



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	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.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary	Tuxedo	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HIELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
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SMITH, Scott	Brandon West	N.D.P.
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TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, July 17, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

**Member for Interlake
Apology Request**

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on an important and urgent matter of personal privilege.

On Thursday, July 13, while I was attending the investiture of the Order of Manitoba at the invitation of the Lieutenant-Governor, and while the Deputy Speaker (Mr. Santos) was in the Chair, the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) intentionally referred to me as the Honourable Member for Whitehood. Perusing Hansard this morning, I confirmed this statement and note that it is recorded on page 4036 of Hansard. This is the first opportunity I have had to raise this issue before the House.

Mr. Speaker, for this member to imply that either myself or any citizen of the constituency of Fort Whyte is racist is completely unparliamentary and out of order. His incorrect naming of my constituency is completely outlandish. While the Member for Interlake and I differ philosophically, it is totally inappropriate for him to refer to me or the constituency I represent in this fashion. For this member to imply that any of my philosophies are racist is totally inappropriate and it is unparliamentary. For the Member to make this statement when I was absent from this House borders on cowardly.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the comments made by the Member for Interlake breach the rules on order of this House. Should you find that the question of privilege exists, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that the Member for Interlake

withdraw his remarks and apologize to the House and to the constituents of Fort Whyte. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing any other member to speak, I would remind the House that contributions at this time by honourable members are to be limited to strictly relevant comments as to whether an alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity, and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I recall that last week. It was a slip of the tongue. I think I had said, "I am sorry, Mr. Speaker" at that time and immediately referred to him as the Member for Fort Whyte, but it was inappropriate, and I certainly do apologize to the Member and regret that it slipped out.

Mr. Speaker: The apology by the Honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) should conclude the matter.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Committee of Supply

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (Acting Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted a certain resolution, directs me to report the same, and asks leave to sit again. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub), that the report of the Committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Public
Utilities and Natural Resources
Third Report**

Ms. Linda Asper (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the Third Report of the Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Our Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources presents the following as its Third Report.

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your committee met on Friday, July 14, 2000, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building to consider the Annual Report for the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the year ending March 31, 1998, and the Annual Report for the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the year ending March 31, 1999; the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council for the year ending December 31, 1994, the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council for the year ending December 31, 1995, the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council for the year ending December 31, 1996, the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council for the year ending December 31, 1997, the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council for the year ending December 31, 1998, and the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council for the year ending December 31, 1999.

Mr. Bob Brennan, President and Chief Executive Officer, and Mr. Vic Schroeder, Chairman, provided such information as was requested with respect to the Annual Reports and business of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board.

Mr. Arthur V. Mauro, Chairman, and Mr. Garry M. Hoffman, President and Chief Executive Officer, provided such information as was requested with respect to the Annual Reports and business of the Crown Corporations Council.

Your committee has considered the Annual Report for the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the year ending March 31, 1998, and the Annual Report for the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the year ending March 31, 1999; the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council for the year ending December 31, 1994, the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council for the year ending December 31, 1995, the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council for the Year ending December 31, 1995,

the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council for the year ending December 31, 1997, the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council for the year ending December 31, 1998, and the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council for the year ending December 31, 1999, and has adopted the same as presented.

Ms. Asper: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg), that the report of the Committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* (13:35)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Tornado Destruction Pine Lake, Alberta

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans were shocked to hear of the devastating tornado that struck the community of Green Acres campgrounds at Pine Lake, Alberta, on Friday night. It is difficult to comprehend the depth of the trauma experienced by the people and families affected. Our hearts go out to them today.

We are encouraged to hear that there has been a strong show of support from the community. Hundreds of volunteers from the Red Deer area, the RCMP and the Red Cross are providing assistance in this emergency. We also understand that the Canadian military will aid in the search operations.

On behalf of this Legislature and the people of Manitoba, I wish to offer our most sincere sympathies and heartfelt condolences to those who have lost family and friends. Our prayers and concerns go out to those who are now suffering from the injuries and other damages. May they be granted the courage and fortitude they need to deal with this terrible tragedy.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I know

that our caucus certainly would want to join with the Government in extending our heartfelt sympathies to those that were impacted and affected by tragedy and death as a result of the campground at Pine Lake being absolutely devastated.

One of those things that we have absolutely no control over is the natural disasters that do take place. We are fortunate here in Manitoba that we have not had a disaster of this magnitude, but it seems that the weather is changing. We should never be complacent and never think that maybe something could not happen within our communities that would devastate us and impact us and those of our loved ones in the same manner that it has in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we want to thank those that are volunteering their time and their effort and their energy to work with those families that have experienced this disaster and want them to know that our hearts and our prayers are with them as they move through and beyond this tragedy. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask for leave to speak on the Premier's (Mr. Doer) statement.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? *[Agreed]* Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join with the leaders of the other two parties to indicate that there is all-party support in this effort to convey sympathy to those who were affected by this terrible tragedy and our hope that there will be no more deaths found and that if there is anything that we in Manitoba can do from the point of view of helping those through this tremendous time of suffering, we are ready to do that. Thank you.

* * *

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I want to table the supplementary information for—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is there a will of the House to revert back? *[Agreed]*

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, the 2000-2001 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Labour Legislation Consultations

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Labour. The business community was fooled into believing that there would be a new era of co-operation only four months ago when the Century Summit was held and this government heralded co-operation as the agenda of the day.

* (13:40)

The business community is not impressed when they see the kind of labour legislation that has been introduced by this government. My question for the Minister of Labour is: Did she talk about these specific changes to legislation with the business community at this summit?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that last week members opposite were indicating the sky was falling in terms of the economic situation in Manitoba. I note, over the weekend and in the latter part of last week, Mary Webb, a Scotia economist spokesperson, was very positive about the balance that was in our budget in terms of its impact on people and on businesses.

A step-by-step multiyear approach that is going to keep Manitoba's environment on an improving path sends a definite message to businesses. Manitoba has committed, over a longer term, to reducing the taxes as much as possible. It speaks about the provincial budget providing a major stimulus both through tax cuts and also through investment. Mary Webb says the NDP is "doing a good job," not like members opposite.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am sure that Ms. Webb, at the time when she commented on how well Manitoba was doing, had not seen the labour laws and the changes that this government introduced. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, we will have an opportunity, as time goes by, to hear the kinds of comments from individuals that would indicate that it is a wrong-headed decision by this government.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Labour would be: Who on the front lines within our community in Manitoba did she consult with, other than the union bosses and the union organizers, on removing the democratic right of workers by a private vote, by a secret ballot, without fear of intimidation by either management or union? Which front-line workers did she consult with before she took away their democratic right?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite speaks about the individual, Ms. Mary Webb. Her comments were made in the media and to the media both Thursday and Friday of last week, well after the proposals had been tabled.

Beyond that, there was an excellent article in the *Globe and Mail* from I believe it was Margaret Drohan last week talking about the 4.4 percent unemployment rate in Manitoba and the kind of work that is going on in Manitoba, because the biggest challenge we have is the lack of skilled workers in this province, and that is why the community college initiatives and some of the positive initiatives that speak to the positive nature of Manitoba, rather than the doom and gloom of members opposite.

Labour Legislation Voting Rights—Secret Ballot

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): In 1916 women in Manitoba received the right to vote. In 1952 First Nations people in Manitoba received the right to vote. In 1996 workers in Manitoba received the secret ballot in the workplace without fear of intimidation or reprisal. Now, on the dawn of the 21st century, this government is intent on revoking the fundamental right of workers to a secret ballot. Mr. Speaker, to the Minister: Why is she intent on taking away the fundamental right of workers to a secret ballot, a

draconian move more at home in the 18th century than the 21st?

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, as I stated in answers to questions by the Member last week, since 1947 in the province of Manitoba there has been some form of automatic certification for workers to be able to join a union, either through practice or in legislation. From 1988 to 1996, in particular, under the former Conservative government, the same legislation was in place. There was automatic certification from 1988 to 1996. I wonder why it was not considered draconian then and it is now.

Mr. Schuler: Why, Mr. Speaker, with sports groups, multicultural and church organizations who make decisions with secret ballots, is this minister denying the fundamental right of workers to a secret ballot?

* (13:45)

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, there will be an automatic certification only if 65 percent or more employees in a workplace sign a card saying they wish to be a member of a union. Those card signings must take place outside, off the workplace. There is no ability for cards to be signed at the workplace. There is no allowance for intimidation on the part of either management or the union. We are simply reverting back to a practice that was in place for the last 50-plus years and a practice that was in place through 8 of the years of the former government.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, why does this minister feel she has the right to take away the fundamental freedoms of any group in society? Why are fewer, rather than more, fundamental freedoms necessary with this minister?

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, why was it not considered anything but standard operating procedure and good labour relations from 1947 to 1996 in this province to have some form of automatic certification? Under Duff Roblin, Mr. Campbell, Sterling Lyon, Edward Schreyer, Howard Pawley and the Member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon), for eight years, there was automatic certification. That is what we are

bringing back in this province. It was not draconian then; it is not draconian now.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Springfield, with a new question.

**Labour Management Review Committee
Labour Legislation**

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday when this minister was under heavy fire for her anti-business, anti-worker bill, she stated: We made an election commitment and restated that commitment after the election that all pieces of labour legislation would go to the Labour Management Review Committee.

Yet it is now obvious that in fact substantial parts of Bill 44 did not make it to the LMRC, in clear violation of the election promise of the NDP. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain to all Manitobans why she has clearly broken the NDP election commitment to send all parts of labour legislation to the LMRC?

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, if the Member had paid attention in the House last week, he would have heard my comments. Every single element of Bill 44 was sent to the Labour Relations Committee, every single element.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister: What is so important or urgent about this particular piece of antibusiness, antiworker legislation that the Government is clearly breaking an election promise to bring it in? Are special interest groups that interested in this bill that they cannot wait?

* (13:50)

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, we sent a number of proposals to the Labour Management Review Committee, and we got a very, very positive response back on many of the elements. There was consensus, as I stated last week, on seven portions or entirely, seven of the proposals that were sent, some of the questions, the issues that were sent to LMRC. There is far more consensus than has happened with Labour Management Review Committees in the past ten years.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, to this minister: Why should Manitobans believe a single thing the Minister of Labour says when it is clear her word is meaningless? First, she will not consult, and now she will not even live up to her own commitments.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, as I stated in the House today and stated in the House last week, we sent to LMRC—

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

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): The interesting event here is that there has just been a supplementary question posed by the Member, and ever since the Member asked the question, he has been talking, yelling continuously, preventing not just an answer to be provided by the Minister but preventing people in this Chamber from hearing an answer. Surely, if he has a question, it is for the purpose of soliciting an answer, rather than trying to force one on the Minister.

Mr. Speaker, would you please call the Member's attention to his conduct, which is unbecoming of a member in this House?

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. You know, it is very easy to stand up and be all self-righteous, but all too often we are being drawn into this debate by the statements that are being made by ministers.

Clearly, *Beauchesne's* 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

It is exactly those types of answers, answers that say nothing, that provoke this debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Government House Leader, he does have a point of order. I find it

very, very difficult to hear the answers that are given. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members so we can hear the questions and we can hear the answers.

* * *

Ms. Barrett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We sent to the Labour Management Review Committee proposals and questions that are completely reflected in Bill 44. Every element of Bill 44, as an issue, was sent to the Labour Management Review Committee.

The information the Member is referring to is incomplete information, as I stated last week. We have completed and followed through on our commitment to send every single piece of labour legislation to the Labour Management Review Committee. We did not receive consensus on some of the elements that were sent over, some of the proposals that were sent over, but complete or partial consensus was reached on seven of the proposals that went to the Labour Management Review Committee.

I will stand in this House and state unequivocally that I have been giving the Member a full, complete and truthful comment about the Labour Management Review Committee.

Flooding Agricultural Disaster Assistance

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I rise today, and I want to thank the Honourable Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) for visiting some parts of southeast Manitoba to view the serious flooding that took place over there. We all heard her say that producers are not asking for money now. That was a quote.

We all hope that the sunshine we have right now will continue and there will be some good crops in the southeast area. Apparently the Minister is unaware that many of the crops that have been underwater for as much as two weeks now are totally destroyed. Many of the farmers cannot harvest their hay crops, nor will they harvest any of the other crops.

Will the Minister of Agriculture now confirm that Manitoba producers are not asking for money to help them cope with the devastating effects of the repeated flooding of the heavy rains of the last couple of weeks? Is that what she is saying? I will repeat the question for her. Will the Minister now confirm that the farmers were not asking her for financial assistance when she was out there looking at the devastation that was taking place?

* (13:55)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I did have the opportunity to visit in the southeast part of the province on Thursday. Indeed I met with municipal leaders and some producers who indicated that the real challenge that they are facing is the situation that the drainage has been neglected for so long and the excessive moisture has no ability to get away. What they are looking for is a long-term solution to address the drainage problem. I have to confirm that we have had very few calls in the office asking for financial assistance, and the Department of Agriculture's staff is monitoring the situation very closely.

Mr. Jack Penner: I suppose then that the farmers that I have been meeting with over the last week and a half are somewhat different than the ones she has been meeting with because I have constantly been asked for financial assistance—

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

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Now I feel bad, Mr. Speaker, because I did not get my *Beauchesne's* out when the Member stood up with his first question. I knew it was going to elicit a citation here. He is on a supplementary question. Supplementary questions require no preamble according to *Beauchesne's*.

Mr. Speaker, would you please ask him to put his question.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Honourable Government House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Honourable Member to please put his question.

Mr. Jack Penner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister of Agriculture take the disaster assistance money she claims is on the table, that they have offered, today and announce a series of programs and measures designed to get aid into the hands of those farmers and farm families whose crops have been totally destroyed and who cannot harvest enough hay for their cattle for this upcoming winter?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, for livestock producers, the ability to harvest hay is a very important issue. I have to say, as I said last week, we hope that the rain is over and there is going to be some good weather so that hay can continue to grow and producers can harvest. What we are advising producers is that, should there be a specific incident where people cannot get hay to their livestock or there is a shortage, they contact the Department of Agriculture and discuss it with our Ag reps. But, to this point, we have not had calls from people saying that they need hay to feed their livestock immediately.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister now admit that she has not been listening to the farmers in western Manitoba and that she has not been able to provide assistance to those farmers that virtually lost their entire crop in 1999? Will she advise those farmers today that she will visit with them and sit down and discuss with them programs that she could put on the table to assist them, as well as assist those that face that same disaster this year in Manitoba? Will she offer that assistance to them now, and will she meet with them in their communities?

Ms. Wowchuk: I will try to answer all five questions.

The Member is wrong if he says that we have not met with the producers of southwestern

Manitoba. We met with them on Thursday and had discussions with them, and we met with them a few weeks ago as well. We are making arrangements to go to meet with them in their communities as well.

The Member is well aware that we have put a proposal to the federal government. The federal government has decided that they are going to treat the southwest part of the province differently than the Red River Valley or the people who have suffered from disasters in Ontario and Québec, and that is regrettable.

Grow Bonds Program Funding

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, since their introduction Grow Bonds have contributed significantly to the economy, employment and investment opportunities throughout rural Manitoba, including my own constituency. In making its announcement that the program would now include the city of Winnipeg, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) stated in her news release that the rural component of the program will not be affected.

* (14:00)

Can I have an answer today to advise this House if additional funds will be allocated to the Grow Bonds Program in conjunction with the proposed changes?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Acting Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I will take that question under advisement on behalf of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Community Round Tables

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I am also wondering: Is the Minister proposing community round tables within the city of Winnipeg as they are currently being done in rural Manitoba?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Acting Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I will take that question as notice for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Funding

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Finance: Will there be more funds available for the Grow Bonds Program if it is expanded into Winnipeg, and, furthermore, will the rural areas be allowed to participate in Winnipeg's exclusive programs?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): The expansion of the Grow Bonds Program in Winnipeg requires that the Government of Manitoba provide a guarantee on the investments of local investors. That guarantee will be provided through the program as it expands in Winnipeg with no detriment to the guarantees provided to the rural program. So there is no proposal here to take from one to give to another, and that was the intent of expanding the program.

Sustainable Development Strategy Component Strategies

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in place of a Sustainable Development Strategy, the Minister of Conservation has presented the COSDI report. In his announcement, the Minister of Conservation himself admits that the COSDI process was to address those components of the white paper which were not reflected in this Sustainable Development Act. Since the COSDI report does not reflect the core needs of The Sustainable Development Act, as the Minister himself admits, I ask the Minister: Where is the rest of his Sustainable Development Strategy?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): I thank the Member for his question. As I said earlier, prior to making the announcement, I thought I had made it very clear to the House and others that we have accepted the report. I know that it had been sitting there for quite some time waiting for government action. As soon as we were elected into government last fall, we made it our business to take it off the shelf and have a look. From there, we made plans to take it to cabinet for cabinet approval with a plan on how to implement the recommendations of the report. That is what we have done, and that is where we are now.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary to the Minister: Where are the component

strategies as mandated under the Act? Where are the component strategies for achieving sustainability in specific economic, environmental, resource, human health and social policy sectors?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, again, I think it was about a week ago that the Member asked those questions. Again, I made it a point to try to be clear in my responses at the time. As I recall it, I advised him that as soon as the preparatory work is done, the analysis and the assessment, then I will be coming back to the Assembly to make those specific announcements.

Mr. Gerrard: My second supplementary to the Minister. I ask: Why did the Minister fail to bring in the component strategies on time, when, as this document which I table illustrates quite clearly, the previous government had done a lot of work in preparation and indeed there just was not any follow-through this time? Why did you fail to bring forward your strategy on time?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, again, I will advise the Member we are in the process of getting that information together. As soon as I am able to put it into a report form, I will be returning to the Assembly to report as to what the next step will be.

We are moving in that direction. I just want the Member to be assured of that.

Ambulance Service Government Initiatives

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Health a question of particular concern to Radisson and Transcona, and it has to do with the shortage of ambulances that has plagued the city of Winnipeg over the last numbers of years and has left citizens across many parts of the city fearful that they will lose a loved one or a friend because of the shortage of ambulances. I want to ask the Minister of Health what accomplishments the Government has had in addressing this serious problem.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for that question. We attended a press conference on Friday where the Mayor of Winnipeg said that there had been

more progress in terms of ambulance and emergency personnel in the past six months than there had been in the past six years.

The effect of the announcement will see \$2.1 million into the Winnipeg ambulance service, and, more specifically, will provide for 16 ambulances, 16 ambulances in peak periods in the city of Winnipeg, which is beyond the 10 that has presently been provided for and even less had been provided for over the past decade. So, for the people of Winnipeg, once the system is up and running in several months, the service component will be effective and will be beyond even the recommendations of the committee.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to rural Manitoba, I am pleased to announce, as well, that we have doubled the resources available for ambulance services, the greatest increase in the past decade with respect to ambulance services.

Osborne House Labour Dispute

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it has come to our attention that staff at Osborne House are in a position that they could go on strike on Friday. I would like to ask the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) whether she has any contingency plans in place.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I thank the Member for the question. It is a very important issue and one we take very seriously.

I am pleased to inform the House that there is a detailed contingency plan which will begin operation later today and will escalate over the week, because, as the Member knows, it is a facility that admits people for sometimes very short stays but sometimes the stays can go as long as 10 or 15 days in some cases. We will stop admissions shortly. There is a good contingency plan with great co-operation from the community.

Osborne House has developed this plan in conjunction with other shelters in Winnipeg and with the staff. So we are confident that there will be security of this service. There will be a toll-

free number to advise families in the exigency of a strike. These are very, very important services, as the Member well knows. I think we need to assure Manitobans that these services will continue in the event of a strike.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We all know that when women are in a crisis and in need of an emergency shelter for them and their children, it is important that the services are available.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Minister of Labour: Will she be looking at putting staff from Osborne House under essential services?

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): The Minister of Family Services has outlined the contingency plans that have been worked out with Osborne House in conjunction with other service providers in Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba and in conjunction with the staff at Osborne House. Everyone who has anything to do with the services provided to women and children in crisis is well aware of the need to ensure that those services remain and are in place. We are hopeful that those contingency plans actually will not be required to be implemented but that we can come to an agreement with the staff.

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, I would just like to remind all honourable members the presence or absence of members is not to be raised in the House.

Immigration Policy Nursing Profession

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. There is no doubt that jurisdictions across Canada, including Manitoba, are facing a severe shortage of nurses. It is an issue that has been there for many years, and the Minister and I may agree or disagree from time to time on its causes or solutions.

Last Friday I had occasion to have a matter brought to my attention, which I shared with him

at that time. That is a case where the Government of Canada, in considering the immigration of a particular individual who has a four-year nursing education, applying under the independent immigrant classification, was told by the Government of Canada that, unfortunately, the occupational demand for the occupation which you are prepared to follow in Canada, nursing is zero and consequently rejected her application.

I know that I have only made the Minister aware of this letter on Friday, but I would ask him if he is prepared to take this up with the Government of Canada. There are certainly 600-and-some jobs available in Manitoba for that individual alone today. This is certainly unacceptable action by the Government of Canada.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I thank the Member for Lac du Bonnet for providing me with that information on Friday outlining this situation. Of course, it is a serious situation.

As I understand it, currently Canada Immigration does not consider a nurse as an occupation for skilled worker selection under their general occupation list. I understand that is the case, despite the fact that both the previous administration and our administration had made those particular representations to the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, I will be attending a federal-provincial Health ministers' meeting this week, and I intend to raise that issue during the course of that particular meeting.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of members, I will table a copy of the letter from the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi. I have removed the information about the specific individual to protect confidentiality.

I am glad the Minister has referenced that under both my tenure as Minister and this administration this has been pursued. I would ask him if he will not only be raising this with the Minister, with fellow ministers across the country, but if he is prepared to take it up with Manitoba's senior cabinet minister, the Honour-

able Lloyd Axworthy, who is also Minister of External Affairs, because I am sure this is a serious matter to all Manitobans. Will he be elevating his pursuit of this matter to that particular level?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I will raise that to the appropriate federal officials. I understand that CIC, Canada Immigration, is reviewing the whole strategy of worker selection criteria with respect to that, and I understand that is an area under transition. But I certainly will raise it. I can also indicate to the Member for Lac du Bonnet that with respect to the individual case, as we always try to do at Manitoba Health, we will try to see what we can do in the individual circumstances in order to assist this individual where we can.

Manitoba Hydro Collective Bargaining

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, the Government, through Treasury Board, provides guidelines to Manitoba Hydro to utilize during contract negotiations with their employees. The independence of Manitoba Hydro provides that following the Government's guidelines is paramount. However, once again, this government is actively engaging in a political interference.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier confirm that his government ordered Manitoba Hydro to withdraw its contract offer after it had already been provided to the bargaining committee?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): As you know, guidelines are provided for collective bargaining through the compensation committee which is a subcommittee of Treasury Board, and those guidelines are the subject of active discussion with all those implementing those guidelines through collective bargaining, and that was certainly the case with Hydro.

Mr. Laurendeau: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro advise Manitobans and the employees of Manitoba Hydro upon what grounds his government interfered in Manitoba Hydro's bargaining process?

Mr. Selinger: I would ask the Member to check Hansard with respect to my first answer which I think answered his second question as well. I will simply repeat that the compensation committee, which is a subcommittee of Treasury Board, provides guidelines for all collective bargaining. Those were communicated to Manitoba Hydro, as is the standard operating procedure. I would remind the Member that collective bargaining is still in progress.

Mr. Laurendeau: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister could tell this House if, under the new binding arbitration which this government is bringing forward, the first contract put on the table, be it whether this government withdrew it or not, is the one that the arbitrator will be settling with.

Mr. Selinger: Once again, the Member is jumping the gun. Collective bargaining is still underway with the units at Manitoba Hydro, and I think the Member is asking a hypothetical question, which is out of order.

Overland Flooding Disaster Assistance

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, recent heavy rains and overland flooding have created concerns for many Manitobans. Both businesses and private homes have been flooded and the recovery process is only beginning. A number of municipalities have also indicated that they will be seeking government assistance. The provincial government has been called upon in the past to assist with the flood recovery process, such as when there was overland flooding in the Transcona area in the early '90s.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister responsible for the emergency services agreement agree today to establish a disaster financial assistance arrangements program to help Manitobans cope with the recent flooding?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): I appreciate the question from the Member opposite, and I can indicate, just to update him, that we have received resolutions from 12 municipalities. We understand that there are 3 more that have passed resolutions. In addition to visiting

Headingley with the Member, I also had the opportunity to visit a number of communities southeast and east of Winnipeg. We will be visiting other communities this week. I want to indicate that we are following the normal procedures that are followed in terms of disaster financial assistance. Municipalities are giving us the resolutions; we have contacted the communities affected. I might add there are approximately 20 municipalities that have indicated some sort of impact. We are anticipating a response from the municipalities on specific damage, in which case we will be making a decision whether it is eligible under the DFAA process. I am hoping, if we do not hear later on this week, that we should have a better idea by next week, once we receive the detailed information from the municipalities.

Mr. Helwer: Will the Minister responsible for emergency services agree to set up this program even if the federal government does not become involved at this time?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, the procedure we are following is the exact same procedure followed by the previous government in 1997 and 1999. I want to indicate the real question that will be followed in terms of the federal government's involvement will depend on the type of situation involved and the magnitude of the damage. I want to indicate to the Member that, just as we have indicated for the 1999 flood, we would expect the federal government to be involved if it meets the guidelines of DFAA, and in fact what we are working on now is getting that information. As I indicated to the Member, once we have received that information, we will be in a position to make that kind of decision. I do want to indicate, if we receive the magnitude of claims that we have seen in other situations, such as 1993, we would expect the federal government to be involved as well.

Mr. Helwer: Will the Minister responsible for emergency services agree to have a disaster aid program approved by Treasury and the Cabinet sooner, rather than later, in order to give these residents some idea of what assistance might be available?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, we are making every effort to do it on a basis of sooner rather than

later. Our Emergency Measures Organization staff have taken a proactive role; they have contacted municipalities. I just want to advise the Member opposite that we are following the same procedures that have been in place for many years, 1993, 1997, 1999, many other emergencies. As soon as we receive the detailed information and as soon as we are in the position of making a decision, we will communicate that directly to the people. I understand there is a process that has to be followed here, and the message we have to people who have been affected is contact your local municipality; the local municipalities are the first lines of contact in emergencies. We are working as soon as we can in trying to get a program in place, if a program is warranted based on the disaster information we receive.

