industrial developments, communities on the west side.

We've been very clear in the election campaign. We said to the people of Manitoba our belief is, our judgment is based on the environment, based on people that we've had meetings with in First Nations, based on the absolute spectacular area of the east side called the boreal forest. And also because of our customers, who, the major customers in United States who are subject to regulatory and democratic processes, that we felt that for purposes of reliability, the preferable route was the west side. We said that in the election campaign.

I remember in the CBC debate the member opposite was in favour of the east side, we were opposed to it, and the Liberals didn't have any position. Nothing has changed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Without commenting on the Liberal position, which we have yet to ascertain as well, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that the Premier talks about concern for the boreal forest when he's talking out of one side of his mouth. But when he was talking out of the other side of his mouth during the campaign and announcing his down payment on the east-west power corridor to run through Ontario, when he was going to get out the chain saw and cut through hundreds of kilometres of boreal forest through Ontario, cutting through territories traditionally occupied by Aboriginal people, through northwestern Ontario, it highlights the hypocrisy of the position that he's adopted.

The Premier knows that there is currently development on the east side, there are winter roads that exist on the east side, there are three transmission lines that exist on the east side, and so he's decided to plough ahead, leaving a half-billion dollar debt to future generations of Manitobans. He's decided to plough ahead, wasting precious clean

energy, energy that could be the equivalent to Manitoba of what oil and gas is to Alberta and Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and he's going to waste it by allowing it to leak out of the lines by running it down the west side, giving up the chance to displace coal.

We've got experts saying there's an opportunity to run the line down the east side as well as the UNESCO site, experts such as Elijah Harper, the former NDP MLA and member of their caucus, chiefs on the east side of the lake, callers who have called in from Poplar River to tell us about the crushing poverty in that community and on that side of Lake Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I just want to ask the Premier if he would, rather than ploughing ahead with an ill-conceived, put on the blinders and plough ahead with the loopy west-side route, Mr. Speaker, why won't he keep an open mind? Why won't he pursue the alternative of a UNESCO site and an east-side power line in much the same way as the Kluane National Park, which is a UNESCO site, built the Alaska Highway right up the side of the park so that people could get access to it. Why won't he do the right thing for future generations of Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, do a U-turn, reconsider his position, and do what's right in terms of his legacy to future generations?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, unlike members opposite, we stated our view in the election campaign. We have stated our views completely and democratically from the year 2004 on. We said that the west-side route was more expensive because, obviously, a more circuitous route is more expensive than a direct line. We were very much up front.

But let me put it in perspective, Mr. Speaker. There are customers that Hydro relies on, and yes, I believe there's a greater opportunity for development with the UNESCO World Heritage site for the people of Manitoba. I believe it's a great, great advantage that we have on the east side, but there's also a reality.

Now, members opposite wouldn't know anything about customer relations because they never sold a megawatt of power in the last 30 years. All they did is mothball power. They didn't sell any power. There are customers, the biggest customer we have is the state of Minnesota, Xcel, the state of Wisconsin, and other states connected to our power line.

Mr. Speaker, we know the issue of cost because the issue of cost is a legitimate issue to raise, but we

sell on average \$600 million of power every year to the Xcel power grid. Sales were developed with a vision of our government in the past. That is half the cost. Potentially, the maximum half-cost of the transmission line going around the west side.

I want to say to people opposite: If they're not aware of Hydro transmission projects and Hydro sales being cancelled with customer pressure in United States, they should start with the state of New York and the cancellation of the Great Whale Project by the people that put pressure on the customers. We have to pay attention not only to the advantages for Manitoba of preserving the boreal forest and UNESCO World Heritage site, but also the costs of not being able to sell into places like Minnesota.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has the history completely wrong. Pressure was applied in the case of the New York power sale, consultations were entered into with the James Bay Cree, arrangements were made, the project was built and people in those communities are now benefiting from that project.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier also talks about pressure. He may be aware that at the end of last week, there were chiefs in Manitoba raising concerns about the west-side power line prepared to go to the United States to make their case about the lack of consultation by his government with respect to their unilateral, ill-considered decision to run a line down the west side of the province.

So, if we've got opposition on the east side, we've got opposition on the west side, what does the Premier do? He announces one day, we're going to make a power sale to the east, announces the next day, so, we're going to send our lines to the west, Mr. Speaker. What kind of loony, NDP thinking is that?

I'd ask the Premier if he would get the facts right. Minnesota is an important customer, Mr. Speaker. There are privately owned power utilities that have entered into contracts to buy from Manitoba. There's a responsibility and a regulatory process for Hydro to provide information about what's happening with claims. That process was built in because of horrendous flooding and the impacts of flooding in northern Manitoba. We're talking about something completely different here. Rather than allowing rhetoric to cloud the issue in the United States, why not go there with the facts, explain what everybody in this province knows to be true, which is the east side is better financially, it's better

environmentally, it's better for everybody involved, it's better for future generations.

He is so far wrong on all the facts in this issue, and I know he said last week he was concerned that if he changed positions we'd accuse him of flip-flopping. Well, the fact is, he's flip-flopped 38 times in the past eight years on major issues. Why not make it 39, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just uses misinformation to try to create some kind of argument. We've been very clear that a straight line is cheaper than a circuitous line. We've said that all along. The member opposite was one of the first ones to object to a power line that was proposed by the Conservatives coming through the constituency of Springfield.

So he actually makes our case. No matter where a power line is proposed to go, it's going to be controversial; it's going to be opposed. Just look at exhibit A, the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) who objected to David Newman's proposal when we came into office.

I also want to make a point. We had legal advice prior to the signing of the agreement with the east-side chiefs. It was clear that there is no veto in that process. Why does the member opposite allow for the interpretation to be made over and over and over again that land-use planning can be vetoed by a process of consultation under section 35 of the Constitution?

Will he please get legal advice and tell the people the truth rather than try to misinform them as he's doing in the House every day, Mr. Speaker?

Hollow Water Cottage Barricades Government's Response

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): This NDP government is no closer to resolving the issues at Hollow Water than it was last week or even the week before. The illegal barricades are still up and the chief of Hollow Water stated that they're not coming down anytime soon.

So I ask the Minister of Justice or the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) or perhaps any minister opposite who will give me an answer: When will the illegal barricades come down?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the member

opposite has the unfortunate habit of questioning the activities of the police. About a week ago, the member opposite—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: About a week ago, the member opposite complained about our gun amnesty program, saying that it would target innocent citizens, Mr. Speaker, and I was very pleased to be at a press conference this morning where over 400 guns were handed in, a process that not only the Member for Lac du Bonnet criticized, but his predecessor lacked—

Some Honourable Members: Oh. Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: The member may not have respect for the police and their decisions, but we certainly do on this side.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, I would venture that not one of those guns came from members of the Hells Angels, not one.

Mr. Speaker, Chief Ian Bushie of Hollow Water was quoted as saying that residents of Hollow Water will not be sympathetic to cottage owners trying to get past the barricade and drain their water lines before they freeze. Those were the words of the chief of Hollow Water. There will be millions of dollars in property damage if homeowners and cottage owners cannot access their property before freeze-up.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Who will pay for the millions of dollars of property damage that will result because of this government's inaction and incompetence?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister of Justice is absolutely right. We're not taking advice from members opposite when it comes to directing what the police do. They know their jobs. They do it best.

We are, Mr. Speaker, working with cottage owners to make sure that they have every opportunity to go in and take care of their cottages before a freeze-up and before there is damage done. We want to work with the cottage association to make sure that that happens.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, in April of this year the NDP signed an agreement giving chiefs on the east side veto power over decisions on the east side

of Lake Winnipeg. Six months later Chief Ian Bushie of Hollow Water exercised his veto and erected an illegal barricade to stop further home and cottage lot development and to stop lot owners from protecting their property before freeze-up.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: If he won't enforce the law, will he at least commit to paying for the damages?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, if the member would reply, and I ask him, to his legal judgment to the document that was signed, he would know that there is no veto power contained in that document, and, in fact, if he was in court he'd probably have to withdraw his statement. But he's not in court.

But I should indicate, Mr. Speaker, that I note that the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs wants an apology from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and says, and I quote: ". . . or do you only talk to First Nations people when you need their votes."

Generic Drugs

Time Frame for Approval

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, the ability of—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Steinbach has the floor.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The ability of Manitobans to access generic drugs which have been approved by Health Canada saves the Pharmacare system in Manitoba millions of dollars and ultimately saves lives. However, Manitobans cannot access these generic drugs which do the same work as their brand name counterparts until they've been approved by a provincial government committee.

Can the Minister of Health advise Manitobans when the Drug Standards and Therapeutics Committee of Manitoba last met to update the generic drugs in Manitoba?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, and as all members of this House know, Manitoba has worked very diligently to ensure, as cited by the Canadian Institute for Health Information, that we have one of the most, if not the most robust Pharmacare programs in Canada.

We know, ensuring as we're looking at health spending and looking at ever-increasing costs for drugs of the generic kind, that we have to be working very diligently with our partners to ensure that we can hold the line on those costs and make sure that we're able to provide as many drugs as possible on our drug formulary, while ensuring that our spending is kept in check.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the minister exercised her parliamentary right not to answer the question, but she's not doing her democratic duty to tell Manitobans what's going on with the generic drugs in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, for the minister's information, the provincial committee has not updated the generic drugs available in Manitoba since March of this year. Other provinces' committees such as Alberta, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have approved new generic drugs, some of them just in the last few days. Why is this Minister of Health dithering on this important issue and breaking her promise to Manitobans to provide timely and effective health care?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite states, we are constantly reviewing the kinds of drugs that are available to Manitobans of the name brand variety, of the generic variety. Those reviews take place every six months, and it's a constant review. We're also among the first in Canada, if not the first, to enter into utilization management agreements with pharmaceutical companies so that we can work together with the industry to hold the line on cost to provide even more drugs to Manitobans that will be covered under Pharmacare and to make sure that all Manitobans, seniors, children alike are getting the kind of care that they need when they need it.

Mr. Goertzen: I advise the minister again that that committee has not met since March to update generic drugs available in Manitoba. The generic drug ramipril was launched in December of 2006. It helps lower blood pressure. It's a substitute for the named drug Altace. It's estimated that if this drug had been approved even eight months ago, Pharmacare and Manitobans would have saved \$2.4 million.

There are other generic drugs that deal with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, infections, tonsillitis, bronchitis and allergies. They're all sitting in there waiting for the minister's committee to meet so that they can get approval. Why is she making Manitobans, why is she making Pharmacare wait for

these drugs to get approved and to save millions of dollars to Manitobans?

Ms. Oswald: Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. But he needs to remember that this kind of review takes place at minimum every six months. It's a continuous ongoing review and he needs to also bear in mind that with utilization management agreements that are in place, virtually unprecedented in Canada, we're saving money on drugs each and every day. It's also worthwhile to note that we are second in Canada in terms of coverage that we provide for our provincial oncology budget. Manitoba is moving in the right direction and covering costs for drugs, and we'll continue to do so.

Economy—Manitoba Fiscal Policy

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, it seems we have finally identified the direction of the NDP fiscal policy. The Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Robinson) is quoted as saying, and I quote: we can no longer afford to make decisions based solely on the bottom line. It's now on the record, but it shouldn't be a surprise. The NDP has always governed this way.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Finance tell me whether this lack of regard for the bottom line is an official policy position of the NDP, and by extension, the policy position of Manitoba Hydro and all other departments under the minister's control?

* (14:00)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, while the member was in retirement, we balanced the budget eight times in the province of Manitoba, and we paid down debt in Manitoba. We addressed the pension liability, and when we bring forward future budgets, they will balance as well.

The member knows full well that Manitoba has done an excellent job in terms of its fiscal management in this province. It's been recognized by the bond rating agencies who have upgraded the credit rating in this province four times. Standard and Poor's, Dominion Bond Rating Service, Moody service, have all upgraded the credit rating of Manitoba because of our ability to manage the finances of this province.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has done it on the backs of Manitoba taxpayers. He's

done it on the backs of Canadian taxpayers with equalization and transfer payments that have never been so high.

Mr. Speaker, controlling our debt should be doable with equalization payments increasing at a rate of 10 percent. However, this government has still managed to increase the debt burden of Manitobans every year. Manitobans need a fiscally responsible government to make decisions that incorporate the impact of the bottom line. The NDP simply spends, taxes and spends more, in debt finances.

Mr. Speaker, is this minister going to continue to *[inaudible]* our mounting debt and fritter away our record levels of transfer payments, or is he finally going to exhibit fiscal responsibility when it comes to our Manitoba taxpayers?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I think the member was reading some very old *Hansards* because taxes have gone down in Manitoba, debt-to-GDP ratio has gone down, investments in key programs like Assiniboine Community College. If the member's against Assiniboine College, let us know. If he's against the new hospital in Brandon, let us know. If he's against the new bridge in Brandon, let us know. All those investments the people of Brandon appreciate.

Country of Origin Labeling Legislation Government's Response

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, the United States farm bill contains provision for Manitoba country-of-origin labelling which would come into effect next fall.

The Canadian Cattlemen's Association and the Canadian Pork Council say country-of-origin labelling could cost their industries more than \$500 million a year, Mr. Speaker. Manitoba's Minister of Agriculture said she's going to send a letter to the federal government on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, given the devastating financial impact that country-of-origin labelling will have, will the Minister of Agriculture assure Manitoba producers that she's going to develop a long-term plan on this issue?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue and one that we have been addressing with the U.S. government. In fact, it was on the table at the western governors and premiers

conference, so I can assure the member that we have been addressing it.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is a very important market for us, and we have to continue to raise the issue that we cannot have country-of-origin labelling, and many of the issues that are outlined in country-of-origin labelling have not been addressed. It is a very serious issue, but I say to the member, as well, that's why we have to look for solutions at home. That's why I'm so pleased that the Manitoba enhancement council has been able to announce their first project that will see more processing of Manitoba beef in Manitoba.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, the executive director of the Canadian Pork Council has said that country-of-origin labelling, and I quote, this is a disaster. We are in a perfect storm of challenging circumstances for our industry. A strong approach is needed to country-of-origin labelling. First, you try and cut it off at the pass before it becomes law. Second, to prepare a long-term plan to help industries if it does become law.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture tell this House what long-term plan this government has to help Manitoba producers deal with the impact of country-of-origin labelling?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The member is correct. The best way to deal with this issue is to try to educate the Americans that are proposing it on the consequences for their economy and our economy. We raised it with the commissioner of agriculture and other states.

If you can imagine one of the weanlings—there are about 3 million weanlings a year going to United States. Does that mean the bacon is Canadian bacon or American bacon when the pig is processed or completed in the American market and then slaughtered there. So, it is a complicated issue. There are a lot of American people in agriculture and in industry that understand that it's not that simple to propose that a weanling in Manitoba that goes to Minnesota to be completed, what is the label going to be? There are a lot of people we can work with and that's our first objective, Mr. Speaker.

Spirited Energy Advertising Campaign Spending

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, first we were led to believe by this NDP government, actually by this Premier (Mr. Doer), that there would no additional dollars spent on the Spirited Energy

campaign. We were even issued FIPPA responses that said no additional dollars were to be spent. Then the minister told us that spending was \$10,000 per month. Then the government staff corrected the minister by saying the totals were closer to \$22,000 per month.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't a bidding war on *The Price Is Right*. Will the Minister of Competitiveness now clarify, for the record, exactly how much was spent each month and explain why we were issued FIPPA's responses that said zero?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, not only did we have an all-party agreement to have the Auditor go in and do an audit on this, and we're expecting the audit very, very shortly, but what we have done is we've said, let the business people lead this initiative.

I'm shocked that the member opposite keeps on calling this a war, calls it unsightly, calls it embarrassing, when what we've done is we've tried to work with the business community, business leaders in the province, to create a very favourable marketing program for the province.

We have been open. The member opposite was quoting from numbers of FIPPA requests that we had provided to her. We have been open about this, and will continue to be open, and looking forward to the Auditor General's report.

Mrs. Rowat: I'm shocked but not surprised by this minister's inability to answer a question.

Mr. Speaker, last week in Estimates the minister did a great job of deflecting blame and avoiding responsibility for his Spirited misspending, but finally committed to providing us with a full accounting of all of the spending of the campaign. It's been nearly a week and he still avoids the need to be accountable.

I ask the Minister of Competitiveness: Will he, today, table the true accounting of the Spirited Energy campaign?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, I'm very shocked that the member opposite—they've called it ridiculous. They've spun lame old comments about this campaign. What we did was work with the business community to market the province. Number two, what we did was an all-party recommendation to the Auditor General to make sure that she had full information so that she could conduct an audit and

provide a public audit. Number three, on the freedom of information, we provided to the member opposite a stack of invoices about this.

She says that we're not being open. Mr. Speaker, we have been open. We have been blunt. What we have continued to do is make sure that we are accountable and will continue to be so.

Private Sector Donations

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, the minister's failure to admit his government's spending has us concerned that Crown corporations are once again being considered private donors to the Spirited Energy campaign.

Last year, \$54,500 of Manitoba's MPI premiums were paid for the Spirited Energy street teams. I ask the minister: Who's paying for the street teams and temporary tattoos this year? MPI ratepayers? Manitoba Hydro ratepayers? Is it the people buying beer and wine at MLCC? Is it the people at the tables at the Manitoba Lotteries casinos? Which Crown corporations are private donors this year, and how much are they paying or chipping in, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I listen to the member opposite and talk about how it's unsightly, embarrassing, a war. We know that the member opposite does not believe in allowing a good marketing campaign to produce.

What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that the member opposite is putting the slight on the members of the business community who have spent hours volunteering, spent hours leading this process. I don't know whether the member opposite does not believe that Ash Modha and Bob Silver and all these people who have donated their skills and time to move it forward, but we believe that it's an issue that should be led by the business community. We're following their lead. I await the Auditor General's report to see how this spending has been done.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:10)

Hollow Water Cottage Barricade Record of Consultations

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier: The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) has a record of poor and failed consultations. The consultation with Métis over the harvester cards was very poorly done. The

consultations of the Lowlands National Park were a complete failure, a disaster. Now the Minister of Conservation has botched the consultations with the people in Hollow Water.

I ask the Premier today to table the e-mails and the letters that went from his office and the Minister of Conservation's office to the people in Hollow Water and chief and council to ask for and to request these consultations.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has stated his view on the harvester card. He would want to delegate that authority completely to an organization. We have not done that. You know, he took a position in terms of hunting, although we didn't take that position.

We have no difficulty in supporting the principles of the Powley decision but also having the ability to implement the policies on hunting on the basis of conservation. The first criteria is the responsibility of the provincial government to be responsible for the species in Manitoba. The member opposite has taken a different view, I would argue, an unconserving view of that issue, and just goes in front of conventions and grandstands and promises this and that which doesn't take in the best interests of conservation in Manitoba.

We need no lecture from the member opposite on the policy of harvester cards. We were up front about it, again, before the election, during the election. We were up front about it during the Métis convention. We believe safety, conservation, issues of treaty rights has informed our policies on this issue, and we reject his position on it.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, we're on opposite sides, clearly, of the harvester cards, but here today we're dealing with an issue of Hollow Water. The MLA for Rupertsland and Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Robinson) has said publicly that the Minister of Conservation botched the consultations and the MLA for Rupertsland has supported the people of Hollow Water against his own government.

I ask the Premier whether he will not table the e-mails and the letters from his office and the Minister of Conservation's office to the people of Hollow Water, the chief and council, so that at least he will be in a position to publicly support the kind of approach to consultations that he's taken so far.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, dealing generally with the east side, the Member for Rupertsland and as

minister had over 80 meetings on the long-term land use policies on the east side, 80 meetings. The member opposite should know that that is a very serious effort on consultations with all First Nations people, not just chiefs and councils, and that's important, but all the people in the communities.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there's a person who stands up here, yells, but doesn't even have a position on the east-side transmission line. At least the Member for Rupertsland has a backbone.

Youth Justice System Joint Chairs Committee

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, over the years, we have seen this government marginalize the consequences of youth violating our laws which in essence makes a mockery of the whole justice system. There was a time in which a youth that would steal something from a store or cause vandalism would go before justice committees. That has all fallen by the wayside as this government takes us in a new direction.

Mr. Speaker, today, I understand that the joint chairs committee of the youth justice committees is no longer functioning. Can the Minister of Justice tell this Chamber is the joint chairs for our youth justice committees still active today?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, Mr. Speaker, as I explained at length for the member in Estimates regarding youth justice committees last week during the Estimates process, because of changes to the YCJA brought in, the function and operation of youth justice committees has changed and we are looking to use the volunteer and the tremendous goodwill from the communities within the justice system, but it's in a changed fashion.

I might also add, Mr. Speaker, that we have been very concerned about the level of youth activity, which is one of the reasons why we've lobbied the federal government now to make changes, and it looks as though they're going to make changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act in order to ensure that (a) we can give opportunities to those that need opportunities by community-based programs, which we are doing in an unprecedented number, and (b) there are—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The honourable Member for Brandon East.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): I have a fan club over there.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

**Assiniboine Community College
Progress of Relocation**

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): The Doer government believes in building educational excellence in Manitoba. Few of the provinces have met double-digit enrolment increases. It's made unprecedented investments in post-secondary institutions. It's made a return to respect for educators, respect that was—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Lac du Bonnet, on a point of order?

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I'm not sure whether you heard the Member for Brandon East correctly, but I heard him from my seat, and he said, he announced, the Premier, Mr. Doer as opposed to the Premier. Certainly that's against the rules, and I'd ask that you'd caution the member accordingly.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member was quoting from the *Brandon Sun* that said: The task of expanding college opportunities for young Manitobans was left to the Doer government, and it's done a remarkable job on this front. I think the member was just perhaps quoting from the *Brandon Sun* which said the Doer government has done a remarkable job on this front.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised, I heard it very clear that the reference was made to the Doer government. I, as Speaker, have allowed that in order for honourable members to point out the error that they are speaking of. All members are fully aware that, if they are making reference to another member, it's not by name, it's by constituency or by portfolios that members hold.

But I did hear it very clearly, and the reference I heard was Doer government, and that has always been allowed so that way it gives the members a

chance to identify with what era the member that has the floor is talking about. For example—[interjection]

Order. For example, in the past what I've used is like the Filmon government, the Pawley government and here today it's the Doer government. So I have always accepted that, and I will continue to accept that. The honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon East, to continue.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, the Doer government is building educational excellence in Manitoba. In the 2005 Throne Speech, we committed to developing ACC at the former Brandon Mental Health Centre site, an outstanding architectural monument in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, given the social and economic significance of Assiniboine Community College, can the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy please advise Manitobans of the progress being made on ACC's relocation?

* (14:20)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): I thank my colleague for the question. In answering it I want to point out to the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) who was present at the opening of the Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts last week, I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that if we had followed his advice and taken the bottom line, there would be no centre for culinary arts.

But we believe in excellence in education, and consequently we have invested \$6 million in the creation of the Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts. I was joined by the Member for Brandon West, the Member for Brandon East, the president of the college for the inauguration of this spectacular new building which actually is a regeneration of the previous nurses' residence and so combines the beauties of heritage with state-of-the-art technical developments.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Pembina Constituency Community Events

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, 2007 has been an historic year for the Pembina constituency. This year Morden celebrated its 125th anniversary, and in 2008 it will be recognized as a cultural capital of Canada. Building on this momentum each month we can mark several more accomplishments. This month alone I have been honoured to attend community events that reflect our constituency's growth and generous charitable spirit.

On October 5, the community of Morden gathered to celebrate the expansion and upgrade of the impressive 3M plant. I would like to sincerely congratulate and thank the management and employees of 3M. They are valuable members of our business community and set high standards with its progressive charitable work and responsible practices that contribute to a sustainable environment.

3M is a world-class manufacturer of quality products. Morden has been fortunate to include 3M in our community since 1982. Demonstrating the success of this plant, it doubled in size in 1991. 3M has an exciting future in Morden and Manitoba. Our community looks forward to a mutually beneficial partnership, helping them achieve continued success and prosperity.

On October 6, I was privileged to attend and participate in the first annual Thanks for Giving Half Marathon in Winkler. Just over \$14,000 was raised for the Winkler and District Food Cupboard to help families and individuals in need. People from around Winkler but as far away as Brandon and British Columbia ran either the 5-kilometre or 15-kilometre course to raise money for this worthy cause. I would like to thank and congratulate each of the participants, volunteers, donors and Race Director Anna Matuszewski for the work that she did.

During the Thanksgiving long weekend, it was heartening to see this outstanding event reminding us to be truly appreciative and thankful for what we have. It reminded each of us that we need to help others, not only during the holiday season but each and every day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Buhler Recreation Park

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that on September 8 baseball started at our beautiful, state-of-the-art Buhler

Recreation Park in south Transcona. This new multi-sport, all-ages recreation park will be officially opened next year.

The park nearing completion is located just off of Murdock Road in south Transcona, an area that is comprised of some 140 acres and is larger than Kildonan Park, Mr. Speaker. When completed, this new park will contain eight softball diamonds, two fastball diamonds, four soccer pitches, a playground, walking trails, a canteen now under construction, exhibition space and a large parking area. The park will be operational year-round and will maintain skiing trails, a skating pond and a toboggan hill as featured winter activities. National softball tournaments are already planned for this site next year, and baseball diamond bookings are nearly completely filled for the entire year.

Roughly 1,000 trees will be planted on the site in an effort to attract a wide variety of wildlife for viewing enjoyment of many visitors. My thanks to the Floodway Authority and to Manitoba Hydro for their assistance in obtaining these trees. The park is expected to attract some 400,000 visitors annually, and it is projected to contribute some \$10 million annually to our local economy.

Our province is proud to financially support this \$6-million initiative together with our partners in both the federal government and the City of Winnipeg. The four Transcona community clubs comprising the East Winnipeg Sports Association and Mr. Steve Mymko of Transcona also need to be credited for securing an astounding \$1.6 million in donations from individuals and businesses. Some of these donors include John Buhler, the Transcona Credit Union, Manitoba Lotteries and New Flyer.

Mr. Speaker, Transcona's field of dreams is becoming a reality because of the tireless efforts of many volunteers within our community. On behalf of this House, I would like to thank and recognize the individuals and business organizations that have brought this dream to life. We have many more good news announcements regarding this park in the coming days and weeks ahead. Thank you.

Family Doctor Week

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): No one can deny the importance of a society where citizens are healthy and, when ill, they can get the care they require. Having been trained as a nurse and worked with many qualified medical professionals, it is my pleasure to recognize that October 8 to October 13,

2007 is Family Doctor Week in Canada. We should all take the opportunity to appreciate the importance of family physicians and their impact on our own lives.

Family Doctor Week is a time to appreciate the outstanding contributions these doctors make to society in their delivery of health care. They provide a special doctor-patient relationship that cannot easily be replaced. Family doctors undertake countless roles in their efforts to provide the best care for their patients. They diagnose and treat illnesses and injuries, promote disease prevention and good health and co-ordinate care on behalf of their patients. Family Doctor Week allows the focus to be turned to the physician in gratitude for the care they provide.

Family Doctor Week is even more important for Manitoba this year as the annual Family Medicine Forum will be hosted in Winnipeg from October 11 to 13. Visitors from across the country will come to this city to attend the forum and see the wide range of exhibits, seminars and guest speakers. Finally, Mr. Speaker, successful singer-songwriter and Manitoba native Chantal Kreviazuk will provide a special performance at the close of the events.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House today to acknowledge the hard work, dedication and care of all family doctors in this province and throughout the country during this week in recognition of them. Thank you.

Flin Flon Green Project

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I have worked and lived in the riding of Flin Flon for 35 years. Flin Flon is a beautiful city with a vibrant and energetic population of 6,000 people. It's a unique city perched on the rocks at the edge of the Canadian Shield. For three-quarters of a century this picturesque city has been a proud and prosperous community.