First Nations Casinos Selection Process

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, when asked last week whether the Minister responsible for Gaming had any contact with the First Nations Casino Project Selection Committee or any of the Government employees utilized by the committee to do its work, the Minister would only say that he did not speak to Mr. Nadeau or Mr. Freedman as an MLA or a minister. Now that he has had time to talk to his staff, I would again ask the Minister responsible for Gaming if he or any of his staff have contacted any member of the selection committee or any government staff that were working on the selection committee that showed support for the Nelson House First Nation casino project.

* (14:20)

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have increased the size of their fishing net from last week when they asked about the two individuals involved. I indicated that I never made any personal comments or contact with the officials who are involved with that to lobby. That was something that was followed by all members of our side of the House. We felt that it was absolutely vital to have a process that was above and beyond the kind of political lobbying that

perhaps the members opposite might have been engaged in, but we did not do that. I indicated to the Member that I did not lobby and to my knowledge, and I indicate again, I do not know of anybody that did contact either of those two individuals or anyone to lobby in terms of any specific proponent.

Manitoba Gaming Commission Membership Composition

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Gaming Commission is set up of a committee that is appointed by the Minister. I would like to ask the Minister whether he will be making any changes to that committee now that he is Minister responsible for Gaming and whether he feels the confidence by the former minister in that committee put forward with the committee under the Manitoba Gaming Commission that is now set up.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, since being appointed as Minister responsible for Gaming, I have been reviewing, along with my colleagues, a number of items in the next step in terms of the implementation of First Nations gaming. I can indicate we have not looked at the composition of that committee, but we are reviewing a whole series of items or part of the very extensive scrutiny that is part of the next stage. I want to reiterate the excellent work done by the former minister in gaming in having a very detailed process with a great deal of integrity that has ensured that we are in a position now of being able to have a very thorough review of the five proposed locations for First Nations gaming in the province.

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

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

During Oral Questions on July 4, 2000, I took under advisement a point of order raised by the Honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) concerning the request made to the Honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer) by the

Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) to table a legal opinion. The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, the Honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and the Honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Laurendeau) also spoke to the point of order. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities.

Regarding the request for tabling of legal opinions, *Beauchesne's* Citation 408(1)(c) advises that a question should not require an answer involving a legal opinion, while Citation 409(3) states that a question cannot seek an opinion, legal or otherwise. *Beauchesne's* Citation 410(13) indicates that questions should not seek a legal opinion or inquire as to what legal advice a member has received.

A review of rulings by previous Manitoba Speakers indicates that, prior to 1990, the practice of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly was in conformity with the *Beauchesne's* citations, in that questions asking for the tabling of legal opinions were either ruled out of order or were requested to be rephrased. Mr. Speaker Graham intervened on the following dates to either rule questions out of order or to request that the question be rephrased: July 18, 1978; May 8, 1979; April 22, 1980; May 27, 1980; June 27, 1980; July 4, 1980; July 8, 1980; July 21, 1980; and February 16, 1981. Mr. Speaker Walding ruled a question out of order on April 25, 1985. Madam Speaker Phillips intervened on May 19, 1987; July 9, 1987; and June 12, 1987, to rule questions out of order or to ask that questions seeking a legal opinion be rephrased.

However, since 1990, the practice of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly regarding requests for tabling of legal opinions has changed. On March 14, 1990, Mr. Speaker Rocan noted in a ruling that it was becoming common practice for ministers to table written legal opinions. On that basis, he ruled that, as a compromise between the practices of the House and the procedural authorities, he would allow questions that inquire if a minister has received a written legal opinion and would also allow requests to table the opinion but that he would not allow questions that would call upon a minister to state his or her own opinion of a question of law.

Since the time of the March 14, 1990, ruling by Speaker Rocan, questions referring to legal opinions or requesting a legal opinion or the tabling of legal opinions have been allowed on at least 53 occasions without intervention by the Chair or without a point of order being raised. On this basis, I am ruling, since the recent practice of the House has been to permit questions regarding the tabling of legal opinions, that the Honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) did not have a point of order. I am also ruling that it has been the contemporary practice of the House to ask if a minister has received a legal opinion or to ask that the opinion be tabled. However, it is up to the Minister to decide to answer the question or to decide to table the opinion if asked to do so. It is also not in order to ask a minister to state his or her opinion of the legal opinion.

Being mindful that the recent practice has seen a gradual departure from the pronouncements of the procedural authorities and previous Manitoba practice, if the House wishes to revisit the practice of requesting legal opinions of ministers in the House, the Standing Committee on the Rules of the House may wish to examine this issue.

* (14:30)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Order of Manitoba Recipients

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to recognize two exemplary citizens, Mr. Edwin Jebb and Ms. Sue Lambert, both from The Pas, Manitoba, who have recently been awarded the Order of Manitoba for their dedication and commitment to their local community.

As the first in his community to graduate from the University of Manitoba with a Bachelor of Arts degree, Edwin Jebb has actively served on several community organizations, including three years on the museum committee, four years with the Chief on Council, the Gaming and Commission Committee, and has worked to raise the most money in his community for the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Additionally, Edwin is known for his dedication to the development of educational programs for Native people, for the construction of educational institutions within his community, and for promoting aboriginal culture.

On a personal note, Mr. Jebb graduated from Frontier Collegiate Institute in Cranberry Portage quite a number of years ago. FCI is a school at which I was also an educator for 22 years; therefore, it is an honour for FCI and for me to be able to celebrate one more deserving grad like Edwin Jebb.

Equally involved, Mr. Speaker, is Sue Lambert who, for over 30 years, has worked to promote the Trappers Festival, an event designed to commemorate the traditional northern way of life. She was also responsible for developing the Manitoba Organization of Festivals and Events, which assisted in the development of festivals throughout the province. She has also worked with the Hudson Bay Route Association to promote the Port of Churchill and the retention of rural Manitoban railways. I am proud to be a member of the Hudson Bay Route Association and can attest to the fact that Sue Lambert has been a tireless advocate for the Hudson Bay line and the Port of Churchill. As well, for over ten years, she has volunteered with The Pas Health Complex Foundation by chairing the Foundation and assisting with local fundraisers.

The Order of Manitoba was established to recognize individuals who have demonstrated excellence and achievement in any field, and who have contributed to the social, cultural or economic well-being of Manitoba and its residents.

I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, to take this opportunity to celebrate the excellence and achievements of both Edwin Jebb and Sue Lambert, two outstanding Manitobans, two great northerners.

Labour Legislation

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, a long time ago in a land far, far away, Howard Pawley and his cronies drove Manitoba to its knees by gleefully putting the screws to Manitoba business with brutally high taxes and

viciously anti-business, anti-worker labour laws. Now we see the evil empire striking back, and Howard Pawley's storm troopers have returned.

This government of yesterday's NDP seems intent on crippling the business community in this province. Here, in a blast from the past, we see the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) introducing the most vindictive, anti-business, anti-worker labour bill this province has seen in years, circumventing the Labour Management Review Committee and allowing her venom for the business community to affect her every decision.

It is unfortunate that Manitobans believed the charade of moderation and responsibility portrayed by the NDP during the election. We now see the return of the old mentality that a high-tax, anti-business, anti-worker economy is the ideal. Irresponsibility is now the agenda of this government. The deep divisions caused by this Minister of Labour will never heal. One hopes the Minister soon realizes she is supposed to be the referee, not the highest-scoring player and MVP for Team Labour.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba business realizes this government would like to see them leave the province in droves. One can only hope this government is defeated before that happens.

Farm Family of the Year

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the family of Gladys and David Gislason, who have been chosen as Manitoba's 2000 Farm Family of the Year according to the Red River Exhibition Association. The award is presented in recognition of Manitoba farm families who have an outstanding, innovative farm operation as well as having a record of exceptional service to their community and industry.

David and Gladys have farmed in the Geyser area since 1962 and were one of the first Interlake families to begin managing leafcutter bees for the purpose of forage seed production. David is a founding member of the Leafcutter Bee Association, which later became the Manitoba Forage Seed Association, the

organization which nominated the Gislasons for the award.

In addition to serving on a wide variety of agriculture-related organizations over the years, David has served as the Reeve of the R.M. of Bifrost and is heavily involved with the Icelandic National League. Gladys is the financial manager of the farm and is pleased that the family is the focus of the award. Her daughter, Kathy, along with her husband and five children, runs her own dairy and forage seed production farm, setting a fine example of intergenerational continuity in this business.

Forage seed production is a pivotal industry for Interlake farmers for a variety of reasons. It is most appropriate that this family be recognized for its role in bringing the practice into the region.

On behalf of the people of Manitoba, I congratulate and thank them for the leadership role they have played. Mr. Speaker, the Farm Family of the Year from the Interlake, David and Gladys Gislason.

Mennonite History

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending the gathering of about 2000 Mennonites at the Fort Dufferin site at Emerson. The Fort Dufferin site is, of course, the home of the North-West Mounted Police and it is the home of the Boundaries Commission that was established. It is also the disembarkation point for the Mennonites that settled the West Reserve in Manitoba and really the areas of the municipalities of Rhineland and Pembina.

My colleague Peter Dyck and I were in attendance yesterday when they voiced their appreciation to the Government of Canada having given them the right and the freedom to practise their religious beliefs and their ability to refrain from military service when they first came to this country.

It was interesting to note that for 10 years the Province of Manitoba has maintained or been part of funding the maintenance of the Fort Dufferin site.

Mr. Speaker, I was absolutely appalled when I visited Fort Dufferin yesterday, because it was overgrown with weeds. The Mennonites had been told: If you want to use the site, you have to clean it up yourselves, if you want to use it in this province. I spoke personally to the acting director of Parks. He said: We are having no part of cleaning up Fort Dufferin. I think that it is clearly an indication of this government's irresponsibility of maintaining a site that has tremendous historical significance in this province, not only for the Mennonite community, but for everybody in this province.

So I congratulated the Mennonites for cleaning up their own site and putting on a celebration at Fort Dufferin yesterday.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Prior to recognizing the Honourable Member for Burrows, could I just ask the co-operation of all honourable members, when referring to other members in the Chamber, to please refer to their constituency, or to ministers by their title. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Youth Justice Committees

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the important role that local youth justice committees play. These committees provide an alternative for young offenders charged with lesser or first-time offences. Under these models, offenders are made accountable to both the community and the victim. Last year, around 2000 Manitobans, the majority being young offenders, were given the chance to take responsibility for their actions in a local setting. Youth justice committees provide community justice that is highly effective. Approximately 80 percent of young people who participate in alternative measures successfully complete the program.

Recently, I met with representatives from Parks West and Burrows-Keewatin youth justice committees, whose boundaries include parts of Burrows constituency. It is exciting to hear about the types of initiatives undertaken by these groups. As partnerships evolve, so, too, do the roles of these committees. Today, many committees are involved in mediation, community justice forums and a number of other

activities. I want to congratulate all those volunteers who donate their time to youth justice committees. These individuals make a positive difference in the lives of youth and help make our communities safer.

* (14:40)

Committee Changes

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer), that the composition on the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: Lakeside (Mr. Enns) for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Riel (Ms. Asper) for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger).

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call debate on second readings of the following bills in this order: 25, 32, 33, 34, 36, 39, 5.

Bill 25—The Interpretation and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh), Bill 25, The Interpretation and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi d'interprétation et modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay).

Is it the will of the House to keep it standing in the name of the Member for Seine River?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few comments to the record on this particular bill, The Interpretation and Consequential Amendments Act. I have had the opportunity to review this particular piece of legislation. Although the bulk of it seems to be in my view very acceptable, changes to our Interpretation Act to clarify the way in which our statutes are interpreted, there are a couple of points that jump to my attention that do give me at least cause for some question and in one particular case cause for concern.

One of the provisions of this bill is for what is entitled here the liberal interpretation of statutes, and I believe it is specifically section 6 of this bill which indicates that: "Every Act and regulation must be interpreted as being remedial and must be given the fair, large and liberal interpretation that best ensures the attainment of its objectives."

Mr. Speaker, I have always been a believer, in my career in the law as a lawyer and as a legislator, that it is the obligation of legislators to make their legislation clear and as precise as possible, and where it is affecting the life and rights of our citizens that those citizens have the right to rely on a narrow interpretation of statutes. They should not be entwined in breaching the law because of a very broad interpretation, that if an act intends something to happen or not to happen it should be very precise in setting out what that should be.

Now, that may not be a view of interpretation that is shared by all members, but it is certainly one that I raise as a concern. We as legislators have a great deal of power in affecting the rights of our citizens, and when we do so we should be clear and concise in writing our laws so that citizens know exactly how it affects them. If there is ambiguity in the law, if the law is not clear, if the law is not written so that it is clear to the reasonable person who reads it, then this Legislature and government should not have the right to rely on some broad interpretation of the statute that would then affect the rights of our citizens in an adverse

manner when that interpretation is one that has, in essence, been stretched out of the legislation by very broad interpretation.

Citizens should have the right to be able to rely on clear and consistent meanings of statutes, and government should not have the right, in my view, to allow having those stretched beyond their clear and precise interpretation in order to interfere with the rights of our citizens. So I have some concern with that particular provision of the Bill.

I also notice for the first time in our Interpretation Act, the Minister is proposing that in section 8: "No act or regulation is to be interpreted so as to abrogate or derogate from the aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada that are recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*."

I must say that I view this, as I understand, that the Government has promised that they would include this in the legislation, when in reality none of our laws can abrogate or derogate from the constitutional rights of other citizens. It would make the Act unconstitutional. So whether there is a need for this provision or not I do not think really is the issue. The Government has, in fact, said that they would include it. I believe that it is already there in the reality of how laws are applicable, but that is fine to include it.

I am pleased that the Minister did reference Aboriginal and treaty rights to those guaranteed by the Constitution. My experience as a minister of Northern and Native Affairs is that often there are rights that are claimed that do not necessarily have a constitutional basis for them, and I have seen that happen with things like traditional use areas for land. There certainly were land entitlements under treaties which I certainly was involved in settling shortfalls under those treaties. It was doubtful that there was a legal right necessarily for a traditional use area. There may be other common-law rights for that but may not necessarily have been a treaty or Aboriginal right, and yet it was claimed.

So the Minister has confined this interpretation to those rights that are defined in

the Constitution, as he should. So this clause, I think, is one that is there because of a political commitment to include it, I think to give a comfort level to First Nations people, and I certainly make no objection to that. I do not believe on my reading of this particular provision that it does anything that is not already there, but it makes it clearer, and if that makes it clearer, it certainly gives a comfort level to First Nations citizens. I have no objection to that particular clause.

As I have said, there are many things in this act that I have read. There are some questions that I have, as well, about some specific issues that I will put to the Minister in committee. One other comment that I made is with respect to preambles. I have noticed in my time in this Legislature that there has been a growing desire by governments—the Government of which I was a part did some of it and this new government seems to be doing even more—to include preambles in legislation.

I have always objected to the preamble. This is a personal view and position. It is, in essence, a political statement. That is what the preamble has become and is, is a political statement of what government is wanting to do. I have seen some bills come before the House where I often thought that the political statement was—that is why we had the legislation, in fact, was to make this political statement. I am not a great fan of preambles in legislation. I think the citizen has the right to have the active clauses clearly defined, what they are intending to do, and to rely on that clear definition without necessarily having a preamble.

So it has been a trend. This Attorney General certainly is not the only one who has advanced the use of the preamble, so I do not fault him for that, but it is a trouble that I have had personally as a legislator. I see now in the interpretation in this particular statute that the preamble of the Act the Minister is proposing should be interpreted and be used in assisting and explaining the meaning and intent of the Bill.

* (14:50)

Again, my point is that citizens should have the right to rely on a clear wording of the

operative sections of the Bill. The ability of that to be supported by our courts should be on a clear and plain reading of the operative sections, not necessarily using preambles and certainly not having some catch-all liberal interpretation that allows the clear meaning of that section to be extended by the use of a preamble or a liberal interpretation clause as the Minister is pursuing.

So that is a personal view that I have on the interpretation of statutes. It is one that the Government does not share. It is the concern that we have about this bill, certainly I have, but we are prepared to move it on to committee today. Perhaps we will have some more discussion about this when it does reach the committee stage. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 25, The Interpretation and Consequential Amendments Act.

Is it the pleasure of House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 32—The Victims' Rights Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh), Bill 32, The Victims' Rights Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits des victimes), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner).

Is it the will of the House to keep it standing in the name of the Honourable Member? Stand?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Attorney General on this particular piece of

legislation, in having the chance to review it and in reading through the Bill, and I look forward to some discussion in committee.

This particular bill, I think, enshrines in legislation many of the things that should be and, I would hope, are happening on a daily basis in our justice system with respect to the rights of victims of crime to be able to access information that they need: information about what is happening in the court process, what is happening in the prosecution, what is happening in the investigation, what services are available to them to seek restitution, to retrieve property that has been stolen and perhaps recovered as evidence.

I have never served as Attorney General of this province, but I would hope that these kinds of practices go on, on a regular basis, within our justice system. The odds are that they do not always, so this particular bill now gives victims the right to have these things happen as a matter of course. I think the Attorney General's most difficult part with this bill will not be the legislative process but to ensure that it is carried out, that the attitude is there within the Department that people do have a right to these things. That is a challenge that is going to be the most difficult part I think of this process, but it is one that we certainly welcome on this side, and I want to congratulate him for bringing this into law.

There are some provisions of this that I, in my notes in reading this bill, marked down as certainly excellent. Certainly, the provision of information to victims about restitution, the retrieval of property, the kinds of things that a victim of crime are practically going to want to know, have available to them so they can recover their property, seek damages without being sort of pushed off to the civil court system while the criminal law is operating in some other sphere. I also must compliment the Minister because many of these rights are, of course, at the victim's request, which does not mean they will happen in all cases. There are many cases where there is no need for them to happen, there is no interest but certainly I think keeps that victim at the forefront of the Act.

One provision does trouble me, and I am going to raise it today in my concerns to give the Attorney General an opportunity to perhaps

think about it a little more before we get to committee, and it is not that we are offering him the be-all and end-all answer. It was a problem for me, and that was in section 7, the right to information about investigation of offence. I appreciate that this is a delicate balance. You have an investigation going on, charges have not yet been laid, the victim wants to be kept abreast of what is happening in an investigation.

It is a difficult time perhaps for the law enforcement agent. How much information can we provide without jeopardizing our investigation? The trouble I have with this section, and I am not saying I have a definitive problem with it, but the red flag went up; that is, the test of whether or not the agency, the police, the law enforcement agency shall provide that information is one in which the Minister is defined as, and I quote: "Unless doing so could unreasonably delay or prejudice an investigation or prosecution or affect the safety or security of any person."

I do not have problems with those principles. I have problems within whose judgment that will be made. What is missing from this? And I would look to the Attorney General in committee to perhaps give me his thoughts on this. As this is now written, this is a general test, but it is not the opinion of the head of the law enforcement agency. It is a test of, I guess, the reasonable person. The Attorney General may wish to give consideration to an amendment that would allow that test to be one which was the subjective belief of the head of the law enforcement agency, so that the head of a police force could decide and make that judgment call as to whether or not providing the information would delay or prejudice the investigation or the prosecution or affect the safety or security of any person.

That is missing from this clause today, and my concern is that in the heat of an investigation the head of a law enforcement agency has to make judgment calls. Sometimes they may be the right one, they may not be, but this provision allows that position to be second-guessed by some body outside of the process. I know it is a part of the balance, but I think that in all the parts of this bill, this is the one that is going to

be difficult for law enforcement, because they know that every decision they make, whether they provide information to the victim or not, could be second-guessed by an outside body, by the director under the remedial provisions who was not there at the time of the investigation.

I see this as the one place where there is going to be potential friction in here that perhaps could undermine the police law enforcement agency. So, I am not saying that I have the be-all and end-all. It is the one issue that I have flagged with the Attorney General today. I would ask if he would look at it and perhaps we could discuss it in committee. It may be an amendment he would like to consider just to ensure that it would be the opinion of the head of that agency that that test be there. I do not know how that fits entirely with his view of the scheme, but it may, in fact, take away a potential problem.

I know the concern. Does that mean the police agency will always say just no, we will not provide the information? There has to be some right to it, but again do we always want to be second-guessing the judgment of those who are investigating a crime and have to make some calls in the darkness of night without the full light of hindsight as they will be judged by this review? So I would ask him to have a look at that, and I would be delighted to discuss with him in committee. Again, my congratulations to the Minister on this, I think, generally very good piece of legislation.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 32, The Victims' Rights Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 33--The Highway Traffic Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh), Bill 33, The Highway Traffic Amendment and

Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant le Code de la route et modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to pass this particular bill through to committee. This represents another expansion, I guess, of our get tough as a province with drunk drivers legislation. I know that the administration of which I was a part championed that cause under the leadership of the former member for Brandon West, Jim McCrae. The former member for Rossmere, Mr. Toews, took it forward another step. This Attorney General has carried it forward even another.

There are issues, I guess, that some might argue that perhaps not all of this is needed. In some circumstances it certainly is, but we are prepared to pass this bill through to committee. I know some of my colleagues may have some comments on it at that time or in third reading, but I certainly see no reason for this not to move forward at this particular stage.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 33, The Highway Traffic Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

* (15:00)

Bill 34—The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2000

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh), Bill 34, The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2000 (Loi de 2000 modifiant diverses dispositions

législatives), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

Is it the will of the House for it to remain standing in the name of the Honourable Member for St. Norbert?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, we will pass this through to committee. The only caveat I attach to that, of course, is that as various critics go through this particular bill there may be a matter that we may have some concern or question with that we will raise at committee.

I would hope that the Minister will probably leave this as one of the latter bills to go through in this session, because it is a bill that is prepared by staff really to clean up bills, and it is an omnibus, all-encompassing piece of legislation. So I would just ask him and reserve the right that we may have some issues that we may raise as this continues to go through the process.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 34, The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2000.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 36—The Summary Convictions Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh), Bill 36, The Summary Convictions Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les poursuites sommaires), standing in the name of the

Honourable Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

Is it the will of the House for it to remain standing in the name of the Honourable Member for St. Norbert?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, this bill primarily, as I understand it, allows where there is a default judgment, in other words a person has not responded to the court summons, to have imposed on them an additional penalty of \$35.

The concern that I have with this, of course, is there will be times when the default occurs through no fault, in essence, of that individual.

Now, I know the Member, from my reading this, excludes highway traffic offences, I understand, but there are other offences where a summons may, in fact, not arrive at a residence. A person may be away for an extended period. There may be other justifiable reasons for having not responded, and we will be asking him for some further clarification of the process here, particularly how those circumstances might, in fact, be dealt with.

I would just raise with him, as well, as I have the floor today, during the course of Estimates, I raised the issue of the victims-of-crime levy that was placed on various offences including offences under The Highway Traffic Act which was not intended by the former government. I can say that as one of the ministers of that government and that it was brought to my attention last summer that we were charging that levy on highway overweight fines and using it for a victims-of-crimes fund when the damage, if any, was done to the highways.

When we get to committee, I would hope that the Minister may be able to give me an update. It is certainly in the same vein of penalty imposition as this bill outlines.

So we see no reason to hold this up. It should now proceed to committee, and we will have those discussions in the Committee.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 36, The Summary Convictions Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 39—The Insurance Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux), Bill 39, The Insurance Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

Is it the will of the House to leave it standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Pembina?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to place a few words on the record regarding Bill 39, The Insurance Amendment Act. The Insurance Act is certainly an important piece of legislation for all Manitobans. I do think it is unfortunate, the reputation that is often given to sellers of insurance because they provide such an important service. I know from personal experience the positive relationship I have with the firm that handles mine and my family's insurance. I am certain that the quality of service that is provided is typical of most agents in Manitoba.

This bill does, I think, recognize the reality of the insurance business in today's world. It addresses issues such as allowing agents to carry on other businesses under certain restrictions. This seems only equitable as other areas of financial service are opened up to banks, credit unions and trust companies. As well, the Bill ensures that agents, brokers and adjusters carry liability insurance. I know that this is the case in other jurisdictions and is another thing that will provide peace of mind to purchasers of insurance who should not be punished in a difficult time because of the errors or omissions of an agent.

I also note that the Bill will tighten the screening requirements for those seeking a licence through a sponsoring insurer. It is important that people feel confidence in their agent and are comfortable in the knowledge that certain screening requirements are in place to obtain a licence. Through my contacts with agents and with individuals on the Insurance Council, I am advised that this bill largely meets with the approval of the industry. It is meant to improve the operation of the industry as well as benefit the purchasers of insurance and the loved ones it benefits.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to move the Bill along to committee.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 39, The Insurance Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Committee Changes

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law

Amendments be amended as follows: Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) and Morris (Mr. Pitura) for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson).

Motion agreed to.

Bill 5—The Wildlife Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), Bill 5, The Wildlife Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la conservation de la faune), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Lakeside.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, this is bad legislation, and as I indicated to the Honourable Member and to the House on an earlier occasion, I have no quarrel with the members of the Government or the desire, the stated desire of the Government, to curtail or to limit what they refer to as penned hunting.

But, Mr. Speaker, if that is the case, say it. If the Government does not want to permit penned hunting in the province of Manitoba, say it. That is what legislation ought to be, clear in what precisely is intended when we pass that kind of legislation. Instead, this legislation sets out all kinds of pitfalls for various different kinds of livestock operators who had ventured into what I call the non-traditional livestock—bison, elk. They will, in my opinion, be under the threat of needless harassment from host or raft of bureaucratic regulations that may or may not come into force but certainly can come into force under the provisions that we are providing in Bill 5.

So, Mr. Speaker, I invite members, committee members or not, to come before the Committee because they will hear from individual livestock producers, particularly from the Manitoba Bison Producers, the Manitoba Elk Growers Association and from corners they least expect, from people who own budgie birds and parrots and have little pets in their homes. This legislation has the potential of seriously impacting on that, and that is where this government is making a serious mistake.

I know what this government wants to do. They want to prohibit penned hunting, but nowhere in the legislation does it say that. It is going to say that in some regulations, but in the meantime, they empower the bureaucrats in the Department of Conservation all kinds of muscle, all kinds of elbow, to create chaos in what is already and is rapidly becoming important part of our diversified agricultural scene.

So I am going to look forward to the representations made at committee, but I would hope that this is an instance where it is not a matter of denying a government's wish to pursue a particular policy. We are prepared to support the Government in a simple measure and a simple bill that will make it clear that penned hunting is not an acceptable thing to do in Manitoba. This bill goes far beyond that, and presentations made at the Committee will amply demonstrate that to all and sundry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:10)

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to add a few words on Bill 5. I really feel that it is going too far. It is going beyond, I believe, what this government had proposed initially and that is the penned hunting. I am not particularly concerned with that part of the Bill. What I am concerned with, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that it could have a very large effect on many farmers in the Interlake area, especially some of the specialized producers that have bison, elk, ostrich. They even have a farmer that produces rabbits that could very well be affected by this legislation. It gives too much power to the present government so that they could control and could have a detrimental effect to many producers in my particular area.

The Interlake has had to diversify because of difficulties in the grain crops in this last number of years and the fact that we lost the Crow rate back a few years ago. This has put a lot of effort on many farmers to look at other options, and some of those are diversifying into some of these special type of livestock. I am afraid this act could have a very detrimental effect on that. So, I am sorry, I cannot agree with the Act. I know that a number of my producers, both the elk and

the bison, will be making presentations at the Committee to oppose this and to explain why this bill could be detrimental to them. So, I look forward to hearing them. I just want to emphasize again, Mr. Speaker, that I cannot agree with this bill in the present form and look forward to committee stage.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have outlined some of the same concerns that I have regarding this bill, but let me for the record say that my concern is the uncertainty that this creates in the agricultural community, in the diversified agricultural community, where we, as the preceding administration, encouraged farmers to diversify, including some of the species that can well be captured under this legislation.

If the Minister and the Government were to be a little bit more forthcoming about the absolute intent of this bill and had brought forward a simple amendment to clarify that position, then I suspect there would not be the uncertainty that is out there right now.

Penned hunting conjures up all sorts of nasty and unpleasant visions in the eyes of many people, but my position was always that the current Wildlife Act bans penned hunting of any animals listed under The Wildlife Act, but there was one anomaly that came under that and that was the buffalo were not listed under The Wildlife Act. A simple amendment to include them, or an amendment to forbid penned hunting, which would have captured all of the aspects of whether animals are listed under The Wildlife Act or not, would have then solved what I think is becoming a bit of a festering sore in certain specialized parts of the agricultural community.

I would also be concerned that this legislation is entirely enabling, at first read, at least. Even at second read, I see it as being very much enabling legislation and might well say: Well, the minister of the day should have the authority. With the stroke of a pen he, however, can change the opportunity for profit or loss for people across rural Manitoba who have a significant investment in certain activities.

I am going to take the opportunity, while the person I am going to refer to is not my

constituent, I know that there is an operator in this province who has wild boars and has set up what would be known as a hunt farm, not a penned hunt.

I would be interested to know, and I have not yet heard any reaction from the Minister or from his colleagues, or from the Premier (Mr. Doer), for that matter, or from the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), for sure. We have not heard any indication or any comments that could give us some clarity, and I hope that in committee we will hear some of these answers.

Frankly, there is a person that if his penned—and I use the term "penned" because that is the colloquialism that many people have applied. He thinks of his operation as a hunt farm, where he has several hundred acres, albeit with a fence around it, but he also would acknowledge that he has several hunters who go in there and come out empty-handed. In other words, it is not a lot different from a normal, natural hunt would be, because of the terrain and because of the cover.

Is the Government intending to put somebody like him out of business? Will they compensate him if they put him out of business? He started this farm, in my understanding, at least, in good faith. He was not breaking any laws. The animals that he had, and they were wild boars as I understand it, the animals that he has are not listed under The Wildlife Act, so he was not breaking any of The Wildlife Act or regulations, and he did set up a hunt that was difficult.

That, I think, does away with a lot of the fear that has been propagated around this type of hunt. It is not a case of putting an animal in a cage and shoving the rifle through the fence and pulling the trigger. It is, in fact, a sport activity, and some of those who are willing to pay to be involved in this type of activity are, by nature, people who have to husband their time carefully. They want to go to an area where they know there is going to be wildlife of the type that they are seeking. They have two or three or four days set aside where they can go. They are willing to pay for the opportunity to participate in a hunt of that nature.

I am afraid that what this bill does is create an enormous amount of uncertainty that only one

by one will we be able to understand what the intent of the government is as they put the named species and the activity into place and the regulations of this bill. It can easily lead to an abusive authority where, I do not care if it is a director of wildlife, whether it is a regional director, whether it is the Minister or whether it is the Cabinet as a whole, with the stroke of a pen they can put somebody out of business or they can keep them in business.

I always say that while that may be desirable for the minister of the day, on the other hand, he has a tremendous, onerous responsibility. What it does is create a climate of unease, uncertainty, and probably inertia in industries where they are being affected or governed by this type of legislation, because the Minister today may not want to do anything about it, the Minister tomorrow will, or the opposite. The Minister today will take this person out of business and the Minister tomorrow in a new administration might decide to reverse that.

If anybody should read this at some future time and say, well, Cummings is fearmongering himself, I only need to point to what happened in the Swan River Valley, where elk ranching was first of all begun, and then it was stopped, and then it was begun again. We know the legal entanglements, we know the cost to government, and we know the uncertainty that followed that.

* (15:20)

That was an example of where it was following the legislation of the day, which at least was clear and required governments to change the legislation before anything different could happen. Today with this legislation, if it were enacted this summer, by this fall there will be a number of people with their lifetime savings at risk, not because there will be anything specifically in the Act that would put them out of business but that there are provisions in the Act that simply with a change of a regulation, which does not have to come to this Chamber for debate, does not have to go to the public for debate, but simply with a stroke of the pen can have that kind of an influence on operations such as I described. There are other operations out there that will find themselves in a similar predicament.

I find it somewhat ironic. During the election there was a significant difference between myself and the current Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) because of issues about whether or not hunting of species that were designated under The Wildlife Act was legal.

Now that he is part of the governing side, I challenge them to change this legislation to make it more specific, to make it more comforting to those who are in business. At least they have the right to know whether or not they are going to be out of business once this legislation is in place. They certainly need to crystallize whether or not they intend in any way for any of the clauses in this act to influence other operations of a similar nature or if they intend to use the silver bullet to get rid of penned hunting, particularly on elk, which was illegal anyway.

Buffalo would be another example of where if there was a penned hunt of any kind it would now easily be made illegal. I suggest, as my colleague from the Interlake and colleague from Gimli said, it would be far better to have written a simple piece of legislation that would have pinpointed what the philosophical direction and what the issue was that the government wanted to deal with. Enabling legislation in and of itself is far, far more dangerous in the hands of any politician, no matter what their stripe, than legislation that is, in fact, straightforward and specific so that people can understand—yes, I am shooting from the lip—and straightforward and easy for those who are in the industry to understand.

Mr. Speaker, I have pretty well concluded the thoughts that I have on what I see as the shortcomings of this bill. Without speaking to the specifics of the Bill, it is the principle behind being able to legislate regulating powers that are yet unknown.

You know, how quickly the worm turns. I remember some of the members of the current government saying when we introduced legislation, well, not only should you have your legislation more clear, you should, in fact, write your regulations and show them to us before we are going to deal with your legislation. Well,

maybe that is a challenge we should throw out to this government on this bill.

If the Minister and his colleagues are so sure that this bill is the way they want to go, and obviously it is because they introduced the Bill, if they are that certain about it, then I would give them the challenge: Let us have a look at the regulations.

We all know the esteem or lack thereof that the word of politicians of any stripe are held by the public today. So let us see it in writing. Let us see what it is that they actually intend to do. If they are prepared to do that then the debate can deal with the specifics of either the problem or the assets of the Bill. But until we see that, until we see some comment that can be verified, that the government can be held accountable to, or what their intent is beyond ending penned hunting, what their intent is in the introduction of this bill, making it as broad as we believe it could be, if there was someone in government who chose to abuse it, and I choose my words carefully, because I am sure the Minister and the government of the day will defend themselves and say that I am attacking their honour.

Well, let us just talk about it philosophically. It is not any particular minister, it is the potential of a minister at some point in the history of this bill making changes that, in fact, will be detrimental to the little guy out there. I emphasize, the little guy. There are a few operators out there that have significant dollars. In some cases the people who are going to be affected by this bill find themselves owning land that is marginal, that is heavily covered with bush. There are demands on them to keep the natural aesthetics of the land and at the same time earn a living that is viable for themselves and attract tourists, hunters, and others into the community, because those communities, believe me, are very often a little bit more remote in location than where we are standing today.

Mr. Speaker, on that basis I look forward to what I see in committee and what the government may be able to do to ease the concerns that we have collectively raised.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Just a few minutes to put a few comments on the record on

Bill 5. What I find most interesting about this bill is that it is the wrong bill to deal with a perceived problem.

There is a group of people out there that have obviously been in touch with this government and members of this government. Members of this government, quite frankly, and I think they would be the first to admit it, have no knowledge of what goes on in rural Manitoba. They have no knowledge of what kinds of situation farmers are being forced into these days.

The federal government walked away from the farm community when the Liberals were first elected almost eight years ago and made it very clear that they intended to cut the farm community loose and let them go out on their own. They got rid of the special grains programs, were instrumental in getting rid of the GRIP program across this country, except Ontario and Quebec. They were instrumental in getting rid of the Crow benefit, which was a \$750-million subsidy on transportation to the railways, and basically have said to the farm community: You are on your own, kids; you either run or you cut bait. So the farm community decided to run. They are not going to give up that easily. The farm community said, well, if we are going to be forced to be on our own, we are going to become innovative. So many of them did become innovative.

The farm community asked the previous Conservative administration whether it would be possible for them to get into the same kind of business that Saskatchewan farmers were into, mainly elk ranching, bison ranching, emu ranching, ostrich ranching, and, indeed, raising birds for pet shops, raising animals for pet shops and all those kinds of things. The previous administration said, yes, we recognize how diversified you will have to become in order to just stay alive.

I know many of these people across the way who now sit in government do not understand what that means. It means that canola prices over the last year—and I would like to say to you, Mr. Speaker, especially you, Mr. Speaker, that if you would have taken the kind of hit that canola producers, grain producers and specialty crops

producers have taken in the last year, if you would have taken that kind of reduction in your salary, I guarantee that you would not be sitting where you are sitting today. To any one of the ministers sitting on that side of the House, if you would have taken a reduction of 70 percent on your salary, I say to you, you would not have stayed there. You would have gone looking for a job somewhere else.

* (15:30)

Our canola prices have gone from \$9 a bushel to \$4 and I believe 63 or 70 cents today. I am not quite sure what the price did this afternoon, Sir. Barley prices have come from \$3.50 a bushel to less than \$2, and if you sell to the feed market and to the Wheat Board, you get an initial price of less than a dollar.

Now, that brings me to the next point. I know there have been many people here who have said it is great for us to have a board and to average in pool stock. A number of the speakers have spoken strongly in favour of pooling. Well, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and the rest of your colleagues in this House, how could you survive if all your salaries were pooled, first of all at a 70% reduction in your salaries, and then pool them all and say, now you are all going to be equal and you are all going to get the same price.

The reason I mention this, this has forced farmers to become very innovative. Yet when I look at the regulations and the legislation that this government is foisting on that same farm community—and the absolutely derogatory way that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has portrayed the livestock industry by putting out her publication on livestock is absolutely unbelievable. Here we have another bill, Bill 5, that talks about almost every live animal and names them under The Wildlife Act and designates them all under the same category as wildlife.

I know the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) is much more knowledgeable than most people are because he talks about the dead parrot act. Well, this is no dead parrot that we are talking about. These are live rural families that we are talking about, and they are only trying to etch out a living, even though the Member

opposite does not want to pay for food across the table, even though he only picks up less than 14 percent of his salary, I would suggest less than 8 percent of his salary, but 14 percent of the average salary of people in this province goes toward food these days. less than 14 percent. I think that that is a shame that we will not even allow those farmers out there to make a living so that they can support their families. This bill is a further indication of how little this government knows about rural Manitoba and how rural Manitoba functions.

Most of the farms in many parts—yes, you can shake your heads all you like, you do not know. Most of the farms in this province are fenced. Like it or not, the reason they are fenced is because you have animals in them. Animals graze grass and they eat little twigs off trees, and believe it or not, in some of these fenced areas, which we call pastures, Mr. Speaker, we actually are now being told that these will no longer be fenced pastures; these will be pens.

Some of these pens will be thousands of acres in size. Matter of fact, most of these pens will be hundreds of acres in size. Yet the perception of the members opposite on the Government side and, I believe, even the Minister, is that the pens will be no larger than this room, that you will lean over the edge of the pen and point the gun and fire and kill the animal, maybe, if you are a good shot. If not, then you will shoot it again and again and again until it drops in this little pen. Well, that is not reality. You know that. You are probably one of the few people in this Chamber elected on the Government's side of the House who knows this. The rest of them have not got a clue of what they are talking about when they passed or put forward this kind of legislation.

Penned hunting is something that we wanted to stop. The little pens as big as this room or maybe even larger, we would have stopped that. But I do not think that we would have said to the farmers out there when they raise bison, when they raise elk, when they raise any of the other species named under this act: No, you cannot do that, or, no, you cannot issue a licence to somebody to come in and kill a bull bison that is not going to make it until next year or the year after because they are old.

Mr. Speaker, it presented an opportunity to some farmers to encourage foreign tourists to come into this province and pay a decent fee to allow them to shoot something that they had domestically raised on their farm. This government is saying: No, you cannot do that.

That is unfair. It is nothing but unfair. You are encroaching on the ability of individuals to make decisions to make a living for themselves. That is what is wrong. That is what is wrong with this government.

We are looking at some other acts—the drainage act. The Water Rights Amendment Act is a similar kind of piece of legislation. I know the Minister said: Oh, do not worry, Jack, we are not going to come to your farm and stop you from making a ditch across your quarter section. Well, then, take it out of the Bill. If you do not want to do it, then get rid of it. Do not do it. But he said: Yes, but we want to keep it there. We will not do it. Do not worry about it. We will not pass regulations.

Similarly, you are now talking about doing the same thing with The Wildlife Act. You are naming all of them, designating them all, in that respect, as wildlife. That is what is wrong with this legislation. There are a number of pieces of legislation that you could have used to accomplish the same thing. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), I believe, has some sense of knowledge in that respect. How she would have allowed her colleague to put forward this kind of legislation without properly analyzing what it will do to her farm community—and she is supposed to be the proponent for agriculture in this province—just totally, totally confuses me.

So I say to you, Mr. Speaker, give some opportunity, encourage the members of the Government, and I say to the Minister, ask your colleagues to reconsider what you are doing to their farm community and get them to set this bill aside. Get them to set this—*[interjection]* She says, no, no, we are not going to do that, but get them to set this bill aside and use a different bill to ensure that what their true intentions are, are, in fact, happening and will be encouraged to happen by legislation and regulation but not this so-called draconian approach to control in

regulation an industry that is already deeply hurt and is being deeply hurt.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

So I say to you, Madam Acting Speaker, that I would only encourage the Minister and the other ministers in cabinet, before they put this bill forward for reconsideration and finalization at third reading and in committee, I would ask them to seriously reconsider putting this bill aside and letting the farm community have a say in what and how legislation should be drafted to ensure that "penned hunting" is, in fact, what is controlled and not total confinement hunting in all the rest of the province, because the next thing you are going to find is that you are going to see that your Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), if Ms. Burns and others have their way, you will be stopped from hunting white-tailed deer in this country and from hunting elk in this country because you will not be able to let them be hunted in fences.

* (15:40)

I know the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) says, oh, phooey. Well, if she would look at her own community, she would know that virtually every farm is fenced and has a fence around it. It is confined hunting. It is confinement, and it will be seen by those who are the proponents of this bill as confined hunting, and they will come after the Minister and say to the Minister, now, stop this; you are breaking your own law.

I know what I speak of, Madam Acting Speaker. I know what I speak of, because when I took a trip by snowmobile into the Mantario area which is a restricted area, which should not have any motorized vehicles in it, I took a snowmobile trip to go look at a naturalist camp in the middle of that area. It should not have been there either, but it is still there, by the way. When I took a snowmobile out there to look at this naturalist camp, I was told by that minister that I had broken my own law, and I did, and she will be breaking her own law. The Minister of Conservation will be breaking his own law, and all the farmers in this province will be breaking their own law if they allow white-tailed deer

hunting and elk hunting and/or any other hunting in fenced areas, because that is what this bill speaks to. That is exactly what it speaks to.

So, Madam Acting Speaker, I only ask that we set aside this bill and let it be debated another while by the agricultural community and let the agricultural community truly have a say in what should be or should not be in this legislation. Thank you.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Madam Acting Speaker, I rise to speak on this bill to put a few comments on the record with regard to I think the perception about this bill from people in my constituency and indeed many other Manitobans whom I have had the opportunity to talk to about this particular piece of legislation.

Madam Acting Speaker, I do not think the Government really paid a lot of attention when this bill was drafted, because had they paid more attention to the drafting of this bill I do not believe that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) would have allowed this bill to be drafted in the way in which it was. Secondly, I believe in all honesty that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) would have probably said: We had better take a little more time in how we present the information or how the information is presented on this bill.

I think the Minister of Conservation had the right attitude in the beginning when he scheduled the series of meetings across rural Manitoba to consult on this legislation, but somehow his cabinet got to him and did not allow him to proceed with those hearings. I think Manitobans were somewhat outraged at the fact that they knew there was an opportunity coming where they could debate the intent of this legislation, and then they were cut off from the discussion. Today they are left with nothing more than an opportunity to present during the second reading of the bill.

Madam Acting Speaker, I was interested in looking at some of the statistics with regard to how many wildlife are taken by hunters in any particular species in a given year. You know, over the course of time, with the hunting regulations that we have in our province, we have actually been able, with good conservation

practices, to enhance the numbers of species or enhance the number of animals in the variety of species that are hunted.

For example, today, if you look at the numbers of black bear in the province of Manitoba, they are higher than they were 20 years ago. If you look at the number of white-tailed deer in the province of Manitoba today, they are higher. If you look at the numbers of elk, we are down in the Riding Mountain in the numbers of elk, but that is largely because of the loss of habitat, not as a result of hunting, because the hunting is controlled.

So the legislation that we see before us today comes out of a lobby by a very select group of people who are termed, if you like, tree huggers and animal huggers, and have no concept about the reality of animals and how animals are treated by people who live with them on a daily basis. These people, like Ms. Vicki Burns, have no clue about what it takes to raise animals, what it takes to ensure that animals are protected in their environment and to ensure that they can propagate in a natural way. This is a sensationalist, this Vicki Burns, who merely wants to stop any kind of hunting of any kind of animal.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I have to tell you that I would bet my bottom dollar that there are more animals put to sleep by the Humane Society in a given day than any hunter will take in the course of a lifetime. So I would say to people like Vicki Burns and those who are such proponents of this legislation that they should become more realistic in their approach towards this kind of an issue.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that we have done as a society is that we have encouraged farmers throughout Manitoba to diversify their operations, because having a single source of income, whether it is from grain or from livestock just has not been able to do it for most farm families in this province. So through the course of our administration we encouraged farmers to diversity.

I have to say that I have at least two hunt farms in my constituency that are operating

today. Now, these are not pens. These are large tracts of land that have been fenced where there is I guess what you would term wildlife. The two farms that I know about have wild boars in their fences. Yes, there are hunters who come in, they pay a fee, and they are allowed to go out and hunt an animal. But it has got to be a particular animal. It cannot be just any animal that is out in that preserve, if you like. The animal is going to be identified. There is going to be a guide that accompanies the hunter. That hunter simply cannot take any animal that is within that fenced region.

Once again, you will be lucky to return at the end of a day with your game, because I would dare say that given the density of the cover of those lands that the animal has a very, very good chance of escaping. It is not like going into a particular area with a group of hunters. Rather, you are going into that hunting area as an individual. You are hunting as an individual, and, at most, perhaps two individuals and a guide.

Mr. Speaker, I think one has to actually visit a hunt farm to appreciate what it is and what value it brings to that community and to that family. The value just does not come to that family; it comes to that small community as well because the hunters that come are unlike the fishermen who come or unlike other hunters who come to hunt in a region. They do spend their dollars here in our province and here in our communities. So those are badly needed dollars in a rural economy that today is finding it difficult to make ends meet.

The other situation, in my part of the world, is that right across the border to the west, Saskatchewan does allow for hunt preserves and hunt farms. I think the figure was given to me that something like \$5 million has come in, in the past year, in new money into those communities and into those hunt farms as a result of the establishment of those hunt farms.

So now we have the species listed under The Wildlife Act, species that we had worked for a long time to incorporate into the Department of Agriculture, today are back in the Natural Resources Department. That is another concern because what is going to happen to those spent

animals, specifically the spent bulls in Manitoba. I can tell you what is going to happen to them. They are going to go over into Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan hunt farms are going to add value to these animals, because they are going to put them into their hunt farms. They are going to attract the hunters to allow these animals to be hunted.

Now, if you were to think about this legislation a little more carefully, and if the Government were to think about this a little more carefully, they would ask themselves the question: How can we work it so that we can co-ordinate hunt farms in Manitoba with the expansion of the elk industry and perhaps even the bison industry? But, instead, the Government took a reactionary approach, and they said we will cut off any ability for these people to be able to diversify their economy because somebody sensationalized a complaint.

* (15:50)

Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, the Minister of Agriculture said that I said during the election campaign that we would not. That is legislation that I would fight against, because my constituents depend for their livelihood on such initiatives as hunt farms. So I simply say that I think this position needs to be rethought. I think the Minister of Conservation has to take a very close look at this and perhaps to bring in amendments.

Now, I do not know what the term "penned hunting" means. Does it mean hunting within a small area, or are we really talking about the concept of penned hunting as it relates to hunt farms? It is a very different issue. A hunt farm is one which is large in area. You could put a minimum size on it if you wanted to. If you wanted to put a quarter section as a minimum size, fine. If you wanted to put a half section as a minimum size, that is fine, but I can tell you that as somebody who has hunted in the past, and, Mr. Speaker, I know that you are very familiar with that activity in our lives and you know what hunting is all about. If you create the right conditions on a quarter section of land and you have one hunter, the animal has a fairly good chance of getting away from you and not being hunted down.

It is not just a matter of being able to go out there and pick any animal. Indeed, the animal that you will shoot has to be specific, it has to be marked, and you have to have a guide with you in order to be able to take that animal. It will be hunted in a proper manner. It will not be maimed, and it will not go into the woods somewhere to die on its own. It will be looked after in a humane way.

So I think that whoever has encouraged the Department of Conservation to move ahead with this because it is a politically correct thing to do in the eyes of some, I think overall this is a bad move, a bad move for the economy of rural Manitoba, a bad move for Manitoba in general, because we are out of step indeed with other provinces and other jurisdictions who are allowing this kind of activity.

We have heard from the people who are involved in the bison industry. We have heard from the people who are involved in the elk industry. They are very nervous about the way in which this government is proceeding because what has happened is that the enabling legislation simply allows the Minister, by regulation, then to incorporate any species he wants to into this act. All of a sudden farmers who are now raising animals, whether they are elk or bison, two examples, may find themselves that indeed they have a difficult time disposing of animals that are spent or animals that are old or animals that have to be taken out of the herd for one reason or another.

I think there are enough hurdles out there in front of these producers right now as it is without having this enormous hurdle placed in front of them, so they are nervous about this. They certainly want the Government to rethink its position, and they want some assurances from this government that indeed it is not going to move in a very negative and draconian way as it relates to this legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I regret to say that I will not support this legislation because of the fact that I believe it hurts farm families. It hurts those families who have already diversified. I want to ask this government what it is going to do about those farm families that already have spent enormous amounts of money to establish these

hunt farms. What is the Government going to do about these families? *[interjection]*

Now, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), from her chair says they were never supposed to be hunt farms. Hunt farms were not something that was not allowed in this province. Nobody said hunt farms were not allowed in this province. I would ask the Minister to tell me under what legislation hunt farms are not allowed in Manitoba because there is no such legislation.

These hunt farms have now been established. These families are earning a living off these farms. These families have spent enormous amounts of money fencing these farms. They have spent money making sure that they have the animals within those farms as well. They have set up protocols. They have set up protocols, rules for their farmers. They have set up facilities for these hunters when they come through. Now, what are they going to do? I ask the Government: What is it prepared to do to make sure that these people are not destitute and do not find themselves out of business and not able to make a living for their families?

I think those are real questions. I think those are questions that the Minister has to answer. He has to answer those questions directly. To date, we have not had answers to those questions. That is why it leaves us in a position where I do not believe that we can go forth to support this kind of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, with those few comments, I have to say that I will be voting against this legislation in its present form.

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to add a few words to the record in this debate. This is an area that I must say I agree very much with my colleague the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) in his comments.

This whole area is one that has developed over the last number of years, and it is one where the perceptions and the realities are very, very different. In my own constituency, we have had a so-called penned hunting operation begin in the Rural Municipality of Lac du Bonnet some

time ago. I know that the initial reaction when you hear the term penned hunting is of a small area with animals, like the old turkey shoots, you know, of old where you had a bunch of animals within easy close range and people sat along the fence with their shotguns and they fired away until there were no turkeys left. That is not at all the case.

I had the opportunity last fall to meet with one of the local councillors from the R.M. of Lac du Bonnet and the proprietor of this particular facility. I had the chance to hear what they do, how they put things together, the kind of operation that they run. I think they are making every effort to run a very good operation and one that in no way looks like the perception that many would have the public believe is, in fact, associated with the term "penned hunting."

I know of, I say, no one in this Legislature who would endorse a hunting situation where you had a small area and animals having absolutely no chance. That is not what we are talking about.

Now, what troubles me with this particular piece of legislation, I think it is indicative of a government, and I should say the new Democrats are not the only ones that can be accused of that from time to time, but when government acts only on perception and public opinion rather than fact, I think we get bad law, bad circumstance.

In many of the natural resources issues that we have had to deal with over the last decade, my recollection of those issues is the New Democrats have always tended to grab onto people who would take a position on natural resource issues, most of whom did not deal with the subject matter in their lives, did not live in the areas involved, and often propagated views that were just actually so far from reality, but they did always tend to find voices in the New Democratic Party and to triumph those particular views.