Part of its history has been the story of the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company. Since the establishment of HBM&S in 1930, Flin Flon has become one of Canada's most prosperous mining communities. Mr. Speaker, our government has been a strong supporter of the Flin Flon/Creighton Green Project. Heather Acres, one of the key organizers, has devoted huge passion and commitment to returning the soil to its natural state. The green project uses limestone to neutralize the effects of the copper, zinc, cadmium and acidity in the soil. The

results are astounding. I would ask that all honourable members go to their Web site: www.greenproject.ca, to see the miraculous difference their work is making in the local environment. Along with Heather, Mr. David Price has done an enormous amount of work on this project also.

This year, 655 volunteers came out to help spread limestone on what is currently barren land. In a few years this bleak landscape will be transformed into productive, lush, green, natural scenery. I am pleased to inform the House that, as of August 2007, the project has almost 35 hectares under treatment. However, Mr. Speaker, Heather reminded me that the most rewarding part of the project is seeing all the young people coming out to make a meaningful improvement to their environment.

There are many mining communities across Canada, some of which have smelters. There have always been environmental challenges connected to mining and smelting activities. We know that there is more work to be done in addressing these challenges. I am proud that our government and industry have taken steps towards reducing present-day pollution and addressing contamination from earlier eras. For example, recently we've allocated \$39 million for cleaning up contaminated sites in Manitoba and over \$70 million for cleaning up abandoned and orphaned mines.

I'm also proud that all stakeholders are committed to the process of reducing emissions. All of us are committed to improving the quality of our air, soil and water. It is through excellent partnerships like the Flin Flon/Creighton Green Project that we are making a difference and adding to the already stunning beauty of Flin Flon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

Dugald Train Disaster Anniversary

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, the community of Dugald recently came together to remember one of the most tragic disasters to ever occur in Manitoba. On September 1, 1947 at the end of a Labour Day weekend, when families were travelling home from their holidays, an eastbound Continental passenger train collided head-on with another westbound passenger train in the small rural town. Thirty-one people perished and 80 sustained serious injuries.

As the MLA for Springfield, I was in attendance at a ceremony in Dugald commemorating the tragedy. This September 1 held special importance, as a historical marker created to commemorate the 1947 Dugald train disaster was unveiled. With this marker the community ensures that the event shall not be forgotten and it honours the 31 lives that were abruptly cut short that day.

Despite the passing of 60 years, let us not forget the residents of Dugald and surrounding area who came to aid in the rescue efforts during the terrible tragedy. What was an ordinary holiday weekend suddenly turned into a catastrophe that saw an entire community come together to assist those in desperate need. Profound stories of heroism emerged from the area when the trains collided and presence of the historical marker means the heart of the small community shall inspire others for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, the Springfield Women's Institute deserves recognition for their hard work as they took up the challenge in 2003 to provide a means to commemorate the train disaster. It is through their dedication that the historical marker will forever act as a reminder of the tragedy that occurred in this community and the strength that emerged from it.

I would now like to read the 31 names into the record. Stanley Adams, Mrs. Stanley Adams, Shirley Adams, Donna Barlow, Miss M.E. Booth, Grenville J. Dixon, Mrs. Betty Dixon, Donald Dixon, Patricia Dixon, Merle Dixon, George Fraser, George Harmon, Mrs. George Harmon, Martha Jarvi, Jane Jamieson, Ida Kozar, Gaylord Lewis, Richard Mellor, Mrs. Richard Mellor, Jimmie Papki, Adam Richardson, Gilbert Rougeau, Mrs. A. Simpson, Betty Simpson, Winnie Simpson, Fred Skogsberg, George Steele, Mrs. George Steele, Ronald Steele, Joyce Vander Linden, Alma Wynne and may they rest in peace.

Thank you.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you would canvass the House to see if there is an agreement by all members to set aside the ordinary business of the House to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the continued escalation of violence in Darfur, which is the—*[interjection]* Oh, we have to hear it first? Well, okay.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that under rule 36.1, the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the continued escalation of violence in Darfur and the need for Manitoba MLAs to act to raise awareness of the situation and to support Sudanese Manitobans who are calling for urgent action to support and enhance peace-making and peace-keeping efforts in the Darfur region.

Motion presented.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): I believe if you were to canvass members of the House I suggest there would be unanimous consent to allow this motion to be debated in the context of one member of the Liberal Party, one member from the official opposition and one member from the government speaking to it. I believe, if you canvass the House, you would see agreement to undertake that initiative.

Mr. Speaker: Is there a willingness of the House for the matter of urgent public importance to come forward with one speaker from each, one speaker from the independent members, one speaker from the official opposition and one speaker from the government side, and then that would conclude the debate on the matter of urgent public importance. Is there leave to do that? *[Agreed]*

Okay, leave has been granted, so now we will hear from one member, one member from the independent office, one member from the official opposition and one member from the Conservative, I mean, from the government party. So now we will start off with the mover of the motion, the honourable Member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, it is timely and appropriate that we have a discussion and a debate in this Chamber related to the situation in Darfur and the need to raise awareness and to support Sudanese Manitobans and many other Manitobans who are calling for urgent action to support and enhance the peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts in the Darfur region.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is an appropriate time. Although the conflict in Darfur has been going on for some time, it is now at a critical

point, and, therefore, this is appropriate to raise it now as a matter of urgent public importance because it is the first time, given the critical junction of events, that this opportunity has arisen.

We are at a critical time in Darfur because, first of all, there is now an African Union police force, or force, present trying to improve the situation there, but, clearly, they are having some difficulty. We are, at the moment, in a situation where the United Nations has worked very hard and is hoping to imminently be able to deploy a United Nations force. There is a need right now for additional support for that force. They are not, as I understand it, calling on Canada, for example, to put forward soldiers in the force, but rather that they need equipment and other forms of support for the force if it's going to be able to go and do its job appropriately in the Darfur region. Secondly, it is at a critical time because even in the last few days there are ongoing massacres and slaughters, people and villages being bombed and lives lost on a continuing basis because of what is happening in Darfur.

On the weekend, I had the opportunity to participate in the run for Darfur. This was at the Assiniboine Park, and there were many people there who are from the Sudanese community in Manitoba and, indeed, many others who were also supporting. Indeed, I think that there were approximately 500 people in the walk or run and many others who were there supportive of these efforts to highlight the urgent need for attention on the situation in Darfur.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So one of the people who was there who is from Sudan talked to me about this ongoing violence, slaughter of innocent women and children, including others, and it is a terrible situation. I think all of us are shocked by what is going on, and it is because this situation continues and because there is, right now, a critical opportunity to bring an improvement in the situation that this discussion in the Manitoba Legislature is so timely.

I suggest to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that one might ask, well, why should we in the Manitoba Legislature be debating a subject which might be considered foreign affairs and primarily under the federal government. Well, I would suggest to you that all of us have a responsibility to speak up on this issue, and that we have, as we have on many another issue, a responsibility to have our comments heard at

the federal government to urge the federal government to do what it can. But, at the same time, we have a responsibility to do what we can because, as we have seen in other circumstances, a global effort, where the combined voices of many, has an impact far beyond the voices of a few.

* (14:40)

I believe that, if combined voices of people from around the world were heard adequately, if people were allowed to speak up and in legislatures and provinces and in countries around the world, we had resolutions like this spoken to and supported, then, Madam Speaker, I believe that we would have the critical effort which would continue to support and build the momentum which is now there at this very critical time in the situation in Darfur.

I think it is important to note that there have been similarities drawn between what is happening in Darfur and what happened in Rwanda. Of course, our own Roméo Dallaire, who is now a senator, has spoken out passionately about the situation in Rwanda where he was and the need for more global action when the critical time came then. In Rwanda, it never happened; it never came to pass. I've personally talked to and heard from Roméo Dallaire and I know that he is passionate also about improving the intervention capabilities in Darfur so that we can stop the massacres and the slaughter and bring peace to this region in Africa which has been so troubled in the last number of years.

The situation in Darfur demands and needs a global attention. It should not be forgotten; it should not be relegated to the back rooms. It should be discussed out in the open here in the Legislature. I'm pleased that all parties have agreed to participate to support this idea that we need to raise not only awareness but to have an awareness of not only the situation but that the time now for action is a very critical time. It is a time for all of us to have our voices heard in this Legislature and send that voice around the world, not just to Ottawa.

Certainly, in Manitoba we have had quite a number of people who have come from Sudan. Many of us have met or are familiar with the Lost Boys from the Sudan and the incredible stories of hardship, of loss of family members, of the terrible situation that has existed in the Sudan and the need now and the call now for action. I know that because I have talked on a number of occasions to members of the Lost Boys, including on Sunday at the Run for

Darfur, including today, a member of the Sudanese community who is very passionately concerned that there be more awareness and action.

We are going to have later this week, I believe on Friday, some more efforts to promote knowledge about Darfur and to propel people around the world to act and to commit to making sure that we are doing what we can by speaking out, by pushing for action and support to make sure that the United Nations force gets there as soon as possible and is in a position because it's well supported to be effective. There have been varied attempts in the past but now is clearly a critical time; there is an opportunity, and that is why I'm so pleased that all parties are ready to support and to come forward and talk about this situation here, so that what we say here can go forward and push for greater awareness of how difficult and desperate the current situation is and what there is in terms of an opportunity and why it is so important now to act and to push those who are in a position to act, to act.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): It is my pleasure today to stand and speak to this issue, though it is a federal issue. Quite clearly it is an issue which all of us, I'm sure, are aware of, and I very much hope that the all-party recognition of that will in some small way help toward changing the circumstances of the people still in Darfur and all of the people who have had to flee that part of our planet.

Before I go much further, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it's very important to acknowledge that, when you're about to speak about issues of this nature, we acknowledge the enormous position of privilege that we enjoy here, and by here I don't just mean this Chamber where all of us, of course all 57 of us, have access to information and decision-making powers that the vast majority of our fellow citizens in our own province don't have by the nature of our elected positions. I mean just by the nature of living in Manitoba and by the nature of being in Canada, the enormous privilege that goes with that.

When you meet people from the Sudan, when you meet the lost boys and girls of Sudan, and anyone else who has gone through this type of turmoil, you really begin to appreciate how precious our current situation in Canada is and how absolutely vital it is that we do a better job of helping other parts of the world in every way that we possibly can.

While this is clearly, under the Canadian Constitution, an issue that would fall under the federal government's jurisdiction, this is not the first

time that our government has lent its voice and its resources to international issues. The Premier (Mr. Doer), I was very proud—it was actually one of the first events that I went to. He hosted representatives from the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, which is an umbrella group, and I had the honour of serving on their board for a time for all of the non-governmental organizations based in Manitoba. There the Premier announced an annual increase of \$250,000 per year to that group so that they could continue to do their excellent work with their partners on the ground in developing nations clear around the world.

When other disasters have struck various regions of our planet and had enormous detrimental impact, such as a tsunami, Manitoba, I'm very proud to say both the government and its citizens have been very generous in the donations of time and resources to try and help in any way that we can.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So it is a federal issue, but this is not new terrain for our progressive and very globally minded government to be lending our support and our voice to legitimate causes. It's an approach that we share with our federal colleagues and our federal party of the New Democratic Party, who have for many years now called on successive federal governments, be they Liberal or Conservative, to make the genocide in Darfur a much higher priority and to provide more support to prevent some of these awful circumstances from happening. And I am, Mr. Speaker, I am sure, one of many, many tens of thousands of Canadians who are quite disappointed that that higher commitment has not happened yet at the federal level.

To understand why this is such an important issue and why it is that we're speaking to it today, a few quick words on the context, I think, are in order. The country of Sudan, such as it still exists despite years of internal turmoil, is located in East Africa. The particular region of Darfur is in the western part of that nation and it is split between the north which controls the government in Khartoum and the south, and the lost boys and girls come from the southern part of Sudan. The official estimates, which are often very low, suggest that 250,000 people have been killed. The local members of the Sudanese community here put that number closer to 400,000 people who have died and over two and a half million people who have been displaced from their

homes and are now in a refugee camp, or not even enjoying that small meagre amount of protection.

* (14:50)

To put a story forward, to try and help all of us better understand what 400,000 people being slaughtered and two and a half million being displaced, what that is, because it is so far from our privileged perspective here in Canada—I want, with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, to read a brief excerpt from a book which a good friend of mine sent recently. The book is called *Not On Our Watch* and it's by the authors Don Cheadle and John Prendergast. These are not easy words to read, nor are they probably easy to listen to, never mind to write, but all the more reason to do so.

So the quote begins with this: When we spoke with the survivors of the genocide, most had similar stories. The attacks usually began before dawn. Government aircraft commenced the assaults by dropping crude bombs on villages killing men, women and children as they slept in their beds. In the chaotic aftermath of the bombings, government troops with hundreds of Janjaweed fighters would sweep into a village to murder the men, rape the women, burn the homes, loot the livestock and drive the survivors into the desert. To prevent people from returning to their villages, the Janjaweed poisoned the water supply by dumping bodies down wells. They destroyed crops and precious food supplies. Food availability dwindled, prices soared, malnutrition rates skyrocketed, and the government began its favourite tried-and-true tactic of denying humanitarian assistance to its suffering citizens by cutting off their access to aid agencies.

One of the *New York Times* columnists, Nicholas Kristof's trip to Darfur in June 2004 was particularly difficult and uncomfortable. To make one quote from this story, Mr. Speaker: What I found most poignant, were the women in Kalma Camp who were willing to tell me with sound and video running, using their names, that they had been gang-raped by the police. They risked humiliation and retribution, yet they had the gut to come forward because they thought it would help stop the assaults. They were also seeking shelter under trees and I started talking to them. Under the first tree were two brothers who had been shot. The one less injured had carried his badly wounded brother on his back for 49 days and was nursing and trying to keep him alive. Under the next tree was a woman whose parents had been shot and thrown into the wells and then her husband was shot

in front of her. Under the third tree were two little children, aged 4 and 1, who were orphans. Their parents had been killed. Then as far as I looked there were more trees and more families sheltering underneath them with stories just as heart-wrenching.

That, Mr. Speaker, is what Darfur is right now. It may seem to us, living here, that it is on the other side of the world, but it's not. Those issues, those people live right here in our community now. They are the lost boys and girls of Sudan who have suffered. Under those contexts, others of them, many of them were captured by the rebel Janjaweeds and forced to become child soldiers. Only a few of them managed to escape, and so many of them still have family in Africa. Most often they don't know if they are even still alive or where they are if they are alive.

It has been an enormous privilege for me, particularly given my background in international education, to meet and to work with a number of the lost boys and girls from the Sudan, and I want to tell you just a few stories about two of them.

Simon and Samuel are two of them. Simon, quite recently, won a remarkable peace award for his effort, not just to raise awareness about what is happening in his home country, but to go a step further and to start raising the funds to actually build a school back home in the Sudan, and Samuel, who has remarkably managed to take his experiences from Africa and propel them into an incredible gift which he has found and that is his music. He has just cut his first CD and I was very proud to be on stage with him just this past weekend at the Run for Darfur where he performed one of the title tracks from that piece.

I also think, Mr. Speaker, that there's an enormous amount of hope amidst this backdrop of tragedy and genocide.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just thank the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) and thank the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) for the articulate and thoughtful comments that have been made on this important issue. If I could just, to some extent, pick up on where the Member for Wolseley left off and add my voice and the voice of members of our Progressive Conservative caucus to the debate

today, not debate so much as a call to action on the part of all members of this House for all those who have an ability to influence the direction of events today taking place in the Darfur region of Sudan.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen through news reports and through direct personal accounts of individuals who have fled that region of the atrocities that are taking place in that troubled country. We've seen since 2004 pitched battles raging through the region. We know of at least 200,000 people who are thought to have died and more than 2.5 million more who are believed to have fled their homes in the face of the atrocities and the destruction of villages. The Member for Wolseley has put on the record some of the specific stories of violence, torture, disease, starvation and rape which have taken place in that country in the midst of this terrible conflict.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are in a situation where, here in the safety of Manitoba and Canada, we cannot and should not escape awareness of what is happening, which means that we cannot and should not escape responsibility for playing a role in attempting to bring about peace and a lasting settlement of differences among those involved. We certainly need a strong international response to bring to justice those who are committing the atrocities, and we need a response to bring care and nurturing and security to those who have been victimized and who continue to be victimized by what is happening in Darfur.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen the very recent reports of attacks on African Union forces. We have seen recently reports of the concern about the ability of the African Union peacekeepers to maintain order and to provide a just solution to what is taking place.

So, Mr. Speaker, we know that the United Nations has taken a strong interest in this issue. We commend them for that. We support the efforts of United Nations forces and personnel as they attempt to provide a degree of safety and order within that troubled part of our world. We know from the stories being told by refugees here in Winnipeg, Manitoba, about what is taking place. We know the stories of the Lost Boys of Sudan. We had an opportunity during the war child conference to hear stories of those who have been victimized and been required to be separated from families and loved ones as they flee danger.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's no question that what we have today is a humanitarian crisis of immense proportions. It's a crisis that calls for the intervention

of the international community including Canada and Manitoba. I certainly add my support and the support of members of this caucus to the words already spoken today and the need for urgent international action to deal with what's taking place.

* (15:00)

Mr. Speaker, in my own way, I've had the opportunity to hear first-hand about some of the circumstances and the terrible outcomes of the violence in Sudan. I note a media story quoting Serge Kaptegain, who is originally from Congo bordering the area which is currently in crisis, but who in his own circumstances fled that country and was separated from his own family as a result of conflict. He has spoken passionately about the need for international care and concern and intervention in Darfur. Mr. Kaptegain is somebody who is a great contributor to our society here in Manitoba. In my case, I've had the pleasure of being instructed in French by Mr. Kaptegain, and, through no fault of his, probably haven't learned as much as I might have hoped by this stage through the instruction but have learned a great deal about the horrendous circumstances that he left, the heartbreak of being separated from family and friends and the ongoing atrocities that are taking place in Darfur and also in other regions of Africa and in other places around the world, Mr. Speaker.

We know that here in Manitoba we have many who are deeply involved in international efforts to bring sustenance and to bring safety and clean water to people in troubled parts of the world. I think of the work of the Mennonite Central Committee which does so much on the international stage in order to provide relief and the many other organizations that are involved in relief work internationally. I'm proud to be from a province, Mr. Speaker, that has spawned so many of these organizations and so many of those individuals who throughout the world today are helping people in crisis.

So I commend the work of the Mennonite Central Committee, the other organization that are active around the globe. As I indicated to the Premier (Mr. Doer) in Estimates, I support the funding that has been provided through his department of Executive Council to support the work of Mennonite Central Committee individuals who are working around our province. There are many others involved in these efforts. We owe them our thanks. We certainly owe the people of Darfur our consideration, our prayers, our good wishes, but more importantly

our call on those who are in a position to help to take action urgently, Mr. Speaker, to prevent further death and further atrocities in that part of the world. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, this concludes consideration of the MUPI.

Now I'll call Grievances.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain on a Grievance.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): It's certainly a pleasure to take part in the democratic process, and at this juncture it's a Grievance. It allows us as opposition members a chance to address an issue of the day. It is a huge issue to each and every Manitoban and it has to deal with Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to continue some of the words I talked about his morning in terms of Manitoba Hydro and, in fact, this government's role, direct role in Manitoba Hydro and how this government manipulates Manitoba Hydro. Just over the next few minutes I'm going to take the opportunity to put a few facts on the record, facts that I think all Manitobans should be aware of when they consider Manitoba Hydro.

Manitobans are certainly familiar with the smoke and mirrors and the misperception that's often put out there from this NDP government, and today we're just going to have an opportunity to rectify some of those misconceptions and put some facts on the record. So, Mr. Speaker, it certainly gives me great pleasure to bring forward this grievance today.

Mr. Speaker, we know there are a lot of issues before Manitoba Hydro. Obviously the issue of the day is the discussion we're having with the east-west power grid going forward, bipole 3, if you will. It just seems to be day after day where we are getting information coming from different sources telling us what a bad idea this particular decision by the Premier (Mr. Doer) is to go down the west side of Manitoba.

Quite clearly what's happened with our favourite Crown corporation is that this particular government has become directly involved in the management of Manitoba Hydro. Mr. Speaker, when you have the CEO of a Crown corporation, in this case, Bob Brennan, come forward and say, from an economic

point of view the corporation would like to build bipole 3 down the east side of Manitoba and then the very same day the Premier of the province comes out and contradicts his statement saying that we're going to build bipole 3 down the west side of Manitoba, this particular government has taken control of our favourite Crown asset.

I want to tell you a little bit about some of the financial implications of having this particular government manipulate Manitoba Hydro and the management of Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to refer to the Manitoba Hydro annual report, the latest annual report referencing 2006-2007, and I refer to page 100. It talks about the financial statistics in here. The finance expense is an important line when you look at this particular financial statement because it talks about the added burden of debt that Manitoba Hydro is currently carrying. Back in 1999, the financial expenses—this is debt-service money Manitoba Hydro has to pay every year—that figure was \$411 million. The fiscal year ending March of 2007, that financial burden was \$506 million. So we know, on an ongoing basis, this particular government has directly added to the increased costs of Manitoba Hydro.

Just further down the road, Mr. Speaker, if you look at—we're talking about long-term debt and current debt, and I'll just put these figures together for you. Back in 1999, the long-term debt and current debt for Manitoba Hydro was \$6.8 billion. *[interjection]* This was 1999. Move ahead to today, March 31, 2007. Total debt, \$9.2 billion, Mr. Speaker, \$9.2 billion; a \$2.4 billion increase in debt incurred at Manitoba Hydro.

Quite frankly, what has Manitoba Hydro built in the last eight years? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

Going forward, we know Manitoba Hydro is currently building an office downtown in Winnipeg. We're not sure what the final cost of that particular building will be, but we're pretty well guaranteed it's going to be over \$300 million, Mr. Speaker. We know that that particular amount will have to be added to this current debt, so we know the current debt over the next year of Manitoba Hydro will be at least \$9.5 billion of which we, as Manitoba Hydro ratepayers, will be forced to pay interest on that money.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about bipole 3 going forward, we know the added cost by going down the west side alone will be at least half a billion dollars. That, again, will be debt that we as

Manitobans will have to service, and that amounts to \$2,000 for every family in Manitoba. So what we know is this government with their hands-on management of our favourite Crown corporation has just added to the debt for each one of us going forward.

There are a lot of issues in terms of the bipole 3. As I said, we have people coming forward each and every day to talk about the mistakes that this particular government is making. Just today in the *Winnipeg Free Press* we had an individual, an Andy Staudzs, wrote in to the *Free Press*. Basically, he's saying the power line on the west side is a huge mistake. This particular individual has 40 years of experience in dealing with transmission lines and 30 years directly dealing with Manitoba Hydro and their transmission lines. He provides eight reasons here, Mr. Speaker, why the line should not be built on the west side of the province. Common sense would dictate that a line be built in the most direct route possible to provide Manitoba Hydro customers a direct avenue for electricity.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro has a policy, a Power Smart policy, where they are trying to have Manitobans cut back on their energy use, and they spend millions of dollars every year trying to encourage Manitobans to cut back on their electricity use. We as Manitobans have responded to that. We have cut back on our energy use.

*(15:10)

The other thing we've done in Manitoba is we've also developed a wind farm in Manitoba, and we do have a number of megawatts of electricity that are developed there, less than 100 megawatts of power. I just want to put these in perspective for you, Mr. Speaker. Given the extra kilometres of line that will be added to go down the west side of Manitoba, there's going to be considerable loss of electricity in that particular line. So, given that we're going to have that considerable loss of line, this means with that loss of electricity, we've actually wiped out any extra potential revenue that we've gained from that wind farm in Manitoba. We've probably lost, again, more power than what we're saving through the Power Smart programs implemented in Manitoba. So, clearly, from an energy perspective, it's not a very good decision.

We want to talk about the extra kilometres that are going to be added to this line, Mr. Speaker. We know that more miles of boreal forest will have to be chain-sawed down by this NDP government's

decision to go down the west side versus the east side. The other thing that appears to have happened is that the Premier (Mr. Doer) may have sold out any possible opportunity to negotiate positive economic development on the east side of Manitoba. He signed an accord with First Nations communities back in April, which may have mitigated any future development. We get a previous former NDP MLA caucus member coming forward, Elijah Harper, saying that he believes that this decision alone will cause devastation in their communities. They will live in poverty in perpetuity. So, obviously, we have a number of people coming forward, throughout Manitoba and across Manitoba, saying that this is a very bad decision.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and I'm sure members of my caucus will have an opportunity to bring forward their issues on this particular situation. I'm sure I am speaking on behalf of many Manitobans, not just this McFadyen opposition critic, but as many others. Thank you very much.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please canvass the House to see if there's agreement for Private Members' Business to be set aside this Thursday morning to consider the Committee of Supply, with the understanding that next Tuesday morning, the official opposition will bring forward a private member's resolution in lieu of giving up doing a resolution this Thursday.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for Private Members' Business to be set aside this Thursday morning to consider the Committee of Supply, with the understanding that next Tuesday morning, the official opposition will bring forward a private member's resolution in lieu of giving up doing a resolution this Thursday? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, would you please call the committee—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business?

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker. Due to the schedule change for this Thursday, in accordance with rule 31(9), I would like to announce that the private

member's resolution that will be considered next Tuesday is the resolution on Beverage Container Deposit System sponsored by the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurischou).

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced by the Official Opposition House Leader for next Tuesday, in private members' hour, we'll be discussing the resolution on Beverage Container Deposit that will be brought forward by the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie. Okay, that's for the information of all members of the House.

Mr. Chomiak: Would you please call the Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker: The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Madam Deputy Speaker and the Chairs, please proceed to the respective rooms that you will be chairing.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

HEALTH

*(15:20)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Daryl Reid): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of Estimates for the Department of Health. As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I'd like to welcome back the minister and her staff along with you and other staff from the holiday long weekend. I just have a few questions.

One question I want to wrap up on—the issue of West Nile virus as we had talked about over the last couple of days. Just in regard to a vaccine, has the minister or her department sort of been keeping abreast of developments for a vaccine for West Nile? Mr. Acting Chair, I've heard varying reports and sometimes contradictory reports about the timeline for the possibility of a vaccine being available, although I do know that there seemed to have been some positive reports coming from certain scientists south of the border and indicating that we may have a vaccine sort of within the next four to five years.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Certainly, in consultation with the Chief Medical

Officer of Health, Dr. Joel Kettner, we have talked about the continuum of protection and mitigation exercises with larviciding and with fogging and the issue of personal protection. While we have posed questions to Dr. Kettner about availability of any sort of prophylactic exercise that can happen with West Nile, at this time it's not part of the overarching plan as its availability has not yet been determined.

So, Mr. Acting Chair, we'll be going forward, again, taking advice from the member opposite. On issues of communications he has some good ideas and we're open to them and continuing to take Dr. Kettner's advice about what we can be doing today to be protecting ourselves against West Nile.

Mr. Goertzen: I appreciate that. I don't have a lot of advice on the issue of a vaccine. I'm certainly not working on one in my basement or anything—

An Honourable Member: Everyone has a hobby.

Mr. Goertzen: —like that everybody has hobbies, but that's certainly not one of mine.

But I do know that there is work going on south of the border, and I think a rudimentary degree of research would show the minister—I'm sure that somewhere in the department they have this information about some of the work on vaccines that's going on, and it's important to keep abreast of those developments. I'm not suggesting Manitoba has a role to play in that, but we certainly have an interest in what's going on with the issues of vaccines and developments for it.

Some sort of perfunctory or general questions for the minister that I'd like to get a response to. If she doesn't have the information requested here, certainly taking it as notice is acceptable.

Could she provide a copy of the department's organizational chart, including the names and titles of the individuals within those designated responsibilities?

Ms. Oswald: I can go over the organizational chart for the member. Certainly within the Department of Health and Healthy Living, we have the position of Minister of Health, which I currently hold obviously; also, Minister of Healthy Living, the Honourable Kerri Irvin-Ross.

We have a shared deputy minister in that department, Ms. Arlene Wilgosh, and we have an associate deputy minister in charge of primary care

and healthy living, and that's Acting Deputy Minister Donna Forbes. Also, underneath Deputy Minister Arlene Wilgosh, we have cross department integration initiatives, Assistant Deputy Minister Marcia Thomson. Also under Deputy Minister Arlene Wilgosh, Mr. Acting Chair, we have Human Resource Services Director Mr. Watt; Legislative Unit Director Ms. McLaren; Correspondence Unit manager Ms. Wiggins. Under Minister of Healthy Living, we have Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat Executive Director Mr. Jim Hamilton; Federal/Provincial Policy Support Executive Director Ulrich Wendt; Disaster Management Director Gerry Delorme.

Following down on the chart, Corporate & Provincial Program Support Acting Assistant Deputy Minister Bernadette Preun; Administration, Finance and Accountability Associate Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer Ms. Heather Reichert; Health Workforce Acting Assistant Deputy Minister Terry Goertzen; Regional Affairs Acting Assistant Deputy Minister Yvonne Block.

I've already mentioned Primary Care and Healthy Living acting associate deputy minister and Provincial Public Health officer, Dr. Joel Kettner.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for reading those into the record. I recognize one name, Terry Goertzen, on that list. I'm sure he does a fine job for the minister. I know he has somewhat of a political past that differs from mine, but we have some genealogy that we share.

So, with those comments, could the minister indicate if any of those positions are new to the last year? If they are, were they hired by competition?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the position of public health chief Provincial Public Health Officer, Dr. Joel Kettner, is a new position that has been made out of the Department of Health and Healthy Living.

The acting assistant deputy ministers, as mentioned before, are technically all new positions, and those individuals in their acting roles have been appointed to them. The competitions for some are in process at the moment or will be in the very near future.

Mr. Goertzen: Can the minister provide, perhaps not today, but if she can endeavour to undertake to provide a list of the positions hired or the individuals

hired within her department over the last year, indicating on that whether they were hired by competition or appointment and any secondments to and from the department. Again, I don't expect her to have necessarily all of that here but if she could provide it at a future date.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Acting Chairperson, just for clarification, I can say that new positions in the senior management of Health are all by competition. If I could just clarify, the member was asking for the new positions that we just talked about either of an executive director or a director or an assistant deputy minister. The member's talking about senior management he'd like to have a copy of?

Mr. Goertzen: I'd be interested probably more generally individuals who have been hired into the Department of Health over the last year and any positions that were OIC'd and whether or not it was by competition or whether or not it was by appointment.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Acting Chairperson, again I can indicate for the member that since I've been minister, since Arlene Wilgosh has been deputy minister, going back some time now, all new positions are done by competition.

Again, the member is clarifying in the Department of Health new positions that have occurred in the last year, hirings that have occurred across the entire department or across senior management or executive management.

* (15:30)

Mr. Goertzen: That's right, with the proviso that it's not necessarily people into new positions but just new people into the pre-existing positions or the creation of a new position, but really, anybody who's new to the department over the last year.

Ms. Oswald: Again, for clarification, you know, we don't have a problem providing the member with information. I'm just clarifying one more time about the nature of his inquiry, bearing in mind that employees at Cadham Lab, Selkirk Mental Health Centre would fall under that category. It is a good number of people, but, again, is the member saying by OIC? The answer to that is none. So I just want some clarification, respecting that the member himself has said that he's not interested in make-work projects for the department. To just get some clarity as to the scope of what he's talking about.

I believe he's asking a question about any direct appointments, of which there have been none, and I think he's seeking clarity on who in the last year has become gainfully employed in significant positions in the Department of Health, and what was their journey to get there. I think that's the spirit of what he's asking, so I will endeavour to do that without naming every technologist that was named at Cadham Lab.

Mr. Goertzen: That's fine, Madam Minister.

Could the minister also provide, if she has it on hand here or in the future, a complete list of all the minister's expenses within the last year?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, I can endeavour to provide that information for the member opposite.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for that undertaking. I'm assuming that it'll include in that all-capsulizing request would be the minister's travel expenses, the destination, the purpose of the travel. Could she also indicate whether or not the department has funded any travel for the Premier (Mr. Doer) in the last year?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, I do believe that, through a freedom of information request, the member or a colleague may have some or all of that information already. We will endeavour to get that information to the individual. I can tell the member that through the freedom of information request that went out, there is a breakdown of transportation and travel, of accommodations and meals, of hospitality, and of communications.

As I'm sure the member can appreciate, with an infant child I don't get out that much, so it will be a quick read. Certainly, I have responsibilities on the federal-provincial-territorial level to travel to those meetings to represent Manitoba, and there have been one or two other portions of travel for the purposes of gathering information about programs, but that information can be made available to the member. I'm sure he will find it a disappointingly quick read.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I just want to ask the minister a few questions, and first of all, thank her for coming out to Morden to Tabor on August 16, I believe, was the date. I know that, although she got caught up in the traffic, she did arrive, and we had a good meeting there. The tour at Tabor was certainly something that was very much appreciated by the board and, of course, the staff at the Tabor Home.

I would ask the minister if follow up to that has been made, and if there's anything that she would be able to add regarding the hopeful new building that Tabor is looking for.

Ms. Oswald: I want to thank the member for resisting the temptation to make fun of a city-slicker who got caught up on traffic on Highway 75 and didn't know the best route through Carmen. What was I thinking? In any event, I took that route home at the member's suggestion and it was much superior to the journey out there.

I also thank the member for the kind reception and the leadership that he's shown in the community of Morden in advancing their project. Certainly, the tour with the regional health authority and the members of the board was very instructive. Information that was conveyed concerning the general aging of the facility and the opportunities for renovation to provide even better service to the clients that exist there were very instructive, as I say.

The board and the staff at Tabor Home are truly to be commended for the incredible upkeep and work that they do on a facility that is older than many. I can tell the member that the information that we gained from Tabor has gone into our discussions and long-range planning on capital infrastructure as we go forward with the resources that we do have.

The need in the community was demonstrated by the people there, and we, of course, are under considerable—asked by a number of members of the Legislature for building capital, infrastructure. Our commitment on same has been demonstrated, and I know that we can work with the region towards a solution that I hope is going to be very beneficial for the community.

Again, I can say to the member that a number of his colleagues have also come forward during the Estimates process and, with really only one exception, have clearly stated and understood that everybody has a need in their community and would not put his or her own community's desires over the needs of others. So we will continue to work with the region to try to see this dream come to a reality.

But I appreciated the tour, I appreciated the information that I gained there and we are going forward in our overall capital planning trying to make these plans work for as many communities as possible. I do commit to the member, too, to keep him fully apprised with any developments as we go forward.

Mr. Dyck: I want to thank the minister for that answer.

Just maybe to encourage her and the RHA and, of course, the Capital branch as they continue to look at this facility, I know that there are many others that are looking for a replacement as well. However, I think in order to help our debate in this one, of course, we're looking at it from a safety point of view; the old structure and certainly the types of people and the degree of care that they require has dramatically changed over the last number of years. What it was originally intended for has changed, and so now, of course, those who require care are needing much different type of care than was even 10 years ago.

To add to the debate on this is, I just got the provincial electoral constituency population profile, the 2006. I think what would support our argument for needing a new facility is the fact that we had a 12.5 percent growth in the area. That is higher than most rural areas. I see the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) shaking his head, but we are constantly in competition for growth and for size of families. How do you like that?

* (15:40)

So, anyway, further to that, our growth is not only in certain sectors or areas or age groups, but it's fairly consistent right through. So, the fact that if we do, and certainly I have the understanding that we will replace that facility, that there will be a need for it in the years to come because we do have the growth in that area that will certainly be able to use the facility. So I would encourage the minister to continue to work at, in fact, looking at the replacement of it sooner rather than later. As I said, I can appreciate the fact that there are many demands on her and for facilities like that within the province.

But, again, to reiterate, we do have the growth there, the sustained growth. It's not something that has just sort of peaked in the last little while and one would think that it would stop. I would say that that growth will continue. And any projections that have been made by any of the planners within the area just shows continued growth into the future. So if there's any response to that, I would appreciate it as well.

Ms. Oswald: Again I appreciate the member advocating for his community, and he has done a good job as has the regional health authority and the board itself of demonstrating population and increases and, not unlike the Member for Steinbach

(Mr. Goertzen), they are in an enviable position. Some of our rural members are seeing the opposite scenario occur, and this is representing challenges. I've suggested to the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) it must be because they like their MLAs so much they want to move there, but I know there are other reasons indeed.

I also would concur with what the member is saying about the acuity of patients, that the individuals that live in personal care homes today are not the same as they were 30 and 40 years ago. It's a different level of challenge of care, and in addition to wanting to make adaptations to the physical plant, as I've said to other members of the opposition, we also need to take a very close look at the level of care that's provided by the human resources in these facilities.

That's why we recently had a committee take a very close analysis of personal care home staffing guidelines, and we have received recommendations from that group. Those had not been adapted or really studied intensely since, I believe, 1973. And that work has now been done and bears out exactly what the member is saying, that the nature of the client is much different, the care needs are much higher. And so we are committed to look at those recommendations and make very solid commitments of the human resource side to ensure that patients and personal care homes not only have the physical environment that the member is mentioning but that the staffing complement is appropriate for the needs in that home and that the nurses and health-care aides on the front line are able to have the support around them. And we look forward to being able to make public our plans in amending those PCH staffing guidelines in the very near future.

Mr. Dyck: Possibly, just to add to what the minister is saying that, as far as the duration and the length of time in the personal care homes now, I don't know what it would have been 10 years ago, but I know that today in both Tabor and Salem-Salem, which is in Winkler—I believe the average stay is two years. So they enter the facility certainly at the—how could I put it?

An Honourable Member: Twilight

Mr. Dyck: —the twilight of their years, yes, and, I mean, it's just a reality. My mother just, in fact, got into the personal care home in Salem two or three months ago. She's 92 and, you know, very much aware of her time left on this earth here. So things have changed dramatically.

I guess the other point I just wanted to make as well was that the government continues to promote, and justifiably so, the whole area of immigration. We are the recipients of that within our area as is the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), but I would say on that one I think we have him beat. So a lot of people immigrating into our area, and so that growth is sustained and while we do, you know, encourage that, with that the infrastructure needs to continue to grow as well, and this is a part of that equation.

So that's basically all I have for questions and comments, but again I'm encouraged by the fact that the minister is looking into it, and I would just encourage her to do it sooner rather than later.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Acting Chair, I take the member's encouragement with enthusiasm, and we will continue to work on providing as much information for him as we can on a timely basis as we work through this very challenging and lengthy list of requests for communities for infrastructure.

I just wanted to comment on what the member was saying about length of stay. Of course, he's connected to his community. He knows this to be true and he's absolutely right. I think that in partnership with the Minister responsible for Seniors (Ms. Irvin-Ross) and the Minister responsible for Housing (Mr. Mackintosh), work that is ongoing on our long-term care strategy to provide, in co-operation with regional health authorities and community groups, alternative settings for older Manitobans to choose rather than a direct route from their individual residences to a personal care home. Again, 30 or 40 years ago, we saw that really as a very direct path. We now know the very nature of an aging baby boomer is very, appropriately so, accustomed to seeking a variety of options and not, necessarily, having one answer to one question.

Mr. Acting Chair, we know that we want to have environments where there are supports for seniors in group living, for example, or other supportive housing environments, or even working hard to augment home care, so that seniors who want to stay in their communities, where their families are and their friends are, can do so even when they need a little bit more help and a little bit more support.

While we're looking at the construction and redevelopment of personal care home settings across the province, we're also working very diligently and listening to seniors who are saying: I'm not ready for a personal care home yet. I haven't reached that part

of the twilight just yet. I need more help, but I need to have a different environment in which to dwell.

We've had very good success in the first phase of our rollout of the long-term care strategy in rural Manitoba and in Winnipeg in making these adaptations. I will concede to the member that I wish we could go even faster. We're going to work on doing that, but providing those levels along the continuum of what a senior might need for care, I think is very important.

Lastly, I think the member makes a very good point about a very successful immigration strategy, but that also provides us with more challenges, not only just on the "how many beds do we have" side, but the kinds of supports that we have around that concerning language, and supports for coming to live in a new culture. I think that we always need to be working on that.

Mr. Dyck: I thought it was going to be my last question, but just as the minister was talking, it reminded me of another question I had regarding that whole transition part you were talking about from the senior housing, then, I believe, it's the assisted living and then to the personal care home, but anyway, that little gap in there. I know that our communities, both Morden and Winkler, and Manitou as well, they have really been looking at trying to fill that gap because—and the minister is absolutely right—people resist going to the personal care home as long as they can, and rightfully so.

I know that we're all approaching that age ourselves. Some had a head start. One day we will get there, but I think we would all like to stay in our own accommodations and be as independent as possible for as long as we can. But, on the other hand, though, there is that gap right now because we've gone toward the higher-need individual in a personal care home, where we have that gap of assisted living.

I'm just wondering if the minister has—are there supports for that? Is there encouragement to go in that direction? If she could just give us some information on that, please.

*(15:50)

Ms. Oswald: I thank the member for the question. As I said earlier, in our first phase of the long-term care strategy, we have announced monies made available to regional health authorities to work with community groups, many of whom the member has cited or is aware of, that there are people in the

community that actively want to see a variety of options available to their parents and their grandparents. Very simply—because I did promise the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) I'd be shorter in my answers—so, very quickly, the process, of course, is for those community groups to partner with the regional health authority to put forth proposals of what kind of a situation they would like to develop because, of course, it is so important that these ideas come from the grass roots, come from the communities themselves rather than a region or a government saying: This is what we think you need. It's about a grass-roots approach.

We have seen in the first phase a variety of supportive housing environments be supported by government and the region and the community groups. We've seen supports for seniors in group living, congregate meals, that sort of thing, come together.

So there is a range of options that are available, but I would encourage the member to, if there's a specific community group in mind with a community idea, to speak with members of the region, or we can assist in facilitating that to bring their projects forward as we go forward with phase 2, and we'll see a range of options developing across Manitoba for our seniors.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you very much. I appreciate the questions posed by my colleague from Pembina. We do have a friendly rivalry when it comes to population growth. I'm pleased to say that—I believe he's finished second again this year for population growth; he might dispute that, but I'm the last one who has the mikes, so it doesn't matter if he disputes it.

It wasn't intended to be a segue from the Member for Pembina's (Mr. Dyck) questions on PCHs, and at the risk of turning the discussion somewhat macabre, I was asked to raise this issue, though, by LPNs in the issue of scope of practice and certain things that they can do. The specific issue has to do with the practice of viewing the body following death, and again, this wasn't intended to be a segue from any other questions. But my understanding in talking to the LPNs, is there seems to be some sort of a dispute between who's responsible for ensuring that they are allowed to perform that particular function which, I understand, they've performed for many years.

They indicated to me that the Department of Health said it was really the Chief Medical Examiner who is putting the restriction on. They, I understand, met with the Chief Medical Examiner, and they were told that it was the Department of Health who is putting the restriction on. So we seem to be in this sort of classic catch-22 situation, and they simply want to know where the buck stops. So I'm going to simply leave that question with the minister and see if she can provide an answer either directly to me here or, at some point, for the LPNs because they sort of feel caught in the middle of this dispute and not sure where to turn for an answer.

Ms. Oswald: Certainly, I have met in past with the LPNs and discussed this very issue, and I will concede the point that, when they first raised the viewing of the body issue to me, I had, in and of myself, a rather macabre reaction, but became educated very quickly by the LPNs, as one can imagine, that there is just a pragmatic, an overarching sense, in the field of how this would function more efficiently. I can tell the member that certainly I indicated my support at that time for their ability to proceed.

I can confirm for the member that there are some challenges that exist between the LPNs, the College and the Chief Medical Examiner, the CME, and we're going to continue to work with the LPNs and the CME to try to come to an appropriate resolution of that dispute. We're meeting later this month, I believe, yes, later on this month with the LPNs where we're going to discuss this further. So, Mr. Acting Chair, I can clarify that, from our perspective, we do acknowledge that there is a disconnect between the point of view of the CME and the LPNs and, again, we have indicated our support for the LPNs, as I believe has the College. So, we are going to endeavour to try to negotiate this current impasse to move forward so that the LPNs can indeed have that scope of practice taken care of.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I appreciate that, and I look forward to some sort of a resolution because I know they sort of feel that they are caught on a bit of treadmill here and not really sure where to turn. I was educated on the issue, too, because I had sort of a similar response and didn't realize that this apparently causes significant delays in the process. People wait for medical care when they're alive and, apparently, they're waiting when they're dead. Obviously, there needs to be some sort of resolution

to that issue. So I look forward to the resolution coming from the minister and that meeting.

On to a completely new and more enlightened topic in terms of the mood. I did receive correspondence, and I know that it's been sent to the minister as well, so this won't come as a surprise to her, nor should the correspondence come as a surprise. Dr. Gordon Dyck, in my riding has been quite active in trying to get IMGs here into the province, particularly into our region. He wrote to the minister a couple of weeks ago with a concern that there seemed to be in his view a new requirement put in place in terms of mentoring for IMGs and he wasn't sure where this new requirement came from. It didn't appear to come from legislation. He wasn't sure if there was really a regulatory ability to have that requirement put into place.

I'm not sure, the minister may have responded back to Dr. Dyck already with the answers, but from an abundance of caution, could she indicate whether or not she has a resolution to that for Dr. Dyck and whether or not the issue of mentoring is something that's new to the province.

Ms. Oswald: I can confirm for the member that certainly I have seen a draft response cross my desk, upon which I have signed off. Whether or not that letter has left the building, I can't confirm right now but certainly will endeavour to check.

The issue of doctor recruitment and retention, of course, is a very important one, and I can let the member know that we are working diligently on our efforts to increase our international medical graduates. We're doing that in a variety of ways, whether it's grants in place to help support doctors, whether it's what he may be referring to the medical licensure program for international medical graduates to help them get conditional registration.

We know that since the program was created in '01, we've seen 30 or more foreign-trained doctors be licensed through the program. One of the things we learned from doctors in the field and really learned from, for lack of a better term, the failures of individuals to either pass examinations or to have a career or an opportunity that was lasting in Manitoba or in Canada, was taking into account the not only requirement for an international medical graduate to ensure that they have the skill set and the academic knowledge necessary to work in Manitoba, but there was an entire cultural element that was being left to chance.

This process that's in place now, a three-month mentoring, as the member opposite has cited, has enabled us to provide an environment for international medical graduates to be working with another doctor to be understanding procedures that are common in Manitoba or in our country that may be less so in other countries and helping doctors acclimatize to different environments in rural Manitoba, in particular, so that in fact having that period of mentorship where a doctor can ask questions, can go through a variety of procedures and examinations and have true comfort from another professional that things are being done appropriately.

*(16:00)

We believe that with expert advice that this three-month mentoring segment is going to increase our success rate, increase our ability to have doctors stay in Manitoba after investments have been made in bringing them here, in getting them conditional licensure. While this procedure is reasonably new at this time, we already are having reports from the field that international medical graduates are expressing much more comfort in working in rural environments and we are seeing anecdotally the retention and the success rate be much higher.

This is not to say that we also haven't had the occasional situation like perhaps Dr. Dyck where individuals are against having the mentorship in place, but we believe that we want to give the process time to develop and to work and to grow. We will take advice from the doctors in the field about how we might improve that process over time.

Mr. Goertzen: Just for clarification, I mean, I don't want to put, nor does the minister I am sure, want to put words into the mouth of Dr. Dyck. I don't believe that he was necessarily opposed to the mentorship program. I think he was running into difficulties in that there weren't people within our jurisdiction who wanted to do the mentorship either for pay or other reasons.

I think there were liability issues that he was also concerned about whether or not they would be responsible for some of the liability issues around it. I think he wanted more of an assurance that there was, sort of, the force of law behind it, and this wasn't something that the college was opposing arbitrarily, away from government and that there was some sort of assurance that if a doctor was acting as a mentor, they would have some protection for the mentoring that they were doing.

I don't believe that Dr. Dyck was opposed to mentors per se, but I think the process he was concerned about is, where did the program come from? Is there a protection for those doctors who are doing the mentoring?

Ms. Oswald: Certainly the college has been working very closely with us on this process of ensuring that IMGs are being mentored and are being nurtured to be successful and to stay in Manitoba once these investments have been made by regions and by governments, and we work very closely with the college to ensure that any issue or issues of legality or such thing has been taken care of.

On the issue of specific liability, should anything happen within the context of this mentorship, certainly we will be working very closely with the college with any situations that may arrive that don't necessarily fall under the context of The Medical Act. It is the belief of the college that at present time all issues are covered, but we're going to continue to take advice from the college and from doctors in the field that are going through the process and may encounter a situation that the college may not have had the foresight to predict.

As I say, whether it's an issue of personal health information or consent of a patient to have another doctor in the room or other issues that fall within the context of The Medical Act, we believe that, at this time, doctors are, in fact, going to be fully supported in that way.

Mr. Goertzen: I appreciate the minister's commitment to work with the doctors, and I'd ask her to work closely with Dr. Dyck on this issue because I know he's been, certainly in my area, one of the leading advocates for getting IMGs into the Steinbach region, which has helped to some degree ease some of the pressure off the doctors' workload there and the inability to get some of our own grads to stay here in Manitoba or into a particular area of the province.

He had concerns, obviously, about the discretionary power that the college had and whether or not somebody could fulfil all of the rules for the IMGs that the government has sort of laid out, but then there was a discretionary power from the college not to license somebody because they hadn't gone through another hoop. I think it's really a procedure issue. I think he wants to be sure that when he enters into a program with an IMG, for their sake and for his, obviously, all the requirements are clear in terms of what it is that needs to be gone

through so that there isn't frustration on both of their parts at the end of the process. I think that's a reasonable request, and I'm assured that the minister will act reasonably with him. If she doesn't, I'm sure that I'll hear from Dr. Dyck and the minister will in turn hear from me.

A question on colorectal cancer screening. I'm sorry that we're sort of moving around from topic to topic. I think, to use the vernacular of the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), we're in the twilight, probably, of our Estimates with the Health Minister, so we're moving around a little bit here. But I know that early this year the government announced a program, a colorectal-screening program that involved the Winnipeg RHA and the Assiniboine RHA. At that point, I'd made comments locally, at the very least, about the ability to ensure that all Manitobans benefited from a screening program.

Can she indicate where we are, sort of, on the radar screen or on the journey to ensuring that this program is offered broadly to all Manitobans?

Ms. Oswald: We went through quite a bit of this on Friday with the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). In the spirit of not giving you the long answer that you don't want, I'll give you the *Coles Notes* and you will find the longer version in *Hansard*.

I can tell you that, when we made the announcement last year to be only the second province in Canada to have a colorectal cancer screening program, we suggested that there were going to be several phases to the project. Stage one, of course, was what's called pre-implementation, and that, really, at the voice of constituents had much to do with beginning public education and education of doctors. Not that I would sit here today and say that our doctors need a whole bunch of education, but a friendly reminder to doctors who have the ability today in their offices to conduct the FOBT tests and to do screening with that very important target group. So we have done an education program with them.

In consultation with CancerCare Manitoba we began an education program broadly about the importance of that target group having those tests. We have targeted the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and Assiniboine for the augmented screening, which means the mail-out kits to target groups; that mail-out has indeed begun. We have tests that have gone to the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority and into Winnipeg. We are going to, at the end of that phase, have some 25,000 kits

that have been mailed out to a target group. Those two regions, incidentally for the member, were regions where we were showing a higher incidence of colorectal cancer, so we felt that it was appropriate to start that.

At the same time, we have been ramping up and ensuring that we have the capacity for the inevitable colonoscopy tests that will be necessary as a result of these screening tests. We're also going to be able to, because of working in a phased-in approach, identify any difficulties that may transpire with the mailing of the kits.

It is new in Manitoba, so it is inevitable that we may find challenges along the way. For example, a member suggested the efforts that we could make to avoid duplication of mailing kits to a target individual that had just had that test in their own doctor's office, and that's a very important point. We were interested in getting the tests out as quickly as possible, but I know we will develop protocols through communications to try to avoid that duplication. From that we will be able to have the colonoscopy tests happening in an appropriate way and we will push further to get these, the mail out kits, to all regions of the province.

Mr. Acting Chair, it must be said quickly that I accept and acknowledge freely that the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) was a significant advocate for this particular test in conjunction with her constituent and a constituent from the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson). I had what I would call a life-changing meeting with her and with her constituent; I would say it was government changing as well. While we may stand on opposite sides of the House and hurl javelins on a daily basis, on this issue I would freely say that this was a non-partisan coming together of minds in caring about Manitobans, and, frankly, I'm proud of that.

* (16:10)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I do have a question, I guess of a policy nature even though it's based on an individual constituent of mine, an individual who needed to get some dental work done in order to deal with a medical condition. I think that the minister might actually be aware of the situation, but the essence is that there is an issue of what looks like it's mercury poisoning and there is a need for her to get fillings taken out, but if she doesn't take out the fillings, it's a medical condition that requires it.

The issue is that, should she be responsible, or what responsibility does the government have in terms of assisting her in order to deal with the medical condition of the mercury poisoning, or what we believe to be mercury poisoning?

Ms. Oswald: I'm aware of the case. The member has sent us a letter regarding this very complicated case concerning the accurate diagnosis of this individual and I believe it's a woman, correct? I believe that she has gone through an incredible challenge over time. Certainly, our office is working diligently to try to discover within the context of Manitoba, indeed within Canada, to seek out options for this individual to be assessed and appropriately treated for what seems to be a very complex case.

I will, you know, as I committed to the member, endeavour to get back to him with any findings that we have on the possible options that this individual has with admittedly, a unique and very complex case.

Mr. Lamoureux: Even though we're in the Department of Health, and I can think of probably a few hundred questions that I'd like to be able to ask the minister, but I'm very sensitive to the issue of time. I appreciate the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) allowing me the opportunity to butt in at this point to ask the question.

The only thing that I want to emphasize is that it is, as the minister has pointed out, a very serious medical condition. I just didn't want it to get lost as a dental issue, because it's not a dental issue and I appreciate the forthrightness from the minister. Thank you.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Madam Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Chair, I believe at this time we're prepared to move towards questions of the Healthy Living Minister. I thank the Minister of Health for her time. I also would say that I believe the comments she put on the record regarding the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) would be appreciated. I think they were gracious. The spear-throwing comment aside, I think that they are generally gracious comments and I know that she'll look forward to reading those.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Madam Chairperson, it's truly been my privilege to serve the Province of Manitoba as the Healthy Living Minister since September of last year. Really, I was able to build on the foundation of

the previous ministers, Minister Rondeau and Minister Oswald, as well as the work that was done with the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force.

But all of that would not have been able to develop without the support of the Healthy Living and Health staff that have worked tirelessly to help support different initiatives that have covered the whole gamut of healthy living across the province of Manitoba, and I am very proud that I get to work with these individuals every day, and the passion that they bring and their commitment to making a difference for Manitobans is admirable.

Healthy Living, we've had the opportunity to really develop it, as I said, over the last four years. What we've seen is the co-ordination between all government departments, but more importantly, the bringing together of a number of community groups as well as agencies and thousands and thousands of volunteers who are committed to having Manitoba be a healthy province.

We continue to use the seven pillars that help provide us with their focus, and I just put them on the record, yet again, and around every one of these pillars there are specific strategies which we have developed and promoted across Manitoba in all areas: Physical activity and nutrition, sexuality, mental wellness, Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative, as well as smoking cessation and injury prevention.

These strategies have really, I think, developed a focus for us but also have given Manitobans some really interesting innovative initiatives to partake in and develop healthy living, hopefully some new healthy living initiatives within their own families' lives.