* (16:00)

I would agree with the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). When the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) offered to hold public

consultations, scheduled them with his department to go out and talk to people about this, he was on the right track. I do not think anyone on this side of the House is saying this should be an absolutely open industry. We recognize there is a need for regulation, there is a need for governance. In fact, the Councillor that I have met with from the R.M. of Lac du Bonnet and others where this takes place have said very clearly there is a need to have proper regulation and enforcement of that regulation to ensure that standards are set and are met by operators in this particular industry.

So we support that. We thought the Minister, when we heard that he was going to have these consultations, was going to go out and talk to people in the field, get a real sense of what was happening here and seek the empowerment of this Legislature to put in place the kind of regulatory regime that I think all reasonable and thoughtful Manitobans would say, yes, that will work.

But what happened? The spinners got ahold of him, the activists got ahold of him, and he retracted, cancelled the consultations. We see a bill come forward because it is playing to a particular constituency within that party that knows very little of the reality of rural Manitoba, reality of our natural resources, those particular parts of our province, of agriculture, and yet it looks good. You can trumpet, we banned this, we will play up on the perception.

Now, if people can sleep at night doing that, if they can say: We have triumphed because we set up a perception of an industry, we slapped it down. We do not care how many people we hurt or the people we have put out of business. We look like we have done something. It has furthered our goal as a government to get re-elected one of these days. If you can live with that, that is fine, but eventually it does catch up to you because it is very far from reality.

You know, I think of some of the other issues over the last decade or so, and one comes to mind, Oak Hammock Marsh. The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) was then minister of Natural Resources. I can recall members opposite berating him day after day in this House, how terrible it would be to have Ducks

Unlimited, who are one of the leading conservation organizations on this continent, to have a head office in Oak Hammock Marsh, this tremendous natural marsh.

I remember the Member for Lakeside, then minister, reminding us that if you flew over from the air—originally there were two marshes in the shape of a duck and a goose, because they were man-made. They were recovered marshes. That minister, that member, stood up to all of those same kinds of naysayers who did not want to deal with fact, did not want to deal with reality, did not want to deal with what was there, no, lived in some other world, ideal world, where they never actually went and had a look, but they created these perceptions in the public's mind and fought their battles. But we then had a minister in charge of that department who had the spine, who had the toughness to stand up to the people who created perceptions. He stood up to deal with reality.

We would hope that the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and the Member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) would have the same kind of backbone and guile as the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) and would be prepared to check the facts, work out a system that works for this industry, that works for the public and not play on perception, not play on unreality, not try to gain a few cheap points at the expense of some people who are doing a very good job in that particular industry and who want the bad actors to be kept out.

But, no, they do not have the spine and the courage to do that. They get directed by the spinners. That is what we have before us. Because if they did, and the Member for Swan River sort of intimates from her seat that she has that courage, well, I ask, Mr. Speaker, I ask her and I ask the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin): Why then are you not having those public hearings that were scheduled? Why did you cancel them within your department? Were you afraid?

Well, the Member says: We consult. Well, you consult. I get the impression they consult with each other in the hall. In fact, we cannot even say that, from the number of backbench questions they get. They do not even consult.

But I am sure that is what it was. The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) says it well. It was a little bit of political pressure in their caucus. Because they are not standing up. They are not prepared to go out and do the right thing.

It is very interesting the number of memos and faxes that we have had on this side of the House, as I am sure members opposite may get if they would actually want to hear from the public, saying: We have reasonable issues that we want to deal with. It is like a brick wall over there. No one is listening to us over there. It is like a brick wall. There are no ears. No one can get the Minister's ear. No one can hear about it.

Now, the ministers may dispute that, but that is what we hear from very reasonable operators out there who are saying dealing with this government is like dealing with a brick wall. Now, that is fine, because in three years those people will be around to remind their neighbours of what happened here. We are offering an opportunity. The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) had the opportunity to go and hear from the public and put something together reasonably.

You know what? This side would have supported reasonable regulation of this particular industry, but, oh, no, no, no, we cannot do that because of pressure within our own caucus, I suspect from urban members.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is an issue, I think, where if members would look at the realities of the issue at hand, would go out in the field and study them, one would support reasonable regulation of this industry, which we do, and not the current legislation that is before us. It is regrettable that the Minister of Conservation, who started off on the right path setting up public consultations, then had to abandon them from their pressure from their caucus.

It fits with the changes to The Labour Bill. We do not want voters, working men and women to have the right to choose in a secret ballot whether they want a union or not or which union they would like. It fits in the same: We know what is best. We know what is best.

You know, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) in the House said, well, you know the cards today, they are not signed. But she did not

mention intimidation from fellow employees, intimidation from union officials, intimidation from managers. They are all wrong. But the same kind of "we know what is best for you" attitude comes out very clearly in this particular legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind members again about Oak Hammock Marsh. There was not one New Democrat in this Legislature that I recall who supported that project, not one, because they were catering to a constituency that really, quite frankly, could have cared less about ducks and geese and conservation. Just recently we have a study and a report on that particular project that said they were all wrong, that what a wonderful project this has turned out to be. It has been a big boost to the marsh. It is well managed. It only proves that if reasonable people sit down and work through these issues, they can get extraordinary results.

The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), I think, intended that. He intended that, with this area, to get reasonable people to sit down to work through an issue. But, instead, that was pulled away from him, and he was left to flounder, defending a bad decision to deny reasonable public consultations that his department had scheduled under his instruction. It is just a shame. Mr. Speaker, we know that there are very legitimate concerns in this particular area. That is why those consultations would have been useful, to put all the facts on the table and work out a reasonable package to govern this particular industry. But, oh no, oh no, not with the know-it-all New Democrats, that could not be done.

So all I can say, Mr. Speaker, is that it is a very good thing that the New Democrats were not in power when the Oak Hammock opportunity came up. It is a good thing they were not in power when a half-dozen other natural resources issues occurred in this province. If this is indicative of how they handle these issues, then for anyone who is involved in natural resources, conservation in our province, it is indicative of very sad times to come. Thank you.

* (16:10)

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is

second reading of Bill 5, The Wildlife Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: On division?

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill 42?

Bill 42—The Public Schools Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), Bill 42. The Public Schools Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques et modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Lakeside, who has 13 minutes remaining.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to see this bill move to committee. Let me simply reiterate again on behalf of myself, and I believe all of us on this side of the House, this bill is not in the interest of education as a whole. It is not in the interest of the children who attend our public school system. This bill is a self-serving commitment to a special interest group—in this instance, it is the Manitoba Teachers' Society—that this government has made to them.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 42, The Public Schools Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: On division?

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker. I wish to announce that the Law Amendments Committee, meeting on Wednesday, July 19, at 10 a.m., will consider the following bills: 25, 32, 33, 34, 36 and 39, in addition to the bills previously announced.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker. I wish to announce that the Public Utilities and Natural Resources Committee will meet on Wednesday, July 19, at 6:30 p.m. to consider Bill 5, and if not concluded at that sitting, for the committee to meet at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker. I wish to announce that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet on Tuesday, July 25, at 6:30 p.m., and on Wednesday, July 26, at 6:30 p.m., if necessary, to consider Bill 42—and Bill 12, in addition to 42.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, before moving the Supply motion. I need to obtain the consent of the House.

Mr. Speaker: It was announced that the Law Amendments Committee meeting on Wednesday, July 19, at 10 a.m., to consider the following bills: 25, 32, 33, 34, 36, 39 in addition to the bills previously announced; and also announced that the Public Utilities and Natural Resources Committee will meet on Wednesday, July 19, at 6:30 p.m., to consider Bill 5, and, if not concluded, at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday; and also announced that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet on Tuesday, July 25, 2000, at 6:30 p.m., and on Wednesday, July

26, 2000, at 6:30 p.m., if necessary, to consider Bill 42 and Bill 12.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I wish to obtain the unanimous consent of the House to vary the sequence for Estimates consideration, set out in Sessional Paper 138 and subsequently amended, to consider in the Chamber the Estimates of Executive Council to apply until further notice; in Room 255, to consider the Estimates of the Department of Health prior to considering the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training, with that change to apply until further notice; and to have the Estimates of Sport and Community Support Programs to follow after the Estimates of Health in 255, with that change to apply until further notice.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?
[Agreed]

The sequence for Estimates consideration, set out in Sessional Paper No. 138 and subsequently amended, to consider in the Chamber the Estimates of Executive Council until further notice; in Room 255, to consider the Estimates of the Department of Health prior to considering the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training, with that change to apply until further notice; and to have the Estimates of Sport and Community Support Programs to follow after the Estimates of the Department of Health in Room 255, with that change to apply until further notice. Agreed?
[Agreed]

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Mr. Speaker: Prior to the announcement, because of the unavailability of the Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) will chair this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber.

The honourable members for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) and Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) will chair this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255.

The question before the House is that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

CONSERVATION

* (16:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Conservation. When the Committee last sat, it had been considering items 12.3. Resource Programs (a) Water Resources (4) Surface Water Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 39 of the Estimates book.

Line (4)(a) on page 39 reads as follows: Surface Water Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$785,700. Shall the line pass?

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Chairman, I am glad that I can be in front of this committee. I do have some questions that I would like to ask the Minister. I certainly hope that he will have the appropriate staff here. If not, then I would understand that they would be taken more as matters of information and brought back later on.

I was wondering, through you, Mr. Chairman, if I could ask the Minister if he could explain exactly how an environmental licence would be granted in the case of a hydro transmission line.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): The Manitoba Hydro would be treated as any other applicant wanting to do development and seeking a licence. Hydro would make the application. The application

would be looked at by the Department, after which guidelines for an environmental assessment would be given to the Manitoba Hydro. Hydro would then go about preparing the assessment, after which time Hydro would forward their assessment back to the Department. The Department would then review whatever assessment had been done by Manitoba Hydro under those guidelines that were given to them in the first place.

If the Department was satisfied that all pertinent information had been included, that we were satisfied that we had received all the necessary information needed for a decision, a decision would be made. Then a public hearing would be organized, and after the hearing, a licence would be granted. After the licence is granted, of course, there is an appeal process in place for people, opponents I guess, or even opponents could make the appeal process. Whether we make a decision to go for a public hearing depends on whether we have all the information in place. In the end, the public hearing decision is one of those discretionary calls that the Minister has.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Chairman, after an environmental licence is granted, how long would an appeal of such a decision usually take?

Mr. Lathlin: Once the licence has been granted, the appeal period is 30 days from the date of the granting of the licence. Within 30 days, you can appeal. Apparently there is really no time deadline for a reply to the appeal, but I understand also that there is consideration given to time. We try to do it as early as possible in making the reply.

It also really depends on how complicated the issue is. If it is really complicated, then it obviously needs more time for people to research and get additional information together upon which to make the decision, but for the most part, the Department tries to come back to the proponents as early as possible.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Chairman, on March 24, 2000, the Minister responded to an appeal dated November 22, 1999, from a resident of East St. Paul. Roughly four months had elapsed. This would provide ample time for the Minister to

review and carefully consider this appeal as stated in the Minister's letter denying the appeal. Could the Minister explain his reasoning behind his denying the appeal of Environment Act Licence 2433?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, I would like to advise the Member that, because we deal with so many appeals and so many issues, I just do not want to give him the wrong information. What I would like to propose to him is that I go back to our files, and we will gather up all of the information together and provide him with that information. At least that way I can be accurate. I would try to get information, but I would be guessing, and I do not want to misinform the Member.

Mr. Schuler: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, through you, to the Minister. We appreciate the fact that not everything would be on hand. If he could provide that in the next day or so, that certainly would be appreciated. I can understand that it is better to check to make sure that it is all there before going on the record with something that is not on hand.

The issue that I am dealing with, Mr. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, is the Dorsey-St. Vital line. Currently, there is a corridor that goes through East St. Paul and West St. Paul. The corridor currently has a 230 kV line and a 500 kV line. Proposed long term is that another 230 kV line goes through another 500 kV line. What is most unfortunate about this particular corridor is that, should the 230 kV line go in, it would make it the highest concentration of power going through any residential development in Canada.

Should the additional 500 kV line go through that corridor, it would make it the highest concentration of power going through any residential area in the world, through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, clearly, an overdevelopment of a corridor in what has become a growing area, and it tends to be a young area.

I would point out to the Committee, through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, that if the Minister were to look at this room, this is about a 90-foot room, and I would ask the Minister,

through you, Mr. Chairman, if you were to look at this room, this is about 90 feet, add 10 feet onto it, would this Committee or would this Minister be comfortable having his children or his grandchildren sleeping 100 feet away from the highest concentration of power either in Canada or the world. Is that something that is reasonable under the Department of Conservation?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, if it was something that I was not sure of, of course I would be concerned. But let me also advise the Member that some of the northern transmission lines that go through some of the northern Manitoba communities I understand have 500 kVs and 750 kVs. Some of these transmission lines, as the Member will be aware of, go through Aboriginal communities and so on. You know, if they are indeed a hazard, somebody would probably have to find out through scientific means whether there is, in fact, a hazard.

We in the North, for those of us who lived directly under these transmission lines, used to say that, yes, they were a hazard. We were told time and time again that, you know, given the studies that were carried out by the different types of governments that were there before, we were advised that we did not have to worry about anything, that we were safe to live under these 500, 750 kV lines.

So as far as the East St. Paul corridor is concerned, the 230 and the 500, well, people living under the 500 and 750 kVs are still there today. So I imagine as time goes on, there will be better methods of evaluating the risks associated with transmission lines. But for the time being, the information is that there does not seem to be a risk identified with transmission lines.

As a matter of fact, if Hydro were to have gone through an assessment process, that item would have been one of the areas addressed through the environmental assessment process. They have gone through that. They were granted the licence. It would indicate to me that those areas of concern would have been discussed and addressed accordingly.

* (16:50)

Mr. Schuler: Well, first of all, through you, Mr. Chairman, I do not know about other areas and I

do not know if they are within 100 feet of residential areas. Certainly, 100 feet is a serious concern. The fact that we have hydro lines running in Manitoba, I mean, that is a given. It is a strong part of our economy, but to run them through residential areas, I would suggest through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, is a concern wherever that should be.

I would draw the attention of the Minister to the Henshaw report, and I would quote from there: We want to know why there is increased leukemia in children living near high-voltage power lines.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, there is no scientific evidence which concludes that hydro lines develop leukemia in children, but there is a mathematical chance. There is an equation that seems to come up that one out of eight children who live very close to hydro lines develops leukemia.

My question to the Minister is: Is he comfortable with that chance? Again, the scientific proof is not there, but the percentage seems to be that one out of eight children living near power lines develops leukemia. Is that a statistical number that the Minister is comfortable with?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, I am not aware of—at least I have not come across the report that the Member is referring to, the Henshaw report. I could advise the Member, though, that there have been literally many, many studies and reports that have been done. So far, the general consensus has been, from all the scientific work that has been done in this regard, that so far health risks have not been linked to the existence of these transmission lines over the community over which they go.

The other thing that I wanted to maybe mention to the Member is that this corridor that he refers to, that particular corridor has been in the plans for quite awhile, for years. When those plans were formulated, the time that those plans were completed even predates the arrival of the residential development that is there now. I understand that the plans had been made even before there was any residential development in the particular area, the East St. Paul corridor.

When the corridor was first established, apparently it was located there and also a buffer developed to create a distance from the housing development that was slowly coming onto the site. But despite the buffer, I guess, housing finally came about.

I know, I remember, I lived in Transcona probably in 1981, and I used to drive down that way to go to Concordia Hospital. I remember driving that way almost every day. At the time that I was living there, there was hardly anything there. Not too long ago, my wife and I decided to go back in history a little bit, and we followed that same route that I used to take her to work as she worked at Concordia Hospital or Seven Oaks, whatever hospital is—[interjection] Concordia, that is where she worked as a nurse. I used to give her a ride to work there on my way to work, and there was hardly anything there at the time, no housing. So not too long ago, we took a drive around that area and could not believe the amount of development that had taken place even in that short time.

But I think what I am trying to say to the Member is these plans had been developed, formulated, approved of, before the arrival of the residential development.

Mr. Schuler: Through you, Mr. Chairman, has the Minister travelled to East St. Paul and observed just how close this new line will be to the residential homes in East St. Paul?

Mr. Lathlin: No, I have not, Mr. Chairman. I have gone to, I believe it is the same place, East St. Paul, visiting a contaminated area, but I was not there looking at the transmission lines.

Mr. Schuler: Has the Minister had the opportunity to meet with any residents from the affected areas of East St. Paul to discuss their very serious concerns about placing new transmission lines so close to residential homes?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, as I advised the Member earlier, I have only been minister since October 5 or 6, less than one year. As I said earlier, these plans were put in place many, many years ago, before the arrival of the housing development and even way before my arrival as the Minister.

* (17:00)

Mr. Schuler: One of the Honourable Member for Lakeside's heroes, and probably one of all of us here, had a quote—and I mean this with all due respect to your officials here—and that was the former Prime Minister of Britain, the Honourable Margaret Thatcher. She was known to say that bureaucrats advise and ministers decide, and minister of the corridor is basically something that—

An Honourable Member: That never worked that way when I was around.

Mr. Schuler: The Honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) should have read a little bit more on Margaret Thatcher to figure out how things were supposed to be done, but the corridor is clearly something that has been planned and it is a plan by bureaucrats, but in the end it is a ministerial decision. It is a decision that politicians make.

I would say to the Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, that the Minister brought up issues of areas of up north, but nowhere will there be the same concentration of power going through residential areas as that particular corridor once they add the 230 kV line. If they put in the proposed 500 on top of that, Minister, you would, through you, Mr. Chairman, then have two 500 kV lines and two 230 kV lines.

Nowhere, that certainly we have information on and we have checked far and wide, in the world would there be that much electrical power going through a residential area. Not up north, with all due respect, Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister, not in Ontario, not in Canada, not in the United States, nowhere would there be that amount of power. In fact, I was wondering if the Minister was even aware that, in the United States as of May 1991, the United States federal policy is that they would avoid building new high voltage power lines near residential or commercial buildings.

Why is it that the United States always has to take the forefront? Smoking is fine in Canada until the Americans say it is wrong. Building power lines in residential areas is fine in Canada until the United States says it is wrong. Why is it

that we cannot have the courage? Why is it that ministers here cannot decide that maybe there is too high of a concentration of power going through that corridor? I am very surprised that this particular licence which was granted under this minister did not take that into consideration.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, I agree with the Member. Ministers make decisions based on the best available advice that is there, whether it is given by bureaucrats or by the scientific community or sometimes a combination of both, but, nevertheless, after everything has been assessed or researched, a recommendation is given to the Minister and a decision is made.

In this case, I relied on the information that was there. The information was such that I could go ahead and grant the go-ahead. The Member, again, with all due respect to the south, there are issues and concerns that are being brought forward by the people of the south all the time. I have been here 10 years and I know how it goes.

In the North, not only do we have transmission lines going over our communities, our traditional areas and so forth, but some of us were also flooded out. You pay a high price for development, I guess; in our case, our people paid a hell of a price. In some communities a whole way of life was destroyed, not just transmission lines running overhead or 100 feet from where people live but actually water coming into and flooding traditional areas. In some cases, communities having to be relocated I am afraid to Cedar Lake and east of us. So, I am not trying to one-up the Member in terms of devastation or potential danger or risk, but I want to him to know the extent of impact that the people in the North experienced.

I also appreciate people are concerned in the East St. Paul corridor. However, again, the information at the time suggested to us that there was no risk, so therefore it was decided that we go ahead.

Mr. Schuler: Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, considering that there seems to be new information, perhaps at the time one of the things that was not looked at is the concentration of electrical power going through the corridor.

Would the Minister consider another appeal to the environmental licence from the community in light of some of the new facts that have come to the surface?

Mr. Lathlin: Perhaps I can also give further information to the Member. That is this additional 500 kV line that he keeps referring to I understand is not a done deal. It is not going to be going ahead at this time. Only the 230 kV line was approved during the licensing. Any other new line would have to go through a licensing process, as I understand it.

So it is not guaranteed that that 500 kV line that the Member refers to will be automatically approved. I guess lastly I would also advise the Member that we like to think that the review that is conducted or the assessment that is conducted for these types of projects is just as thorough as any process in the United States.

Mr. Schuler: Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister: So then the answer to the question of opening up the licence to one more appeal, I take it the answer is no?

Mr. Lathlin: I will just repeat my last answer. That is the additional 500 kV line is not part of the licence. Only the 230 kV is. If the 500 kV was to be required to go through, then we would have to subject that proposal to a licensing process. That is how I understand it today.

Mr. Schuler: Just for the record, so that I certainly have it clear, through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, the environmental licence that was granted for a second 230 kV line going through the East St. Paul corridor, in light of the fact that new information has been presented, will the Minister consider another appeal to that particular licence, yes or no?

Mr. Lathlin: I think the information, that the Member has referenced, I do not believe it would be new information to this project. I believe that that information had already been considered during the assessment process.

* (17:10)

Mr. Schuler: That is quite remarkable, that there is a mathematical chance that one in eight

children will end up with leukemia, and that was not one of the factors that was used in this particular environmental licence. I find that at best amazing.

I would like to ask the Minister in conclusion: Would the Minister be open to coming to East St. Paul to meet with area residents and those who have questions on the issues to discuss their concerns about the health and safety impact of this new transmission line?

Mr. Lathlin: The one-in-eight number that the Member keeps referring to, as I understand it, is not supported by all the scientific studies that have been done. In other words, there is no consensus in the scientific community as to whether the one-in-eight number is, in fact, the way it is.

In terms of the request to visit people in that area in East St. Paul, my suggestion to the Member would be to have expert people have meetings with the residents in East St. Paul, scientists, health professionals, a group that could quite credibly give advice and information to the residents there, rather than me, a layperson, going in there to try to advise.

Mr. Schuler: My question, once more, to the Minister, if I may, is: Would the Minister be open to coming to East St. Paul to meet with area residents and those that have questions on this issue to discuss health and safety concerns and the impacts of these new transmission lines on the community?

Mr. Lathlin: I know the Member was not listening when I was giving my last response in terms of the request for me to visit the residents in that area. I will repeat my response, and that is: I would much rather prefer to have experts, people who are schooled in this area, such as health professionals, scientists, and so on, to visit with the residents in East St. Paul, because that group is in a position to more credibly inform the people there.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister, Mr. Chairman, I would caution this minister. There are a lot of other things out there that one can look at when making a decision. If you just base every decision on the so-called scientific facts, I would

point out to him that, when it comes to SIDS, for instance, it started out that babies should be on their back, then babies should be on their stomach, and now babies should now be back on their back and on their side. This is the scientific community that goes from one side to the other, to the other. In the meantime, decisions are being made.

I would again say to the Minister: True, there is not a scientific correlation, but there is a numerical correlation between childhood leukemia and high concentrations of electrical power going through residential areas. You can hide behind as many studies as you want and stack them up and just believe in them, but they will betray you. In time, that will shift. There is still a mathematical fact.

Again, back to the Henshaw report, one of the things that they are trying to look at is the correlation between increased leukemia in children living near high-voltage power lines. Is it unreasonable for the residents of East St. Paul to ask that at some point in time a moratorium be placed on the amount of power going through that corridor? Is that unreasonable for residents to ask?

Mr. Lathlin: Well, I suppose the best way I can respond to the first half of the Member's statement, and that is, saying that I am hiding behind professionals, scientists, and so on, that I do not think that is a fair statement to make. On the other hand, if I just go ahead and make decisions on my own as a layperson, then he will criticize me, I am sure, for making decisions on something that I know nothing about. I know this because quite often I hear the Member in the House saying he does not know; what do you know?

Therefore, when I make decisions of this sort, I like to base them on a lot of professional advice, research and study. I do not want to go in there and pretend that I know the subject matter and make decisions, and then be accused later of making decisions without any scientific evidence or studies or fact.

Mr. Schuler: I have listened to the Minister, and I have asked the question twice. The answer just

seems to escape my ears each time. I was just wondering if the Minister could respond, perhaps with a simple "yes" or a "no" to the question. Would the Minister be open to coming to a meeting in East St. Paul and dealing with some of the concerns that individuals would have in regard to the health and safety impacts of the new transmission line? Yes or no?

* (17:20)

Mr. Lathlin: Again, I will advise the Member, I would prefer to have professionals, scientists, health-care professionals going into East St. Paul to give advice and information to the residents there, rather than me, as a layperson, going in there pretending to know that I know the subject matter and probably giving the wrong advice. So I would much rather have it the other way around, and have professional people visiting with the people there. They are going to ask questions. People who are schooled in that subject matter will be in a better position to answer questions. They can reference studies. The professional people are in that business. They know that there are studies being conducted all the time. They have a whole inventory of studies, reports that have been produced.

That is why I would suggest to the Member that that is probably the best way to do it, to have professional and scientific people visit the community to answer any technical questions that I know would come up in a meeting of that sort.

Mr. Schuler: I would like to thank the Minister for that. Certainly we would appreciate it. I take it that the Minister is offering that officials from his department would come out and be willing to answer questions. I think that is very reasonable. Of course, we all have areas of specialization and we cannot expect one individual to have all the answers in all the areas.

Just to the Minister then, would officials from his department be willing then to come out, say, in the fall to a community meeting and just answer some of the questions?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chair, right at the outset I can advise the Member that—I mean, I do not have

names right now of people from the various departments who could go, but I will consult with my staff and, again, pick out the most appropriate disciplines from Health and also from Conservation that could go to a public meeting to answer any questions that people from that area might have.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: Line 12.3.(a)(4) Surface Water Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$785,700—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$493,600—pass; (c) Canada-Manitoba Agreement for Water Quantity Surveys \$447,500. Shall the line pass?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I know that these have been ongoing co-operative agreements with the federal government to continue doing various surveys. What precisely is involved in the program currently in this \$400,000?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, in response to the Member's question, the federal-provincial program that he refers to has to do with a cost-sharing arrangement with the federal government with regard to surface water quantity monitoring, and that would include flood control programs.

The other thing I could mention, Mr. Chairman, is flood control works also the international water station that is located at Emerson. So it is those kinds of activities that are included in the Canada-Manitoba Agreement for Water Quantity Surveys.

Mr. Enns: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: Line 12.3.(a)(4)(c) Canada-Manitoba Agreement for Water Quantity Surveys \$447,500—pass.

12.3.(a)(5) Groundwater Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$816,800. Shall the line pass?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chair, to the Minister, over a year ago about this time, I was pressing my colleague, my then colleague the minister responsible for natural resources and the minister in the Department of Environment for a

real, serious attempt to establish a benchline data base for water quality in this province. I was doing this principally because of the growing pressure that Agriculture was receiving with respect to its role in possibly endangering ground water supplies through more intensive livestock operations.