Some of our accomplishments have been the Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative. We have 57 communities which have signed on and I'm most proud to say and put on the record that 21 of those communities are First Nations communities where people are coming together.

There's been an initiative called Moving Around Manitoba. I don't know if my honourable colleagues have their pedometers, but 4,575 Manitobans have participated, and in a few short months they have logged 170,000 kilometres that they have walked around the province, and I think that that speaks to the commitment of Manitobans to adopt healthy living practices. Last year we provided 220,000 flu shots free to Manitobans. Eighteen thousand bike

helmets were purchased. We also unveiled the Healthy Living champions, and these are everyday Manitobans who, in their own way, have promoted healthy living within their own personal development as well as in their communities but will be mentors across the province of Manitoba.

And we've had a recent announcement of 1.3 million of a healthy sexuality plan. And throughout the spring event, the election, there were many election commitments that were made. Around chronic disease we've made a commitment around recreation opportunities, one being a \$1-million program called First Sports that will provide grants and to help fund priority items such as teen uniforms, sporting gear and equipment.

There was \$60 million over four years for community-based sports and recreation facilities and \$1.8 million over three years to the Winnipeg Trails Association that's going to help develop 32 kilometres of trail across the city, and then also the expansion specifically to the Recreation Centre for Southdale. As well, there's been the Diabetes Prevention and Dialysis Treatment, and a big portion of this will also go towards prevention and working with community groups and identifying different ways that they can support healthy living within their communities and personally and try and deal with the rates of diabetes that we're faced with in Manitoba.

Also another big announcement was the Mental Health and Addictions emergency, which will be the first in North America that will be built here in Winnipeg.

So, with those few comments, I just want to say that it's been an honour and a privilege, and I look forward to continuing to work with Manitobans as we go forward and really promote healthy living and really take on that challenge of making Manitoba the healthiest province in Canada.

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): The floor is now open for questions.

* (16:20)

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for her opening statement, and I welcome her to her portfolio and to her first Estimates process, I believe. I didn't partake in my ability to take an opening statement just for the sake of time. It's, certainly, our intention to move the Estimates prior to the end of the sitting today, governed by the brevity of the answers I know the minister will try to undertake .

I do want to ask the minister if she'll provide, either now or in the form of an undertaking, the current wait times for addiction treatment within the province, residential programs, day programs. We had an update, I think as of March of this year. If she has up-to-date information on hand, I certainly would accept that; if not, if she could undertake to provide that.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, we'll undertake to provide that to you.

Mr. Goertzen: I appreciate that undertaking by the minister.

Some time ago, when the new literature on crystal meth was produced, it was largely intended for parents. I think it was entitled "how to talk to your kids about crystal meth," if I'm correct. I appreciated that information. I had the opportunity to distribute that to parents in a number of different forums in my area and throughout the province. There was at that point a statement made, though, that there would be further material coming forth that would be directed specifically to the young people themselves as opposed to the parents.

Could she indicate if that's still the intention of the department to produce that material?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, Madam Chairperson, we will be continuing to work on our crystal meth strategy. We've seen great response from community members, parents, professionals and youth alike as we've unrolled this. We've, you know, we know the member is familiar with the crisis stabilization unit that we established, and we see that the services that were being provided are being well received by Manitobans.

Mr. Goertzen: On the issue of addictions treatment, I know this crosses different departments; however, there is certainly a role, I think the Addictions Foundation Manitoba would certainly play a role in treatment of addicts in prison. When I spoke to the Minister of Justice about this issue, I believe in his Estimates, his most recent Estimates, he indicated to me that there wasn't necessarily for all inmates going into incarceration some sort of an assessment of their addiction that they might be facing. So there wasn't a risk assessment when it comes to addicts for all individuals going into prison.

I had the opportunity this summer to visit a prison, not what everybody would consider to be a great summer holiday when you do these "what did I

do for my holidays," but I did visit a prison in Sheridan, Illinois, which is the largest drug treatment prison in the United States, a medium security prison.

Warden Michael Rothwell spent the day with me in that prison and had the opportunity to interact with those who are incarcerated, Madam Chairperson. Just for the minister's information, everybody who is at Sheridan Institution has been sentenced either because they committed a drug crime or they committed a crime because of their drug addiction or because they were on drugs or non-violent offenders, but they all in some way, came in with a drug addiction.

It's a therapeutic community, different than Headingley, for example, where you might have the Addictions Foundation running programs at certain times of the day. Someone might come in for an hour or two program. I'm not exactly sure all the programming that goes on at Headingley, but then they return back to their cell and they are sort of back into the community, if you would, that terminology, into the community that they came from.

All the studies that I've seen, and certainly I know California is looking at this as well, the change to their model of drug addiction treatment in their prison system is to have a therapeutic community so that everybody within that prison is dealing with the same issues and they are dealing with it in the same way.

I wonder if the minister could indicate whether or not she's had any discussions either with her colleague in Justice or whether she's had discussions with the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba about the possibility of a therapeutic prison here in Manitoba.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Madam Chairperson, you know, I can't speak specifically about what programming happens in justice facilities in Manitoba, but as the member's aware that we offer community-based services across Manitoba, in-patient and out-patient to all Manitobans, youth and adults included. We're always as a department and working with our addiction partners across Manitoba, always reviewing what the best practices are.

There are ongoing conversations all the time about what we can do to continue to build on the foundation that we have developed here in Manitoba and the recognition that best practices are always

changing and evolving, and we need to be a part of that.

Mr. Goertzen: I would encourage the minister to talk to her colleague the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) on the issue. I've got quite a bit of information. I'm sure I can provide that to the minister. The reason I bring it up, I know it crosses ministerial responsibility, but I do think that many of the people who are leaving prison are leaving with the same addiction problems that they came in with; so, it returns to the community. It's not just an issue of crime, obviously, and the recidivism rate within the criminal justice system, but I do think that they're returning to their addictive nature.

I appreciate that one shouldn't have to go to jail to get drug treatment, and I am sure the minister would concur with that. But, Madam Chair, I do think that there is an important point about having significant drug treatment within the prison system through a therapeutic community to ensure that when individuals return to the community, they're not dealing with that addiction. One of the questions that I had when I first started to look at this particular area is how it is that individuals who are in prison still sort of come out with the same addiction. I'm not naive to the fact that drugs find their way into prisons as well, just like they do into the general society.

One of the educational aspects that I had with Warden Rothwell in Illinois was that they're not really treating the drug per se. They're not treating the addiction to the drug; they're treating what it was that drove that individual to the drug. So, after sort of an initial period of a month or so, when an individual is removed from the physical symptoms of their drug addiction, they then start to, over the course of two years or however long they're incarcerated in Sheridan, start to work at what it was that drove them to that drug, because you can remove the drug from an individual's body, but the symptom or the problem is really what drove them to that drug. I know that the minister certainly understands that, and then that's certainly part of what I'd like her to examine.

The other issue is I know that there's many good—and I think we recognize, and I will get the information on the wait times with drug treatment—I think we recognize that there's a shortage in Manitoba. I don't imagine the minister would say otherwise, but has she looked at organizations like Teen Challenge, that I understand don't get government funding? And she can correct me if I'm

wrong, but partnering more specifically with—there's a faith-based organization like Teen Challenge or other faith-based groups who are looking at doing drug treatment. Certainly, Madam Chairperson, I know the federal government has a program, the National Homelessness Initiative, which has teamed up with some faith-based groups to provide both shelter and drug treatment as a combination. So, there is a precedent for that. Can the minister indicate what sort of discussions she's had or is willing to have with these organizations to provide a greater level of drug treatment in Manitoba?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: As you did note, we work with many, many organizations across Manitoba to deliver different levels of programming, a continuum of service that includes everything from prevention, education, intervention and recovery programs as well. So, Madam Chairperson, there are a number of agencies which we fund, and I'll just put them on the record for you: Addictions Foundation of Manitoba; Native Addictions Council of Manitoba; Tamarack; Behavioural Health Foundation; Esther House; Salvation Army; Addictions Recovery Inc.; Rosaire House; Main Street Project; youth stabilization; the addictions unit at the Health Sciences Centre; Laurel Centre; centralized intake at MATC; and RaY, Resource Assistance for Youth.

There's also support that we do provide to Teen Talk which travel around with their peer supports and deliver programs throughout the province on teen-related issues and peer-related issues. So, we continue to work across departments as well as with many agencies on defining what is the issue, and how do we best serve the population which we need, and also working with the volunteers that work in the field of addictions, too, about what we can do to improve our system.

* (16:30)

Mr. Goertzen: I know the minister didn't directly address the question, and I just want to leave with the minister this—plea might be too strong of a word, but I do know that, and I'm not here to carry the water for Teen Challenge, but I know they've had a very successful program. I believe that their success rate is in the neighbourhood of 80 percent to 85 percent. They have a unique model, and they certainly haven't come to me and said that they're looking for government funding. Their motto might not necessarily be appropriate for government funding, but I think that there are other faith-based groups out there who are willing to engage and to do some of

this work, which might not be the answer for all individuals who are struggling with addiction. The minister in her own, sort of, dissertation of those who are getting funding makes the point that there are different models that will work for different addicts. I think providing a wide range of treatment abilities would be helpful to ensure that those who are dealing with addictions from different perspectives can be treated.

I'm just going to leave that with the minister, and if she wants to respond she can. I did promise my friend from River Heights that I would accede to him the next 10 or 15 minutes, so I'm going to do that. If the minister wants to respond to that comment that's fine, if not she can just simply take it as a comment from me.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: As you can understand, that funding is limited and we have to balance the needs, different organizations, delivery of service and making sure that the programs that we are supporting can work together in a co-ordinated, collaborated method to ensure that we're delivering the service right across Manitoba.

I encourage the member, if he has contacts in Teen Challenge, we'll be looking to see—I'll take it under notice and find out whether there is specific funding that's being provided from the province of Manitoba, but we encourage you to tell them to submit. If they have proposals to submit them, and we'll, certainly, review them along with all the other proposals that we receive and make a decision based on merit and the ability to work within our system as we try and balance all the multiple needs.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question to the minister is: Can the minister tell us what the incidence is of FASD in Manitoba?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The member knows that incidence and prevalence of FASD is very difficult to measure. We continue to work with our community partners to provide the necessary supports as far as a continuum of programs, again, around prevention and education, intervention at the individual, as well as at the family level.

It is very difficult across jurisdictions. We all struggle with that issue about defining the incidence of it. We continue to work with our federal, provincial and territorial members through the Canada Northwest Partnership, which we have the pleasure of chairing, and look at that exact question about how do we define the prevalence of FASD in

our jurisdictions and make sure that we're able to serve the population adequately.

I think, though, it's important to reflect about Manitoba's role in that consortium. Also, we've taken on the interesting exercise, and we're the only jurisdiction in Canada that has been looking at the prevalence of alcohol use during pregnancy. What we have developed is what we think is the next-best measure and that's the Baby First postnatal screen where public health nurses are asking new moms three questions around alcohol use during pregnancy. They're getting the response from the moms; they are being very honest with answering the questions, and through that we're hoping that we'll be able to continue to work with our partners and to provide the services that are necessary.

Mr. Gerrard: I remember the minister commenting, I think it was sometime last year, that she was able to screen every child for FASD. Well, I mean, clearly, the minister is not able to do that. Yes, it is very possible to measure the prevalence for FASD. It was done by Dr. Chudley in a group of inmates in Stony Mountain. It is, certainly, possible to have a reasonable estimate for the incidence of FASD in Manitoba, and I think that the minister should make sure that she's got things lined up so that she has a reasonable estimate. It's very hard to make effective change without having reasonable and responsible measure for the incidence of FASD in Manitoba. How do you know that measures that are being taken have any effect to decrease the incidence of FASD, for example?

The minister has mentioned that she's measuring the incidence of alcohol use in pregnancy. Can the minister tell us what the incidence of alcohol use in pregnancy, using her measure, is in Manitoba?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The preliminary statistic is that 14 percent of women interviewed admit to having consumed alcohol during their pregnancy.

Mr. Gerrard: Now, the minister seems very sure that women are being completely open and honest about whether or not they've used alcohol. Does the minister have some independent measure to, you know, check the veracity of her claim that the women are being entirely honest?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: As the member is aware as a researcher himself, when you're relying on self-reporting, of course, there's an incidence of, I guess, error that happens, but right now that's the best method that we have in our system to define that. I

think that FASD is preventable, but we also have to be very, very careful about how we treat women around this, that we don't criminalize them and continue to work with them in a supportive way. That's why we have, through Healthy Child Manitoba, supported STOP FASD which is a wonderful program which provides mentoring support to women who have identified addictions as an issue and may have given birth to a child already diagnosed with FASD, and is provided ongoing support through this mentor around parenting, emotional support to deal with the addictions. And we are seeing a lot of success with that.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for acknowledging that there are limitations in the data being gathered. I would say that, I mean, we are on the same page in terms of certainly not wanting to criminalize or stigmatize women. On the other hand, it's very important not to compound the problem. That is that it makes a huge difference where a child is identified early on in terms of the outcome of the child. So it is fundamentally critical to be able to be helpful to the mother by being able to provide a diagnosis where a child is FASD and the sources and help, so that the child can have the best possible development.

As the minister is well aware, there is a higher incidence of FASD in children with Child and Family Services, and we were given some information with regard to the incidence, or the prevalence, in children with Child and Family Services. I would ask: Can the minister give us any update on that information, and tell us to what extent children coming into care at Child and Family Services are screened for FASD?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I can't talk to specifically about what's happening around screening around the children that are being placed in care. That's the responsibility of the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh), and I'm certain you'll probably have an opportunity in his Estimates to ask him that question. But I can tell you that the Department of Family Services and Housing works very closely with all the partners with Healthy Child Manitoba, including Healthy Living, in working on our FASD strategy with our community partners as well.

* (16:40)

Mr. Gerrard: Can the minister tell us if there has been any more work done in terms of young offenders and FASD? In other words, we know from

the work, I believe, of Dr. Chudley, that a certain proportion of inmates of Stony Mountain have been identified with FASD, but young offenders, many of whom, most of whom, are certainly not when they're young going to end up in Stony Mountain.

Has there been an assessment of young offenders with regard to what proportion have FASD?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Again, I can't speak to what other departments are doing specifically around FASD in assessments, but what I can tell the member is that we have an extremely innovative project that is funded through our strategy, the FASD Youth Justice Project in Manitoba, where youth are identified after they have been diagnosed with FASD, and through the court assessment they are provided support in the community. The individuals who are providing the support provide information to the court to define what the sentence will look like. Through that, as they're developing the supports, they're looking at the family, they're looking at the individual, and they're looking at the community, and are really doing a wrap around approach to make sure that the necessary supports are there and preventing recidivism rates.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister mentioned earlier on that some 14 percent of women self-identified as having consumed alcohol during pregnancy. To what extent are those women being followed up so that, if there's a child with FASD, that child can be helped and the parents can be helped to raise the child well?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, well, through the public health system, new babes and moms are followed very closely, and that's how we provide them with ongoing support. Again, if this is a mom who has previously given birth to a child that's FASD, a referral to the Stop FAS program is also an option and alternative for them to provide that ongoing support.

Mr. Gerrard: Is there any assessment of the proportion of this 14 percent of children who turn out to have FASD?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'd just like to correct the record. I did not say that 14 percent of the children have FASD. What I said is that the parents, the moms, admit to having a drink, and that these parents are followed through the public health system and provided with the necessary supports.

Mr. Gerrard: I think the minister misheard the question. What I was saying, of the 14 percent of pregnancies where the woman has self-identified as

having consumed alcohol, what proportion of those mothers end up with a child with FASD? Is this information available? Madam Chair, can that then be helpful in helping the children, but also in helping communicate better to young people what the risk is of drinking during pregnancy?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We don't have the specifics about which of the 14 percent of the children born have been diagnosed with FASD. I can look. This is a new project which we've been doing, so I will follow up and see if that's one of the outcomes that we're looking at and how we're evaluating that. I can take that under notice and get back to you.

Around specifically about, you know, what are we doing around education around FASD? I can tell you that we have multiple partners and there are different methods which we're using. There's advertising in the media through TV commercials that we do, on radio. As well, brochures are being handed out. Sometimes there is also, at the liquor board commission, on the bags, there are notices as well.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the questions which is an important question for which there is some information from other jurisdictions is the cost to the provincial Treasury of a child with FASD in terms of support under Health, Education and Child and Family Services, and so on. Let me restrict the cost in terms of the cost to the health-care system. Do you have any information with regard to the cost to the health-care system of children with FASD?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: No. We don't have that information about what the cost is on a child with the diagnosis of FASD.

Mr. Gerrard: Is the minister going to try and look to obtain that information? Clearly, it would be important in terms of planning for the health-care system.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, I'll certainly take that under notice, and I will consult the colleagues at Healthy Child Manitoba if they have that information available to us.

Mr. Gerrard: It is often said from studies in other jurisdictions that there may be 1-in-100 children born with FASD. There is not, clearly, adequate data from Manitoba. Clearly, in terms of being able to use resources most effectively, it would be helpful to be able to provide resources efficiently and well to have some understanding of the incidence of FASD in different communities. There is a lot of anecdotal

evidence, but there really is not the kind of understanding that you would need to effectively target resources. I say this knowing that all communities in Manitoba are likely to have some children with FASD. It's not specific to individual communities, but, certainly, being able to use resources most effectively would benefit from knowing the incidence in different communities.

So I'm asking what efforts the minister is taking to look at the incidence in different communities so that the resources from her department can be used most effectively.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: When we took government in 1999, Madam Chair, the annual budget for FASD was about \$10,000. Last year, alone, our budget for FASD programs, just specific to Healthy Child Manitoba, was \$1.4 million. So that's a 1,400 percent increase.

I'm not saying that our work is done. We have more work to do, but you can tell by that level of commitment that we are committed to working across departments to make sure that we're providing a continuum of supports, as well as services including education, prevention, recovery programs to families in FASD. As we said before, it is preventable. It sees no social demographic—it crosses all lines is what I'm trying to say. Nobody is immune to this.

We've had a recent announcement last spring of \$7.5 million, which I know that the member is familiar with, which got a lot of support. It was, actually, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs said that: We're very pleased that the province has identified this critically needed resource.

I think that really speaks highly of the partnerships that we have across the board. In that \$7.5-million announcement for the FASD strategy, it included a program called Spectrum Connections, which is going to provide support to young adults as they're transitioning from foster care. It's going to be a mobile team that wraps services around them and helps them have a successful transition into the community, as well as \$600,000 for FASD specialists for Child and Family Services that can support agencies that serve families that are impacted by FASD, as well as increased diagnostic services, more money for public education, and a training strategy to help support existing service delivery, as well as the expansion of our very successful Stop FAS program to three rural and northern communities, as well as more support for women

with addictions, training supports for school divisions and increased research to guide the development of new programs.

We are committed. We'll continue to work with the community groups and across departments to support people with, families and individuals with FASD, but most importantly the goal is to prevent this from happening.

* (16:50)

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for the questions that he has posed. I know he and his party have raised some good issues around FASD and I think that that's to be commended.

There are other issues, of course, that I'd like to continue to talk about regarding addictions or others, perhaps even moving around Manitoba. I know you have a briefing note on that. I should start wearing a pedometer, probably would look more like a low-scoring football game right now. I need to improve on that obviously, but having said that, the shortage of time prevents a number of different questions being asked. I do have just a couple of questions for the minister before we proceed to move the Estimates.

HIV testing. I know the government made an announcement regarding anonymous HIV testing recently. I think that was a positive initiative. I understand that Ontario has opened 60-second HIV testing facilities. Can the minister indicate, was that part of her announcement or was that something that they're looking towards doing, that type of HIV testing in Manitoba?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Just to confirm with you, are you referring to rapid testing?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I'm assuming that that could be the name for it and I understood from Ontario jurisdiction, that's a 60-second test.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Well, 60-seconds is rapid. So, yes, I was very proud to work with the department and all of our community members and volunteers and make an announcement of \$1.3 million for the provincial HIV and AIDS Strategy. A part of that announcement was the rolling out of anonymous testing but also an intent that we would be having rapid testing happening in Manitoba as well.

Mr. Goertzen: Does the minister have a timeline for those initiatives to come forward on rapid testing?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: It's anticipated that the rapid testing will be happening in the community in acute-care facilities. What we're doing now is we're working with a group of professionals and community leaders around HIV and AIDS and trying to identify the best method of having the strategy. We're anticipating that it will be in the new year.

Mr. Goertzen: I look forward to the fulfillment of that commitment.

Madam Chairperson, a question regarding colorectal cancer vaccination. I believe the minister has made statements on the record that her government supports the vaccination. Can she give us an update in terms of when that program is going to be coming forward?

Madam Chairperson: Honourable Member for Steinbach, did you want to clarify your question?

Mr. Goertzen: I just had a flashback to doing questions with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald). Cervical cancer and the vaccination program that the minister has spoken positively of in the past.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, I was very proud to be the first province to step forward and say that we are to express our intent to implement the HPV program along with the support of the federal government, as well as making sure that we are listening to the professionals and waiting for the National Advisory Committee on Immunization to release their recommendations. Well, they did release their recommendations, and what we're doing now is we're waiting for the Canadian Immunization Committee to identify what they define as best practices. So we'll continue to wait to hear from those national bodies before we proceed.

In the meantime, Madam Chair, we have our own local committee that is made up of health-care professionals and community volunteers as well as community organizations and develop what we feel is going to be a very comprehensive program as we roll it out. At this time, I cannot give you a specific time frame as we continue to wait for our additional reports to come forward.

Mr. Goertzen: My understanding is that both Ontario and Québec have begun their program. The minister can correct me if that's wrong, but there certainly is an impression among those who have an interest in this issue that we're sort of lagging behind from the announcement of an intention to the program starting up.

I wonder why other provinces have been able to move forward in a quicker manner than we have.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, the member speaks about other jurisdictions. I think what you've seen happen in the communities; other jurisdictions have come forward and expressed their intent as well. I'm quite confident that it was one jurisdiction that—I know one jurisdiction came forward and announced their intent that they were going to be implemented in September, but, Madam Chair, after consultation with the professionals in their province, that they backed off and said that they needed to wait until they had the information on best practices.

There is a point where we need to ensure that, prior to implementing a program, that we have done due diligence and we make sure that we've protected our children in making sure that what we are providing with them is one of the best programs that we can provide to Manitoba youth, and young women in particular, around this. So we'll continue to wait to hear from the Canadian immunization committee, as well as working with the other federal, provincial and territorial governments as we go forward to ensure that we can implement one of the best programs in Canada.

Madam Chairperson: I see no other questions.

Resolution 21.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$19,688,900 for Health, Corporate and Provincial Program Support, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,056,600 for Health, Health Workforce, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,315,700 for Health, Regional Affairs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$88,766,000 for Health, Healthy Living and Health Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,631,726,600 for Health, Health Services Insurance Fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$14,903,700 for Health, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$89,391,100 for Health, Capital Funding, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,708,500 for Health, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 21.1.(a), the Minister's Salary contained in resolution 21.1. The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions, BE IT RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,851,500 for Health, Administration, Finance and Accountability, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Health. Thank you very much everyone.

The time being past 5 p.m., committee rise.

FINANCE

* (15:20)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Finance.

As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My first question deals with the fact that there's a significant lawsuit, class action lawsuit with regard to Crocus, and I wonder if the Minister of Finance had put any budgetary number in, in terms of the liability or the potential liability and risk if that lawsuit were not settled in the government's favour.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): As the member knows, that's a hypothetical question. The legal resources for the lawsuit are in the Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade. I'm not aware of any provision put aside in case the lawsuit doesn't turn out properly at this stage of the game. There's no indication one way or the other. First of all, the class action lawsuit hasn't even been allowed to proceed at this stage of the game. It's still all the preliminary discussions, but I'm not aware of any provision put aside for that, and if there's any information on that I'm sure I'll get it very soon, but I'm not aware of any provision for that. I mean, we're at the very early stages of that process.

Mr. Gerrard: I know that the minister has looked at where there may be liabilities and at least started to list, for example, environmental liabilities on the books, and that's certainly a positive move, and I think that it's important that the questions be asked in terms of where the liabilities are and what has been budgeted and what has been at least notionally allowed for or accounted for in terms of liabilities.

Now, let me ask specifically in terms of the environmental liabilities. As I would see it, there is a major commitment, at least stated, in terms of cleaning up Lake Winnipeg and getting the lake back to the situation of—I think the year was about 1970 that was mentioned by the government. Has the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) put any estimated liability here in terms of the clean-up of Lake Winnipeg?

Mr. Selinger: The way it has been working is that the Comptroller's office, in co-operation with departments and with the support of the Auditor General's office, because of the accrual accounting system we're doing now, we are booking environmental liabilities that have been recognized. As the member knows, there's been a sort of due diligence done to get a size of the value of these liabilities across the province. The number, I think

now, is in the order of \$164 million that'll be brought on the books since we last talked. The public accounts have come out. They originally put a plug number in there of about \$75 million, and then they've been doing that work. And there still remains some time to continue to do the due diligence on the environmental liability. So globally the number is \$164 million.

Mr. Gerrard: To the minister: Does that number include any number for the cleaning up of Lake Winnipeg and fulfilling the commitment to return Lake Winnipeg to 1970 status, back to health in essence?

Mr. Selinger: The short answer is, no, there's no money in that \$164 million for Lake Winnipeg. Lake Winnipeg is a spending program. It's covered under Current Expenditures, the resources that are going into that. There hasn't been any sort of number of an old environmental—like the environmental liabilities we're booking are things like abandoned gasoline tanks underground, abandoned mines, those kinds of things, things that have been ignored for many years. This is kind of a live issue right now on Lake Winnipeg, and there's an ongoing research effort and mitigation effort in place. So there is no historic liability to book at this stage of the game.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, I'm presuming that, you know, the issue of cleaning up Sherridon and Lynn Lake, and so on, are also live issues too. Right? I hear the minister nodding.

Now, I want to specifically ask you about one of the issues which really relates in part to the clean-up of Lake Winnipeg. We may be back and forth in terms of precisely what historical factors may have contributed to this, but I think that they are significant historical factors, including man-made interventions which may well have contributed, and that is the severe erosion that's occurring in Lake Winnipeg in the area of Sagkeeng First Nation. It's at the mouth of the Winnipeg River as it comes out into Lake Winnipeg.

Now, I've actually asked, you know, the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin), and he informed me that the lead minister was the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers). Then I asked the Minister of Conservation, as the lead minister, what he was doing on this file, and he told me that he was not the lead minister and that the chief had suggested that the Finance Minister and the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro was the

lead minister, and he also mentioned the Minister for Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick).

So my question to the Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro is: Is the Minister of Finance the lead minister here?

Mr. Selinger: Am I the lead minister on—

Mr. Gerrard: The question is: Is the Minister of Finance in that and other responsibilities the lead minister as it relates to ensuring that the severe problem of erosion in the Sagkeeng First Nation area is addressed? I mean, obviously, it needs multiple ministers involved, but all I'm asking: First of all, are you the lead minister?

Mr. Selinger: The Minister of Finance is not the lead minister.

Mr. Gerrard: I think what I want to mention to you is this: This erosion is severe enough that last fall in one area near where Mary Courchene lives, the bank moved back or eroded some 15 metres in one night. I mean it's huge. Right?

I want to bring to the attention of the Minister of Finance that, you know, if that continued then there is a problem with the main road through the Sagkeeng First Nation, and there is a problem in terms of the security of the school, which was not built all that long ago, and that acting now is, actually, the smart thing to do before there's further erosion because you have a little bit, not a lot, a little bit of space between the road and the bank. If you were to act now, it would be a much smarter circumstance than waiting because it will be much more difficult to act if that gets any closer to the road.