I remind all of us, certainly you, Mr. Minister, that the question of the integrity of earthen dams should really not all fall on agriculture. By far, the largest and the most are municipal and industrial earthen lagoons that dock the province of Manitoba that contain all kinds of toxic and wastewater that should concern all of us, in terms of its safe and acceptable methods of storage of that kind of water, and its subsequent treatment. There is no question certainly with the ongoing, and I am speaking now with an agricultural bias, but I think this department, particularly in its merged capacity, having also the environmental concerns within it—I am a layperson; I am the first one to admit that I am not all that computer literate and doubt very much whether at my age I will be—in this day and age of instant information, of the technology available for computers, I would like to know the quality of ground water throughout Manitoba.

I think this is damned good politics for you or for any government. I thought it would have been good politics for us to have 4-H kids going out with a bottle of water and getting a sample of water from every well in agri-Manitoba, having other organizations providing the water. We have 101 municipal organizations with their own water systems people, but somewhere housed in the bowels of your department there ought to be a data base that says, in the year 2000, this was the quality of water coming out of this site so that, in the future, five years from now, ten years from now, four years from now, when arguments are made that this particular activity is endangering and jeopardizing ground water supplies, and ground water is a very important issue to all of us, that (a) you as government, we would be the first to know if it is true or if it is not.

* (17:30)

One of the privileges of being in opposition is that we do not all have to sing from the same

song sheet. My young colleague from Springfield, just a little while ago, was urging the Minister not to pay too much attention to science and rely more on anecdotal evidence or something like that; I am pleading just the opposite. I think it is extremely important for us, on this whole question of agricultural pollution, of intensive livestock pollution, of any kind of industrial pollution, what greater service could you, Mr. Minister, do? If you could say that, okay. By the way, I refer back to the previous one of surface water, too. This is the quality of water of Lake Winnipeg in the year 2000. On October 1, this was the quality of water of Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, our river systems, along with all our major aquifers and all our wells. Then, if there was an issue and if an issue arose that a particular industry or a particular economic activity was jeopardizing or endangering ground water supplies, we would have something to measure it by.

In fact, Mr. Minister, in some instances, I am led to believe that we are improving our situation. I know that, in agricultural practices, we are slowly but surely improving working with programs, with natural resources, by the way, and with other programs. For instance, we no longer build our feedlots next to rivers or on riverbanks to allow their effluent to escape from them. We are encouraging farmers to keep livestock out of rivers and streams. We are encouraging, through different programs, some public or otherwise, to cease and desist from cultivating right to a stream's or river's edge, to planting corridors or strips of forage or grass that help act as a filter and a restraint to agricultural runoffs into these streams and so forth.

I know that, as your deputy minister is aware, we have made, perhaps not sufficient, but I think substantial, inroads in how we place agricultural fertilizers, hog manure, for instance, on land. We have passed certain legislation that calls for manure management plans to be provided, working with the ag rep, that is based on science, on actual take-up of nutrients by a crop and so forth, that should enable us to create, in a balanced way, the use of some of this material without lasting or long-term injury to the environment. I see, in these two, you identify the activity of this operation: Operation and maintenance of provincial ground water

monitoring network; operation of computerized ground water data system containing water well, ground water level and ground water chemistry data. As I did when I was in government, I do not see this totally the responsibility of your department, Mr. Minister. I think certainly Agriculture has an interest in this, certainly your colleagues in Industry and Trade have an interest in this.

I can see some of the initiatives being undertaken by your government, this whole review that is going on. I know it is currently focussed on agriculture, to some extent, and intensive livestock production. It surely ought to be. The integrity and safety quality of our ground water is very often the most visible and understandable criteria that our citizens can understand. I think it is a tremendous opportunity for you, Mr. Minister, to forge ahead in doing what you are doing. I know you are doing a great deal of what you are doing, but to create that kind of a readily accessible, publicly accessible data bank of the quality of our ground water, so that if a municipality or an individual is being challenged at a public meeting that he has debased the ground water, that his operation is contributing and polluting the ground water, well, let us not let it be decided by who can pack more people into a municipal office; let us decide it on science.

I think it would be a tremendous service for the orderly, responsible, ongoing development of various activities in this province, be they mining, be they forestry, be they agricultural, if we have reliable, scientific data on what is the condition of our ground water and surface waters today, so there is something that we can go back and measure them by.

I would encourage the Department, I would encourage the Minister to challenge his people. I would encourage the Department to reach out to other departments of government to help fund this program. I know that it is not cheap. I was surprised at the extent, depending on the sophistication of a particular water test, what it is that you are looking for, they can be fairly expensive. So this is not an undertaking that can be done with just a few dollars. It is a serious undertaking, probably involving several millions.

But I would see tremendous benefit. If you, Minister of Agriculture, or if you, Minister of Conservation, can, in two years, three years, walk into a community and stand up to opponents who are accusing you of allowing somebody to build an extra hog barn or to allow for an additional paper mill, or something like that, to be put up in the area, and as a consequence you are polluting the Winnipeg river system, or you are polluting the ground water supplies in the Interlake or somewhere, you have data furnished that says: Sorry, this simply is not the case. As a matter of fact, the water coming out of the ground, our ground water supply in this area is better than it was three years ago, or at least has not deteriorated.

I make that appeal to the Department. I think it is particularly important, at the kind of economic activity that I see as possible in the province of Manitoba, but I also see as possible it being severely hampered and virtually shut down if we simply allow non-science and emotion to make the definitive arguments in this instance.

* (17:40)

Mr. Lathlin: Let me start off by saying to the Member that, yes, I think for some time now there has been that realization or the awareness that we need to look at any activity, whether it is industry or a municipality or an Indian reserve or a farm, an agriculture operation. I think the time has come for us to, if we want to be assured of a continued supply of good ground water, as the Member says, the time has come for us to include everybody in this scrutiny, including agriculture.

I have said for quite some time now that it was not always politically correct to try to put agriculture under that kind of scrutiny as, say, a telco would be put under. That was not the political correct thing to do, but I think we have to go beyond that now. We are seeing signs of further deterioration of ground water. There are incidents happening all over the place. There are all kinds of indicators telling us that we must take action.

I think, at the same time, on the federal side, the federal government recently has been making

statements to the effect that agriculture definitely would have to be considered as part of the scrutiny that other industries are placed under. I, for one, support that, if that is where we are going to go.

I also want to advise the Member that, when we talk about our Sustainable Development Strategy, one of the components in that strategy is that we, by legislation, compel all government departments to make sure that they take into consideration sustainability principles whenever programs or projects are being devised.

In other words, if one department is contemplating a project, a development, they have to—not just Conservation, but whether you are Agriculture, Intergovernmental Affairs, or whatever government department you may be in—take into consideration sustainable development principles that we have approved just recently. In other words, it is not a free-for-all anymore. We have to get some kind of a grip or control on just how these developments are developed and implemented. There is going to have to be some very, very strict adherence, like strict rules applied to ensure that government departments are moving in the same direction and not just Conservation.

I think I would like to tell the Member that we are very concerned about the issues that he has brought forward. Maybe his lobbying has worked for him because in the fall, in September of 1999, there was a rural ground water quality surveillance program that was started. This program is being conducted throughout the agricultural regions in Manitoba so that we can collect the data that the Member refers to and, in the end, will help us gain a better understanding of the quality of water in rural Manitoba.

As a start to developing this data, for example, approximately 800 rural water samples have been collected at a random basis of 1 per 36-square-mile township within the eastern Interlake region, in Winnipeg, in the south central part, the park west regions, and there are still some others that have to be done. There have also been, since the summer of 1999 some sentinel observation wells that were drilled and constructed in the southwestern region of the province, so we are taking actions.

I want to assure the Member that we share his concerns, and I think, as we move along, there are going to be more programs announced, more initiatives announced, to move in the direction that the Member has mentioned, and that is to make sure that when we make these kinds of decisions, before we allow development to take place, we make the decisions based on sound information and scientific information.

I agree with him. I agree with the Member. I, for one, have been in various leadership positions throughout my working life. Throughout all those different leadership positions that I have held, as a chief, for example, I never made decisions all by myself. First of all, I had a council, and then, second of all, I had the community, held a lot of band meetings, community meetings, and then, yes, we hired professionals, some from within the reserve and for the most part, some from the outside. We relied on their expert scientific opinion, and we made decisions based on that advice that they gave us. I think that is the direction that we ought to be going in Manitoba so that we are not guessing. Yes, I like to be able to sit face-to-face with a proponent for, or an opponent to, any kind of development and be able to back up our initiatives with sound information.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to hear that this work is proceeding. I just encourage the Minister and the Department that there is a heightened—there always has been—degree of interest in this, the kind of Walkerton situation in Ontario. I think it would be just good PR and good politics for the Department to let Manitobans be aware of the extent of work that is being done in this area, you know, the observation wells that you were talking about, the fact that you are getting an increased gathering of data from throughout the province. I think most Manitobans would be comforted in knowing that this was being done by the Department.

I am prepared to pass this section of the Estimates, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: Line 12.3. Resource Programs (a) Water Resources (5) Groundwater Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits

\$816,800—pass; (b) Other Expenditures
\$617,200—pass.

12.3.(a)(6) Waterway Maintenance
\$3,908,700—pass.

12.3.(b) Parks and Natural Areas (1)
Administration (a) Salaries and Employee
Benefits \$367,500—pass; (b) Other Expenditures
\$428,200. Shall the line pass?

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I have a couple of general questions in this area, partly related to one line that we already passed, but on the maintenance area is there anything other than regular maintenance being contemplated?

Mr. Chairperson: Excuse me. Is there leave to go back to the previous line, to 3.(a)(6) Waterway Maintenance? Is there leave?
[Agreed]

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, in response to the Member's question, the line there is only for ongoing maintenance of existing waterways.

Mr. Cummings: The impetus for my question was whether or not the Minister anticipates that he will be seeking an increase in this line for next year's budget.

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, I take the Member's advice on that. But I would also like to advise him that in the fall we are going to be starting our water management study project, I guess I will call it, where we will be attempting to review water management in a comprehensive way. We will look at drainage. We will look at all the things that the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) had already alluded to in his earlier remarks. Hopefully, that process will not take long, and in the end we will be able to use the report to substantiate whatever requests for increased funding that will be coming up.

* (17:50)

Mr. Cummings: Well, I understand that the previous line has been passed and this line was passed as well, but my question is more of a general nature rather than the specifics of the dollars.

Waterway maintenance and conservation districts and the overall management of the watersheds, there has been a movement over the last few years to increase the number of conservation districts, some of which has relieved responsibility for water management on a basin basis. But it has always been acknowledged that there eventually have to be more dollars put into this area, either through conservation districts or through maintenance that is in the section that we are currently dealing with.

The discussions that the Minister referred to, will they be looking at recommendations regarding conservation districts? I think it is going to come up in relationship to the Bill that he has before the House as well. I would be interested in what his general approach to this is likely to be, because the jurisdiction is only one part of the issue. The bigger issue is whether the province and/or the municipalities and/or conservation districts in conjunction with both levels of government can apply more aggressive management on the watershed basis across the province. Has the Minister considered encouraging the expansion of conservation districts?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, I believe the Member is referring to two areas. One is conservation districts. The other one is watershed-based initiatives. Some municipalities have undertaken those initiatives, but let me say to the Member that I think so far we have 11 conservation districts in Manitoba. Out of those 11, 3 are based on watersheds, which is not the way we would like it to be, because we are in agreement with those groups, AMM, who say that we should allow municipalities to have an input into this and the management of these projects should be managed or should be based on a watershed basin.

We are not in disagreement with that proposal. I think I have said that two or three times along the way. I think any time that we are able to devolve this kind of responsibility to the local community it helps because they help you. You do not have to go there and convince them that this is a good idea. They know that it is a good idea. If they know it is a good idea, they will be in support of it.

Mr. Cummings: I hope my line of questioning is not too obscure. What I am really getting at is that the conservation districts or the province, there is going to have to be some dollars committed to it. Some of those dollars will either be coming from Intergovernmental Affairs or from this department in order to support those conservation districts.

I suspect, as well, that in a generous interpretation of the basin concept, I find that there are more than three districts that may not cover complete basins, but they are generally tied to drainage areas, if not the complete basin, if I recall the description of most of the districts.

Now, you do not have a district as big as the Assiniboine, but portions of the Assiniboine are under conservation district management. My real question in tying all this together, Mr. Minister, is that as a member of Treasury Board and a Minister of Conservation, do you support the concept that more dollars should be taken from what is currently a fairly buoyant economy in order to deal with this issue? I think the strategy that he refers to is part of it, but the municipalities have always said it is fine to have a strategy, but we are not going to be able to raise our local taxes enough to support some of the strategic demands that are out there. They are somewhat global in nature.

I wonder if the Minister would give me his thoughts on that.

Mr. Lathlin: I think the Member might be aware it is just a short time ago that he was in government. He probably still remembers the funding arrangements that were in existence at the time. That is, for example, for conservation districts, they are being funded through the Intergovernmental Affairs Department. Yes, I want to assure the Member that I am in support of increased funding to those conservation districts, because I think it is a worthwhile concept. So far, what I have seen, it works.

In The Pas we just had a new conservation district established. That is the Kelsey Conservation District. They have developed some pretty commendable goals and objectives for that particular conservation district in The

Pas. I have met with the people involved in it, and I wish them well.

Mr. Cummings: We are just about at the six o'clock hour, Mr. Chairman, but I want to reinforce with the Minister that—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., the Committee rise.

HEALTH

* (16:20)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Health.

Consideration of these Estimates left off on page 91 of the Estimates book, Resolution 21.3, External Programs and Operations, Health Programs, Salaries and Employee Benefits. The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wonder if the Minister could indicate to me whether he has any more information to table.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairperson, I do and I will provide it as soon as I have an opportunity to review it.

Mrs. Driedger: I noticed in the *Winnipeg Free Press* today there was an article on signing bonuses. In the particular article, too, it also indicated a listing of all of the specialists. I guess, most of them look like physician specialists that we are short in the province.

I found it interesting, because I had asked the Minister that last week in *Estimates*. He indicated that it would be very difficult for him to provide me with this special list. He went on to say it depends upon interpretation and it depends upon how one evaluates the situation. It is not a simple process of simply numbers and vacancies.

Then, when I saw this in the newspaper today, I was a little bit taken aback. It boiled

down to simple numbers and vacancies. I also, I guess, was concerned that this information was so readily available to a newspaper reporter, and the Health critic was not given access to that same kind of information. I wonder if the Minister would care to comment on that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, as I pointed out to the Member who was going through the items specialist by specialist, I indicated that it was difficult to ascertain those particular statistics, that we are short of all specialists. I gave the blanket statement that you could not name a specialist virtually that we would not be short, firstly. Secondly, if the Member could appreciate that this time during the Estimates process, the Member has information that has never ever been available from the Department of Health to any Health critic. I know that from experience because that information was not supplied for seven or eight years. We have tried to be informative and provide the Member with information that has literally never been provided.

I did not provide that information to the reporter with respect to the article. The Member may not be aware, but we have regionalized the system. The recruitment of those issues are generally done on a regionalized basis, and the reporter talked with the regional health authority to ascertain those issues. If you will look at those specific categories, they cover some areas. They do not cover all areas with respect to the specialist issue.

I did not want to get into a situation where the Member is going specialist by specialist and asking, is there a shortage? Then the Minister would say, no, there is not a shortage in this particular area, and then find out that in fact there is shortage perhaps in rural Manitoba, in that particular area, or in a northern application to that particular speciality. I did not want to get locked into a situation where we were providing information on a specific speciality area, and then have it countermanded by an interpretation in another area.

I also indicated to the Member that it was very difficult to isolate these issues because of the circumstances, some areas we are short specialists depending on who one interprets and

who one reviews. The University of Manitoba might say, we are short of specialists in an area. The regional health authority might say, no, we are sufficient in that particular area. The particular patients waiting for that service will say, well, clearly you are short in that area. I did not want to get into a situation where I was getting a blanket one way or the other. I gave an overall review that, name a specialty, we are probably short. I will provide the Member at some point with some kind of a listing that is a general update. I have dealt with specifics in the House, but I did not want to get locked into a situation where I was saying, well, we are short two in this area, but we are really short two and a half, and I would be countermanded by someone or some individual coming back with a particular reference.

So if the Member has received more information and greater information and information that was never provided in the past with respect to health and the Member will continue to receive information, if the Member wants us to review the information that was in the paper and comment on that, I am quite prepared to do that.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister just confirm with me that there are signing bonuses being offered to physicians of \$15,000 and that this fund had actually been set up right after the new government came into power and it was made retroactive to last summer to cover new recruits? Is that an accurate comment from the newspaper article?

Mr. Chomiak: There was a process, as I understand it, put in place by the previous government that created a fund that took place, I believe, in July of last year. It set up a fund that dealt with this particular issue. I am looking to staff to confirm whether that was the case and that there were incentives tacked into that to deal with specialists, particularly for rural Manitoba, that we recruited as a result of that particular process.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister is going to be getting this information from his staff at this moment in time as to when this fund was set up. According to the newspaper article, and I am just looking for verification on it, it

said the fund was set up last fall after the NDP came to power and was made retroactive to last summer to cover new recruits.

Mr. Chomiak: As I understand it, the fund was set up by the WRHA to deal with recruitment issues.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister could be more specific. I am of the understanding that it probably would have been run through the WRHA. Was it something that the Government directed them to do?

* (16:30)

Mr. Chomiak: As I understand it, the fund was established by the WRHA.

Mrs. Driedger: Was it established with the Minister's approval?

Mr. Chomiak: I believe that the WRHA established the fund and advised the Department.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me whether he was informed at the time? I am just going to make an assumption that when something of this nature happens, I would assume that the Minister is involved in terms of being part of the decision making.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the Member be more specific as to what time the Member is referring to?

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister indicate, in this particular article it says a provincial funding initiative was set up. Therefore, I would have to assume that this does not only related to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, if indeed the article is accurate. I wonder if the Minister could verify for me. He has just said that this \$1-million fund was set up by the WRHA. Yet, it does talk about a provincial funding initiative. Would the Minister clarify for me if this is \$1 million just for the WRHA then?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I will take the question under advisement and get back to the Member about details of that particular fund.

Mrs. Driedger: I thank the Minister for that. My colleague from Russell has also some questions on this as he was listening to the radio today, and there was some indication of some other information attached, so he will be looking for some clarification.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Chairperson, again, this is for information. Obviously, there has to be some knowledge by the Minister with regard to this fund, because the news media certainly did not make up the story. This article that is in the news, I guess, originated in the Department. It did not originate at the WRHA, because it talked about a provincial fund as well. It was in reference to specialists not only in Winnipeg but also in rural Manitoba.

So I would like to ask the Minister whether there are two separate funds. Is there a fund for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority that was established by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority as opposed to a provincial fund for rural Manitoba? Are there two separate funds, or is all of this in one particular category or one fund?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, there is a variety of initiatives going on. As I understand it, there was a funding provision established for the recruitment of specialists that was administered by the WRHA that dealt with specialists, the majority of whom were recruited for rural Manitoba, as I understand it. There are also initiatives that have been put forward by the MMA with respect to physician recruitment-retention to deal with other issues related to that, that are still being reviewed and have not been acted upon.

With respect to the specific details of the WRHA fund, I will take that under advisement and get details back to the Member.

Mr. Derkach: Well, I know there may be several initiatives, but the articles and the news reports speak specifically about a fund established to attract specialists to Winnipeg and rural Manitoba. There have been, I think it said, five grants or something of that nature that were already allocated to specialists who are relocating to Winnipeg and to rural Manitoba. I think there were a couple of specialists who

went to Brandon, one went to the Parkland area and five to Winnipeg, I believe. I may have my numbers a little off. Yes, it says 10 grants have been handed out so far. Four specialists went to Brandon, five to Winnipeg and one surgeon relocated to the Parkland region in the Dauphin area.

Now, obviously, the grants for the physicians outside of Winnipeg could not have come through the initiative with Winnipeg Regional Health Authority; if they did, I would be very surprised. So, does the Department, because this initiative is not present in the other rural RHAs, as I understand it, the Department has to have an initiative within the Department for the recruitment of these specialists to rural Manitoba outside of the city of Winnipeg?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, as I understand it, there was a committee that was struck under the auspices of the WRHA to deal with physician recruitment and retention at which funds were provided. As I understand it, and I will confirm the details that that organization and group commenced activities last summer-fall, out of that came a specialist recruitment-retention initiative that dealt with these 10 individuals in question. I will take the specifics under advisement and get back the details to the Member.

Mr. Derkach: I am just not certain how the protocol of this would work. Maybe the Minister can advise us how this works. If it is originated from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, \$1 million has been given to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to deal with this. How do they deal with other regional health authorities, whether it is the Parkland Regional Health Authority, the Marquette Health Authority, the Brandon Health Authority? Is there a transfer of funds or do we have now a super regional health authority in Winnipeg that does have jurisdiction about grants for specialists outside the city of Winnipeg? How do they relate to, for example, the Brandon Health Authority?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, a lot in the same way that the previous government set up a commission and a committee to review lab

services and consolidation of lab services in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority combined with Brandon Region and the other regions in the province to put together a lab consolidation process that dealt with labs generally outside of Winnipeg but had the input of Winnipeg and the expertise of Winnipeg, as one of the regional health authorities, and they collaboratively worked through RHAM to put together a proposal. That is how I understand the process generally took place, so I will get the specifics back to the Member.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, I am not criticizing the Minister for doing this. I am not being critical here. I am looking for information. This, in fact, may be a method of getting special assistance to rural Manitoba. However, we harken back to the Minister's comments when he was in opposition about subsidies and about grants with regard to special programs. I know the Minister personally has a difficult time with this. I think he stated that on radio, if I heard that correctly, but nevertheless, I am not here to criticize the process because I do not know the process and I do not know whether or not communities can apply to a fund to attract specialists. I do not know how this is administered, so we are simply looking for more information.

If the Minister does not have that at his fingertips, I guess, all I could ask is that before this Estimates debate is over, whether we could get from the Minister a commitment to table the information and the protocol with regard to this initiative so that we have a better understanding of it.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I will undertake to do that.

Mr. Derkach: Can the Minister tell us how many specialists we are short? I think that the broadcast that I was listening to had some numbers, but those numbers were still being debated as to their accuracy and I think there were some variances in those numbers. Can the Minister give us an indication of what our total shortfall is with regard to specialists both in Winnipeg and also in centres outside Winnipeg, please?

* (16:40)

Mr. Chomiak: As indicated to the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), I am loath to give out specific numbers in that regard because of the interpretation and the review as to how the Member for Charleswood was going specialist by specialist with respect to "are we short this specialist, are we short that specialist."

Suffice to say that we are short and recruiting virtually every level of every type of specialist and differ between—if one talks about specialists outside of Winnipeg, virtually every specialist that we could require outside of Winnipeg; when one talks about specialists in Winnipeg, yes, there are requirements for specific areas of specialists within Winnipeg. There is an ongoing recruitment for a number of areas across different areas. I am loath to give out specific numbers because every time one gives out a specific number from the Minister of Health and one is locked into a specific specialist area, one opens oneself up to controversy or dispute from another area or another group that, in fact, we do need a special in this area.

Let me give the Member an example that I gave the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger). There are some areas where in fact the demand in Manitoba requires one and a half specialists. The demand is for one full-time specialist and perhaps one specialist, for example, and we have one specialist in that area. Well, we are actively recruiting a second specialist. The active recruitment of the second specialist causes problems with respect to the actual employment of the first specialist who then will see their particular practice and income suffer as a consequence of the recruitment of the second specialist, and it gets into some problematic areas. So I am loath to give specific numbers and specific specialist numbers, shortages. Suffice to say, we are short specialists across the entire spectrum.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, then I would have to accuse the Minister of withholding information because, through his department and the regional health authorities, an initiative has been put forward to attract X number of specialists to the province. Now certainly the Minister has to

know which areas are priority areas, how many positions he is looking for in those priority areas. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority has put some numbers forward. I do not have any argument with those numbers, but I do think that for the benefit of us as opposition, it is only incumbent on the Minister to be able to give us a ballpark figure of the number of specialists and where the priorities are as they relate to services in Manitoba. I am not going to hold the Minister's feet to the fire and say: Well, you said you were short a specialist and a half, but it would give us all, I think, some valued information as to the numbers of specialists perhaps that we are short, that we require, the priority areas, and I think then we are all dealing from the same level of information.

Mr. Chomiak: In light of that, Mr. Chairperson, I will give some ballpark numbers to the Members opposite, keeping in mind those considerations. I consider that reasonable. Considering that that information has never been provided by previous ministers of Health, like a lot of information that has come out these Estimates—and I hope members appreciate that—I will give ballpark figures keeping in mind the comments of the Member for Russell concerning how negotiations can be affected by this, and how certain factors and the way we deal with certain issues can be affected by release of specific information. I will give ballpark information to assist the members in determining priority levels and strengths and weaknesses, and I will provide that information.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I do not want to put the Minister in a position where he compromises his position with regard to negotiations with physicians and specialists who might be coming into the province, and I would respect, I guess, that ability to keep that information confidential, but I think in terms of global figures certainly that cannot dampen or affect negatively his negotiations or that of his department. I have to remind the Minister I was never the Minister of Health, so my questions are simply coming from my interest in the topic and from information I think I require.

When the Minister was critic for Education, I believe that he and I used to exchange a lot of information, although he may say that I did not,

that there are bits of information I may not have provided. It was not certainly done with any intention to withhold information. It was perhaps an oversight, and I am not looking for this information to be able to criticize the Minister. I think it gives us a better base and a better understanding of what the needs of Manitobans are and, indeed, our responses to the public when we are asked those questions as well.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chair, to conclude or complete, we will provide that information for the members. Considering those caveats in mind, I think it could protect—the members appreciate some of the circumstances, why some specifics might be a little bit more difficult than others. We will give, in general, as much information as we can, within the ballpark and provide that information to members opposite.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me if the \$1-million fund for this recruitment and retention is for bonuses only, or does it also cover, I guess you would say, enhanced salaries for specialists coming in, example, neurosurgeons?

Mr. Chomiak: I will take that question under notice and provide the Member with some of that information.

Mrs. Driedger: I thank the Minister for that undertaking.

On page 75 of the supplementary information, it indicates that the regional health authorities will have access to new contract templates reflecting, there are three: alternate funding models, i.e., not fee-for-service contract templates for midwives; service purchase agreements; and a memorandum of understanding template.

Will also the Health critic have access to those new contract templates?

Mr. Chomiak: I do not think there is a problem with providing that information with respect to the templates.

Mrs. Driedger: I thank the Minister for that. I am assuming from his answer that he will be

providing that information to me at some point. Is that correct?

I am wondering if the Minister, with staff here, has any further information on the salary scale for midwives.

Mr. Chomiak: I believe I indicated to the Member either last or previous Estimates that it was in the senior range of a nurse and that the specifics we would get back to them. We do not have it today.

Mrs. Driedger: I thank the Minister for that undertaking.

In looking at primary health care centres, I understand that one was open in St. Boniface Hospital. Are there any plans to establish any others?

* (16:50)

Mr. Chomiak: The Member will know that there is a primary health care unit within the Department of Health that, as I indicated in the previous Estimates, has been very active in terms of meeting with the RHAs and discussing with them the process of development of primary health care centres. It certainly is a goal of the Department of Health and has been for some time for the establishment of primary health care centres.

Mrs. Driedger: I understand that we have four community nurse resource centres in the province. I wonder if the Minister could tell me if there are plans to establish any others.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, as I understand it, about five or six years ago the previous government put in place pilot projects for the establishment of four community resource nurse centres that were gradually up and running across the province. Together with the health access centres, primary health centres and nurse resource centres, those are all initiatives of primary health care that are being actively pursued and reviewed by the Government.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me if there are any primary health care innovations coming forth under his government?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, there will be primary health initiatives coming forth under this government.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the Minister prepared at this time to share any of those innovations with us?

Mr. Chomiak: Those announcements will be made in due course.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me if there are any plans to link health services with other community services?

Mr. Chomiak: I think that the Member can get a general sense of where we are going by the recent announcement of the PACT proposal, the announcement about a month ago that it had been long reviewed and long discussed. We were very pleased that we had the opportunity of announcing the PACT proposal as clearly one of the innovations and one of the processes in health care that links community and institution and is almost a definition of a community-based health care system. We made that announcement relatively early in our mandate to suggest to the public and to the population in general where we wanted to go with respect to health care, albeit it was in the mental health area, and as we have discussed, this is an area that is going to have a fair amount of activity during the course of our mandate. But the announcement and the movement towards PACT can be seen generally as one of the directions and initiatives that is clearly an area that all governments are pursuing, and all governments have expressed a desire to proceed. The announcement of PACT was one of our demonstrations of how we intend to proceed.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could tell me how he plans to strengthen the role of disease prevention and health promotion. Does he have a general approach that he could delineate at this point in time?

Mr. Chomiak: Well, I guess it is one of these questions that I am resisting the temptation to give a long—I do not know if I can give a two-minute answer to a question like that. Disease prevention and health promotion are clearly two of the long and long-proposed initiatives of all Health departments across this land. In terms of specific measures and initiatives, we have tried

very much to protect and promote that particular area of the pre-existing Department of Health that was in existence when we came to office, and enhanced resources where we could in that regard.

In terms of specific initiatives, about a month ago we released our first portion of the diabetes strategy that dealt with both prevention and clinical diagnosis, which is the first major component of the diabetes strategy and a diabetes initiative, which has long been established as a prototype. I give credit to the previous administration for the preparation of that particular material, and it has been recognized across the country. I have been told across the country that the diabetes initiative that has been put together is probably the best diabetes initiative in the country. Unfortunately, it has not been implemented, and one of the deliberate initiatives that we took several months ago was to actually put in place several of those diabetes initiatives, and actually moved them out, make them applicable and subject them to actual review. So the diabetes initiative, with respect to prevention and promotion, has actively been pronounced and is being pursued and funded by the Department of Health.

Harm prevention with respect to AIDS and with respect to communicable diseases and other sexually transmitted diseases is also an area in which we have taken a fairly strong initiative. Also, the Member might know, we have undertaken a study in terms of harm reduction together with Mount Carmel Clinic and in terms of the community outreach program to try to expand that particular initiative. That study is still pending, but we are going to be taking initiatives in that regard. Of course the promotion of the variety prevention, and that is why I am kind of resisting to get into a general—there are a whole series of initiatives across the board in terms of children's health, women's health and disease-specific programs, as well as preventative issues relating to matters that have been somewhat in the news lately—smoking is one example—that are actively being pursued.

Suffice to say that we have been very supportive of the Public Health branch of the Department of Health and are attempting to resource and provide the kinds of resources,

funding and initiatives to Public Health so that they can carry out their activities. It has also been a direction of this government that clearly, in the mid- and long-term, the Government is interested in issues of prevention and in harm reduction across the board, of which some measures have been announced and some measures are pending.

It is an interesting opportunity for a new government coming in to reflect on that and to provide additional opportunities and initiatives across the board in that regard. We have asked the Department to look at those initiatives and look at those measures in order to enhance our role and our function, not just from a public health perspective, but from a total population health perspective across the board.

One of the issues, for example, that is very interesting, I think, that has come across recently is the—it almost seems trite—question of falls and the effects of falls and injuries from, particularly, elderly people and the impact that has on the health care system and the prevention. There are initiatives that we are undertaking in that regard with respect to that specific initiative. We have asked all the regional health authorities, within their planning framework, to look at prevention and disease control as a major initiative.

You noted that I did not use the word "priority" because I said it is so difficult to say what is a high priority and what is not a high priority because literally in health care everything is a priority. But, clearly, we are directing some activities on specific disease control and specific disease prevention, and we hope that the Department of Health, over the next few months and years, will actively pursue that as a major initiative.

Mrs. Driedger: I would just personally like to indicate to the Minister that I think any initiative towards addressing falls is a good one. I also would like to indicate that I think the PACT program is a good one.

With the moving forward of the diabetic strategy, could the Minister tell us how much money has been allocated towards that particular strategy?

* (17:00)

Mr. Chomiak: Part of the breakdown that I have in front of me includes the acute side of the equation. What I will try to do is break out the components that are isolated from the acute side, because it does not give a good or fair representation. So I will take it as notice, and I will get you specifics.

Mrs. Driedger: Does the Minister have any plans to mount a large-scale anti-smoking campaign?

Mr. Chomiak: We intend to launch a number of initiatives with respect to the health effects of smoking. We are still in discussion of that particular strategy at this time.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister give us an update of all of the pilot projects being undertaken in primary health care?

Mr. Chomiak: The Member referred to pilot projects, and I noted the choice of the Member's word. Does the Member want an update as to what is happening in primary health care or does the Member want information as to what is happening on pilot projects reflecting primary health care?

Mrs. Driedger: This was sort of a last-minute question I threw in, and it was in reviewing last year's Estimates. This was exactly the same question that the Minister had asked the former Health Minister. Pilot projects are what I would be interested in, an update of all of the pilot projects being undertaken in primary health care.

Mr. Chomiak: I will undertake to do that.

Mrs. Driedger: I am prepared to pass this line.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Nevakshonoff): Item 21.3.(h) Health Programs (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,467,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$3,486,500—pass; (3) External Agencies \$5,297,200—pass.

Resolution 21.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$64,035,700 for Health, External Programs and

Operations, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

The next item 21.4. Health Services Insurance Fund (a) Funding to Health Authorities, Acute Care Services \$1,023,663,200. Shall the item pass?

Mrs. Driedger: Under Acute Care Services, it is showing an 18% increase in expenditures, and it indicates that the increase is due to wage costs from collective bargaining agreements reached with health sector unions, incremental costs related to the elimination of reduced work week, the operating deficit of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and rural health authorities, hallway medicine initiative and volume workload changes.

Would the Minister have before him the information on how that billion-dollars-plus breaks down into each of those specific areas? Could we go through that one at a time, with an indication, for example, of how much the wage costs from collective bargaining agreements takes of the \$1 billion, the elimination of reduced work week, the amount that would be, the operating deficit, and so on?

Mr. Chomiak: We can have a discussion about that and attempt to delineate it as best as possible. I just note for the Honourable Member that the increase is from the budgeted amount of the previous fiscal year. Because of the nature of the budgetary process, we may not be able to get specifics with respect to what was spent the previous year in particular areas because of the way the collective bargaining process worked.

I think what we can try to do is delineate somewhat the factors as they relate to the increases between the Estimates of Expenditure last year and the Estimates of Expenditure this year to provide some kind of rough assessment of those figures.

Mrs. Driedger: Is this something that the Minister is prepared to table, or is it some discussion that we could get into right now so we could ask further questions as we go along?

*(17:10)

Mr. Chomiak: The difference in the two budgetary figures, as the Member indicated, is 18 percent. Of the 18 percent, it equates to around \$156 million from budget to budget. On that specific breakdown, the wage settlements were somewhere in the vicinity of \$70 million. The deficits are somewhere in the vicinity of \$60 million, and the rest are specific-program related and related issues for a variety of programs related to the Budget.

Mr. Derkach: I would like to ask the Minister some questions as relates specifically to rural health authorities and the deficits that have been incurred by the rural health authorities. I know that, from time to time, deficits are incurred as a result of many factors, but what I see in some of the health authorities in rural Manitoba is what seems to be a shift in emphasis in terms of where the dollars are placed. I have to tell the Minister that I was in two different facilities on the weekend and talked to nursing personnel from a third facility, and it appears that nurses today, specifically, and other personnel are as dissatisfied with the workplace and the environment as they ever have been.

When I asked whether or not the situation is getting better, as a matter of fact, I was given the reverse of that. I am not blaming the Minister for that, but I do know that there are some challenges out in the rural health districts. I would like to ask the Minister what approach he is taking with regard to the significant deficits that the regional health authorities throughout rural Manitoba seem to be incurring at the present time.

Mr. Chomiak: As the Member might know, when we came into office, there was a significant discussion concerning deficits and discussions that were ongoing as to the various deficit positions of the various health authorities. What we attempted to do was to incorporate, where we could, on the base budgets, the deficits from the rural health authorities and, indeed, from all of the health authorities to establish a baseline that could then be utilized over the subsequent years as to programming and various needs that are required to be met or not to be met.

One of the fundamental issues, I suppose, in this regard is whether or not the funding, in the first place, in terms of baseline, is adequate and whether the previous funding model and the previous funding approach provides for adequate funding for the various health authorities. It is obviously very difficult to come in halfway through a budgetary year and establish baseline funding on programmings, et cetera, when there had been deficits for a number of years that were not conclusively dealt with. So we tried to come in and incorporate, where we could, the deficits, and there are still ongoing discussions with respect to the various authorities as to what constitutes baseline funding and to what that is comprised of. So it is clearly the attempt to deal with financial matters that continue to be of significance to the Department of Health.

The Member has to appreciate the fact that I think what happened in terms of regionalization is still an ongoing process. There was regionalization in fashion and in style to a certain extent, but certain administrative and financial structures as well as other aspects of regionalization have not totally evolved. The regionalization process is still a development in progress, and one of the tasks that we have to come to grips with is the whole issue of base funding, as to what is appropriate funding, what is not appropriate funding and how we adequately deal with the measures in hand.

As the Member notes, when we came into office, we prioritized what was clearly a number of significant areas that required address. One of them was the human resource issue, and clearly with respect to the Member's comments concerning nurses, the clear indication from nurses to us was that we needed a number of initiatives of which we announced and launched, including the establishment of the diploma nursing program, the establishment of the \$3 million that is being sent out to the regions for upgrading, education, et cetera, as well as the establishment of a committee to deal with workplace issues that had not been dealt with in the past, that we give a quick response and a quick turnaround to try to improve working conditions.

Part of the difficulty we are experiencing is the ongoing acuity levels in both hospitals and

personal care homes in many areas, the increased acuity and the staffing levels related to that, as well as the issues of nurse burnout and the difficulties being encountered, by not just nurses, but by all personnel in dealing with the patients in the appropriate setting. This is something that clearly we cannot deal with overnight and that we are trying to address in as expeditious a fashion as possible. That is one of the reasons for the significant funding for nurse recruitment and retention, as well as the issue dealing with workplace safety issues and workplace job satisfaction, which, overnight, cannot be turned around.

It is interesting that one of the comments made by the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) about the increased vacancies is partially a product of the Department of Health and the overall health system putting in place additional programming over the past nine months. Almost every initiative that we have undertaken requires additional staff, particularly nurses, be it the hallway medicine initiative, be it the initiative to expand the community-based program. All require nurses, and clearly, it creates an even greater challenge and even greater demand on the system in a system that is already underresourced in terms of nurses.

So I think that generally the feedback and the consensus that I have heard is that people are appreciative of the initiatives that have been undertaken and recognize that overnight we cannot transform a system that has been under some stress for the past decade and that a number of the initiatives launched by the Government and watched by the Department of Health, and launched by the regional authorities, will see fruition and will see a decrease of pressure in the workplace as well as providing better quality patient care.

It is interesting that, in a whole variety of areas, where initiatives had not been taken in the past, now that we are actually launching initiatives, it is generating discussion and generating debate as to what is the best way and the best means to achieve that. That is welcome. There is an open discussion about how we approach a variety of areas. The fact is, we are approaching areas. We are not stepping back and saying: No, we are not going to deal with this

one area. We are not going to deal with another area.

We are approaching it under the limitations that we find with lack of personnel in many areas and a need for training and a need for advancement. I mean, one of the examples, well, it is not exactly acute care, it is the whole question of standards of personal care homes. There were no standards and initiatives put in place. We could have made the decision not to put in place our standards or to mandate the standards and then be in a situation where we could not implement. So, instead, we took a middle road and said let us move forward and put in place some form of standards with advice and communication back to the various personal care homes in various settings and let them recommend what works and what does not work, what is doable, what is not doable, what needs additional funding, what does not need additional funding and try to just move forward.

* (17:20)

We are seeing that across the health care sector in general. Part of the difficulty we face is clearly, right across the board, a shortage of personnel in every area, and let me give an example. As I indicated to the Member opposite previously in Estimates, we are expanding the number of ultrasounds in this budget as they were expanded in the previous budget. So ultrasounds in the last two years have expanded by about 10 000, more than 10 percent, in this province, and yet the waiting lists are still growing. That connotes more of a problem than simply a problem of expanding the number of services available. It connotes a variety of issues that we are going to have a plan to approach, training of more sonographers, more flexible hours and a whole option that we are going to be bringing forward. It is a package to deal with the issue of ultrasound. As we move forward, some of these issues that we are having to face are going to change in the complexity but are going to be addressed. Generally, Manitobans are appreciative of the fact that we have taken action on a variety of areas and are doing the best under the circumstances to improve the quality in the approach to service. We could have shut our eyes and said, well, we are not going to recognize the deficits, but that would have been

foolish. We know there is a deficit problem right across the board. The question is: have we covered enough? In some cases, yes. In some cases, no.

Then we have to come to grips with the issue of what the deficit is, what it comprises of, what is significant, what is not significant and how we can deal with the RHAs. It is a product of an evolutionary state. The RHAs have not, nor has the process, matured with the Department of Health and the RHAs totally. It is still a developmental process. We are still working with them to try to establish the best means and framework for under which we can do it. We try to get out the budget. For example, this year, despite coming in late, we tried to get the budget out as early as possible. Historically, we are way ahead of the budgetary process in previous years. This is a government that has just come in, in the first year, versus an experienced of the last few years. In some cases, it has not worked perfectly, and in some cases, it has been difficult, but the fact was the attempt was made to try to be up front and forward and move the process along.

Mr. Derkach: I think the words of the Minister show that indeed the problems in health care are not ones that can be erased overnight as the Minister thought they could be when he was in opposition. As a matter of fact, as I was listening to him, I thought to myself, if I were to shut off the image of the Minister and just have the voice there, it would not matter whether it was the previous minister or this Minister. Basically, the message is the same in that each minister tries to move ahead in the best way possible. I think, the issue of deficits, though, one which has arisen over the course of the last couple of years is a serious one.

Hospital districts are looking at the regions and are asking questions about whether or not regionalization is the effective way to deal with medicine. I hear this from the districts themselves, and they say that because of the fact that they see the deficits building when there in fact used to be surpluses at many of these facilities. Mind you, I think the priorities in the services have changed over time, and it is not a simple solution. I acknowledge that. But I would ask the Minister whether or not there is a directive to

regional health authorities or a plan that has been developed with regard to dealing with future deficits, or what form of accountability is the Minister now demanding from the regional health authorities so that in fact deficits are not an ongoing issue with these authorities? Is there a balance between the administrative side and the delivery side in the regional health authorities?

Mr. Chomiak: I only take exception to one comment of the Member with respect to who is in front of this particular microphone, and that is that we had launched a number of initiatives, numerous initiatives that had not been launched in this jurisdiction for some time, across the board. We will disagree politically, but we did not stay the course on a whole variety of areas. Indeed, we launched fairly aggressive initiatives across the board. That, I think, is a substantive difference between speaking in front of this microphone, regardless of who the individual is, and the previous speakers in front of other microphones.

Indeed, we also are prepared to admit, and the Member should know, for example, I used to stand up regularly and ask about waiting lists of previous ministers, and they would say: What waiting lists? There are no waiting lists. And they would give back the pat answers that said we have done this many and this many and this many.

Or hallways. What hallway problem? they would say. What hallway problem? We have just been up front and said: There is a problem in hallways; there is a problem in waiting lists; there is a problem with deficits; there is a problem with a variety of areas, and we are attempting to deal with them on an issue-by-issue basis, and try to provide the kind of health care that is being required.

It is clear that deficits have been a problem for some time. I remember one of the remedies dealing with deficits that occurred about three years ago, where several of the institutions in Winnipeg, for example, were told that if they signed on to frozen food they would have their deficit paid. That was an interesting initiative. It also indicates that there were problems in the past.

It is pretty clear that the issue of coming to a proper determination of what base funding exists and what base funding is necessary ought to be the approach. We are working actively with each of the regions to try to deal with the issue of what is necessary and how we can best come to grips with each of the individual and the collective problems that we all face across the board.

The Member referenced the issue of administration versus delivery of program. It is an interesting issue because, across the board, there is a sense out there in the community that the administration is proliferating while the delivery of programs is not occurring. I mean that is a general consensus that has been in this system for several years; it still remains in the system. The Member will know, as a former minister of the Crown, how difficult it is to come to grips with the actual factual nature of that and to deal with it.

One of the ways that we dealt with it was by merging two administrative structures together in the City of Winnipeg and to eliminate duplicate administrations. We have done that in a variety of areas under a variety of programs to try to deal with the issue of administration. We have also asked for a review of the administration component of all the RHAs to try to get a grip on the actual facts concerning the administrative issues and concerning the delivery of program. Suffice to say that it is our preference to put money into programs and bed-sides, rather than into administrative structure. Clearly, everyone wants to do that. It is a direction and a goal of any administration.

It is an interesting question, and I pose it as a question, whether or not ever in the system people agree that there has been a benefit from regionalization, a benefit from amalgamation. It will be the subject of time and the subject of tests, and I do not know if they will ever actually agree that the administration has been decreasing while programs have been proliferating. Generally, from our perspective, that has been a first emphasis, the emphasis on programming versus administration. Whether or not that is actually occurring or the perception is actually there is an open question. The Member suggested, in his question—I got the impression—

was suggesting that perhaps regionalization is not the way to go, and I would be curious—I am not trying to put words in the Member's mouth, but he suggested whether or not regionalization was working or in fact questioned the very basis of it.

I would be curious to see what the Member is referring to and what he might suggest in that regard, because the basic premise that we came in under and that we attempted to adopt is that we did not want to cause a good deal, after a regionalization process had taken place—structurally to come in and then re-invent the system. We might have had different options for the system but to come in and cause years of chaos by re-inventing the system again may not be the best way to go in terms of the health care system that has seen so much change in the past decade. The basic principle was let us try to function within existing administrative capacity and function and improve it where we can and move it along that way, but if the Member has any suggestion in that regard, I would be curious to see what he has to say.

* (17:30)

Mr. Derkach: I am going to go back to the Minister's first comments because I acknowledge the fact that his government and he—under his stewardship, there have been a number of initiatives that have been enacted by him as minister. But let me say that if he looks at the list of initiatives that were initiated under the former administration in any specific year and under any specific minister, I am sure that each of those ministers could hold up as many cards as this minister could to date, and indeed there were initiatives in many of them. As a matter of fact, I think the last budget of our government injected some \$194 million into the health care system in times when the federal transfers were taken away from our province, and those have been restored to some extent, but certainly not to the extent where the Minister can feel that he is flush I am sure.

The Province has enjoyed an increase in revenues through taxation, and I think that has got to be acknowledged because that does in fact have a positive impact on the initiatives that can be launched in any department. Hallway

medicine, waiting lists, although to some extent they are not perhaps as highlighted as they were, I think the waiting lists are still there. We see patients now going to the United States for treatment. I do not think that is a negative. If these people can get treatment there when we have waiting lists here in Manitoba, I think that is simply a common-sense approach to helping people who are in need.

With regard to the issue of deficits, I am simply seeking from the Minister, I guess, a comment with regard to a plan which he may have to hold regional health authorities—and I am talking about the boards, to give them the real authority to control their deficits. Regardless of the administration, I think that that is a challenge in itself because certainly the bureaucracy can take over and boards then are not as effective as they can be. I think that somehow the message from the Minister has to be given that indeed the boards do have the authority, but they also have the responsibility and have to be accountable at the end of the day.

My comments with regard to the regional health authorities is not one that has any suggestion of downsizing them or eliminating them. I am simply seeking from the Minister a comment with regard to whether or not he has in his vision of health care over the next few years the prospect of reviewing the effectiveness of regional health boards and whether or not, in the course of the evaluation, there will be an opportunity to look at how effectively they are administering their responsibilities and whether there in fact is room to amend, to change, not necessarily regressively, but indeed to offer better services to Manitobans out in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: I think that is a useful suggestion. I can say affirmative to that. The Member's colleague from Charleswood had also suggested, I believe, perhaps after three years an actual outright review. At this point I did not want to consider an outright specific legislative review, because I thought it would cause policy-wise just too much upheaval in the system at this point.

The ongoing review on the various methodologies, we are approaching. There are

various committees and applications that are taking a look at the whole, entire process, the concept. It was an interesting suggestion.

We did go back and forth in terms of to what extent we do an actual overall, specific review as sort of almost a legislative review or not. We decided in the negative at this point because of those reasons. In terms of the processes, there have been a number of processes in place in terms of the deficits. The RHAs are being asked to look at their deficits, and the Member knows about this, to ask, to manage and to see what effect the program management can be and if they can manage deficits without program elimination or without program reduction. We have also had a funding. We have also been looking at the funding methodology over the past three or four months with respect to RHAs. That is an ongoing process.

Mr. Derkach: I want to ask the Minister with regard to the morale issue in hospitals. When one visits hospitals, and I am sure the Minister must sense this when he visits hospitals, there appears to be a morale problem with staff in hospitals. I have noticed this personally since the development of the regional health boards for one reason or other. I do not know where the problem lies.

I am not asking the Minister to micromanage the whole issue, but I am wondering whether or not this is an area that is of any concern to the Minister and whether or not he perhaps is looking at the model in relation to what it is doing to the morale of staff in our facilities.

I go back to education. I think there was a time when that was an issue with the education system until the system moved to give more local control, if you like, of those types of issues to the school or to the people that were working within a unit, where people within a unit could decide their needs better than someone deciding it from on high or from a distance. I am wondering whether or not the Minister has any plans or whether his department has looked at this issue as being one that certainly does have an impact on patients at the end of the day. I can tell you, if you walk into a facility where there is good morale among staff, the spirit of the staff is

good, that translates into happier patients and happier people in the entire system.

Mr. Chomiak: I think that is a very perceptive comment and it illustrates the Member's experience with the field. The Member is accurate. One of the clear ramifications of moving from a local, institution-based kind of system to a regional system is the identification of employees and staff and those in the system with their particular institution, their particular body. It does cause a good deal of difficulty.

We are aware of it. There are some initiatives that recognize that. One of the areas this government is conscious of is faith-based institutions as an example of bringing a particular kind of approach to health care that we do not want to lose. So I think the comments of the Member are very perceptive, that we are aware of it, and I can indicate to the Member there are discussions and there are considerations being undertaken in that regard.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I want to move specifically into the area of Emergency Health Services—and we have been here before with the Minister—but I do want to talk about it as it relates to the rural health authorities. I have just received today a letter from the Erickson ambulance personnel. I will share this with the Minister.

Mr. Chomiak: Is that the letter you referred to the other day?

Mr. Derkach: No. This is a letter I received in the last day or so. It is written by an ambulance supervisor in Erickson, and I guess he is putting a suggestion forward to the regional health authority. I would share this. I do not know whether the Minister received a copy. I received a copy of this letter. It actually went to the regional health authority, and it says, and to all who are concerned. So I will certainly share this. I will make a copy of it and share it with the Minister.

* (17:40)

But in this letter the supervisor indicates that he is now the only staffperson who will be on call as of September during the day. With the

amount of remuneration he is receiving, I do not even see how this individual can actually support a family on it, except that he does have an interest in an outside job. This is a very particular situation in my region, because it is an ambulance service that serves a large population in the summertime, and then in the fall when the holiday season is over, it drops down to a situation where there are rural communities and permanent residents that are served, but not the people who come out to the Clear Lake area, the Onanole area, the Lake Audy area for the summer. I think the population of that region is around that 36 000-or-plus in the summertime, and it is served by the ambulance from Erickson and, I guess, supported in times of emergency from the Minnedosa ambulance, which is a fair distance away.

I am wondering whether the Minister has had any time to look at the issue of this specific area, because I know it is one that has been highlighted on a number of occasions. As a matter of fact, I have another letter that I received some time ago that I had talked to the Minister about, and I will share that with him if he does not have a copy of it, as well. I do believe that it is a situation that could result in a real problem if there were an accident which involved a large number of people or if there were an unfortunate mishap in that area, because I think the services are stretched to the limit.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, yes, I would appreciate if the Member would provide copies of those letters, and we will endeavour to respond to the Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Derkach: Generally speaking, though, with Emergency Health Services, I know the Minister has put some money into the area of Emergency Health Services for this coming year, additional to what was there before. Does the Department have a specific plan and some time frames with regard to addressing the issue of emergency health services in the rural part of the province?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the Member may be aware that this has been a long-standing problem in rural Manitoba. There were two or three reports that were commissioned by the former government with respect to emergency services, one of which was a report, task force

recommendations that reported in the fall, that had something like 22 recommendations for amelioration of the services outside of Winnipeg.