So, you know, even though the Minister of Finance is not the lead minister, I think that it's important that you are aware of the situation, that you are aware that if this is not looked after now there could be some major expenditures down the road. I take it, and let me just make sure that this is accurate, that there's nothing booked at the moment in terms of the liability here. Okay. The minister is shaking his head; I take that to be a no. And that I would just bring this to your attention and ask you to have a look at this because I think that it has an impact on proper budgetary planning, as well as proper infrastructure planning and how things are looked at.

*(15:30)

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for the information. I'll look into it. I suspect I'll be asking the Department of Conservation to identify from their perspective what the issue is and who's responsible for it and whether there are mitigation measures required.

Mr. Gerrard: My next question deals with the building of transmission lines. You know we've been talking about east side, west side. There are transmission lines, I think, for Wuskwatim being built even now, and there have been many built in the past. What is the government's policy with regard to compensation for land owners or individuals or groups who have rights to land which would be used by the transmission lines?

Mr. Selinger: This is supposed to be global, not universal, global on Finance. You're wandering way over the mandate here. So that's my first comment, and I guess I'd just summarize by saying that Manitoba Hydro is the responsible agent for transmission lines.

Mr. Gerrard: What I'm trying to get from a Finance point of view is whether there has been any previous precedent, right, where the government of Manitoba has gotten involved in such compensation issues in any way?

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I'd just like to remind all honourable members that their remarks should be kept relevant to the matter before the committee, as our rule 75(3) states: "Speeches in a Committee of the Whole House must be strictly relevant to the item or clause under discussion."

For clarification, does the member want to let us know which resolution or item in the Estimates you're referring to at the moment?

Mr. Gerrard: In bringing forward the budget and the role of the Minister of Finance with respect to the budget, we are having some, you know, fairly intense discussions right now about transmission lines. What I seek is to have at least some understanding of whether there is any precedent, right, and whether there might be some involvement at some point of the government of Manitoba in any compensation related to transmission line rights-of-way.

Mr. Selinger: I've got to say that I think this question reaches way beyond Finance Minister Estimates. You're really into a whole other territory, but just as a matter of historical information, the

member will be aware of the Northern Flood Agreement. It was an agreement signed into to deal with compensation matters as a result of flooding with respect to Hydro and transmission issues in the '70s. It was an after-the-fact agreement after some of the damage had already been done.

Mr. Chairperson, I think Hydro's approach these days is to work with the affected parties as they develop projects and try to work out relationships that everybody is satisfied with before there's a demand for compensation. I really don't want to go beyond that right now because I'd really like to get at Finance matters and get them done. Okay?

Mr. Gerrard: Let me just ask one short—the Minister of Finance has not booked any liabilities with regard to compensation in this area. I see the Minister of Finance shaking his head, and I take that to be a no. Okay.

Let me move on. In the last few weeks we've had the failure of a business related to tire recycling and some have argued that the approach with regard to levy on tires compared to other provinces was one of the things which basically resulted in insufficient revenue coming into the tire recycling company so that it had to go out of business, that if the tire recycling company had been in another jurisdiction, it would have been fine.

Now, my question here, from a Minister of Finance perspective, is that this tire recycling levy, I would presume, would be one of the levies that would be covered in the budget and would be under the purview in some fashion of the Minister of Finance. Is that correct?

Mr. Selinger: As you know, there's been a transformation of the Tire Stewardship Board to a producer responsibility model, and the people that are putting the product into the marketplace, the tire retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, are personing the Tire Stewardship Board. They have discretion over the kinds of fees they levy in order to make the Tire Stewardship Board viable. I don't want to get into making comments on the specifics of the business at hand here because, first of all, it would be inappropriate, and secondly, I'm not up on all the detail for the obvious reason that the Tire Stewardship Board is under the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers). He's responsible for the details of that.

The model, as it's evolving, and this is a model that's evolving across the country, is for more

producer responsibility in managing the waste that, in effect, they generate through the sales of their products. They have the ability and a certain amount of discretionary authority as to what kinds of levies they're prepared to make available to specific companies for specific collection and/or recycling activities.

The short answer is, historically, there was a slightly different approach. There's been more discretionary authority moved over to the producer responsibility model in the redesign of the Tire Stewardship Board. That's the best I can give you right now because, you know, it's not part of my Estimates.

Mr. Gerrard: Just one quick question related to this: Was the minister approached by individuals seeking an improved situation with regard to what was happening with the tire recycling levy?

Mr. Selinger: Not to my knowledge. I don't have a complete list of all the correspondence or stuff coming into my office, but I'm not aware of a direct approach to myself. I think the approach was primarily through the responsible minister.

Mr. Gerrard: The Minister of Finance is also the Minister responsible for Hydro, and there are some who have argued, based on what has happened in the past in terms of money from Manitoba Hydro used to balance the budget, that this is sort of a conflict of interest. I would be interested in the minister's perspective on this particular issue current.

Mr. Selinger: I think, if you sought legal advice, there would be no conflict of interest. I don't benefit in any way personally from either of those portfolios, nor would I want to. You could say the minister has a conflict of interest on tax cuts versus spending, and chair of Treasury Board too. But I don't benefit personally from either of those things either.

There's always a balancing act when you're a minister in government between revenues and expenditures and whether you make changes in revenues that reduce revenues or whether you make changes in revenues that increase revenues. I guess you could argue in the broadest sense, although I would disagree with it, that there's a conflict of interest.

I think you're using a very broad definition. The reality is governments have to balance revenues and expenditures, and they come into conflict with each other. That's the very nature of government; it is to try to find the right balance, the right mix of policies

between revenues and expenditures. But there's no conflict of interest as is commonly understood in the law in that there's any personal benefit one way or the other, whether revenues go up or down, whether expenditures go up or down. There's no personal benefit to myself or any member of the government or, as far as I can tell, any member of the opposition. If there is, they're supposed to declare it on their conflict-of-interest form.

Mr. Gerrard: Here is clearly some tax revenue which comes in one way or another from Manitoba Hydro. Could you take us through those items and what it is this year, in 2007?

* (15:40)

Mr. Selinger: We have to get you the detail on that. We don't bring that level of detail here, but I do know that the Manitoba Hydro pays capital tax. That was a tax that was levied on the corporation under the former government, and I'll get a number for the member. They do not pay traditional corporate taxation because they're a Crown corporation, but they do pay capital tax.

I believe they pay payroll tax, as everybody does, public and private sector. They pay a fee for what they call the guarantee fee. The guarantee fee is a rate that allows—it's a fee that Hydro pays in exchange for getting the guarantee of the Crown on the borrowings they make. It's a market decision. The fee they pay to us is less than what they would have to pay if they didn't have the guarantee of the Crown when they went to markets for borrowing, so it's a win-win. They get the money cheaper. In exchange for getting the money cheaper, they pay a fee.

Then there's a water power rental rate. They pay for the use of our natural resource, the water. That legislation is legislation under the Minister of Conservation, or perhaps it's Water Stewardship now, but the water power rentals act, I believe is under the control of Water Stewardship.

Mr. Gerrard: I would presume that Hydro employees play—

Mr. Selinger: They pay all the same taxes. We have no exemptions for Crown corp employees when it comes to taxes.

Mr. Gerrard: The situation with regard to PST?

Mr. Selinger: I'm assuming they pay PST when they make purchases like any other business in Manitoba,

any other enterprise. Now, they'll get a sales tax number so that they can have the arrangements of any business about how they acquire the goods. But, yes, they pay the sales tax as well as the GST.

Mr. Gerrard: Now, there would be a quite a difference, probably, for Manitoba Hydro in terms of how the GST and PST applied, correct? Because the GST is applied but then is rebated for business inputs, but that is not the case with the PST?

Mr. Selinger: The GST has a much wider application, so it applies to both goods and services, so it's a different regime for sure and there is an input credit. The PST is what they pay for those goods and services they acquire that are covered by the PST.

Mr. Gerrard: Now, it's my understanding in terms of the business inputs that there are certain exclusions, but that they would be primarily on the basis of manufacturing inputs for PST, and in the case of Hydro, that that would not apply. Is that correct?

Mr. Selinger: The treatment of Manitoba Hydro or any Crown corporation, for that matter, any Crown enterprise, is exactly the same as for any other business with the difference being that they don't pay corporate income tax, but they pay the same PST on the goods and services they acquire that any other business would. There's no distinctions there.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, so, the minister, just to be clear, would be ready to provide this list, and the total taxes paid by Manitoba Hydro. Is that correct?

Mr. Selinger: My ADM of Taxation informs me that all taxpayers have a presumption of privacy on the specifics of what they pay. So, I just don't have the right to reveal the specifics of that, as I don't have the right to reveal the specifics of it for any taxpayer with respect to payroll tax and capital tax. Simply identifying for you that those are the taxes they pay.

Mr. Gerrard: So, just to be clear. The minister would be able to provide the guarantee fee and the water power rental rates, but would not be able to provide the numbers on the capital tax, the payroll tax and the PST. Is that correct?

Mr. Selinger: Correct. For example, in the Estimates of Supplementary Information Revenue Estimates, the water power rental estimate for '07-08 is \$105 million. Not a tax, it's a rental fee. It's related to the benefit they get from using that resource which is essential to their business. I mean, without the water, the turbines don't turn and the electricity's not

generated. So, this is standard practice across the country for Crown corporations that are in the same kind of business.

Mr. Gerrard: The structure of the water rental rate, does that reflect the total amount of water going over the dams? In other words, it would increase in terms of volume of water, once Wuskwatim comes on-stream?

Mr. Selinger: It increases when the volume of water increases going through the turbines, and it decreases when the volume of water goes down, such as in a dry year.

Mr. Gerrard: So, all things being equal, there would be likely a net gain with Wuskwatim, but it could depend on whether it was a wet year or dry year. I think that's what the minister's saying. Is that right?

Mr. Selinger: Generally, yes.

Mr. Gerrard: The Forks North Portage Corporation, is it treated like any other corporate entity with regard to taxation?

Mr. Selinger: You know, I'd have to take that under advisement because, once again, that's another department that's responsible for that entity, the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs, that I'd have to take it under advisement. My guess would be that it's a non-profit. I don't believe it has shares. But, once again, I'd have to check the facts on it, but my hunch would be that it's a without-share corporation. But, rather than to give speculative information, I'd have to check the facts on that for the member.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, I look forward to receiving that information from the minister in due course, just in terms of clarification.

For a non-governmental organization which is non-profit, like The Forks, what's their situation with regard to, for example, the PST? With the North Portage partnership, if it was non-profit—

Mr. Selinger: Everybody pays the PST: individuals, non-profits and private companies. It's when you buy the good or services, you pay it.

Now, there's a PST number that businesses can have which makes it more convenient with respect to the PST. If they're reselling, they can buy the goods exempt if they're a reseller, and then charge it when they sell the product. So they don't have the same cash flow problem.

Mr. Gerrard: With respect to payroll and capital taxes, what would be the situation?

Mr. Selinger: Is this with respect—

Once again, I'd have to check the facts just to know exactly the status, but I'd rather not give speculative information. Once again, that's for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton) to answer that specific question. But if he's asking me to check it out, I'll try and check it out. Did you miss the Estimates for Intergovernmental Affairs?

Mr. Gerrard: I would much appreciate that information from the minister, and that would be very helpful.

Let me just go back briefly to the situation of the environmental liabilities question as it relates to the mines, the orphan sites, the sites that are to be cleaned up, the ones that you've got included. Tell me about the process moving forward in terms of getting that number as accurate as it possibly can be.

Mr. Selinger: I'm going to have my comptroller, Betty-Anne Pratt, return to the table to help me with that as my ADM of Taxation leaves.

As she's coming forward, I just wanted the member to know that the guarantee fee for the period ending March 31, '07, was \$71 million, and I explained to the member before, that allows them to get the money in the marketplace cheaper than they would otherwise get it if they didn't have the guarantee fee.

* (15:50)

Well, on the environmental liability, when the PSAB or the Public Sector Accounting Board's standard came into play and was accepted, the Comptroller's office worked to develop guidelines on how that policy would apply in government. Then each department was briefed on those guidelines and was supposed to do the work on all the potential environmental liabilities within their ambit, within their purview, and come back with what they thought the best number would be according to those guidelines through their financial officers and their senior officials. Then that information comes back to the Comptroller's office which tries to compile that information.

So it's one of those processes where, first of all, you need to have the standard laid out; then you need to have the standard interpreted into the guidelines; then you need those guidelines to go to departments.

The departments, with their professional staff, have to apply those guidelines to specific situations whether it's gas tanks or orphan mine sites, get the best estimate of what they think the cost of remediation would be, bring that information back and aggregate that information back up until we get an overall number.

There is still work going on on some of those sites out there that have an environmental liability attached to them to further refine how many of those sites exist and how much it would cost to remediate them. As you can imagine, there's some element of a moving target in there because prices change on a go-forward basis. We're in an environment these days where some of the costs of doing these things are accelerating.

Mr. Gerrard: Now, if, with the costs accelerating and perhaps the scope of work changing, does that mean it's sort of an annual iteration process to bring that number up to date?

Mr. Selinger: Yes.

Mr. Gerrard: On the guarantee fee which was \$71 million, I'm presuming that the size of that fee would relate to the amount that's being borrowed. Is that correct?

Mr. Selinger: Correct.

Mr. Gerrard: Would the size of that fee relate to the current interest rates as well?

Mr. Selinger: Yes.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I will attempt to identify myself prior to speaking. We'll try to get back into more of a global financial issue, although in saying that, if I may, I'd like to just ask a couple of questions based on the honourable Member for River Heights' (Mr. Gerrard) questions.

One has to do with the legal liabilities. Corporations of all size, on an annual basis, will normally ask what type of legal liability is possible within their operations for that year. It may well be hypothetical, but in our particular case we listed all of the potential legal liabilities. Not all of them would come to fruition. In fact, we had hoped that none of them would come to fruition, but there was always a budget amount or a contingency that we had set aside for those liabilities, and there were the two that the Member for River Heights had indicated.

One was the environmental. You had mentioned \$164 million with respect to the environmental. Does that include the potential Flin Flon that we've just heard currently? The minister also indicated that it's a moving target. We recognize that as you get deeper into those particular circumstances, that, in fact, those liabilities can go up or come down dependent upon what you find.

Again, the question for the record: Does that include the Flin Flon clean-up or the potential clean-up that there may well be in Flin Flon?

Mr. Selinger: Well, in Flin Flon there's an abandoned mine site for which the government has taken partial responsibility. The clean-up of emissions from a private corporation, the first responsibility would be the polluter.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, as we know, the initial polluter can probably no longer be found. That ownership has changed. If there is environmental problems associated with the playgrounds as well as some other pollution that's there, the government may well be responsible just simply from the lack of finding the original polluter.

Would the government then be held legally liable or legally responsible for the clean-up of those environmental emissions?

Mr. Selinger: Well, once again, this is pretty hypothetical and speculative at this stage of the game. In the past, when an environmental liability has been recognized by the government as their responsibility, in full or in part, that's when they book the liability.

This process, on the one that we've heard about in the media recently, there'd have to be some serious legal research done about whether the current corporation ownership carries the responsibility for the previous corporate ownership on the environmental liabilities before government would step in and pick up the tab. As the member can imagine, it is not infrequent that certain corporations, limited liability corporations, are an empty shell in terms of resources and walk away from their liabilities. But government usually tries to pursue the original corporate directors and/or managers, or the guiding mind in those corporations, for responsibility before they pick it up; otherwise, the liabilities would be a lot higher, as the member can imagine.

So I don't want to speculate right now. I think it is important that if there's a health risk that it get dealt with. I think that was the importance of the

newspaper story. They were identifying certain levels of toxicity in certain high-risk sites with respect to children, et cetera. I would expect, in terms of enforcement, through Public Health, through Conservation, we would be sitting down with the parties responsible at the municipal level, at the corporate level and trying to identify a practical way to address that, including what role we might play.

Mr. Borotsik: I accept that and I appreciate that. The fact is that sometimes you can't find the original polluter; therefore, someone has to bear that responsibility. We've seen circumstances and other examples. I can point to them, even in my own constituency, whereby a municipality may well have to take over a piece of property through tax sale. Through no fault of their own, they are then responsible for that environmental mess. Unfortunately, there is no one then to fall back on, as the minister has indicated.

We also have a terrible experience, obviously, with the city tar ponds, which is a federal responsibility. I appreciate that, also looking at a substantial cost for environmental clean-up. So that's why I asked the question if, in fact, you do list on a balance sheet or, at least, if nothing else, just an identifiable liability, a legal liability list whereby the provincial government may well see some legal liability.

Mr. Selinger: The short answer in layman's language is, first of all, you have to accept or recognize that it's your responsibility before you put it on the books.

I've been given some language here in our Summary Financial Statements, page 61, item 14: The government adopted, in '05-06, "an accounting policy regarding the recognition and measurement of environmental liabilities. Mr. Chairperson, an environmental liability for contaminated sites is recorded when contamination is identified, and when the Government is obligated, or likely to become obligated, to incur remediation costs due to reasons of public health and safety, contractual arrangements, or compliance with environmental standards which are set out in any act or regulation (federal, provincial, municipal) recognized by the Government. The liability is based upon remediation costs," determined on a site-by-site analysis, "measured as incremental direct costs, reduced by estimated recoveries from third parties, and

discounted where possible to reflect the time value of money."

So that, sort of, gives you how they deal with it.

Mr. Borotsik: In the worst-case scenario, should there not be found a third party that would help defray those costs, would there and has there, in the past, been any federal contribution to any types of those environmental clean-ups?

Mr. Selinger: This is a matter of negotiation. In some of those cases, there are still open questions as to whether the federal government should be contributing to some of those clean-ups because, at the time, those corporations were under federal jurisdiction. But, as the member can imagine, sometimes the length of time it takes to sort of nail down who's responsible is far in excess of the time and the urgency for clean-up. So, we're getting on with it, in some cases, even though we continue to pursue federal responsibility and cost-sharing.

Mr. Borotsik: Actually, the last question that was brought up by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), the \$71-million guaranty fee. Next year, as per the Estimates, Manitoba Hydro will have around \$531 million in debt-servicing costs, Mr. Chair. This \$71 million is in addition to that, obviously. The 531 is just simply what their requirements are for debt servicing on their outstanding debt. The \$71 million would then be general revenue, I assume, going to the province?

Mr. Selinger: It's revenue to offset, as I said earlier, the guaranty provided by the province. I'll have to check the facts whether it's buried within that \$530-some million or not. I honestly would have to do some verification of that. It is within that number.

* (16:00)

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you for that clarification.

Now if we can get back, perhaps—well, one other question: legal liability. The legal liability, we talked about the environmental. I know the Member for River Heights did talk about the Crocus fund. I know that's hypothetical and I know that there's class action. I know a lot of what's not happening right now in that particular file. But, again, just for the record, I assume there is nothing that has been identifiable as a potential legal liability going forward on that particular file. There's nothing that's currently identified.

Mr. Selinger: According to the policy—first of all, there has to be a recognition and an acceptance of a responsibility. That's not the case at the moment.

Mr. Borotsik: If we can get back to, as I say, the Estimates and the budget and numbers: equalization, Mr. Minister. As we readily understand, equalization is a very important part of the total revenue streams from the provincial government. As by definition, and I'll just read this: Receiving equalization payments—this comes from the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce—means that our province cannot provide public services that are reasonably compared to those in other provinces without receiving financial help from the federal government. That, in their opinion, is a little embarrassing.

My question right now is, has the minister ever experienced a reduction in equalization payments over his eight years as being the Finance Minister?

Mr. Selinger: The equalization system has changed fairly dramatically in the last decade. There have been times when the forecast revenues for transfer payments have been less than what had been expected. Mr. Chair, was there an absolute reduction in equalization? I'm looking at my officials to see if anybody can remember.

But I know that at one time, until very recently, actually, until the Ralph Goodale budget, which the member might recall, the first Ralph Goodale budget, where they brought in a block funding scheme for equalization and sort of put a floor under it, that every year equalization would go up and down, depending on a rolling three-year forecast and what had happened in the economy during that three years. So there were times when transfer payments that were forecast to be coming to us were dramatically adjusted downward, which caused heartburn in terms of budgeting processes.

Now the question is whether it absolutely went down. I don't think in absolute terms there was a reduction, even though there was a very significant drop in forecast revenues, after September 11, 2001, for example. So that would be the best answer I can give right now. We'll try to verify that.

Mr. Borotsik: If I could, I have verification. One of the tables that I have is, actually, in the year 2003, there was about a \$60-million reduction in equalization payments from the year 2002. It was \$1.399 billion in 2002, \$1.338 billion in 2003, which was the only downturn that I could see. Every other

year has been an increase. This year is budgeted in the Estimates to be \$1.826 billion.

We know, Mr. Minister, through experience that the economy does cycle and recessions do occur. Federal transfers will not always be so robust. In fact, there was a 10 percent decrease in federal transfers from the 1992-93 fiscal year to the 1993-94 fiscal year. I realize that was before your time, Mr. Minister. I'm wondering if you're prepared for the possibility. If the province of Manitoba were to have a 10 percent decrease in transfer payments, equalize—well, transfer payments, in this particular case. If there was a 10 percent decrease in transfer payments, it would result in lost revenue in transfer payments of about \$370 million, based on today's Estimates.

How would the Province be able to react to this type of loss? I appreciate the minister is going to say that we certainly hope that we don't get that kind of a loss, and I would agree with him, but how would the department and how would you, sir, react to a loss, a 10 percent reduction in transfer payments?

Mr. Selinger: Well, actually, what I thought the member would say is that I was going to say that's a hypothetical question, which it is—

An Honourable Member: It may not be.

Mr. Selinger: —which it is. I know the member seems to walk around in a doom-and-gloom scenario when it comes to the Province of Manitoba. I can tell you I think we can beat your expectations. We have every year and I think we will in the future. I actually think the Bombers are going to do better than you think, as well, just to put the record straight.

Look, every year we've had adjustments. The other thing the member has suggested in his opening comments, which I didn't respond to at the time but I thought was a bit precious, to be honest about it, he was kind of hinting that it's kind of been easy since we've been in government: revenues have been robust, things have been great, it's just been no sweat doing this job. That's real cute to say that when you're sitting in the chair and haven't had to do it. The reality is in 2001 we took \$150-million hit on corporate tax revenues after September 11.

The reality is that we had a federal accounting error where they phoned me and said, by the way we've just deducted your revenues \$110 million yesterday, but we can talk about how we can solve it going forward on the other \$700 million you owe us. That was the message we got from the federal government. They deducted the money first, and they

informed us second. I remember that call very vividly because it had an impact.

We also had the BSE crisis, which was very significant in this province, as the member will recall. We also had the second driest year in the history of the province a few years ago which had a very significant impact not only on revenues but on firefighting costs and fire prevention costs and forest fire fighting costs for which there is no federal cost sharing.

So I just want the member to know that it just hasn't been all hearts and flowers, just a slow walk in the park, everything's been easy as we've been balancing the budget every year, and I'm not even talking about the expenditure pressures on the other side let alone tax competitiveness issues. So the reality is that every year we see what's coming at us. We get a forecast and we manage accordingly. We managed our expenditures and our revenues in order to bring the Government of Manitoba's finances into balance and to ensure the key programs get financed.

Now, if we had a dramatic drop in revenues, the new formula in equalization, for example, is a rolling three-year average so there is some buffering that's been built into it as a result of many representations made by experts in governments across the country to take out some of the hills and valleys in the way the system works. Now, when you take out the hills and valleys, it means you don't get any pleasant surprises either. You don't get a sudden burst of revenues when things are going really well, but it also protects you on the downside. When things get rough there's a little more adjustment time. I think that's a prudent approach to federal-provincial fiscal relations is that they don't hit you all at once or don't benefit you all at once.

The member will know that the way the federal government works is that when they have their year-end surpluses they don't really make long-term commitments to health care. They tend to give you year-end lumps of money and then they say, oh, there's a chunk of money for health care for wait times, for example, and we expect you to make that last three to five years. But, when it runs out, there's no renewal of that money, so the government has to find that money, and the three to five years they really don't have the ability to specify that, but they try to create an expectation that it'll last that long when they have no control over the specifics of how the money should be used and allocated.

So the reality is that we do see changes, incremental changes in revenue and expenditures every year, and there will be changes in the economy going forward. We've had a very strong economy the last couple of years, but the forecast for next year is a slight protection in economic growth of about 0.6 of 1 percent. Even that's very important to us and we have to budget accordingly. We have to take that into account in setting our expenditure targets and managing our expenditure envelope and setting what we can do on taxes and deciding what we can do on capital investments and manage within that, and that's the approach we take every year. Despite what the member might think, it's never a walk in the park.

Mr. Borotsik: If the minister also remembers in my opening comments, I did suggest that it was a delicate balancing act, that there were a number of departments, I'm sure, that are at his doorstep on a rather regular basis looking for additional sources of revenue, and I assume that the minister has to make sure that those are held in a balancing act as well. I do appreciate that. I wasn't terribly precious in my comments when I had indicated that it was relatively easy, but I do know that the minister also recognizes that back in the early '90s when interest rates were upwards around 14 percent there's quite a dramatic change between 14 percent and 4.7 percent in borrowing, and that is fairly dramatic.

Now do I doom and gloom? No. Realism, yes. I believe that at some point in time rates will go up. The minister knows, as I know, that rates have been at their lowest for the past four decades. That's not going to last forever, and I know the minister is smart enough to recognize that there may well be a shift in rates, and they're going to go up, they're not going to come down.

* (16:10)

The minister also recognizes, I'm sure, that, should there be a downturn in the economy, and there are a lot of things to point to, I'm not going to say a major restructuring but certainly a minor restructuring, in the economy based on the Canadian dollar, the strength of the Canadian dollar. Based on liquidity in the industry right now, we all know that there well could be some liquidity issues in credit. We know that the Bank of Canada, I think last week, had three injections of cash into the industry. That in itself speaks to some negative changes to the economy.

So my question was not one of doom and gloom, but one of realism in saying, should this in fact affect

the transfer payments forthcoming from the federal government? We all know that if there's a downturn in the economy, that affects the equalization. That's simple and plain. Should the economy be affected, the equalization is going to be affected. That will then be reflected in less equalization payments to the Province of Manitoba than we've had in the past.

I know that back in the 1992-93 there was a reduction of some 10 percent in equalization payments. It was simple as that. The minister talks about receiving a phone call from his federal counterparts—that phone call came in 1992-93 as well, saying, well, by the way, your equalization payments are dramatically reduced. There was at that time a need to react to it, and my question was a legitimate question to the minister: How would you react? Please, with all due respect, after the 2001, Manitoba Hydro came to the party. There was, I think at that time, \$230 million or \$280 million—I'm sure you can correct me because you were the one who implemented that particular infusion of cash. Manitoba Hydro was asked to infuse cash into the revenue stream that year.

So I go back to my simple question: Do you have—I know you do. Your department's smarter than that not to have some sort of a plan in place should there be a reduction in transfer and equalization. Can you give me some understanding of that?

Mr. Selinger: Well, I think I just want to build on my comments that I made before. First of all, we do a better job of forecasting and that's important that we try to do that every year, but in terms—I think it goes to the fundamentals of the economy. I just want to start at that level before I get into transfer payments. We try to do things every year that keep the economy growing. *[interjection]* Well, some of them, for example, come out of the member of Competitiveness, Training and Trade's department. We've done things with the manufacturing sector. We know there's a rising dollar, so we've made some very significant efforts, both on the program side and on the tax side and on the manufacturing investment tax-credit side to allow to work with the private sector to modernize the manufacturing sector which is a very important sector in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Chair, just on the program side, for example, there's an advanced composites initiative that has been put in place to allow industries such as aerospace to modernize the materials they use to stay ahead of the curve in terms of competitiveness. There's been a productivity initiative that we've

launched through—*[interjection]* It's called the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, but it speaks to the issue of productivity. Manufacturers in Manitoba can't really rely on a low-wage, low-dollar sort of context to be competitive, so we've tried to help them modernize their manufacturing processes and reduce their input costs, and Manitoba Hydro's been a part of that. So, we try to help them reduce their input costs, make sure that their investment in labour gets more productivity. We've put measures in place for them to acquire technology.

One of the upsides of a high dollar is that technology, offshore technology, particularly from the United States, gets more cost-effective to acquire, Mr. Chair. The dollar buys more. Modern technology buys more computer software, buys more computers manufactured in the United States, for example. So there has been a positive side to the rising dollar as well, in terms of increasing their investments in technology. Last year's budget we had a rapid three-year write-down for depreciation. We had also put in place a manufacturing investment tax credit for the first time in the history of the province. We gave a credit up front, a refundable credit. You used to be able to get it only after the fact. We started that credit out at 35 percent refundable; we moved it to 50 percent refundable, and that also was in the context of reducing corporate taxes on the macro side, the big-ticket corporate taxes, the big-ticket small-business taxes.

We took the exemption for capital, investing in capital. It used to be, when we came into office and for the first few years, that you could get an exemption up to \$5 million. At five million and one dollars you'd pay capital tax on the entire \$5 million. Now we have a complete exemption, without any clawback, up to \$10 million and we're reducing the rate starting January 8, and we plan to phase out capital tax.

So, when you look at the elimination and higher threshold for capital tax, when you look at the Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, when you look at the reduction from 17 to 14 and going down more to 12, in corporate taxes when you look at the 67 percent reduction in small business tax rate, and when you look at the investments we've made in education and training to make sure labour is more productive—*[interjection]*—as well as the Co-op Education Tax Credit. Thank you for reminding me of that.

The Co-op Education Tax Credit, and I want to spend a minute telling the member about this because I think all of us in the Legislature could promote this as we meet small businesses. We have in place what we call a Co-op Education Tax Credit. It applies to the private sector and now to the non-profit sector where if somebody needs somebody, a certain skill, and they hire them to work in their company while they're taking that training program, say, at Assiniboine Community College or Brandon University or any institution in Canada or the world for that matter, if they hire them during the course of their training, we'll give them a tax break for hiring that person to train in their business. Then, if they hire them after they graduate, we'll give them a tax break as well, a refundable tax credit up to \$2,500.

We put these measures in place so that businesses start thinking ahead in terms of the human resources, not that they don't, but in a more systematic way and more incenting them to do that about the manpower, the person-power they need, the human resources they need, to ensure that they provide trading opportunities for them, because, as you know, even the best programs, like colleges', still need tweaking when people hit the workplace. It's always a little different what you have to do versus what you might have got trained in at a community college or university.

So we've tried to put in place a number of measures with modernized business, allow them to train people better, to have lower costs and to have more money up front to invest in technology. So that's just on the economic side, so that we can keep our economy growing well. Our economy tends to do better during tough times than most other economies because it's a more diverse economy, so we don't tend to have the big hills and valleys, as, for example, some provinces do that rely on one or two commodity prices to make for when the sun shines, and for when the clouds come they get hit as well.

So that's just on the fundamentals of the economy. Then what do we do if we get a transfer payment reduction? Well, first of all, we were among the leaders in the country in suggesting reforms to the equalization program. We thought the old program had significant flaws. We thought the block transfer was seriously flawed because it didn't reflect growth in the economy. It was just a fixed amount with an escalator that had no relationship to growth in the economy. Even though we didn't attack provinces like Nova Scotia and Newfoundland when

they got the special arrangements that they got, we knew that that seriously distorted the formula and put it in a situation where it really was ad hoc, federal-provincial relations by ad-hoc deals, which really didn't do anything for the fundamentals of the country.

So we did support the federal Finance Minister and the federal government last year when they returned it to what we call a principle-based or rule-based system. One of the things that we've done within that is for the first time in many years we've gone back to a 10-province standard. It used to be a five-province standard. That five-province standard had, one of its cornerstones was Ontario, which, as you know, is struggling most under the high dollar in the manufacturing challenge. It's a 10-province standard now which includes the resource-rich provinces. So it's a better formula.

It's a three-year weighted average, so it doesn't hit you all in one year. In the old days you used to get an adjustment at Christmas time and an adjustment in January and an adjustment in February, and if you were lucky, you didn't get or did get another one before the budget hit. So it was really very much a moving target. But, as I said, that three-year weighted average also reduces the upside. You don't get any sudden burst of revenue in good times, but you don't get big hits in bad times, so there's greater predictability there based on a better overall standard.

It's two-year lag data as well. In other words, the data in the three-year formula are two-year-old data. So, if we had a sudden downturn tomorrow, we'd be still working off the data of two years ago which would give us more adjustment time. This wasn't just to serve our interest. This was to serve the interest of the federation. Whereas we know the provinces deliver the core services, health, education, social services, very little of that is delivered directly by the federal government. So we need more stability to make sure those services don't get caught in a, you know, yo-yo effect when the economy goes up and down.

So we've tried to do things to improve that. We've had budget papers to that effect, and we published it, showed our interventions in that regard. I think we were listened to on several of those points, and our officials were well regarded in that fact. We also had the Council of Federation come and visit us with their experts' panel, and we gave them lots of

good input that was reflected in their report. We had the expert panel struck by Ralph Goodale and implemented by Jim Flaherty. We had lots of good input into that so we've tried to make the formula more predictable. We've tried to make the economy stronger so that we can deal with these things when they come at us.

*(16:20)

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you, Mr. Minister, for your answer and your understanding of how you would react to any type of changes. I wasn't aware of the two-year lag time, and that's interesting in itself, I guarantee you. Given a two-year lag time certainly does give you sufficient time to be able to react to those kinds of circumstances.

I guess more of a philosophical question right now: Do you ever see, Mr. Minister, a time in your position as Finance Minister of the Province of Manitoba where, in fact, we wouldn't rely on the equalization payments quite to the level that we've relied on them in the past? I guess, for the record, it's referred to as a have or a have-not province.

You tell me, and I have to believe you, that the economy is firing on all eight cylinders. Things are so fine here in the province of Manitoba that, in fact, we should probably be looking at a bit more self-sufficiency as opposed to be looking at increased equalization payments coming from the federal government.

Mr. Selinger: Once again, I'm going to have to challenge the member a little bit on the assumption that we're becoming increasingly dependent on transfer payments. When you look at the major increase in transfer payments—because, for the most part, health and social services and education have been shifted to a per-capita formula, and all the equalization that was within them has been eliminated—the biggest beneficiaries of transfer payments are that have-not province of Alberta and the province of Ontario. They've been getting the biggest amount of cash by far, if you take a look at it, and B.C. as well.

So, for example, Ontario has seen a 152 percent increase in transfer entitlement since '99-2000. Alberta has seen a 115 percent increase since '99-2000, and B.C. has received a 99 percent increase since '99-2000. Manitoba has had a relatively modest increase since that day of 65 percent. So, Mr. Chair, when you want to look at the winners on what federal-provincial fiscal relations have done, it's gone

to the provinces that are already considered the have provinces. They've got the biggest percentage increases. They've got the biggest amount of cash.

Our equalization transfer has remained relatively constant as a proportion of the economy, between 19 percent, 19.5 percent. There is this mythology that I'd like to think of as based on misinformation, not ill will on the part of the opposition, that we've somehow been getting a cornucopia of resources when, in fact, they've been going to the big provinces with the most resources to begin with.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, just for the record, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia receive nothing in the form of equalization payments so we know that—

An Honourable Member: Transfer payments.

Mr. Borotsik: No, I'm talking equalization here. Okay. They receive nothing in equalization so I'm sure, if you wanted to balance out the transfer payments inclusive of equalization payments, there is a—

An Honourable Member: I'm talking total transfer payments.

Mr. Borotsik: I understand what you're saying. I'm saying they receive nothing in equalization. Alberta, B.C. and Ontario, I'm sure you would agree with me on that one, receive nothing in equalization. Saskatchewan, on the other hand, receives only \$226 million in equalization where Manitoba received—this is our own document here. This is the Estimates. Manitoba, this year, will receive in equalization \$1.8 billion in equalization. Now that's a separate funding pool that comes from the federal government.

Transfers in general, I'll look at the numbers that the minister just gave me and certainly we'll look at the transfers. We recognize, and the minister himself said, there are certain service deliveries that are required by the provinces. It's health, education, and social services. We know that those are the responsibility of the province, nor do we want the federal government sticking their fingers in that delivery, I can assure you.

The fact is that they fund those. Whether they be funded to the same levels the minister has indicated with respect to Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario, there's a thing called a per capita, and we can look at the per-capita funding on that in comparisons between Manitoba and those other provinces.

The minister has to, and should, agree that, in fact, on an equalization basis, Manitoba is receiving a substantial amount of their operating dollars off of equalization, not transfers totally, just equalization.

Mr. Selinger: As I said earlier, our equalization as a percentage of our budget and our economy has been relatively constant, 19 percent, 19.5 percent. We haven't had a big windfall. That would be a misinformation.

The point I was trying to make on total social transfers, it is true that B.C., Alberta, and Ontario do not get equalization, but when I put all of the federal transfers together, in Manitoba, it includes an equalization transfer as it does in seven other provinces. And I put in health and education so it's an inclusive package. The big percentage increases are going to the provinces I mentioned: B.C., Alberta, and Ontario, even though they don't get equalization. Our increase, including equalization, is 65 percent. Their increase, without equalization, is over 100 percent in all cases. That's the point I'm trying to make.

So I'm trying to do an apples-to-apples comparison. All things included, the big winners have been the have provinces under the transfer payment scheme. That is not an accident. That is by design by the federal government because—well, there's a number of explanations I could give for that. I don't choose to be cynical. The reality is they were under pressure to provide more resources to those provinces and that's what they did.

In the case of Ontario, for example, as you know, the premier there, running in an election this week—just about all the political parties were saying that they were getting short-changed on things like immigration support, et cetera. Manitoba, actually, was not unsympathetic to some of the pleas they were making for some of the transfers that they needed. But the reality was, under federal transfers for health and post-secondary education and social services, historically there had been equalization within those, in addition to the core equalization program. That has been eliminated now. It's been moved to a full per-capita amount.

The reason there had been some less per-capita amounts to those provinces is because back 20 years ago, they transferred tax points to the provinces. A tax point generates more income in Ontario and Alberta and B.C. than it does in Manitoba. So they said if we're giving you tax points, we have to count

that as a deduction against your cash transfer to be fair. Well, you know, the mists of history have washed away that fairness now, and the only thing that makes fairness now is an equal per-capita transfer even though tax points generate more revenue in other jurisdictions than they do in some of the other jurisdictions. A tax point generates far less in Prince Edward Island than it does in Alberta to put it in an extreme basis.

So, equity? Gone. Per capita? Yes, a new form of equity, per-capita amounts on transfers regardless of ability to generate your own revenues. Some would argue that that's a more inequitable situation, but that's the way it's gone. As part of that, there has been a return to a more principle-based approach for equalization, 10-province standard, rolling average, two-year lag time.

Manitoba was not a major beneficiary of that. For us, it was relatively neutral. The old system was giving us a certain amount of money. The new system was giving us roughly the same amount of money, but we supported the move back toward a principle-based model because it was better for the country, clearer, more understandable, more fair, based on a solid policy rationale. All those arguments we supported, even though we knew, as part of that discussion, we weren't big winners, one way or the other. It was actually helpful in the sense that we could make a more impartial argument on why that should be done that way. Nobody could say, oh, you're only arguing that because you get a windfall. Everybody understood that we weren't getting a major windfall one way or the other, but we did support a movement back to something that was rational and coherent on the equalization process, even though it did not generate huge revenues for us.

Mr. Borotsik: Maybe the minister could pass those sentiments on to his colleague in Saskatchewan. I understand they don't quite feel the same way that he does with respect to the fairness of equalization. In fairness of equalization, I do believe that Manitoba's received—just simply from the increases over the annual period, they are receiving more in equalization and are being treated being fairly.

Out of all of the total transfers that we receive from the federal government, it amounts to approximately 38 percent to 40 percent of the total budget. Could you please clarify that?

Mr. Selinger: On a summary budget, it's about 31 percent. On a core operating budget, it's about 36.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Minister, you've indicated that Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario have received substantially more if you take the total transfer payments exclusive of equalization because they don't get the equalization.

Can you tell me, Mr. Chair, if 36 percent of our operating budget is funded by the federal transfer payments including equalization, do you have any understanding as to what portion of those other three provinces' budgets would be funded, what percentage would be funded?

* (16:30)

Mr. Selinger: I suspect it would be less because they have a stronger ability to generate revenue off their own taxes, but the increases in their spending have been financed mostly by an increase in federal transfers far in excess of what we've received during our period in office. In other words, Alberta, Ontario, and B.C. have seen far more absolute dollars on a per-capita basis and far more on a percentage basis than we have, which has provided them the ability to both keep their taxes low and increase their spending.

Mr. Borotsik: Which they have, and that's the competition that we have here in the province of Manitoba, to make sure that we're competitive with their tax rates, and I guess—

An Honourable Member: And their spending.

Mr. Borotsik: And their tax rates.

An Honourable Member: And their spending.

Mr. Borotsik: And their tax rates.

An Honourable Member: Both.

Mr. Chairperson: I'm not getting into this one.

Mr. Borotsik: I wonder, okay, Mr. Chairman, if I may.

Mr. Chairperson: You have the floor.

Mr. Borotsik: I'm pretty much out of spent force on equalization and transfers. I wonder if I may turn it over to my colleague from Turtle Mountain. He has some questions, I believe on Manitoba Hydro. So we can get back to the—

An Honourable Member: It might be irrelevant to this committee.

Mr. Borotsik: —big global, global perspective of Hydro.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): I will assure the minister that it certainly is relevant to your role here in terms of your role of finances of the province. Very, very timely, I think, that we should talk about Manitoba Hydro. It certainly was brought up today in the House on several occasions. I know even the minister referred to the debt of the Province and how Manitoba Hydro plays a role in that.

For my purposes, and actually I brought a copy along for the minister, if he would like a copy. I'm just referring to the financial statements from Manitoba Hydro, dated March 31 of this year. So, if the minister would like, I certainly would table a copy of these, at least one page, from the financial report.

Some of the context in which we talked earlier in the day was about Hydro and in terms of the long-term debt of the Province. It's pretty clear here. In fact, I've highlighted the points I want to discuss with the minister on this particular page, referring to page 100 of the latest report from Manitoba Hydro. I guess I'll maybe draw you down to the long-term liabilities and the other liabilities that our favourite Crown corporation holds. I note, luckily for us, there's a historical representation on this page. Total liabilities back in 1999 were \$6.8 billion, as indicated by Manitoba Hydro. This year, Manitoba Hydro reported at the end of March, the end of their financial year, a total long-term debt—current and other is how they characterize it—of \$9.2 billion. So, clearly, this has an impact on the province of Manitoba itself.

My concern here, from a Manitoba Hydro perspective and being the critic for Manitoba Hydro, is that we've incurred another \$2.4 billion of debt and I don't see any significant results, any significant investments in terms of Manitoba Hydro over the last eight years in terms of infrastructure development, in terms of dams and other sizeable infrastructure. I just wonder if the minister would care to comment on that.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks all. I just want to take this opportunity as Chair to remind all honourable members, recognizing the Member for Turtle Mountain wasn't in the room earlier this afternoon where this came up, but the remarks should be kept relevant to the matter of the committee.

As rule 75(3) states: "Speeches in a Committee of the Whole House must be strictly relevant to the item or clause under discussion."

So I guess there are two things for clarification. The member should please let us know which resolution or item in the Estimates you're referring to. That would be the first piece. Then the second piece is just that this line of questioning might be more appropriately addressed in another forum, for instance, a standing committee of the House. So, yes, Crown Corporations.

Perhaps I'd ask the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) to redirect his question in the context of the Estimates for the department that we're discussing, or direct it to the particular section of the Estimates for Finance for this fiscal year.

Mr. Cullen: Certainly, I'll take that information under advisement.

Clearly, Manitoba Hydro, it being a Crown corporation which this minister is responsible for as well, but the finances of Manitoba Hydro actually do fall under the purview, of course, of the Minister of Finance. If we refer to page 117 of the Supplementary Review, they talk here about this is the financing cost, in fact, of Manitoba Hydro directly. Obviously, the whole idea of Manitoba Hydro having debt impacts the Province of Manitoba as a whole.

So, the question really is the concern over the rising debt, not only of the Province, but the significant additional debt Manitoba Hydro has as part of the overall debt of the Province. In lieu of that, we've seen additional financial expense, carrying expenses, because of that additional debt. I'm just wondering, Mr. Chairman, what the minister, how his department handles that particular extra debt of Manitoba Hydro and how it's incorporated in terms of his financial budget.

Mr. Selinger: The debt for Manitoba Hydro is their responsibility as a government enterprise. They have to pay for it out of their own revenues. It's not a direct responsibility of the Government of Manitoba. We guarantee the debt, but they're responsible for the financing and payment and management of their own debt. They do it by—the member has given me a page here.

He'll see there's certain ratios that they try to follow in the management of their debt. The most significant one being the debt ratio. Mr. Chair, the debt-to-equity ratio, and the member will note that in '98 it was 0.86 and now it's 0.8, so that's an improving ratio. The target is to get to 0.75, and then

there's two other ratios: interest coverage, which has been relatively constant. It's gone up, but it's been relatively constant over those '98 to 2007, and then the capital coverage which, roughly, has been relatively constant as well. If you just look at the two ends of that table, there have been variations in the middle.

So the short answer is they're responsible for looking after their own debt and doing it within a set of benchmarks that apply to Crown corporations in the hydro business.

Mr. Cullen: Well, thank you very much for that, Mr. Minister.

In terms of the debt-to-equity ratio, is there a public policy or government policy that would dictate where the Province would like that debt-to-equity ratio for Manitoba Hydro?

Mr. Selinger: The Hydro Board itself has set themselves a policy of their preferred debt-to-equity ratio of 75/25. So, that's where they'd like to be now.

That becomes more challenging when you're actually building new hydro because, as the member will know, there's long lead times on building these projects. They take a while and then you spend a lot of time building them. Then the good news is that after you spend a long time building them, the revenues continue for an awfully long time after that.

So they're capital-intensive hydro dams. They require capital flowed for a fairly long time horizon before revenues start being generated, but once the revenues are generated they repay themselves over a 50-, 60-year time horizon. So, it's that type of an industry.

* (16:40)

Mr. Cullen: In terms of Manitoba Hydro's debt, my understanding is the Province of Manitoba guarantees that particular debt. In turn, for that guarantee, the Province charges, if you like, Manitoba Hydro. I'm just wondering what that particular figure is now and how the Province determines what that particular assessment is going to be.

Mr. Selinger: The member wasn't here earlier when I gave the number out for '06-07; it was \$71 million. The way that's set is that it's a business calculation. The cost of the guarantee fee is offset by the lower cost of capital that Hydro acquires with the government guarantee. In other words, if they didn't pay the guarantee fee, they would pay more having

to borrow under their own name without the backup of the Province or the Crown; that is the terminology that's used.

So we have a debt guarantee fee, which means they win by getting cost of capital cheaper than they would otherwise get it if they didn't have the guarantee. It reflects the fact that we're providing them a guarantee. We do the borrowing with them; we actually use our Treasury division to do the borrowing in the marketplace for them. So we provide a service, and we give them a competitive advantage through the guarantee fee.

Mr. Cullen: Having said that, does the minister know what kind of a saving that would be accrued to Manitoba Hydro in terms of having their financial situation guaranteed, backed by the Province?

Mr. Selinger: Our estimate would be that they have about a 25 basis point advantage by borrowing under the name of the Crown, which, in layman's language, is about a quarter of a percent. Which may not sound like much, but, when you're talking about the large volumes of capital they consume, it's quite significant.

Mr. Cullen: The other area where the Province is involved with Manitoba Hydro is establishing water rental rates. My understanding is that Cabinet, through Order-in-Council, will set the water rental rates. Could you just confirm that for me?

Second of all, how are those rates set? What are the criteria for setting them and what are they based on?

Mr. Selinger: Water power rental rates are under a piece of legislation, which is in the purview of the Department of Water Stewardship. The rate is set by looking at what other jurisdictions do and to reflect the value of the resource. That would be it.

Mr. Cullen: It appears from Manitoba Hydro's report that the water rental rates have increased quite dramatically in the last eight years. Back in 1999, it was pegged at \$50 million; this past year, at \$112 million.

I'm just wondering if the minister could foresee, or have the rates probably been set for this upcoming year?

Mr. Selinger: The rates have only been set for the budget that ends March 31. We're still going through the budget process from March 31, '08, till March 31, '09. But the rates have been set for the year that we're in right now and we're doing the Estimates on.

Mr. Cullen: I do thank the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) for the opportunity to ask a few questions. We do look forward to having Manitoba Hydro and that committee meet sometime in the near future, so we can have more detailed discussions about Manitoba Hydro. Thank you very much.

Mr. Borotsik: We'll get back into a different area outside of Manitoba Hydro. The minister takes great glee in explaining to me that the economy of Manitoba is, as he said earlier, firing on all eight cylinders.

He also talks about the employment figures and statistics. I wonder if I can do a bit of a shift here and talk about public-sector employment versus private-sector employment at the present time. One of the background documents that I have indicates, and I'll give you the numbers, that Saskatchewan's the highest—there's no question—in reliance on public sector. Saskatchewan has the highest public-sector employees per 1,000 population. They have 139 people per 1,000 population that are employed in the public sector. Manitoba is second, however. So we are second in some things when it comes to the economy. We have 128 employees per 1,000 population. Now that's 128 people per 1,000 people in the province of Manitoba who are employed in the public sector.

Now, Mr. Chair, to take it in a different direction, percentage of the workforce, that's only in the population. In the percentage of the workforce, right now, Saskatchewan certainly is still the highest. They beat us in a lot of other areas when it comes to tax rates. They beat us in a lot of other areas when it comes to personal basic exemption. They also beat us in this one. The Province of Saskatchewan, right now, has 27.9 percent of their workforce which is public sector. Manitoba, again, is second. We have 25.8 percent of the workforce is public sector. That means for every four people in the workforce, right now, in Manitoba, one is employed by the public sector.

I guess, the question that I have to the minister: Does he feel that this is sustainable, that we can continue to have growth in the public sector? Again, at what level does he see its being capped out? Is he looking at one for every three in the workforce, one for every four in the workforce, or one for every two in the workforce? Is there a number that the minister has in mind?

Mr. Selinger: Well, the member said we were the second best, snidely, in his comments. I'm shocked

that he would take that smart-alecky attitude as a new member of the Legislature. I thought he'd be a little more humble until, at least, till Christmastime.

An Honourable Member: I'm more humble at Christmas.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, that would be refreshing.

Now, I have to say to the member that I don't know where he's getting his stats from. Does he want to table his sources? Are these Stats Can figures?

Mr. Borotsik: Public Sector Statistics, Financial Management System 2006/2007.

Mr. Selinger: I think that's federal government data from Stats Canada. That data, if I remember it correctly, has some challenges within it because it includes municipal governments as well, school boards, et cetera. So they sort of conflate together several tiers of government. *[interjection]* My point would be is that a certain amount of that data is in levels of government that are, as the member would well know, not necessarily under the direct control of the provincial government. One of those levels would be the municipal sector which is one of the healthier sectors for public-sector employees in the province, as the member knows. We're very aware that some levels of municipal government pay far higher wages than the provincial government does.

In terms of Manitoba, our public sector per capita has increased 0.8 percent in '06, the sixth slowest rate among the provinces, sixth slowest. Year-to-date, '07, public employees have contracted 1.2 percent, the third lowest rate among the provinces. Between 2002 and 2006, Mr. Chair, Manitoba's public sector per capita has increased only 1.9 percent, the fifth slowest rate of increase among provinces. Now that's in contrast to Saskatchewan, but I don't wish to slag my neighbours to the west of me.

An Honourable Member: Only in the Grey Cup, they're on the way out anyway.

Mr. Selinger: No, I think, we'll do extremely well in the Grey Cup. The member doesn't have any faith in the Bombers, but I have to tell you, I think the Bombers will do great. It would be nothing better than to have a Bomber-Saskatchewan Grey Cup. I think it would be superb. We've just got that small problem of B.C. to get out of the way.

Mr. Borotsik: I wonder if I could also have the table that the minister is quoting from.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, we'll try to provide him that data.

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you.

Okay, the next area. The minister also talks about, and I'm sure he'll have different tables, and I'm sure we can talk about which table is right, which table is wrong. This is Statistics Canada's Payroll Employment, Earnings.

* (16:50)

The minister took great glee, perhaps, even pride in the last committee session in explaining that Manitoba has the lowest cost of living in the country. He showed me the tables, and I see them in the budget. The reason why Manitoba is doing so well is because of our low cost of living, we have the low taxation levels, we have low tax rates. But the minister didn't, at that point in time, mention that Manitoba also has the third lowest average weekly earnings, so therefore we have a low cost of living. There are low cost-of-livings in lots of areas. In fact, if you go to some Third World countries, I'm sure their cost of living is extremely low. I'm not suggesting at all that Manitoba's in that area. What I am suggesting, however, is that Manitoba certainly has a low cost of living, and it's necessary because at the present time we're the third lowest average weekly earnings. We're ahead only of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.

I wonder again if the minister can tell me that this is sustainable as well, as we're looking at the lost cost of living so that we can keep our weekly earnings lower than the other jurisdictions.

Mr. Selinger: I would have to say this to the member that our growth in earnings percent changes year over year: this '06-07, third best in the country, growth in earnings; '07, we were seventh; '05, we were third; '04, we were first, just to give you some indication. Earnings in Manitoba have been catching up. It is true that in the '90s they were very low. We've got a low base to work off of, but earnings are starting to pick up. That's a positive story.

The other thing that the member needs to know is that disposable income in Manitoba is up over 10 percent in the last five, six years, and that is an indicator of how much money is in your pocket after you pay for everything. Even though some provinces such as Alberta have higher wages, their disposable income is actually declining because the cost of living is growing faster than their wages are growing. So that's an important measure, personal disposable

income. It's the second fastest growth rate over the last 16 years in '06, and real disposable per-capita income has grown every year since '99-2000 after falling 5.4 percent between '90 and '97.

So between '99 and '06 Manitoba's real per-capita disposal income has grown 12.9 percent, and that's an important indicator that Manitobans have more disposable income, which is probably an underlying contributing factor to strong retail sales in the province, a strong sense that employment is pretty healthy here. We have a very high participation in the labour force. I think it's 68 percent, one of the highest in the country, which means that of all those people of working age who can work we have a high percentage that are working.

I'm one that believes that we should try to get wages up, and I hope the member is too. I hope for that reason he would support an increase in the minimum wage.

Mr. Borotsik: As part of the wages in disposable income, I would support reduction in taxes so that there's more disposable income in the pockets of those individuals. I'm sure that if the minister asked me I would be more than happy to support any of the personal income tax reductions that he may well be anticipating in the upcoming budget. Certainly, we've talked earlier about the basic exemption. We've talked about the tax rates. We've talked about bracket creep. We've talked about a lot of those, and, as the minister knows, should those be changed, a lot of those dollars going back into disposable income will then go back into the economy here in Manitoba. So, yes, I would support him on that any time he wishes to bring those forward. I would be more than happy to support that.

Mr. Selinger: But I'm seriously asking him whether he supports the minimum wage because a lot of working people in Manitoba pay very little, if hardly, any taxes at all, and so reducing tax rates wouldn't help them. It's only by increasing their wages that they're going to have more disposable income. So I ask him to turn his mind to that.