What we did with that report, when we attended the MAUM convention and other conventions, there was some concern from municipal officials about their having access and not being included in the process, so we took the report that we received, and we sent it out to I think hundreds of groups and individuals for comment back. We then received those comments back from the various agencies, tabulated them and worked with them. We picked what we thought and what was recommended to be the two or three major areas this year we could look at with respect to emergency medical services across the province.

To that regard, we doubled the amount of funding available to rural Manitoba for ambulance services, which included funds available to lease 40 ambulances for rural Manitoba. I think, if memory serves me correctly, the former criteria was every year they would allow 20 ambulances to be recycled or new ambulances, and we doubled the availability and the capacity for rural health authorities to obtain new rolling stock, if rolling stock is the right word. Probably not. Then, of course, each initiative is rife with specific issues of contention vis-à-vis how it should be approached, et cetera, which the Member is familiar with.

We have had discussions with the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), the Member for Portage (Mr. Fauschou) and a variety of MLAs with respect to how and when we put the process in place.

We provided funding for a Medical Transportation Co-ordination Centre that would be capable of quick dispatch of ambulance services, and generally those were recommendations. The question is how we implement it and what process we use to implement it. We provided funding for an integrated communication system. That is upgrading of the communications capacity. Of course, that is rife with some controversy, as well, as to channels of communication, et cetera,

which I think we can work through, and then there were specific improvements in funding for the operations across the board.

So we took the major recommendations of the task force, and again if memory serves me correctly, it is something like 22. We picked the ones we thought would have a significant impact in terms of this year and ruling them out, and we have provided funding for those specific initiatives. Some of them in their application generate discussion as to the means and the method of how we can approach it.

My overall approach is I think at the end of the day we can still provide all of the resources, and it can still meet the demand and the needs despite different viewpoints with respect to how we provide the service and whether or not. For example, in terms of communications equipment, there was unanimous agreement. I met with the RHA authorities very early on during my tenure, and there was unanimous agreement that a method of communicating between ambulances was required, so we provided funding for the equipment. Now there is a dispute as to what channels are available, how those channels are available, and whether or not fire is included on those channels, et cetera. I think we can work through those difficulties. The question is have we attempted to address some of the problems in the initial phases. Yes, we are going to attempt to work through those difficulties, but we picked the areas that we thought were doable and would have significant benefit in rural Manitoba during the first year.

The difficult issue is that over the tenure and over the next four years, there is a needed requirement to significantly deal with the emergency services issue. Without getting too political here, it has not been addressed, and now we are government, it is incumbent upon us to address this issue, and we will have to address it over the course of our mandate.

Mr. Derkach: Well, I know the Minister can address this because he does have a fatter wallet to address it with this year as well. But I want to ask him whether or not he is going to be introducing the stretcher service availability to the rural health authorities.

Mr. Chomiak: The Act has been passed, and I think the Act is pending proclamation, if I understand it correctly. I believe an act has already been passed—

An Honourable Member: Last year.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I think it was passed even before that, if memory serves me correctly, and I am going from memory. I think it was passed two years ago, and it has been awaiting proclamation, pending a variety of discussions and issues that, frankly, we are still working on.

Mr. Derkach: So is the Minister telling me that once the Act is proclaimed, he will be moving in the direction of allowing communities to access stretcher services which are substantially less expensive for routine inter-hospital transfers than is the ambulance system?

Mr. Chomiak: What I am indicating is the Act was passed not the previous session but the session prior. I think it was passed in 1998, if memory serves me correctly, and we are still involved in discussions of that particular act.

Mr. Derkach: No, that is not my question. My question is with regard to the actual service provision. The Act will be proclaimed, as I understand it, unless the Minister decides not to proclaim it. He is indicating that he is looking at proclaiming the Act. I hope I am not putting words in his mouth. But, once the Act is proclaimed, will the Minister be allowing stretcher services to be accessed at the regional health authorities in rural hospitals?

* (17:50)

Mr. Chomiak: The issue of stretcher service, I think, is contingent upon the proclamation of the Act.

Mr. Derkach: I think we all understand that, Mr. Minister. My question is: Once it is proclaimed, will the Minister then be allowing our regional health authorities and our rural communities to access stretcher services for those kinds of services that are needed far more in rural settings than they are even in the city of Winnipeg?

Mr. Chomiak: The utilization of stretcher services is obviously an issue that is significant—and the Member has already pointed out—with respect to the ability of inter-facility transport.

Mr. Derkach: I will let the Minister continue to complete his answer because he has not answered my question.

Mr. Chomiak: As I indicated, the intention, as we roll out our entire emergency services plan over the next several years, and we cannot do everything in one year, is to put in place an effective, safe, cost-effective transport system that will serve the needs of rural Manitobans.

Mr. Derkach: Well, I would encourage the Minister to look at the stretcher service, and I am using the term generically, to look at that service in a positive light, because I do believe that there are benefits that can be gained by the clients.

Now, I know that there are personnel issues, there are perhaps union issues that have to be sorted out, but I am talking about the needs of clients, the needs of the people who use these types of services. For people living in southern rural Manitoba where most of the transportation is done on road, not by air, it is an important service to reduce the costs to the individual who needs to be transported for routine procedures for that matter, people who have to go back to readjust a heart pacer or to have a knee replacement or a hip replacement re-looked at if they are immobilized.

Those are the types of situation, I think that people need that kind of service in rural Manitoba. I am just seeking from the Minister whether or not he has a commitment to look at that very seriously and to implement that kind of service for rural Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, as I indicated to the Member, I appreciate his comments and his advice in this regard, and we are looking at the overall, the entire overall distribution and volume of service to try to offer the most effective and efficient transportation system for people across the province and, in particular, rural Manitoba in terms of what we are referring to today.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I am pretty well completed as far as I am concerned with regard to the Emergency Services. I do believe that that is an area that I wanted to bring forward because of the interest that I believe is coming, and the Minister knows this as well as I do, from all regions of the province, or at least the rural side of the province.

It is an issue that is on the minds, not only of the people who deliver the service, but, I think, much more so on the minds of those people who are remote from the immediate hospital facility and know that at some point in time in their lives, they are going to require this service.

I know the Government has put more money into this area. I know that this is an area that is complex, but indeed it is an area that is extremely important for people in the rural setting. The Minister has moved on the initiative of removing the \$50 of transportation cost for northern residents. I think it only fair, in terms of the rural residents, that there be some attention paid to the enormous costs that these people have to bear as it relates to transportation to facilities.

I cannot overstate this case, because when I look at some of the bills that I am given by residents in rural communities when they have had to have a procedure done at a major facility in our province, or even outside our province, it almost scares me to see that those bills are in the thousands of dollars. Many of these people, for one reason or another, do not have the means, and many of them, secondly, do not have Blue Cross. For whatever reason, they have not been motivated to have Blue Cross within their families, and they find themselves in a situation where they are faced with enormous costs.

But in an overall sense, it is not fair when you look at the costs that have to be incurred by those residents of our province, whereas other residents do not have those costs, either because of the location where they live, or because it is supported in other ways. So I simply ask the Minister that he continue to give this area some attention and some care, because it is a very important area for rural Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the Member for those comments and that advice. I hope the Member appreciates the fact that we have taken significant action, and that the issues are not issues that were not there a year ago, or two years ago, or three years ago, or four years ago. In fact, what we have done is acknowledge the problem, and now we are undertaking action in a variety of areas to try to begin to address a long-standing problem.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Nevakshonoff): The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (16:20)

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order? This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of Executive Council. Does the Honourable First Minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Yes, I do, thank you, Madam Chairperson. I want to begin by congratulating the Interim Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Mitchelson) and commend the former premier for his career to this Legislative Assembly and the people of Manitoba. I was sorry I was away in Brandon the day of the announcement, but my other western Canadian premier colleagues and I certainly were able to comment on his career and his dedication to the people of this province.

I want to commend the Executive Council staff for their hard work and dedication. I might point out that Karen Hill who has prepared the Estimates is away on holidays and had booked a cottage. I know that she had been part of the Estimates process in the past and was offering to cancel her vacation at her cottage. I said, no, that I will try to represent what is in them as best as possible, but I know that for years when I was doing the Estimates from the other side, she was a very capable and competent individual that prepared the Estimates on behalf of the former premier and myself, and this carries on in the Estimates this year.

The Executive Council budget is just over \$3.5 million, that is about a 1.5% increase from last year. The staff years remain the same at 44. I have reviewed the staffing that reports formally and informally to Executive Council over the last few years. The staff count, including secondments last year, was 48. The number of staff, including its secondments now, is 46. We are reviewing a staff position to see whether it will go to 47. So I do not want to be wrong when three weeks from now we are reviewing that position in terms of another secondment. It is normal for some changes to take place to the Executive Council in Communications and Policy, but the permanent staff are generally the same from the previous government. The increase in the Estimates for management and administration in the Department is 1.2 percent.

Our largest increase is in Federal-Provincial Relations Secretariat to cover the costs of the Western Premiers' Conference and the annual Premiers Conference, which we will be hosting in Winnipeg next month. As the Member opposite knows, we last hosted it in Winnipeg in 1990. This requirement is every 10 years, and, as I understand it, we are now going to have the territories, so it will be every 13 years. Certainly the Western Premiers Conference in Brandon was just recently featured in Time magazine in terms of the hospitality from that community. We are also having a lot of responsibilities for hosting a number of major premiers conferences, including the SUFA or social policy meetings. Our Minister of Health is chairing the Health ministers on behalf of the provinces. Our minister responsible for the environment is also taking over the Chair.

We have a debrief from the Western Premiers and Western Governors meeting, if members opposite would so desire in having a copy. We are looking towards a First Ministers meeting in the early fall of this year with the Prime Minister, subject to progress at the Health Ministers meeting this week and at the Premiers meeting next month. I am hopeful that we can resolve the CHST reductions that were made in the '95 budget and have the investments made in a future partnership for health, post-secondary education and social services in Canada, through the restoration of the CHST.

We have been working a lot on international issues since we have been coming into office, particularly water projects. When I was elected, I was informed of the unilateral decision made in North Dakota to have the Devils Lake outlet built. I was also informed that the North Dakota state water act had been approved by a senatorial committee. This was quite a surprise to us as a new government. The ambassador to United States from Canada immediately asked us to go down to the United States to immediately meet with a number of congressional and senatorial representatives, and asked in writing that we immediately meet with the Governor of Minnesota, that he felt was crucial for Canada's opposition to these two projects.

So I have spent certainly more time than I expected on these international projects because obviously they have long-term impact on water quality in the Province of Manitoba. With the fishing industry being worth over \$200 million, and the tourism industry being worth over a billion dollars, it has an important impact on our province. We continue to believe in the support for international development programs, and I have met in opposition and in government with the international development program, which is at comparable spending levels last year to this year.

I look forward to discussing the Estimates. I would say that we have had a couple of memorandum of agreements signed. The Nunavut memorandum of agreement was signed between Manitoba and that new territory, which represents initiatives in transportation and business and tourism and education and training. We have had some initiatives with the federal government on agriculture, two advancements in agriculture, one status quo. On the crop insurance we have had the new agreement. On agricultural income we have the \$60-million and \$40-million agreements prior to the last federal budget in the former fiscal year, the prior fiscal year. On disaster assistance I think it is safe to say that we consider that file to be not completed, the status of that southwest Manitoba to be incomplete. That matter still is a matter that has been unresolved between ourselves and the federal government.

We have worked with the city, the federal government, the provincial government on housing, but our Neighbourhoods First program includes housing not only for the City of Winnipeg but also Brandon and Thompson. We would like to expand that to other communities as we proceed. We were pleased to see a change in the transportation formula for the cost of producers, which we had worked hard on with the federal government. The amount of money, though, for the transition to roads we feel is insufficient, \$6 million per year for \$150 million in gasoline tax that goes to the federal government per year. It is worthy of noting that all funds from the gasoline tax in Manitoba, which is the second lowest in Canada, go to the user in the form of roads and other transportation systems. That is not the case, we believe, with the federal government, taxing gasoline and not reinvesting in highways for the basis of safety and economic development.

* (16:30)

We have co-chaired the meeting on cost drivers in health care with Premier Harris of Ontario. We continue to work on a long-term analysis of cost drivers in health care. I think it is safe to say that it presents some real challenges with the fact that the Canadian health care system now has less per capita MRI machinery and diagnostic machinery than the United States and really means that we have to renew health care and renew the partnership in health care at a first ministers meeting that we expect to be held shortly.

Those are just some of my preliminary comments. I am certainly willing to discuss any matter that is within the Estimates of the Executive Council. As I say, the increase in spending is primarily due to the two major meetings that we are hosting this year, which is highly unusual, but so far we have had good response from the western premiers meeting. We are building on our contacts with the western governors to ensure that our goal is to solve problems between governor to premier before it has to go to Washington and Ottawa and try to resolve it in a practical, common-sense way on behalf of our mutual citizens.

That was certainly the tenor of the meetings at the International Peace Gardens, which did an excellent job of hosting, and what a wonderful place. Even Time magazine had to take a picture of the Peace Gardens. I think we chose probably the best place in Canada, the best place in North America or certainly the Canada-United States border to have a kind of recognition and a meeting with our southern neighbours.

Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): We thank the First Minister for those comments. Does the interim official leader have any opening comments?

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Chairperson, I want to thank the Premier for his opening statement and do want to indicate that we in Manitoba do have a proud tradition of hosting our guests and our dignitaries and showcasing Manitoba for what we have to offer. So I look forward to hearing positive results about our visitors. I know at the Western Premiers Conference certainly that Manitobans put their best foot forward. As a result we have had certainly positive comments from all that participated. I am hoping to hear that the same experience will happen as a result of the Premiers' Conference.

This position certainly is very new for me. I want to, at the outset, just put a couple of comments on the record about my former leader and my premier. He showed certainly great leadership skills through his term of office as the Premier of our province. Although I am sad to see him leave political life and political office, I do know that his contributions will certainly continue to be extolled as we move through this new millennium and the new century. I know that he has left a legacy that will be second to none and I think will be recorded in the history of our province as a good time for Manitoba, governing through some very difficult times and leading us into good economic times and prosperity, and we are still seeing some of those results.

I just want to personally put on the record my thanks to him and do want to indicate that he

deserves to be able to move on, after several years of committed political public service, to a new life and many new challenges and opportunities. I see in him, as he sort of transitions his way out of elected office, youth and enthusiasm and a real desire to undertake the new challenges that will be on his plate. I am sure there is some sadness, but I know also that there is a life after politics for many, and we should all keep that in mind, I suppose, because our times will come.

I was interested in the Premier's comments about his first 10 months in office and some of the issues that he has had to deal with. I know that the legislative agenda in this session is probably fairly light in comparison to some legislative agendas in years past, but there are some significant pieces of legislation that have been introduced by this government that certainly will create opportunity for debate, discussion and, I am sure, presentation at the committee stage on several pieces of legislation. One of them, of course, being Bill 4, The Election Finances Amendment Act, which I think has been moved forward very quickly by this government, and I will certainly be asking some more questions about that as we move through the Executive Council Estimates.

There was a significant amount of debate today on Bill 5, The Wildlife Amendment Act, by colleagues on my side of the House and certainly concern about the actions that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) has taken, first of all by cancelling public hearings and not allowing citizens of this province to have some discussion and some input into this legislation. Bill 42, The Public Schools Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act, is another bill, of course, that we have some concern with. I know it has been moved on to the committee stage, and many Manitobans will have an opportunity to make presentation, certainly a piece of legislation that we are not supportive of and will not be voting for.

One of the most significant pieces of legislation that has been introduced, and I might say in the area towards the end of the session, almost into the summer when many Manitobans have moved on and their priorities are not necessarily what is happening in this Legislature,

it is a bill that has been brought in at the last moment, a piece of legislation that I think takes us back to the dark days of the Howard Pawley administration. We certainly have a significant concern that Today's NDP is just the same old recycled yesterday's NDP, certainly not an NDP government that was self-proclaimed, I guess, during the election campaign to be sort of the reasoned and balanced party that could lead our province into the new millennium. We see with this piece of legislation that we have regressed in a significant way.

Probably the biggest losers with this legislation will be the front-line workers who did have the opportunity through a very democratic process since 1996 of having a secret ballot, of not being sort of coerced or strong-armed by either management or unions but had the opportunity through a private process and a secret ballot to voice their opinion on whether they wanted to become unionized or not.

That has been taken away or will be taken away with this piece of legislation, and we have some grave concerns about moving backwards on that front. It is not, certainly, the best form of democracy when you do not have the opportunity to have a secret ballot and a private vote on which direction—significant direction, I might add—individuals may be taking as the workers in this province. So I am extremely concerned about that.

We will, as we move through the Estimates of Executive Council, have an opportunity to discuss some of this legislation, and certainly I would like to get a bit of a baseline on where this government is at now with staff in Executive Council, what some of the policy direction might be, and I will be asking some detailed questions around many of the decisions that this government has made over the last 10 months and where that direction might see us go over the next period of time before we are into another session and another budget.

* (16:40)

So with those comments, I am prepared to start the process.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): We thank the critic from the Official Opposition for those remarks.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I would, if I may, put a few opening remarks on the record just to indicate that I think that there are—

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): Just one moment, please. Does the Honourable Member for River Heights have leave to make an opening statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: I would put on the record just a few opening comments. I think that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has an important role in leadership, in providing a vision in terms of long-run planning, sustainable planning. That will be an area on which I will be asking some questions.

I think that when we talk about employment, as the Premier well knows, in opposition he emphasized frequently that the Stats Canada numbers for employment in fact undercount the First Nations population in Manitoba in particular and that one of the things that we need in this province is to have more accurate assessment of how we are really doing in terms of employment and that the existing Stats Canada numbers, although they may serve other provinces very well, have some real shortcomings when it comes to Manitoba that need to be addressed.

I would say and be very interested in the Premier's thoughts in terms of the cost drivers for health care, because, clearly, managing the economy in Manitoba, managing government expenditures, one of the major goals clearly is to be to get a health care system which is working in a way that is affordable. So some leadership in this area, some results from the conference that the Premier has mentioned, would clearly be helpful.

Lastly, I would put on the table the fact that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has met with other western Premiers that in my experience if one is

not careful one ends up with a situation where there is a lot more rhetoric than action.

There is, for example, in the area of tourism a lot of potential for partnerships between Manitoba and Saskatchewan to the benefit of both provinces. When, for example, people are coming from Germany or Japan they are looking for a series of tourism venues. To be able to create the opportunities and work together jointly is something that I think we could do a whole lot more of and would hope that out of premiers' meetings with other premiers that indeed we will see areas where there is some real, functional co-operation and working together to promote the interests of Manitoba but to work in a co-operative spirit so that in fact the well-being of Manitoba and our adjacent provinces and territories is together enhanced. Thank you.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): We thank the Honourable Member for River Heights for those remarks. I would remind members of the Committee that debate on the Minister's Salary, item 1.(a), is deferred until all other items in the Estimates of this department are passed.

At this time, we would invite the Minister's staff to take their places in the Chamber.

Mr. Doer: I will just introduce the staff. Jim Eldridge, of course, is well known to members opposite. Diane Gray I am sure is well known to members opposite. *[interjection]* Beg your pardon. He will say the same thing about you, but he could not possibly comment. I am sorry. I do not want to get him in trouble. Diane Gray, of course, is working on Federal-Provincial Relations and working with a lot of us on both the western premiers' and the annual premiers' meeting, plus working on all the other chairs we have assumed because of Québec's situation where they do not take all the chairs for all the provincial ministers' meetings, so we have an undue number of responsibilities this year with other premiers, as the members opposite know, and probably had some of those themselves, prior to the transition.

Diane is working with us as well on Federal-Provincial Relations. As I say, Karen is on a

legitimate holiday, and I was not going to cancel it, but she prepared the Estimates. She knows them better than I do.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): The item before the Committee is item 2.1 General Administration (b) Management and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,072,600.

Mrs. Mitchelson: At the outset, I would just like to congratulate Jim Eldridge on his appointment as the Clerk of Executive Council. I had an opportunity to work with Jim in a significant way in Federal-Provincial Relations as the Ministerial Council representative on Social Policy Renewal for our province. I have always found his advice very valuable. I know his long service to our province is one that we all respect. So congratulations, and also to Diane Gray who worked on the file, the Social Policy Renewal file with me. I just want to say to both of them that they have done an exemplary job in representing Manitoba and Manitoba's position over the years. I know they will continue to do the same.

* (16:50)

I guess I would like to get into asking some questions on who the Premier's staff are now. We know that Jim Eldridge is the Clerk. Could the Premier indicate who his chief of staff is and give us a bit of background on where—I believe it is he—might come from, what his background is and what his current salary is?

Mr. Doer: The chief of staff's name is Bob Dewar. His salary is comparable to the former incumbent Mr. McFadyen, as indicated in the Order-in-Council. His former background was in communications with the MGEU.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Can the Premier tell us the names, the salaries and the background of other staff? I guess maybe we could start with the Special Assistant and Executive Assistant.

Mr. Doer: The Special Assistant Sally Correia, is salary-comparable to the previous incumbent. The Executive Assistant is Dennis Ceicko, again comparable to the previous salary levels.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Could I just ask the Premier to indicate maybe what their backgrounds might be? Where they came from?

Mr. Doer: Yes, Ms. Correia, as Special Assistant, I believe she took over from Keith Stewart from the previous government. She is, again, a writer, a person who is involved with the National Film Board, involved as the editor or a contributing writer for the Portuguese newspaper and involved in a number of other activities in the community. Mr. Ceicko worked at the Manitoba Telephone System.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, can the Premier tell me who the director of the Policy Management Secretariat is?

Mr. Doer: The director is Mr. Paul Vogt. His previous experience was being director of art research when we were in opposition. His previous experience before that was working at the University of Winnipeg. I believe he is a graduate of Princeton and the University of Manitoba.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, can the Premier tell us who is the director of Cabinet Communications and then all of the other staff that might be in Cabinet Communications?

Mr. Doer: Yes, I can advise you of this. The director of Cabinet Communications is Donne Flanagan. He is paid a comparable, equal level to the incumbent who he replaced, Ms. Staples-Lyon. Do you want the other staff as well? Oh, you want to know his background. He was a former Communications person for us in opposition. Before that, he worked in the media, and before that he had worked in an inner city newspaper *Inner City Voice*, that the members opposite may have read.

As I say, he was involved. Like the members opposite, when they came to government, we brought some of the people into the political positions, which, of course, this is, that were involved with us in opposition.

I think Barb Biggar was the director of Communications for the previous opposition party pre-'88 and made the transition to Cabinet Communications, and now I understand she is

having a very successful career in the private sector. But that is the background of Mr. Flanagan.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I wonder if the Premier could indicate for me, I know he has indicated that all of the staff that we have discussed already sort of are on the comparable salary scale to those that were in those positions under our government, could the Premier indicate, when these people were hired, where on the salary scale they came in? Were they brought in at the entry level to the salary scale or mid-range or top of the range?

Mr. Doer: Well, some were hired at the same range as the previous incumbent. I think that some were hired at less pay than the previous individual.

Continuing on in the Communications branch. for example, Ms. Riva Harrison was hired to replace Mr. O'Connor. I think they both came from the same media outlet. The previous individual had a salary of \$49,200. The present individual has a salary of \$47,400. So it was a difference on the salary scale. Some individuals have been brought over from other operations. Tannis Cheadle is a person who was brought into the press communications branch, replacing the position of Mr. Matas that was moved over to Industry, Trade and Mines. That individual came from the Public Insurance Corporation and was working in that communications office prior to our election. Ms. Stubler, who has worked with the previous government, remained at the same salary. So some were slightly lower, some were the same, in terms of the communications office.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, was anyone brought in then at a higher salary level than the previous incumbent?

Mr. Doer: Yes, an individual named Ms. Holmstrom was brought in at a higher level for a press secretary position. Unfortunately, she has left and that position is vacant. She has returned to the media, and that position is now vacant, but to be honest, she had a higher salary than the previous incumbent, basically because she was getting paid that much at the time we were trying to recruit her.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So we have then Donne Flanagan, who is the Director of Cabinet Communications. I think I recall—did I hear three other names? Maybe the Premier could just indicate how many and what their names are.

Mr. Doer: It is a question I asked before in previous Estimates. We have people directly in the branch. Now, in previous years, in previous Estimates, I am aware that individuals working in Communications—for example, the Premier's speechwriter was in the Cultural Affairs Department. I have not filled that position. It might be obvious when you hear my speeches, but the position has not been filled.

So there were some Communications positions—for example, Mr. Godin was working in another department but also was working in the Premier's Office. I mentioned Mr. Matas was in the Industry, Trade and Tourism line of Estimates. Ms. Best was in the Policy Co-ordination branch, but I think doing communication work from the previous group.

We have Mr. Flanagan, Director; Ms. Holmstrom, vacant; she has moved; Ms. Harrison; Ms. Cheadle; Ms. Stubler on these lines. We have a Mr. Modha who is seconded from the Department of Agriculture. Before we came into office, he was doing communication work as well.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So we have got one, two, three, four individuals now working under the Director, plus one vacant position. So there are actually six positions in Cabinet?

* (17:00)

Mr. Doer: There are five positions, there is one seconded, and one is vacant.

You could make the argument that it is less than. You could make the argument because discovering all these secondments for government, which I have worked hard to see, you could argue it is less than the previous group, but then you could argue the previous group had them in different places or doing other work. But it is comparable, I think it is safe to say.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Is the role of central communications the same role as was performed under the former government? I guess the question I am asking is do these communicators provide services to all ministers on all issues, or are there others within their departments who would provide communication support?

Mr. Doer: It is comparable. We are trying to ensure that ministers are available to the public, and I know that is the intent of all governments. I would say it is comparable in terms of approach. We would argue it is more open, you would argue it is not, but it is a biased argument.

We are trying to make sure that these people are working in a way to ensure that the government is available to the public through the media and is working on items in a way that allows us to ensure that there is some co-ordination, so that we do not have 17 announcements on the same day. Some of the operational considerations are very similar to the past. There are departments that had their own communications people in them and there is also the Department of Culture that has writers in it as well for government.