Mr. Borotsik: I'll certainly do the numbers on that when the minister brings forward his proposals, and we'll certainly talk about it at that time. I didn't realize the minister was looking at an increase in minimum wages, and it's fine. But, if he is, when he brings them forward, I think anything that we look at would be fair to discuss and certainly debate at that

time. I wasn't being facetious. I was being totally serious when I suggested about the tax reductions as well. There are a lot of people at very low incomes at the present time. It may well not be minimum wage, but it's certainly low incomes at this time that are still paying substantially more in provincial tax than they are in other jurisdictions. I mean that sincerely, and as I said I wasn't trying to be facetious, it was just a matter of suggesting that's one way to put more disposable income, disposable dollars, into people's pockets.

Speaking of which, and the minister had mentioned the retail sales, one of my concerns, and again it's not necessarily doom and gloom but more of a reality. If you read the papers today, after the long weekend particularly, there seems to be some leakage of retail sales from Manitoba into the U.S. Again, the reason for that is, through no fault of the province—and I'll be the first to admit, it's a very high Canadian dollar at the present time—Manitobans, historically, have been attracted to southern points in the United States, Grand Forks being one, Minot being one out of my jurisdiction. Has your staff been able to look at the potential of that leakage and how that would, in fact, reflect, not only on the loss of retail sales tax, the PST, but also with respect to income generated off the retail sector itself?

Mr. Selinger: Just to put it in perspective, July '06 to July '07, our percent change in retail trade was 9.3 percent, fourth best in the country. It is true that Manitobans are shrewd shoppers; we all know that. They look for value when they purchase things, and that's not a bad thing at all. When they shop in the states and bring products and goods back to Manitoba they still have to pay the retail sales tax. Now, we prefer them to shop in Manitoba. We're seeing all across the country greater awareness by Canadian consumers of price differentials between Canada and the United States. There's been a lot of coverage on the national media on that lately, cars, clothing, et cetera, et cetera. This is putting some pressure on retailers to reduce prices to stay competitive, and we're seeing examples of that now. We're seeing over the long weekend sales in border communities, for example, Windsor versus Detroit, to keep people on the Windsor side purchasing. Manitobans are definitely going down to Grand Forks and looking elsewhere for opportunities to get good value. Some of them are finding them; some of them aren't. I mean, we do have pretty good prices in Manitoba. We have very low inflation. Our prices don't jump up as high as some other jurisdictions, but

the reality is that we always want to make sure that Manitobans have a good shopping environment as provided mostly through the private sector.

But I can tell you this: When it comes to taxes for small business in Manitoba that are providing goods and services, they're probably far lower than they are in the United States, because the United States—they don't have the benefit of a universal medicare system. They have to pay a lot of health premiums down there, which usually takes the form of a payroll tax, which is growing at about 14 percent a year in the United States. It's a huge competitive disadvantage in the United States right now, the way they structure the financing of health costs for their employees.

So the reality is that a high dollar creates opportunities for things like travel. It creates opportunities to purchase goods, and with the Internet, now, it also creates opportunities to purchase goods electronically as well from other jurisdictions. So all of those pressures are out there, but I know our tax people are working on ensuring that we have a fair system on, for example, e-commerce to make sure that taxes are paid in all the various jurisdictions where the goods are bought and sold.

I know Manitoba retailers will be looking to maintain themselves in a competitive position, and I'm sure when they go to their wholesalers and to their suppliers, especially if they're from the Americans, they will expect good value for the money. They'll be asking why they're paying a higher price than they might be paying if they were on the other side of the border. The market has its own self-correcting mechanisms, as I'm sure the member's aware, having been involved in retail and some of the facilities that retailers operate in. Small businesses are pretty shrewd at going back and negotiating for better prices to make sure they can stay competitive, and we'll help them out in terms of having the lowest small business tax rate in the country.

Mr. Borotsik: The minister indicated that July '06 to July '07 there was an increase. There is, and he also mentioned earlier there are lag times, and we recognize that there are lag times. We're sitting in another quarter now; we're sitting August, September, October. In fact, if we go back and look at the dollar value in July, it was substantially less than what it is now.

We're also entering into a fairly significant shopping season. I'm sure the minister recognizes that October, November, December for retail, usually will amount to anywhere from 45 percent to 50 percent of the total revenues generated by those retailers for that period. We're running into a period now where there is, in my opinion, the opportunity for having a substantial impact. Again, I wonder if your staff has looked at any of the possible numbers that could be looking forward now between the last two quarters of this year.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

EDUCATION, CITIZENSHIP AND YOUTH

* (15:20)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order? This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth.

Does the honourable minister have any opening comments?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Yes, I do. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

First of all, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) as my critic. I know that the honourable member brings with him experience in the capacity of a school trustee, and I'm very much looking forward to the dialogue that we'll have with respect to the education system in Manitoba and how we can work together to continue to improve what I firmly believe is one of the best education systems in the world.

I would also like to take licence and acknowledge that, in the gallery today, Dr. John Stapleton is here. He was the dean of the Faculty of Education when I was student president of the Faculty of Education. I'd like to welcome Dr. Stapleton here today to be a part of this democratic process.

I certainly appreciate this opportunity to put a few words on the record with respect to what we have achieved in the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth in the past year. I appreciate, though, that there are only 32 hours remaining in the Estimates process, and there are a lot of good things

we can talk about, but I'll try to highlight some of the things that we have been doing in the department.

I guess I could start with the bricks and mortar. We are currently in our second year of a three-year capital funding campaign that we had announced at \$45 million per year, which is unprecedented, which has allowed for long-term planning, more favourable conditions for tendering and, essentially, has helped to speed up the process when it comes to establishing community needs, building new buildings and dealing with inventory that includes over 28 million square feet of buildings and facilities in the province of Manitoba.

We're very proud of the capital program and the work that we continue to do. I've had the opportunity to open up a school this past month alone in Churchill, and I look forward to other schools that we will be opening as a result of this campaign, including East Selkirk and the new school for the DSFM in South St. Vital, among others. The school capital is a very important part of this portfolio. Of course, how we fund education has been a very important part of this portfolio as well, with last year's announcement of \$30.3 million or 3.3 percent for the '07-08 school year.

We currently fund 71 percent of the cost of public education, and we've been able to do so by increasing funding and taking considerable and meaningful steps to address issues of property tax for the purpose of funding education, including eliminating one of the property taxes that had been levied, the education support levy as had been levied by the Province, which is in excess of \$100 million. We completed that and, of course, the property tax credit, having been increased from \$275 to \$525, for a total of \$225 million, as well as the rebate on farmland, which is currently at 65 percent for '07. It's scheduled to increase to 80 percent over the next five years.

So the way we fund education is certainly a very important discussion in the public domain, but, for me as an educator, I think the most important thing is what we do with that money, how we invest in our students and in our schools. As I said, bricks and mortar are part of it, but to me, as an educator, it's the magic that happens in our schools each and every day with many thousands of dedicated teachers and administrators and educational assistants and trustees and all the stakeholders, parents, of course, all the stakeholders who are crucial to the success of our public school system.

We continue to be innovative as a Province, leading the way on Education for Sustainable Development, for example, where we've developed an action plan emphasizing educated, professional learning opportunities and identifying Education for Sustainable Development focus, learning resources, integrating Education for Sustainable Development in the teaching of all subjects and supporting the United Nations' Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. The department, as such, has become the lead jurisdiction through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada on this very important file respecting ESD.

Aboriginal education. Our department is also recognized as one of the lead jurisdictions with the Council of Ministers of Education in the Aboriginal education file. We're currently working with partners to increase the number of First Nations' educators. We're working to establish a closer working relationship with First Nations' schools and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

One of the other files I'm particularly pleased with is the focus on increasing student achievement in low-income communities in the north. We're providing pilot funding and programming support to 20 schools and low income and northern communities in support of community school initiatives that emphasize intersectoral partnerships and parental and community involvement, Madam Chairperson. The department has also entered into a memorandum of understanding with R.D. Parker Collegiate in Mystery Lake School Division in Thompson to work to significantly increase the graduation rate over a four-year period.

Having taught the middle years, another area that I'm really excited about is our assessment of student engagement in Grade 7, which has not been done before, but it's recognizing the need to assess how active our active learners can be with respect to understanding their level of engagement. We have, certainly, supported action-learning initiatives or hands-on learning initiatives or experiential-learning initiatives with funds allocated on a per capita basis for middle-years learners for experiential learning.

Of course, when I was first appointed in November of 2003, the department was changed to Education, Citizenship and Youth. Citizenship agenda is a very ambitious one that is pervasive throughout the new social studies curriculum as a core concept, and student engagement in the process of teaching and learning about what it means to be a

citizen in a democratic, diverse, and sustainable society is the mandate for the Citizenship agenda. It's also providing support to the Speaker's office in support of the establishing of the Teacher Institute on Parliamentary Democracy, which I'm very much looking forward to next week.

Certainly, our commitment starts before public school and beyond public school as the Youth component to the portfolio, but we are assessing the students' abilities with the early development indicator prior to students attending school. We also have a number of programs under the Youth banner to address student needs post high school, in terms of transition from high school to the post-secondary education. So we also focus on career development, and we also focus on a number of different issues I could summarize quickly: Healthy Choices is part of the Healthy Kids Healthy Futures Task Force; rural education initiatives as we look at what are some of the challenges that are faced by rural communities; and student achievement as we look at effective assessment practices in general to address classroom-based teacher-led assessment, in particular. The department is also exploring ways to improve upon its annual release of our provincial report on student achievement, and a provincial report on school and school division priorities.

Also, recognizing the rapidly changing dynamic of the population of Manitoba, we have recently reviewed the English as an Additional Language strategy, and the department released an EAL action plan providing for additional and expanded programming and funding to support our newcomers, including the Intensive Newcomer Support grant that supports children from war-affected countries. As we just heard a MUPI on the situation in Sudan and Darfur, that is a very important part of the puzzle for newcomers who might arrive in Canada who have had unspeakable experiences, things that we can only imagine in terms of their experiences in their previous country of origin, and how we need to continue to find ways to support them in a meaningful way.

Of course, our commitment, also, in special needs with the regulations around appropriate educational programming in Bill 13, and that being introduced outlining the level of service that special-need students can and should expect. As well, their funding and support of special-need students continues to increase every year.

Technical vocational initiatives are very important as our economy is diversifying, and we recognize the need for more support for the trades and training in the province of Manitoba.

So these are many of the initiatives that we have undertaken, and we are currently looking at a number of other initiatives to support the needs of our students.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the hard work of the staff of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth who have been doing outstanding things in support of learning and teachers in the province of Manitoba.

With those comments, I thank you, Madam Chair.

*(15:30)

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Springfield, have any opening comments?

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Madam Chair, it came as quite a surprise to myself that I was appointed the education advocate on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party. I don't think one should ever be a critic of education, so I would rather be an advocate than a critic.

Being a product of the public school system myself, I had the opportunity to attend many elementary schools, then had an opportunity to visit a few schools, public schools, in the United States, and then finished off my junior and senior high at Elmwood High School. Certainly, a school that had its challenges, but I have come to the conclusion that the staff at Elmwood High School compensated in amazing ways for the challenges that the community might have had, and Maureen Prendergast, I'm sure, is familiar to the minister, Madam Chair. She's now one of the retired teachers. In fact, I think she was president, and if the minister feels she's a little tough on him sometimes, well, then he knows what kind of a teacher she was. She was a tough teacher, and she was a good teacher. Individuals like Tom Forrest, and so on, outstanding individuals, and I guess the minister and I can both say clearly our public education got us thus far. So hats off to the public school system.

Education, of course, is incredibly important. I believe you judge a nation, you judge the standards of a nation, based on the kind of education that you provide, and I think you can never be too pro-education, ever. It's important. It's the way we basically drive our nations; it's the way we drive our economies; it's the driver of everything. The beautiful thing about investing in education, unlike investing in other things, you can invest in metal, steel and stone—those things deteriorate, and education, given once, is something you keep for the rest of your life. It cannot be taken away. It goes with you wherever you go, and it is always, always a good investment.

I have travelled on numerous occasions to Mexico, and I, of course, have to sacrifice and travel to places like Puerto Vallarta, usually in the wintertime. I've taken the opportunity to go to the program called Children of the Dump, and there's a Winnipegger by the name of Winnie Giesbrecht who started the program there. It's as simple as providing a pair of runners, crayons, and \$50; it is what it takes to get into school. For a lot of these children, that's just not attainable for them. They can't come up with crayons, a pair of runners and \$50. What a statement when you think our children, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed—I know my three have all gone through kindergarten and are now moving on in their school years, and what a great opportunity, what a joyful occasion. I know we're trying to give that kind of opportunity to others who are less fortunate. In fact, the Mexican government is now starting to put fencing around the dumps so that children and families don't under-nourish themselves from there and that the children go to education and try to build and become something.

So we have a lot of great things about our educational system. It's a dynamic system. In fact, I was able to indicate to some individuals that I believe in the public school system so much that my children are currently enrolled in the public school system, and that's how strongly I believe in it. I believe education is the way every young person should be going, and I look forward to going through this Estimates process. It's far too short, but we will make the best of it.

Before we get into a line of questioning, I do want to indicate to the departmental staff how much we appreciate what they do, and I don't mean to get Gerald Farthing, the deputy minister, in any more trouble than he may be. In fact, I don't wish to get him fired, but I do want to say that he was my boss

years ago at the department of Crown investment. I think I should put on the record what kind of a boss he was. I think, because we have immunity in this Chamber, I should come forth and tell the truth what he was like as a boss then. Let me put it to you this way. Throughout my career, whenever I came upon something I didn't know how to deal with, staff or a problem, I'd always think back on what would Gerald Farthing do. I'm not kidding you here. I would try to think like Gerald Farthing and I would follow that. He was singularly the best boss I ever had. So I think the department is in very good hands. I am a fan of Gerald Farthing, and I hope this doesn't cost him his job. Sorry, Gerald, I had to confess. They had me on the rack. He's just an outstanding individual, dedicated and really believes in everything that we're doing.

To the departmental staff, school boards, teachers, support staff—I'll try to list some of them, and I'm sure I've forgotten a few of them—the para's, clerical staff, bus drivers, mechanics, caretakers, all the others, thank you for making our education a great education system, for making sure that our schools are safe, that the approaches to our schools are safe, that our buses are driven in a safe manner.

To all of them I say thank you, and I say it out of a conflict of interest because my children do go to the public school system, come home excited, come home cheased off with all the homework, come home with all the emotions that normal children should and do come home with when they come home from school and tell us all about the wonderful things that they get to do and participate in. So to everyone, as the education advocate on behalf of the official opposition, we thank you.

It is a very big department, very big budget, and I think it's important to go through this process. I think the oversight process is important. I don't envy, for instance, I believe it's Alabama. If my numbers are a little wrong, I apologise; I believe the education budget in Alabama right now stands at \$7 billion, and the rest of the state budget is between \$2 billion and \$3 billion. They were, at one point in time, the worst standing in the United States in education.

It's telling how we in this province have been able to build an outstanding education system with the resources we have, and do look forward again to putting questions forward, asking questions. Due diligence is important because it makes this system work. We have to have the oversight. So, if the minister feels I'm being a little bit too harsh on him

at times, well, that is, unfortunately, part of the process, and it keeps the system the way it should be, running smoothly.

With those few comments, I look forward to the Estimates process.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the official opposition critic for his remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of line item 1.(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us in the Chamber, and once they are seated, we will ask the minister to introduce the staff in attendance.

The floor is open for questions. All right. Did you have—

* (15:40)

Mr. Bjornson: Madam Chair, I'd like to introduce the staff who have joined us for this Estimates process today.

I have with me Claude Fortier, director of Finance and administration and acting deputy minister; Steve Power, director of Schools' Finance branch; as well as David Yeo, director of Education Administration Services.

Mr. Schuler: If it's okay with the minister, could we have a global discussion, and then at the end we will go through the various departments? Unfortunately, the way the Estimates process is now—unfortunate—what am I saying? The way the Estimates process is right now, it's a very prescriptive time, unlike in the good old days when it used to go on forever and some of us felt we were going to become old just through the Estimates process, never mind natural process. So, just because of time constraints, would he be agreeable to a global discussion and then conclude with going the line-by-line?

Madam Chairperson: Is it agreed we will proceed in the global discussion? *[Agreed]*

The floor is now open for questions, and the honourable Member for Springfield.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Chair, on the global side, if the minister would just take a pen and, maybe, write down Gary Kaminski's name, and I'll give him the rest of the information. He's a constituent we share,

and he has an issue. If I could just raise that with him later on—I haven't had the time to—I'll get him afterward and give him the information on that particular issue. I stuck it in my Estimates book. I found it now and I should probably be bringing it to his attention.

I was wondering if the minister would give us a list of all the political staff, including their names, position and the FT equivalent, if they are full-time or part-time. If you could do that, please.

Mr. Bjornson: Certainly. Currently, I have a special assistant and that is Carolina Stecher. I have a special adviser, that is Grant Prairie; in Policy, Ron Desjardins.

Does the member wish to know my EA as well in my office?

Mr. Schuler: I know it's probably not something we could get right away. I'm fine with some of this if we can get it later on. I don't want to do this to the Minister of Education that the Minister of Labour used to do, you know, X-Y-Z. Probably not what he wants to hear, but what the Minister of Labour used to do is take a lot of these things and then afterward compile them and send them to my office. I'm fine with that simply because we are in this compressed time with Estimates. I'm fine with that, you know, maybe she is more efficient, I don't know. You have to, maybe, ask her about that, but, she was very efficient all ways. Far be it from me to sing her praises or anything, but I just, on that note, probably should point out the reason why she is the minister she is today is really, probably, because of her critic, but you know that's perhaps a discussion for another day.

I was wondering if the minister could provide for us a specific list of all staff in the minister's *[inaudible]*

Mr. Bjornson: I will gladly provide that for the member.

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister tell us the number of staff currently employed in the department?

Mr. Bjornson: Madam Chairperson, there's currently 543.12 positions in the department.

Mr. Schuler: I thank the minister for that answer.

Could the minister provide for us the names of staff who have been hired in the 2007-2008 budget year, including whether they were hired through competition or by appointment?

Mr. Bjornson: We will provide that for the member.

Mr. Schuler: Would it be possible for the minister, through his department perhaps, if he would give us a description of any position that has been reclassified?

Mr. Bjornson: We'll have to provide that for the member.

Mr. Schuler: My next question, it's an interesting one. I happened to have spent some time with a legislator from the Virgin Islands. This is one of his big things. He's the chairman of the finance committee out of the Virgin Islands, and this was his big thing: a list of all vacant positions within the department. I believe that's a very important question. I think it's important that that be a public number. If that would be possible, I would certainly appreciate it.

Mr. Bjornson: In order to do so, could the member please provide me with a time frame?

Mr. Schuler: Of course, 2007-2008. That budget year.

Mr. Bjornson: We will certainly provide that information to the member.

Mr. Schuler: Are all staff years currently filled?

Mr. Bjornson: No, they are not currently filled, not all staff years.

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister provide us with how many staff years are currently not filled?

Mr. Bjornson: That specific request will take time, but we will provide the member with the information.

Mr. Schuler: Again, that's for the '07-08 budget year.

Mr. Bjornson: The time reference, thank you.

Mr. Schuler: Within the department, and this is more of, for me, trying to understand how the Department of Education works. I'm sure the minister is aware that I spent a lot of years as the Labour and Immigration critic. In fact, I had to train three ministers. It was a tough job. Someone had to do it, and it was always given to me to turn out good ministers. So I'm trying now to learn the education process.

Details of how many and what types of contracts are being awarded directly. Again, why is that happening? Do you have sort of a certain level? Is it

like anything under \$25,000 that goes without tender, contracts over a certain amount? How do you sort of decide what goes out to tender and what doesn't?

Mr. Bjornson: For most amounts we do try to go to tender. There are occasions though, for expediency, that we do not go to tender. The member is asking for some very specific information, and that would take some time to get that information for the member.

Mr. Schuler: You know, perhaps the minister did give me the amount. I didn't hear the first part of his answer. Again, is it a certain amount of money that once it gets to that point it gets tendered out?

* (15:50)

Mr. Bjornson: Actually, it doesn't matter what the amount might be. We try to go to tender every time for contracts. However, as I said, there are occasions when, for expediency, we do not tender. For the most part, we try to go to tender every time.

Mr. Schuler: How often would the minister say? Is that a common occurrence? Is that a rare occurrence that something doesn't go out to tender?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, more often than not, when we don't go to tender it's curriculum-related contracts, whether it's developing resources or writing curricula. That's usually a time-sensitive process once those curriculum initiatives have been approved for development. So, as I said, more often than not, we do go to tender, but these are usually the examples where we do not. That's for expediency, once again. It doesn't matter the amount. We more often than not try to go to tender, so I can't really speak to the frequency of how often contracts are awarded that are not tendered.

Mr. Schuler: Can the minister tell us how many positions within his department have been relocated, again, within the 2007-2008 budget year, relocated, say, from rural or northern Manitoba into Winnipeg, or relocated around the province, or relocated from the city up to northern Manitoba, and why? Has there been a lot of relocation within the department of staff?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes. Thank you, for the question.

There has been one clerical position that was relocated from Wawanessa to Winkler, but that would be the only one at this stage over this calendar year.

Mr. Schuler: If the minister could give us a status update of new departmental initiatives that were

announced, undertaken in the 2007-2008 budget year.

Mr. Bjornson: We'll certainly be happy to provide the member with that information.

Mr. Schuler: Thank you very much. Can the minister tell us, has any travel by the Premier (Mr. Doer) or a delegation led by the Premier, has that ever been paid for out of the Department of Education?

Mr. Bjornson: No.

Mr. Schuler: Can the minister give us sort of an indication of how many out-of-province trips he has taken in the past year?

Mr. Bjornson: Actually, it's been, I haven't had any out-of-province travel this past year. Minister McGifford attended the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada a couple of weeks ago. I did not attend that particular conference. So I haven't been out of the province this past calendar year.

Mr. Schuler: Again, we're always sort of talking the 2007-2008 budget year.

Mr. Bjornson: No, the last trip that I had taken out-of-province would have been last fall when I attended CMEC in—oh, I'm sorry. I was actually in Toronto this past spring; my apologies to the member. I did actually go to CMEC conference in Toronto, I believe in February of this past year. Prior to that, it was Newfoundland for CMEC in last September, October, I don't recall the exact date.

Mr. Schuler: With the minister's exhaustive travel outside of the province, could he tell this committee what the conference was in Toronto and how many staff did he take with him and how many days was it?

Mr. Bjornson: The Toronto trip for CMEC, my special assistant did travel with me as well as—of course, there's the ACDME, which is the Advisory Committee of Deputy Ministers of Education, which included Dr. Farthing and, I believe, two other Department of Education staff; I would have to confirm that number. But that would have been, I believe, five of us as well; Minister McGifford and, I believe, her assistant were part of that delegation for the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

Mr. Schuler: My next question to the minister is about Dr. Mary Hall, who is, I take it, still the executive director of Safe Schools Manitoba: What is her current full-time equivalent?

Mr. Bjornson: Actually, we fund the position through a partnership with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, but Dr. Mary Hall is not identified as an FDE in the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth. She's simply funded by our partnership with Manitoba Association of School Trustees and Safe Schools Manitoba.

Mr. Schuler: So is it that she's an employee of MAST?

Mr. Bjornson: No, she would not actually be an employee of MAST; it is a contract that MAST provides. They also provide space in their office as well as administrative support for Safe Schools Manitoba, so it's actually a contract position.

Mr. Schuler: So, basically, she's a contract employee with MAST and then the department just provides a certain amount of funding?

Mr. Bjornson: Essentially, yes.

Mr. Schuler: Does the minister know, is she a full-time consultant, is she considered a half-time consultant? What is her status?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, thank you for the question. Previously, she had been, I believe, 80 percent, four days a week. However, we recently increased the grant for that position and she is currently full-time.

Mr. Schuler: Is it the minister's intention to keep funding that as a full-time position?

* (16:00)

Mr. Bjornson: Well, yes, indeed. I made our commitment to Safe Schools Manitoba, the legislation that we've introduced to support Safe Schools and the Safe Schools Charter and our codes of conduct in those requirements. Certainly, Dr. Hall has been in demand to participate in a lot of professional development for teachers and for school divisions. She's also had a very important consultative role working with the communities as well. There are a lot of requests for her participation in the dialogue around what we need to do to ensure that our students are safe in our schools and our communities are safer places. So she is, indeed—the funding for Safe Schools Manitoba is certainly part of our commitment to safe schools.

Mr. Schuler: Has every school established a code of conduct and emergency response plan?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, they have.

Mr. Schuler: And I take it they've all filed the plan with your department?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, they have.

Mr. Schuler: Has the department determined whether all of these comply with the criteria in the Safe Schools Charter?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, the department has determined that they are compliant. We also recognize that there is need for local autonomy in the development of some of the policies and procedures that are implemented. In fact, some school divisions have looked above and beyond the guidelines that have been established for the Safe Schools Charter and for the codes of conduct. Some school divisions are bringing in new policies around issues of technology that the Safe Schools Charter had allowed for that opportunity, with respect to appropriate Internet use and what not, and they certainly developed policies and procedures that applied to the technology that is surfacing in our schools.

I mean one of the biggest problems with technology is it doesn't come with rules or regulations, so the Safe Schools Charter allows for divisions to respond to such a use as they may arise, but we have been very diligent in having the school division submit their codes of conduct not once, but twice. We've reviewed them two consecutive years, and we have ensured that they are compliant.

Mr. Schuler: Lately, we have seen a lot of challenges that our schools face. I know universities don't come under the minister's purview, but it's now not just universities; it's down at the school level. But does the minister feel that the Safe Schools Charter is extensive enough to protect our children in light of the kinds of things that we've seen happening around our schools and in our schools? I don't mean now just in Manitoba, but what we're sort of seeing in North America. Does he think that it's a strong enough approach to keep our children safe?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, certainly, I feel it's a very strong approach. It's part of the community in a sense that we have been saying from day one that safe schools and safe communities are a community responsibility. That's why we've looked at programs like Safe Schools Manitoba and funding outside of the department to support Safe Schools Manitoba.

The legislation itself, as I said, is designed in such a way that school divisions can look at arising needs and review their policies and procedures. I

have to applaud the work that school divisions have been doing in addressing a number of the concerns as they do arise. Certainly, they are taking it upon themselves to engage in a number of different scenarios and practising some of their procedures if there's a threat in the community.

One of the things that's quite unique, I believe, in Manitoba—and I'm not sure if other jurisdictions are doing this— but I've requested that school divisions report various incidents to their department so that we can see that what we've put in place is being effective in the community. We've requested data and started to collect the data to support schools in recognizing some areas where, perhaps, there needs to be a revisit of the code of conduct in the charter and to look at how we can provide better resources and supports for that school community.

So it remains a very important priority for us. As I said, it's not exclusively the domain of the education system. We certainly work with Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet through the Positive Parenting Program, work with the Department of Justice with the Lighthouses and all kinds of other initiatives that we've brought forward as a government working with non-profit organizations who respect that program through the Red Cross Society.

So there are a number of different initiatives that are all working towards the same end. Ultimately, that is to see that our schools are much safer. Invariably, they are among the safest places in our society, but we know that there are challenges that they face and we want to ensure that we do more to continue to provide safe learning environments for our children.

Mr. Schuler: I guess what I find concerning, and I guess I can speak as one parent, and I suspect I'm not the only parent, there's the report of about the last week about the tracking of violence. I understand it's probably the first time we've really tracked this kind of stuff, but 32 incidents of weapons in schools were reported in the last school year in Manitoba; 20 assaults, 14 cases of uttering threats and verbal assaults. I don't know if it's entirely, if everything is reported.

I guess the concern is the director of Education Administration branch for Education and training, Manitoba, and that would be David Yeo, when he quotes: But I think the numbers reflect a relatively small frequency of those types of events.

I understand, from a statistical perspective, that it's not statistically a large number, but I don't know if I'm comfortable necessarily with that kind of rationale. Maybe it's just us, but the upscaling of violence is certainly a concern to myself and a lot of parents. The day when it used to be a fight in the schoolyard and you got dusted up a little bit seems to have escalated considerably. I know this from my years of being on the school board.

I guess I would like to hear from the minister that, all times, zero is the benchmark, and zero tolerance toward any of this is where we have to be as a policy. Is that something that the minister views as where we are as a province, as a department?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, thank you for the question.

Certainly, I can appreciate the experiences that you've had in the capacity as a trustee. I know in my experience as a teacher—well, in a previous life I also was a bouncer at a lounge in Winnipeg while I was going to university and, oddly enough, was often called upon to break up fights and situations of, well, I guess, unrest, for lack of a better word, in some of the classrooms. So I had put myself at risk on a few occasions, as teachers do every day in the interests of student safety. The difference between then and now, of course, is that we have implemented legislation, and we have provided a number of different supports recognizing the need in our communities to do more. Yes, ultimately, zero incidents would be ideal.

With respect to the data, we were talking about quantitative data, but if we look at the qualitative data in terms of some of the weapons reports that were brought to our attention, on a couple of occasions, if I'm not mistaken, and David will confirm this, David Yeo will confirm this, but incidents where there were weapons outside the school perimeter were actually reported as a serious incident in part of that data. So there weren't actually weapons on the school grounds, but they were perceived to be a potential risk to student safety, and, as such, schools went into lockdown and followed the policies and procedures of the Safe Schools Charter.

In some cases, another example, I believe, that has been used is the suggestion that, if a student had a hockey stick and it was there because they were planning on going to hockey right after school, and perhaps used it in a threatening manner, that could be construed as a weapons report. Even a pencil could be construed as a weapon. So the data that we've collected is quantitative. In terms of qualitative, that

requires further analysis. But right now it's simply data that we've collected because we wanted to know what is happening in the schools.

* (16:10)

I asked for this information because I wanted to find out where there are areas that we can provide better resources and supports. Certainly, we've seen some initiatives at the local level, including the police resource officers that Winnipeg School Division had introduced. Recently, with my colleague, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton), we've announced support through the Neighbourhoods Alive! initiative to fund more special resource officers in the Winnipeg School Division, in schools in the south end of their division.

Another issue, when you mention the dust-ups in the playgrounds, there is, certainly, the recognition, for lack of a better expression, boys will be boys, in terms of some of the bullying and some of the fights that might have occurred on the playgrounds. But I don't believe that the behaviour has changed that much; it's just that our tolerance for that behaviour now says, no, this has to stop, and we're going to do everything we can to support positive, safe and caring learning environments. I believe that's the objective of our Safe Schools initiative, and that's the objective of finding better ways to provide resources and support our community schools.

One last comment, the codes of conduct, we do encourage them to be reviewed on an annual basis to reflect any unidentified needs or any changes that might be necessary, and we encourage that to involve parents and other stakeholders, including having the local police departments as a part of that dialogue.

You did mention zero tolerance, but, certainly, zero tolerance does not necessarily reflect some of the realities for local school divisions in their ability to be administrators and administrate when they do know their students in their community best. That's why that was not something that was considered, that zero tolerance would be part of that charter. We said from day one that this is something that's best decided at the grass-roots level with community input and community support for the Safe Schools code of conduct, and emergency response plans are best developed at the local level. Principals know their students, parents know their students, teachers know their students, and that's why zero tolerance is not part of that discussion. It's not to say that some school divisions haven't gone that route. That's their

decision to make. But, province-wide, that was not part of our mandate.

Mr. Schuler: I guess we've digressed from the back-of-the-school dust-up to some pretty serious altercations. I don't ever remember in my years of going to school where we had the kind of mass carnage of a Columbine, that kind of stuff. We've seen more of that. It generated more into the post-secondary institutions, but not exclusively.

It is a concern. I spent quite a bit of time going to schools. Teachers at times are uneasy. I always think that teachers are sort of the front line of security for our children. Somebody walks into the classroom, instinctively, as the adult in the room, there you are. I just feel we can never put too many supports in for the teachers because that's really, really heavy to put on the teacher: You're our last line of defence and you're the first line of defence. That's serious. We all go about our day and think nothing more. We send our kids to school. A safe environment should be a safe environment. Periodically, one of these incidents pops up, and I think it just puts a real reality check on what's going on out there.

Again, just from my years at the school board, it wasn't that I was one who advocated zero tolerance, if you carried around a pencil and flicked it at another student. Because of privacy laws, the minister knows we can't talk about specifics here, nor would I choose to. It was shocking at times and there was a clear delineation. There are just some things where we cannot have any tolerance for. That's what I meant by zero tolerance. There just comes a time when you just can't have that. Anyway, that was, sort of, when I talked about zero tolerance. I don't know if there was any discussion in the department that there are certain things that we will not tolerate. You bring a certain item to school and it's classified, I don't want to get into specifics, but, after a certain point, we just are not going to tolerate that. You know, we just can't have that in our schools.

By the way, I do appreciate that the department wants to be careful that it doesn't get too prescriptive, that we allow local communities and schools to still have an opportunity to have its input. I respect that. I certainly agree with that as well. But there does come a time when, you know, our front-line teachers do also have to protect its own. I don't know whether discussion is in the department. This is more of an academic discussion. I don't know where you've given guidelines, what you find at some point in

time. It's just way over the top and not to be tolerated.

Mr. Bjornson: Well, certainly with respect to prohibitive weapons, that's something that is already prescribed in The Public Schools Act, that it must be taken away from the student. Again, the nature of the Safe Schools codes of conduct is that they can be responsive to different situations as they should arise.

You know, I taught high school for 13 years, and, while you were talking, I was recalling a moment where there was a young woman walking down the hallway with a pet rat on her shoulder. I suggested to her that that, perhaps, is inappropriate, and she said: Show me the rule that says I can't bring the pet rat to school. I mean, certainly, teens will push the envelope with respect to what is appropriate and what is not appropriate, and we have to be flexible in our responses to that dynamic.

But, certainly, as far as weapons are concerned, that is very clear in The Public Schools Act that that is not to be tolerated and that teachers are expected to remove the weapon from the student. Again, the response of the schools has been—I've heard lots of very good comments from the community that these schools have been responding appropriately when such situations arise, that there is a lot of confidence in school safety because of the way schools have responded. Of course, as a parent who has children in the school system, every day I hope that they're going into a safe environment, and I know that they do remain as one of the safest environments in our communities.

But, again, as stated, when these situations do arise, we need to take a look, as many school divisions do, on how it was handled to ensure that students are safe, and review and revisit any of the policies if they feel that they can do a better job, yet, of providing a safe environment. As I said, there are other technologies that are coming into play that don't come with rules and regulations, and we have to be able to adapt and allow school divisions, as we have through the charter, that flexibility to address those issues.

Mr. Schuler: Moving on to another issue of great interest to myself, and that's the mandatory Grade 11 and 12 phys ed policy. Can the minister sort of give myself, as a new advocate for education, where is the department right now on that particular policy?

* (16:20)

Mr. Bjornson: Certainly, as the member knows, this is part of the task force, Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force, and one of the recommendations that came forward was to increase the amount of physical activity for our students. We have proceeded on a number of the recommendations, one being that the previously suggested, or recommended, guidelines for time allocated for grade 9 and 10 phys ed were now compulsory time lines, mandated time allocations.

We have a policy paper now on the in-class and out-of-class model as we assured school divisions that it would be as flexible as possible for them to implement this program as there are a number of recreational programs in the community that can tie in and be recognized for credit. Teachers will be awarding credits for students on the out-of-class model. That, of course, did come with a 25 percent in-class instruction and up to 75 percent out-of-class.

Currently, the curriculum is being developed, and that speaks to some of those untendered contracts that we were talking about, given the time lines that we have to work with to establish as much curricula support as possible. There are a number of schools that have piloted this initiative this year, and some schools are opting for voluntary implementation of the grade 11 and grade 12 credits for the current year.

We have been providing as much support as possible through the department on this initiative and will continue to do so, anticipating that there are going to be some schools and divisions that are better equipped to implement than others, but key to this implementation was the flexibility that the model allows.

Mr. Drew Caldwell, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Schuler: I welcome the former Minister of Education into the Chair. I'm certainly feeling like this is becoming a gang up here. I have the former and the current ministers of Education. I hope we can somehow struggle through all of this.

On the grade 11 and 12 phys ed, is that going to be mandatory? Is it a guideline? How does the minister view that?

Mr. Bjornson: Actually, it will be compulsory. That was one of the recommendations that we go to compulsory grade 11 and 12, and it will be compulsory and required for graduation.

Mr. Schuler: When does the minister see that coming into play?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, the implementation process was developed through a series of consultations, and, again, some schools are opting for voluntary implementation this year for grade 11 and 12. We've also developed a resource to assist schools and divisions in promoting the safe participation in out-of-class activities, and the students this year, entering grade 10, I believe, will be the first to be required to graduate with 30 credits.

Mr. Schuler: Those students entering grade 10 this year will be required 30 credits. That means they will have to have had—I didn't quite understand that. What do you mean by they have to have graduated with 30 credits?

Mr. Bjornson: Grade 11 and 12, by September of '08, will require students to have two additional phys ed credits, one for grade 11 and one for grade 12, to graduate, so this year's grade 10s, by September of '08, will be required to enrol in the compulsory credits for grade 11 and 12.

Mr. Schuler: Has the minister looked into the concerns there are about resources, facilities, and timetables? How does all that fit in for those students?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, we're certainly looking at that as school divisions are going to be part of the consultation, or continue to be consulting with the department. We've hired an additional curriculum consultant to assist with the implementation of the new credits.

We recognize that the flexibility of the model, the 75 percent-25 percent, in-class, out-of-class component allows school divisions to explore options within the community if there are issues or facilities that might be a challenge for the school divisions. But, certainly, the flexibility that is afforded by this will allow for some very creative thinking and out-of-the-box thinking, as we like to say, with respect to how best to deliver the model.

I know that, for example, Teulon Collegiate, I believe, is going to the balanced day, a different structure to the timetable that will allow students to acquire the credits without leaving the building because of the timetabling that the balanced-day approach affords the administration in Teulon Collegiate.

There are some school divisions where the occupancy of the school is such that it's not an issue of room to provide the credits. I believe I was in Virden last year where they had converted a classroom to a dance studio. Of course, some of the dance programming that's available can be recognized as a physical education credit.

But I think what's really going to make this successful is the fact that students will have a lot more ownership on their life choices with respect to lifelong physical activity, whether it's curling, whether it's aerobics, whether it's dance. This will also have, I believe, a very positive impact on local recreation opportunities. The key being partnerships that could be developed, and there are a lot of school divisions that have already entered into very positive working relationships with municipalities with respect to shared facility-use agreements that can enable them to deliver these programs.

But, again, the bottom line is that the initiative is very flexible. We continue to support it with curricular development, and we continue to support it with feedback from the school divisions. Our commitment is to see these recommendations from the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force brought forward. This is a big part of that commitment.

Mr. Schuler: I guess my question then comes down to activities outside of the classroom. Now, you've brought in a different component. Again, I have been focussing on other areas of governance so haven't followed this as closely. I'm a little bit confused by that. Is it that 25 percent can be outside of the classroom and 75 percent has to be in the classroom? How are you defining that?

Mr. Bjornson: There's a minimum of 25 percent in class and up to 75 percent out of class. So the model may change if there's 50-50 or 75-25, depending on the programming.

I should let the member know that October, November of this year there are workshops that the department will be leading with respect to the high school administrators and phys ed and health educators preparing for next year's implementation.

Mr. Schuler: So, if a student, for instance, is enrolled in winter soccer, that would be an out-of-classroom activity, and if they're in a league, or whatever, then what would they be taking in the 25 percent in-classroom?

Madam Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Bjornson: Well, the in-class instruction includes the health component to the curriculum. That particular example of playing winter soccer, many of the options are going to be looked at at the local level in terms of the deliverables. Certainly, our curriculum consultant will be working with school divisions to identify the appropriate component in terms of the curriculum as it applies to specific activities and as it applies to the health component.

* (16:30)

Mr. Schuler: Yes, moving on. Insofar as drugs are concerned in school, how is it determined that schools are going to be searched?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, the school boards can take a couple of different approaches where, as a matter of policy, they can implement searches, or, if they so desire, can engage a local police authority, if there's potential for criminal matters and matters of criminal investigation. So that can be determined at the local level. I know there have been a couple of divisions that have taken different approaches to this matter, including drug detecting dogs and what not in some of the schools. Either way, they're sending a signal that that's not tolerated and appropriate in our schools.

Mr. Schuler: Do schools have to submit any kind of a drug check plan to the department?

Mr. Bjornson: No, they do not, but schools do have to have a very clear statement and policy in place with respect to the Safe Schools Charter and the codes of conduct. That is our expectation that they include that in their policies and procedures.

On a personal note, a little history lesson, if I may, to the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler). When I was teaching and this issue was raised by MAST in 1992, I was kind of surprised that our school and our division didn't have a policy on drug and alcohol use and abuse by students. It was part of a team that worked with our local board and with the students and with the parents to develop a policy which we are very proud of as a division. In fact, that division model became a model for many other school divisions, as it turned out that there were many school divisions that were deficient in that area with respect to policies and procedures.

When the Safe Schools Charter was made law and the requirement was made of the local school division that drug and alcohol policies be in place for their students, certainly, Evergreen School Division did not need to make many significant changes, other

than updating the policy that they had in place, given the other resources that were available to the school division. So it's been relatively recent that school divisions develop policies on drugs and alcohol, but it was actually the Safe Schools Charter that made that a requirement in law that they have those policies on drugs and alcohol.

Certainly, where there are issues of potential criminal charges, there's the need to involve and engage the local authorities, as they often are when these rather unfortunate choices have been made by students.

Mr. Schuler: The minister having gone through, I'm sure, many years of education himself, he knows that when assignments are turned in late there is a chance that you will be deducted marks.

Is that still a policy in place?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, certainly, the department's expectations are around the mastery of content, anecdotal reports on issues of behaviour, attendance, et cetera. With respect to whether or not marks are deducted, those matters are determined locally. I know some school divisions have policies that cover that for the entire division. In some cases, rules are established by the administration of a particular school. In some cases, it's at the discretion of the teacher. Again, it's one of those issues where the teachers, the administration, the board, they know their community, they know their students, and these are decisions that are best made at the local level.

As far as our expectations are concerned, we certainly do expect that the students will demonstrate a mastery of the content that is presented in the curriculum. That report, as well as attendance issues, are things that the department expects in the act.

Mr. Schuler: So there's no policy directive that has ever come forth from the department addressing deduction of marks for late assignments.

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, thank you for the question.

I understand that the only policy statement was a result of a 1996 policy document, *New Directions: A Foundation for Excellence*. The suggestion was that assessment decisions were based on a demonstration of the mastery of the content as well as some anecdotal references to the behaviour, whether or not the student was on time, attendance issues, things of that nature. That was something that came out of a policy statement that had been issued 11 years ago

under the Filmon government. So that's the only one that I'm aware of.

Mr. Schuler: So, since the minister has been Minister of Education, no such directive was ever sent out.

Mr. Bjornson: That's correct.

Mr. Schuler: There was a media report some time ago that the government of Manitoba is paying \$250,000 for standards testing on First Nation reserves. Can the minister confirm this?

Mr. Bjornson: I'll have to ask our assistant deputy minister of School Programs Division, Anne Longston, to join us for this question. I believe she's in the gallery. School safety first.

If you'll bear with us, Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

Mr. Schuler: If the minister doesn't mind, I'll go to the next question and we'll wait for his staff to arrive.

Could the minister tell us about the status of the announced \$1.5 billion that the government was going to borrow?

* (16:40)

Mr. Bjornson: Thus far, half a billion dollars has been forwarded to TRAF. When we made that announcement, we did identify that it would be coming in two different instalments. The \$1-billion instalment is pending, but that will be in due time.

Mr. Schuler: The other billion was supposed to be in place in early October. I take it that hasn't taken place?

Mr. Bjornson: That's correct. Not at this point, but, as I said, that was our commitment. It would be phased in, half a billion so far, one billion will be coming. That will be coming.

Mr. Schuler: You know what, perhaps now that the next individual who will be dealing with the previous question—perhaps we could get back to that.

Madam Chairperson: Honourable minister? Perhaps the minister would like to introduce the addition.

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, Madam Chair. Anne Longston is the assistant deputy minister of School Programs division who has joined us at the table. Thank you.

With respect to this particular story that the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) referenced

which had appeared in the media, it is my understanding that this was a press release that did come from INAC. We have a partnership with INAC with respect to assessment in terms of professional development and looking at transition for First Nations learners from their public school to vocational and post-secondary institutions. There's actually no money for the assessment itself, but certainly the investment is in professional development for teachers and the issue of transition.

Mr. Schuler: So \$250,000 was the amount?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, I've been advised that that money is not money coming from Education, Citizenship and Youth; that would be INAC's commitment.

Mr. Schuler: Where does INAC get its money from? Is it not provincial money that they're spending? The report was that it was the Government of Manitoba was going to be paying \$250,000. Is that an inaccurate report?

Mr. Bjornson: What exactly our role will be is to work with four First Nations communities with respect to professional development for teachers and with respect to providing support for the development of a transition document.

The \$250,000 that the member's speaking of is not from my department.

Mr. Schuler: Moving back to our question right before this one, and that's the 1.5 billion that the government was going to borrow. I'm a little confused with the minister's answer; half a billion was supposed to be put in place in April, and he has indicated that it was put into place, and the billion was supposed to be in place by early October. Is there now a reflection, on that billion dollars? It was supposed to be in place already by October.

Mr. Bjornson: No, the 1.5-billion commitment, as I said, was announced to be phased in in two phases, with half a billion and then a billion forthcoming. I believe it was your words that it was early October. I did say it would be in due time that that \$1 billion would be brought forward to TRAF.

Mr. Schuler: To the minister, so there was never a commitment for it to be there, the billion, by early October? Again, I'm sure I've gotten a few things wrong today, and I apologize for that. So there was never a commitment that the billion was supposed to be in place by early October. It was just a commitment and it would be there whenever.

Mr. Bjornson: We could certainly take it as notice if there was a specific date, but, as I said, that is our commitment. We're one-third of the way there, and that \$1.5-billion commitment will be realized in due time.

Mr. Schuler: The due time, is that where your predecessor would say, the devil's in the details? Is that in the fullness of time kind of a time frame? Is it a mañana, meaning not today and maybe not tomorrow? Is it going to be this calendar year? What kind of time frame is the government looking at?

Mr. Bjornson: It will be this calendar year, yes.

Mr. Schuler: With the Pension Task Force, which is being chaired by our former colleague, Tim Sale, has the minister received any recommendations from the task force or from Tim Sale, the chair?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, the teachers' Pension Task Force operates independently of my office. I know that they have been meeting and that they have a proposal that all parties are exploring. As a matter of process, we will look at the recommendations as they come forward.

Mr. Schuler: So the minister has not seen any of those proposals.

Mr. Bjornson: Not specifically, no.

Mr. Schuler: So he's seen proposals unspecifically, just not specific proposals.

Mr. Bjornson: It is a negotiated process. So, Madam Chairperson, that's certainly something that they discuss at the table. When the time is appropriate for the recommendations to be brought to my attention, and the legislative requirements or regulatory requirements that are necessary as a result of those proposals, that's when I would be advised.

Mr. Schuler: On the unspecific proposals that the minister may or may not have seen, are any of them unspecific proposals that say would make him have warm and fuzzy feelings, or are these proposals that just don't?

* (16:50)

Mr. Bjornson: I always feel warm and fuzzy, I should tell the member. I'm always feeling warm and fuzzy, ever since I've been elected. It's a great honour and privilege to be here.

Having said that, the process is one that involves all the stakeholders. For the first time RTAM is an active voice at the Teachers' Pension Task Force.

The Teachers' Pension Task Force has been meeting to consider a number of different options. I know that when we went through the last democratic process of the election that the members opposite had proposed a two-thirds COLA, which had been endorsed by RTAM. I'd have to question some of the numbers that were given to support that potential for the members of RTAM, but, having said that, we've certainly been—"we" being the Teachers' Pension Task Force—very active in looking at what proposals will work for all stakeholders. Certainly, as active teachers in the Teachers' Society, there's a tremendous interest in what impacts that will have on active members of the Teachers' Society, who are currently contributing to the fund. Again, this is something that we have committed to take significant steps to address the issue of the COLA. We have done so with the \$1.5-billion commitment, which speaks to the sustainability and the integrity of the main account which had been a concern for active teachers for a number of years. In fact, I remember lobbying on the MTS annual general meeting floor to that end approximately 15 years ago.

The other steps that we've taken, of course, is the first increase in contributions at 1.1 percent; the first time in 25 years that there's been an increase in contributions. So there are a number of different pieces to the puzzle that have to be addressed. What I do know is that there are currently some very good ideas at the table, and I'm waiting to hear what the stakeholders have to say around the implementation of those ideas.

Mr. Schuler: Just for the minister and his department, if they go to June 12, 2007, where the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) is asking the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) about the \$1.5 billion. Where I got the October date is in there. The Minister of Finance to a question says, "I think that transaction or that process concludes this fall, in about the early part of October," when he's asked about the full \$1.5 billion. Anyway, I'm sure you'll have a chance to look at it, but that might be able to narrow it down a little bit, where we came up with it being concluded by early October. We seem to be jumping between these two topics, but, if that proves that we in this Chamber can chew gum and walk at the same time—I just thought I would raise that issue for the minister.

Again, I think the retired teachers have been very patient. There have been a lot of different commitments and partial commitments, and this task force is, obviously, going to be very important to the

retired teachers, certainly. When does the minister see a final report coming to him?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, again, I know that there are a lot of ideas that are on the table, and it's up to the Teachers' Pension Task Force to make those recommendations. I would hope that they can reach consensus on what is the most viable option. I do know that a two-thirds plan had been endorsed during the last election, and it has provided some terms of reference for the discussion around how we get to where RTAM wants to be.

I know it has been a long process. Indeed, the process goes back to—I always mention that this is an issue that started when I was three years old, actually, with respect to the sustainability of the pension adjustment account and the fact that it had paid full COLA when it was not designed to do so. There had been no less than eight actuarial warnings that continuing to pay full COLA would jeopardize the future sustainability of that account, and those warnings went unheeded. Certainly, MTS has accepted responsibility for that; I've accepted responsibility for that on behalf of our government and previous governments as this is an issue that's been a long time in the making, and RTAM has accepted some responsibility for that as well.

So we've always said that we need to take meaningful steps, and we've taken some very significant and very meaningful steps in addressing this issue. I'm hopeful, Madam Chair, that we'll see the recommendations in a timely manner, but that, of course, is dependent upon the negotiations at the Teachers' Pension Task Force table as to whether or not that will be done so in a timely manner.

Mr. Schuler: I was wondering if the minister could tell us: Is there any discussion within his department, within the government to extend the provincial-wide smoking ban to school division property? Right now it seems to be that there is a one-off system; some school divisions are doing it, some aren't. Where's the department on this issue?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, thank you for the question. Essentially, all school divisions have now policies around tobacco on the property. More or less all school divisions have banned it from, not only inside the building, but outside the building. Of course, our legislation covers inside the building, but there are policies covering tobacco use outside the building. I believe there are only a couple of schools that—three schools—pardon me, three divisions—that currently allow some tobacco use on the school property.

Mr. Schuler: So the answer is that the government is not looking at a provincial-wide ban on smoking on school grounds; they're going to leave it up to the school boards?

Mr. Bjornson: It has been left up to the school boards to this point. Certainly, with only three school divisions that aren't banning tobacco use on school property we've had conversations about that approach. With all the information that we have on health, prevention and healthy choices, et cetera, et cetera, we feel that having those conversations will be fruitful, and that, hopefully, those school divisions will proceed with banning tobacco use on the school property.

Mr. Schuler: Does the department have any policies in regard to cell-phone use on school property?

Mr. Bjornson: That is something that is currently addressed locally. Again, I mention the fact that with technology there aren't any rules or regulations, but I know that some school divisions have banned cell phone use in their schools. Some schools have individually banned them within their division where there is no division-wide policy. Certainly, monitoring the cell phone use and how that impacts learning and how it impacts student safety, I've had a conversation with MAST with respect to how this is dealt with at the local level. I'm looking forward to their feedback on this issue.

Mr. Schuler: So at this time there's no plan on the part of the government to regulate cell phone use at schools. That's something that will be left up to the various school boards.

Mr. Bjornson: Well, at this time there is a discussion with Manitoba Association of School Trustees, and I did ask them for some feedback on what policies have been developed on some of their concerns around the matter. Certainly, we'll continue to have that discussion if there's a need to look at other options for that, but, as I said, these are developed locally. These policies and regulations are developed locally, and I think with the connection between personal communication devices, whether it's cell phones, blackberries, or whatever technology students are bringing into the classroom and the appropriate use of that technology as it connects to Internet use, the means is there for schools to address it through the Safe Schools Charter. Cyber bullying, as it relates to text messaging, as it relates to Internet use is something that schools already have the—

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

CONTENTS

| ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS | | | |
|---|-----|---|-----|
| Introduction of Bills | | | |
| | | Annual Report of the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 | |
| | | Bjornson | 986 |
| Bill 3—The Healthy Child Manitoba Act | 985 | Annual Report of the Healthy Child Manitoba Office for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 | |
| Irvin-Ross | | Irvin-Ross | 986 |
| Bill 7—The Insurance Amendment Act | 985 | | |
| Selinger | | | |
| Petitions | | | |
| | | Annual Report of the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 | |
| Provincial Trunk Highway 2—Glenboro | 985 | Irvin-Ross | 986 |
| Cullen | | | |
| Provincial Nominee Program | 985 | Supplementary Information for Legislative Review 2007-2008—Departmental Expenditure Estimates—Water Stewardship | |
| Lamoureux | | Melnick | 986 |
| Tabling of Reports | | | |
| | | Oral Questions | |
| Annual Report of the Canada/Manitoba Economic Partnership Agreement for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 | 986 | Location of Hydro Power Line | |
| Rondeau | | McFadyen; Doer | 986 |
| Annual Report of the Manitoba Development Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 | 986 | Hollow Water Cottage Barricades | |
| Rondeau | | Hawranik; Chomiak | 988 |
| | | Hawranik; Struthers | 989 |
| | | Gerrard; Doer | 992 |
| Annual Report of the Manitoba Opportunities Fund Limited for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 | 986 | Generic Drugs | |
| Rondeau | | Goertzen; Oswald | 989 |
| | | Economy—Manitoba | |
| | | Borotsik; Selinger | 990 |
| Annual Report of the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 | 986 | Country of Origin Labelling Legislation | |
| Allan | | Eichler; Wowchuk | 991 |
| | | Eichler; Doer | 991 |
| Annual Report of the Department of Labour and Immigration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 | 986 | Spirited Energy Advertising Campaign | |
| Allan | | Rowat; Rondeau | 991 |
| | | Youth Justice System | |
| | | Lamoureux; Chomiak | 993 |

| | | | |
|--|-----|--|------|
| Assiniboine Community College Caldwell; McGifford | 994 | Matter of Urgent Public Importance Gerrard | 997 |
| | | Altemeyer | 999 |
| Members' Statements | | McFadyen | 1000 |
| Pembina Constituency Community Events Dyck | 995 | Grievances Cullen | 1002 |
| Buhler Recreation Park Reid | 995 | | |
| | | ORDERS OF THE DAY | |
| | | GOVERNMENT BUSINESS | |
| Family Doctor Week Mitchelson | 995 | Committee of Supply (Concurrent Sections) | |
| Flin Flon Green Project Jennissen | 996 | Health | 1004 |
| | | Finance | 1020 |
| Dugald Train Disaster Anniversary Schuler | 996 | Education, Citizenship and Youth | 1039 |

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

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