I am not aware of all the staffing in those departments. I am aware, for example, that when I was first doing speeches, I was getting speeches from the department of cultural affairs, worked of the department to write the speech. I generally try to write all my own speeches if I can get the research from the departments. I find that the most useful way to go. So we have not filled that speech writing position yet out of the cultural affairs department. I am not sure of the status of that at this point.

There are people, for example, in Conservation that would normally communicate to the public about things like the camping season, or the Department of Agriculture used to have a lot of people who would communicate about certain areas of information about crops, weather, et cetera. I would think it safe to say that those functions are there. I think that we certainly have not ramped up or down dramatically the communications function. I think there have been slightly less secondments, but there is a comparable function and staffing.

Mrs. Mitchelson: What the Premier is indicating then, if I understand him correctly, is that they have not created new communications positions in any government departments over and above the kinds of positions that were there to provide general information to the public. I know that there were individuals everywhere that had communication responsibilities that were general in nature.

My direct question is: Has this government created new communications positions to support ministers in any government department?

Mr. Doer: In positions, no. I think we have tried to fill some positions in a way that we thought we could get more value for money, but indirectly in the Premier's Office, there is in terms of communications function, the staffing levels are comparable, the secondments are less than, and the positions are—I would have to go back into the department of cultural affairs and other departments in Agriculture and Conservation. I am just recalling what departments have communication people in them. I will take the government-wide question as notice, because we are just dealing with the Estimates here in the Department of Executive Council. I know when we looked at it with questions in December-January it was certainly comparable. I just want to make sure there is nothing that would contradict what I am saying here. But in Executive Council there would not be any additional.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I will focus on the Communications staff in Executive Council or the Premier's Office and ask then. The communicators through the Premier's Office provide all of the political Communications support to all ministers within government. Are they the individuals that are the vehicle for ministers to connect with the media? Do the media go to these individuals? Are there other people within departments of government that are performing that kind of a role for ministers? Is the support through Executive Council on the communications side the vehicle to connect media to individual ministers?

Mr. Doer: I can only speak from my own experience. As hosting the premiers in Brandon, the uni-mike and all the media communications

which I was dealing with included Mr. Fawcett, for example. Mr. Fawcett I know worked with us on hosting Mr. Schafers' tour. I can recall Mr. White out there on the zebra mussels announcement. I do not know how that works exactly.

So I know I myself have run into other people that have been working for the government in a nonpolitical way but in a public communications way with the public. One could argue the meeting with Mr. Schaeffer was highly political. Any time you go in the room with him it is highly political, perhaps not parliamentary partisan.

I know how the Communications people work a bit in our own direct administration. When I go to a press conference on zebra mussels and I read my statement and Mr. White is there, I do not know what initiates that totally except that he is very competent, knows what the media wants. It is a public announcement on zebra mussels. It is not very political because we are all opposed to having zebra mussels in the province and we are hiring students on the Green Team program started by members opposite and continued by us on the zebra mussel program. That was the last media conference I had. It was with somebody that was not, quote, from the Communications branch of government.

So I think what we want to do is make sure that the numbers of positions cannot increase. I do not know whether they have been decreased because of the fact we have reduced the number of departments from 18 to 15 and we have reduced the number of deputy ministers, et cetera, overall in government. I certainly was concentrating on the deputy minister level and the department level.

The number of communication positions, completely, I will have to take as notice, but I am sure that it has not been increased. Sometimes, as I say, when we have certain announcements that we are making, the people from, I think it is the culture department—I think they used to work for you, if I am not mistaken, years ago—are there and many of them would have been hired under you back then. They are still very competent people. They are not

political in a partisan sense, but they are political in a communication sense, I suppose.

So I can take the exact question as notice in terms of the numbers, but it is a system-wide bit of research that I do not have in front of me.

* (17:10)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess what I am getting at, and I will just be very straightforward and maybe the Premier may not have the information. My question is: Has this government hired and directly appointed individuals throughout government into positions, whether they were Communications in the past or other positions, have there been direct appointments without competition in government departments to support the communications efforts of ministers over and above what happens from central Executive Council? It might not be a question the Premier has an answer to, but I would like an answer to that at some point in time.

Mr. Doer: Well, there are three sets of questions there. If anybody has been hired in a position outside of the normal Civil Service Act, which is within the right of Executive Council to do, it is also the responsibility to show that under the proper section of The Civil Service Act as political appointees that are hired and fired with the change of government as opposed to the normal public service. It should be competitive and meritorious and within the system. I do not believe there have been additional positions created for that purpose, but I will take the specifics as notice.

Certainly we would not directly hire somebody contrary to The Civil Service Act under the wrong section of the Act, but we would defend your right in the past and our right in the future to use the correct hiring authority, which of course I think there was very little difficulty in the transition for us to know who was directly hired by the former government by Order-in-Council and therefore subject to the usual transitions that take place. I have gone through the transition both ways, believe me. I went through it in '88 with the transition out, and I went through it in '99 with the transition in. I think that both times the relationship was fairly

mature about who was a political appointee and subject to those kinds of considerations, and who is not political appointees.

For example, we did not go into the Culture department with all the Communications people who have been there since maybe the early '90s and changed them, because they are just competent non-partisan people. We did make some changes in other areas where there were political appointees under the Act. Even in these Estimates, the majority of people who were working under the previous government now continue to work under us. I think Manitobans should be thankful we have a good group of public employees. But the answer to your question is we have not hired somebody inappropriate legally.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I am wondering if the Premier could just run through who the members of his Policy Management Secretariat might be, the names, the backgrounds and salaries.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Vogt; Ms. Martin, I believe, is \$62,000; Ms. Diana Jones, \$42,000; Jane Gray, \$47,000.

Moving back on the individuals, Ms. Martin worked as—well, she came out of the intern program here, the Legislative Internship Program. She worked as a researcher in the Opposition caucus for a number of years. We were there for a number of years, so she worked there a number of years and has moved on to government research. Diana Jones worked in Ottawa, I believe with the Department of Indian Affairs—but I could double-check that—and has been hired to work in our office.

Jane Gray worked for the Liberals as an intern pre-'95. After the election in '95, with the status change to the party, Ms. Gray was forwarded to work with us as an intern. She has since worked in research till the '99 election and we have hired her in research since the transition.

Mr. Paul Labun is working in policy co-ordination, \$45,000. He was an intern with us, a legislative intern. He was working in Ottawa, I believe, for a member of Parliament when we

recruited him back after he finished some more studies.

Ms. Michelle Scott was another legislative intern. She worked after her intern job with the Manitoba Union of Municipalities as a researcher. We hired her from her job with the UMM or I guess it is MAUM now. She worked over there.

The Premier's writer is Tamsin Collings, another graduate of the Legislative Intern Program. I believe before she came to writing, she was working for child and Family Services after graduating from her master's program and working as a legislative intern here.

Ron Desjardins worked for a number of years, I believe from '88 to about '97 or '98, under the previous government on policy and education policies.

We have Administrative Assistant Mal Chikowski who has worked for the former government.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Is the staff component in Policy Management the same as it was under the previous government?

Mr. Doer: Yes, it is, but I think that they are used slightly differently. I understand looking at the previous staffing chart that Ms. Best was there for a while and then on to the Cabinet Communications. So there was some movement back and forth.

* (17:20)

So I am not exactly sure how the former government used the policy and planning people. I am sure that they are partially involved in long-term policy and planning. They are partially involved in short-term research and sometimes into issue management. Sometimes they are working with departments to ensure that the research, if there are working committees or other work that is being done, is communicated to us, so that certainly I am aware of some of the work that is going on, the research work that is going on, not the political accountability through the system.

Again, I cannot speak with a lot of knowledge about the previous Policy Co-ordination branch under the previous government, what roles they had. But it was my experience in opposition to see some of them into various departmental initiatives and then working out of the Premier's Office. I think that that is not different than now. That would be my sense of it from my experience on Executive Council's Estimates in the past. They might have a different ideology though. I think that would be the difference.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I would tend to think that there certainly is a significantly different philosophical bend to the staff in this Premier's (Mr. Doer) office to those that might have been there under the former administration.

Mr. Chris Aglugub, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I think at this point in time that is all the questions I have in this area. I know in my opening comments I talked just very briefly about The Elections Finances Act, and can the Premier (Mr. Doer) tell us, maybe just briefly, the reason behind the changes to The Elections Finances Act that were brought in this session?

Mr. Doer: It is something I have believed in for a number of years and made the commitment in the last election campaign. In September of 1999, I felt that (a) we had a couple of issues to deal with from previous Chief Electoral Officer reports: the non-political chief returning officers; the issue of third-party advertising. He mentions in previous reports some of the issues dealing with items such as market research not being included as an election expense when you know that market research now, particularly in the United States, push-poll, push-polling and other things are really election techniques.

In fact, there was a big debate just recently between McCain and Bush about the use of that technique in the United States so that legitimately polling should be included as an election expense. It is the kind of information about trends, has been replaced with very sophisticated information, so that just was keeping in the spirit of the Act of the past where everything should be transparent, and all

expenses related to election campaigns should be included in a limited amount of money that is allowed in the campaign for spending. So those items were in the Bill.

Some of the other sections that we dealt with in the election campaign, one, to have a banning of union and corporate donations and a limitation of individuals, the goal is to have a level playing field in our province. I would note, and I will send you an article recently from the *Toronto Star*, from Graham Fraser who comments about some of the experiences, not the same as Québec, but some of the experience from Québec. He argued that it has not only been good for the party that brought it in, but it was good for the party that initially opposed it and would not change it now because it has built up their requirement to be democratic and be going out to people as opposed to just receiving cheques from companies or unions. I think it is some positive steps in the right direction.

I think there are some concerns that have been created on the legislation. I notice there was an article this weekend from Mr. Gabor, a former representative from the Mulroney government on the Lortie Commission. His statement about the caucus would be and the Willy Horton ad, I think, if one would read the Act, would not apply. You would not be able to advertise around that kind of partisanship as "PAC drives." I do not think the comparison was valid, but I personally believed in it for a while. That is why I put it out in the election campaign, and I believe it is positive and it will make a difference. It is something I believed in actually for a while. I think I made a speech about it in the early '80s, long before I was elected in politics.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, so I guess what I am hearing is that this bill is not necessarily, then, the changes that the Chief Electoral Officer has recommended, but it is a political or philosophical point of view of this Premier that has driven the changes. Or has it been driven by recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer? Which pieces would have been recommended by him, and which ones would be sort of on the Premier's agenda?

Mr. Doer: When you look at the press release in 1999 in the election campaign, you will find that

the initiatives we sought, some of the initiatives we sought, were items that were policy decisions that we had recommended be implemented as part of our policies. I think other changes, for example, the recommendation had been made for years on the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendation on returning officers being not partisan appointees by cabinet but to take the Cabinet out of that. That was a recommendation he had made, that office had made, so there is a combination of proposals here.

* (17:30)

He had recommended in the past that we deal with third-party issues. I think there was a discussion about that during the 1995 election, a lot less in the '99 election, I think. The third-party advertising was something that had been in former reports of the Chief Electoral Officer and the issue of polling being in and out and advertising limits had been commented on by the Chief Electoral Officer before as well. The Chief Electoral Officer commented that there was an ambiguity in the Act after he had analyzed the 1995 results. The former members solved the ambiguity by making it unambiguous about how much you could spend on advertising, which, we thought, was contrary to the spirit of the Act to have a certain amount for a local organization and a certain amount for advertising. So some of these things are referenced and not recommended; some of the items are referenced and are open-ended; and other items are promises we made.

I think it is safe to say it was the NDP that changed the Act in the '80s to make it mandatory to have all campaign contributions over a certain level public to get transparency in the Act. I think the previous government did that, and I think this just moves us ahead; in my view, it moves us forward. We do get money from unions; we do get money from corporations; we do get money from individuals. This will reduce the amount of money we receive.

Mrs. Mitchelson: You know it seems like one of the first orders of business of this new government has been to bring in The Elections Finances Act—Bill 4, it was—and it was on the drawing board pretty quickly. I know that there certainly are other things that were sort of

waiting for this government to live up to based on election promises, and I would wonder or question why the rush to bring in this piece of legislation in this government's first mandate. It is obviously one of the first orders of business.

I guess I would ask, well, given that normally speaking the Chief Electoral Officer does prepare a report on an election fairly quickly after that election takes place, I would imagine that there would be recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer on the 1999 election campaign that would be coming forward very shortly. I would just like to ask the Premier why the significant rush when we are probably minimum of three years, possibly four years, away from a provincial election, why he would not have waited for, say, at least the 1999 report from the Chief Electoral Officer so that any further recommendations might be incorporated into the legislation.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Doer: We offered to the members opposite the opportunity to pass something quickly after they were concerned about anybody getting an "advantage" after the election campaign on this promise that we made. I think it was more prudent to take our time and get the Bill drafted correctly, particularly the issue of third-party issues, because there had been two court decisions, one in Alberta and one in British Columbia. Then there has been a Supreme Court decision in Quebec, the Liebman decision, which we are quite aware of. So it is a promise made last year. It is a promise that is going to be kept. If there is any advice members opposite have on the Bill, I am certainly open to hearing it in debate stage, at committee stage. What we found, for example, when the members opposite submitted legislation dealing with the rights of people in jails to vote and the fact that it was not limited that we suggested there be changes made. There were, and the Government did amend legislation based on the discussions of that committee. We certainly will have an open mind at committee. We believe this bill is a combination of promises we made to the public and recommendations that have been long overdue from the Chief Electoral Officer, but, because they affect the rules under which all of

us have to compete, we recognize that, if there are sensible suggestions as we proceed, we will have an open mind to them.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I was just wondering if the Premier might have a legal opinion from a constitutional lawyer on whether this legislation would survive a constitutional challenge. Is there any advice that he has received?

Mr. Doer: It has been drafted with the utilization of legislative drafting staff who have worked with constitutional experts inside of government. Do I expect it to be challenged? There are groups already challenging it before they have read it. So I expect it is going to be challenged. I cannot predict which way a court is going to go, but I can indicate that in the Liebman case in Quebec, at certain levels of discussion, at certain levels of court decisions, at the provincial levels, some of these third-party provisions have not been sustained. At the Supreme Court level, the only case that has gone there has been sustained, and that is the Liebman case, and I cannot predict beyond that the Charter of Rights. You will note that somebody who was sitting in this seat previously believed that we should not totally delegate away the power of the Legislature to the courts because you could not predict what the courts are going to do and argued that we should have a notwithstanding clause in the Constitution and, something that Premier Blakeney agreed with and I agree with, that it should be a notwithstanding clause, because you cannot predict how the courts will rule.

In fact, we have already indicated that we would look at all options dealing with child pornography. This is obviously not analogous to that, but I guess I expect parts of this legislation will be challenged because it has already been threatened. In reading some of the comments, I think they have not read the Bill. They assumed it is something from another province, but that is their decision. I respect our right to pass legislation, having heard the public and heard the opposition parties. I respect the right of the people that do not agree with it to challenge it. In a democratic and free society, that is how it should be. When we came into office right away, we had to deal with a decision made by the courts on courtroom security.

I would argue that the safety of people working in courts and the safety of people attending courts, as members of the public, those individual rights should be somewhat balanced with the rights of the community. So, as soon as we were in office, procedures that were put in by members opposite were thrown out by the courts. We have just got to go back and do it a different way, I suppose. But the courts will rule against legislative procedures.

Sunday shopping was another case, I remember, where it went against the legislation and a bill had to be passed in short order. Even judges' salaries were thrown out, I think, by the courts, though notwithstanding, the judges ruling on judges.

Mr. Gerrard: While we are on this area, I am just curious, since this has come up in previous times within the Government of Manitoba, what measures has the Premier taken to ensure that there is a separation of the roles and activities of those who are in the civil service and those who are on the political staff?

Mr. Doer: Yes, I think that it was my view that I wanted the Clerk of Cabinet to be a long-time public employee. I personally believe that the individual I asked to do the job, Mr. Eldridge, is a person who has worked for governments right back to the Gurney-Evans years in the '60s. I do not want to date him, but he is a person who has had the ability to work with a lot of political parties, and one would argue a lot of characters who get these jobs from time to time over the years. I am a great believer in trying to, as much as possible, separate out the policy advice and the public policy advice from political advice. Hopefully, I can manage that. I am a great believer in the meritorious civil service. I believe also that I do not think we have had this debate adequately in Canada.

I think that in the American system everybody goes after an election campaign if a different party replaces the one that is in there in the past. In the U.K., there is a policy political office of the Prime Minister. People are arguing that he, Mr. Blair, is becoming more political. I cannot believe that. But there is a meritorious underpinning of that.

* (17:40)

I think all but one deputy minister that we appointed in departments at the time of transition were people that were working for the former government. I think the only exception to that was in Education and Training. The Clerk of Cabinet was a long-time civil servant. The political jobs were filled with political people that will be hired under the political section of The Civil Service Act. In a number of years from now, when the public decides to make a change, if they have not decided to change themselves, then there will be the natural change. But we try to manage the communication to deputy ministers through the Clerk of Cabinet on policy issues, and the person who is involved in the working conditions of deputy ministers is the Clerk of Cabinet, even though the Premier is responsible for hiring and firing technically under the Order-in-Council.

Mr. Gerrard: Just one follow-up on that. Have you provided any specific directions to members of the staff who work closely with you, or are you just going by the approach that you are taking in making appointments on the one hand, which are from within the civil service, and on the other hand, from people who have worked in a more political perspective?

Mr. Doer: I think I have tried to balance out. There are certain political needs of a government that have to be dealt with because you have certain promises to the public that you are committed to keeping that have to be implemented in government if you are to have any long-term faith with the people. Having said that, when there have been major job openings—we had one just recently with the Lotteries Corporation with the decision we felt we had to make with the Lotteries Corporation. That was a position that was technically filled by the Order-in-Council before, by the Clerk of Cabinet before through Order-in-Council.

I felt that we really needed to shore up that operation in terms of credibility and asked Winston Hodgins to take the job and then asked Marie Elliott, based on advice I received from our Clerk of Cabinet and the previous individual and from the Minister on the competency of that individual to take the acting job, again, as a

career civil servant, who had worked both in the Urban Affairs planning section and in the Rural Development planning section and was working in Intergovernmental Affairs. I have to say, based on briefings I have had on some technical areas of government, I am very happy with the acting decision we made.

So that was just the most recent example of where we were faced with a report that we received on Friday and we had to act, I thought, on Monday, when we released the Auditor's report to the public and wanted to restore some credibility in that office. Any level of staffing lower than that in that corporation—in fact, I read about one set of hirings where decisions were made by the Board. I had read about it the next day in the *Free Press*. You know, that would be inappropriate to be involved at that level below the CEO or the acting CEO. So there will be staff hired that are political, but there is a separate section under The Civil Service Act. So it should be transparent to the public.

A person hired under a section dealing with merit in the civil service is hired under one section of The Civil Service Act, and an individual that is hired as a political appointee, which is the will and pleasure of Order-in-Council appointments, is hired under another section. We are not going to abuse one section with the other. The Act is written that way, I think, from the '60s on, the Member opposite might know, and I think that, generally speaking, we have tried to practise that policy as well, where it is fully transparent, so that you know when you are dealing with a political appointee who, hopefully, is appointed with merit as well, but with certain policy perspectives.

Dan Kelly, who worked in the former office, in the former premier's secretariat, might have different views than Paul Vogt, who is working there now. They are both bright people.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I would just like to get back to sort of the transition from one government to another. I was wondering if the Premier could tell me who the members of his transition team were and how they were hired to perform the activities of transition.

Mr. Doer: Well, again, we had a transition team working as volunteers prior to the election, during the election. It was two former ministers of Finance that we had, Mr. Kostyra and Mr. Schroeder, two names I know that are familiar to members opposite, and the third person to be the central group was Mr. Leitch from the government side, and I asked Mr. Eldridge to be the civil service representative in the transition. There were other individuals who were involved. Ms. Neufeld, who was involved in our election campaign, was working as a spokesperson, and a couple of other individuals that were involved that were primarily the people that were involved in our opposition staff, who were on leave of absence during the election, came on the transition staff. Some of them are now working, of course, in government. I guess some of them are actually. The communication person, Mr. Flanagan, came on in a transition function similar to Ms. Biggar in 1988, when Mr. Scotton was changed and Ms. Biggar came on. I am going by memory, but I remember some of these transitions going back.

So very similar, I believe the former members used Mr. Ransom, Mr. Leitch and Mr. Hodgins, if my memory serves me right, as the transition group in 1988.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess what I am asking for is the list. We have got Eugene Kostyra, Vic Schroeder, Carmen Neufeld.

Mr. Doer: I can come back and give you a list. I gave you, pretty well, the names, but if there are other people, I will bring them back.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Okay, thanks. Madam Chairperson, what I would like to know is who all of the individuals were, how were they hired. Were they hired on contract? Did they have a term to those contracts? How long did they work on the transition process? How long did that process take? Did some stay longer than others? Did some have just certain short-term task to perform? Are they engaged—I know the Premier did indicate that some of those that participated in the transition process are probably working for government. That would be a normal process. I guess I am just wanting to know who they are, when their contract was up if that was how they were hired and how much those

contracts were for, so if we could have that for the next time.

Mr. Doer: One individual who carried on for a period of time was Mr. Kostyra. I know members opposite have FOied his material. I think they provided it, so I will get a copy of the stuff we sent you. But he stayed on certainly longer than the other members of the team, who were either hired into specific jobs or may have done other tasks.

As you know, when you get elected, you have got a very short period of time to make a huge transition. I did not spend a lot of time on how things were going. I am spending a lot more time on reducing the size. My primary objective in the transition period was to reduce the number of cabinet ministers and departments in government and trying to make those decisions the most intelligent ones possible. So I was working more on the macro picture of the size of cabinet and the number of departments. But I will bring back that material.

* (17:50)

Mrs. Mitchelson: The Premier indicated that Carmen Neufeld was a part of the transition team. What was her specific role?

Mr. Doer: Well, she was involved as a volunteer in our election campaign. She was an owner of her own business. She had done work for the previous government and obviously did work right away for our government although that decision she was not involved in, as she should not have been. It would have been a conflict. She had a short contract—I will get the amount of money—for the transition. I will get the specific amount. It was a relatively small amount. She is, as you know, an owner of her own business, on the Chamber of Commerce executive and a person whom we have used from time to time, as members opposite have, for some planning events.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do not think I heard from the Premier what her role was through the transition process. I may have just missed it. I do not know. But I do not think that I heard.

Mr. Doer: Well, as part of the communications, the media wanted a certain—I mean, with the media after a change in government, there are a number of different media requests that should not go to the—for example, the media request should not go to Bonnie Staples-Lyon who was technically still on that job for another two weeks. So some of those media requests would go to either Donne or Carmen at that point, or she would make statements about the transition process. I know she was also involved in a lot of the organizational work. She is a professional person for organization. That is what she does in terms of her own business, and she is a person that had a fair amount of obvious contacts for us in the business community that we thought were important for transition. We wanted to involve some of the discussions in departments and other things reducing the size of cabinet. We wanted to have some discussions with people that would be affected by those decisions without prejudice, of course.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I guess, I would just like to ask the Premier whether her contract was finished before she received the untendered contract to organize the swearing-in ceremony, or was she still on contact? Was she given an additional \$4,000 to organize the swearing-in event?

Mr. Doer: I can say there were two separate contracts, one for the transition and one for the swearing-in. She was not involved in the decision on the swearing-in. Obviously, under any conflict-of-interest regulations, she had to declare and to withdraw. The swearing-in ceremony was something where we made a decision to go with a community-based swearing-in exercise, and she did that. I am not sure whether she had a third contract at the same time. I know she was working for Seniors Secretariat under the previous government through August-September. I am not sure whether that contract is over or not.

Sorry, I am just going by memory. It was the fourth contract I think she had, but I did not know the timing of that. She was working on the women's business conference. I am trying to think whether that was the same time or not, the Women in Business Conference. It is usually at the Convention Centre.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I would presume that both of those contracts that were entered into by the Premier would have been through the transition period. I would presume that they were untendered contracts. They were direct appointments.

Mr. Doer: Later on in a number of these similar functions, we tendered the work, but we had 12 or 11 days, and 4 of them were weekend days, to get a lot of these things doing, including the reduction in size of government and a number of other functions. Yes, and I take responsibility for the decisions because ultimately in transition period you do not have a government. I had lots of other documents coming from the previous government at the same time during transition, and one of the biggest challenges was that I was told that, if we did not give half-a-million-dollar cheque to the Bombers, they were not going to meet payroll on October 5 or 6 or something, the day we were going to be sworn in. You know how many of these things come at you if you do not do this, you will do that. You get literally a hundred phone calls of things that are pending disaster. I can remember the Bombers, Faneuil, and a couple of other things were on our plate the second we were elected as opposed to sworn in.

So we were working a lot with the existing Treasury Board staff and existing government. We were working within a budget, and we were working within the general parameters of previous administrations. I would say that we did make a change. We cancelled the Speech from the Throne cocktail party that the Premier hosts, and I have cancelled it for the next four years. We replaced it with the public open house for the swearing-in. This is a subjective decision that we made. The savings we made is close to comparable on a one-year only cost, and it will be a savings about \$30 million dollars over four years.

An Honourable Member: Thirty million?

Mr. Doer: Thirty thousand, I am sorry, I apologize. I wish we could save that much money. That would have been an issue while we were in opposition, that is why I apologized.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I guess, what I am getting at is that we do have a list of the untendered contracts that have been entered into under this government, and I do not see Carmen Neufeld's name.

Mr. Doer: Her company's name is Frontline Associates .

Mrs. Mitchelson: So I will look for Frontline as her company, but I do not think her company was hired as the contract through the transition. There were two contracts. There was one for transition, for her role on the transition team, and there was one for the organization for the swearing-in party. I do not see her name in the list of individuals who received an untendered contract for transition services.

Mr. Doer: I will double-check because maybe I was wrong and she may have been doing this as a transition role, and maybe there was not any pay. I will have to check that out. I know that she did receive a contract, untendered, for the swearing-in. I will have to get the breakdown between her company and other operations, such as we gave an honorarium to Prodigy, for example, and some others. I know that we got a piano for \$50 from the Winnipeg Symphony. So I will have to get all the breakdown. I will check it. I will take, again, that question as notice. I know that she did receive a contract for the swearing-in, and it was not tendered, and I made the decision.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, that is not the issue. I understand the circumstances. I guess what I am doing is looking through a list of the untendered—

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, July 17, 2000

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