



Fifth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley, Hon.	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, July 13, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered certain resolutions, directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again. I move, seconded by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Shirley Render (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1997-1998 annual reports for Vital Statistics Agency, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the Companies Office, Property Registry Agency and the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission, copies of which have been previously distributed.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Virology Lab Wastewater

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I think most Manitobans were shocked to read today that 2,000 litres of effluents were deposited in our river system from the federal virology lab. This lab, of course, will be dealing with Ebola viruses and other very dangerous materials and genetic issues of disease.

When we raised the questions of sewers and sewage system and disposal in 1994, the

government stated that, clearly, the conditions of the licence will mean that there are no discharges that should be of any concern, and certainly this is meant to be a contained facility.

I would like to ask the Premier: with the 2,000 litres of effluents discharged, are the conditions of the licence being breached with this, or has the licence been changed and weakened by the provincial government?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question. It is a very serious matter, and I thank the member for raising it. I believe, genuinely concerned as we are, that in this instance there was a breach of the protocol that is in place that we are insisting be rectified before any of the high-level lab work begins. It has not begun yet, and of course we want to ensure that in this case there was not a health hazard. We want to ensure that no such occurrence will happen again after higher level work does begin. Higher level work will not begin until this procedure is rectified.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, in Hansard in 1994 the government stated that this would be a contained facility, and there would not be the concerns that we had raised about materials being discharged to the river. I would like to ask the minister: is discharging 2,000 litres of effluents from the virology lab consistent with the licence, or is it inconsistent with the licence issued by the province? We want to know whether the federal virology lab is breaking the licence or whether the licence conditions have been weakened by the provincial government.

* (1335)

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, as I indicated in my first response, before work begins on the higher level lab work, this kind of protocol has to be rectified. The member is quite correct in that this is not part of the original conditions. We do not want that effluent—in this case it was not health-hazard water; it was just water, but we

absolutely insist that there be a change in that particular protocol. They are all under containment, but we want to ensure that no accidental turning of any tap will release any kind of water whether it, in this case, was not a health hazard. Certainly, we will not allow higher level lab work to begin until we are satisfied that that condition of the licence is respected.

Licence Tabling Request

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, again, can the minister then table the licence in this Chamber and indicate to us that it is contrary not to the protocol but to the licence issued by the province for effluents to be discharged through the sewer system into the treatment plants into the rivers? Is that against the licence, or is that consistent with the licence?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, as I indicated in both my previous answers, that is contrary to the licence. What I have indicated is that the water that will be going through the waste treatment ultimately, for the higher level lab work is not yet containing any results of the higher level lab work. What I am saying to the member is that before that higher level lab work begins, we will be receiving assurance from the federal government that no such water will be going into the rivers, which is the concern he justifiably brings forward and with which we concur.

Virology Lab Wastewater

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): With a new question, I just want to make sure that the public understands and we understand the issue. The minister mentioned before certain materials can be dealt with, and she also mentioned a higher level set of materials. Is the minister now saying to us that the condition that no liquids, fluids of any level, one, two, three or four, will be discharged through the sewer system to the river system here in Manitoba? Is that what she is saying is the condition of the licence, or is there some kind of condition short of Ebola that the government is saying would be accepted by a licence for purposes of discharge?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, the member had asked earlier, and I would be pleased to provide details of the licence to him as Leader of the Opposition, and those details will answer those questions.

What I wish to assure the House and the Leader of the Opposition is that the water that did go into the wastewater treatment was ordinary water. It did not have viral contaminants. The lab is not yet working with those higher level viruses, and the protocols that are in place are now being looked at and investigated by both officials in my department and federal officials to ensure that before any contaminants come in there will be no danger of accidental release into the water system. That is a condition of the licence that we demand be honoured.

So I will provide the details of the licensing for him, and if he has any further questions from that, I would be pleased to answer them as well.

Mr. Doer: I thank the minister, and I look forward to looking at the licence. The minister is saying that no alleged contaminants will go into the sewer and river supply, but water from the virology lab will be going through the regular treatment plant. Is that correct, in terms of the licence?

* (1340)

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, when I bring forward the conditions of the licence, I will be able to answer that more clearly. I will take that question as notice, because there are all kinds of ways in which water enters the system that are not contaminated water supply. I will check the detail of that for him.

I again wish to indicate that the break in procedure that occurred in this instance was a good alert to all of us who are looking at the way in which the protocols begin taking place in the lab. I can assure the House, Madam Speaker, that no viral contaminants will be entering the water system and that we are insisting that the federal government show us the protocols that are being put in place to rectify the situations so that no further incident of this sort can occur.

Mr. Doer: Well, I think a lot of people would be scared when they read this story today and very concerned about it. I have talked to a number of Manitobans that are, and I share their concern. I mean, it is just something that we thought that the facility was contained, and now we are learning that it may not be fully contained, notwithstanding the disagreement about what materials went in through the sewer into the treatment plant and into the river.

The federal government, in 1995, promised that any accidental release or spill, the primary responsibility will be with the lab, but they also will be responsible to liaise with the provincial officials as necessary. When was this government notified? Was there proper liaison between the government, the federal government and this government, and is there proper notification of the public, because many of us read it in the newspaper this morning?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, again, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his concern and for his very genuine, I believe, concern on this issue. The federal government connected with the lab notified the provincial government that there had been some water going out of the lab the day after. Technically, they are supposed to let us know within 12 hours. We believe that it was in excess of 12 hours, and that is another point of contention that we are currently discussing with the federal government.

Immediately, then, provincial officials contacted the health authorities. It was not a private or a secret communication at all. They notified Dr. Margaret Fast of the City of Winnipeg and Dr. Popplow here in the provincial government to ascertain any degree of health hazard, and if there was a health hazard, what kind of notification should be provided to the public.

Dr. Margaret Fast is the lead health official who determined that there was not a health hazard, and so therefore then department officials began turning their attention to corrective procedures in terms of protocol. Madam Speaker, I will provide more details because I know my time is up.

Health Care System Waiting Lists

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health on a different matter, and that is we were given assurances some years ago that the line-ups in the hospitals would be dealt with. The Premier promised that there would be a massive decrease by the middle of this year, which has not happened. Two weeks ago in this Chamber I talked about my visit after midnight to the emergency rooms and over 40 people in the Health Sciences Centre.

Madam Speaker, we are contacted by a Jenny Bellino, who is known to some members opposite and who has had 13 surgeries. The food was so bad at Victoria Hospital that her family brought in food for her. She is sitting at home presently, after being discharged, forced to leave the hospital, may have to go back to the St. Boniface emergency because of her condition.

My question is: when will the minister stop making excuses and do something about the situation in the hospitals, and that is to open beds and to bring nurses into the hospital system to deal with the shortages, not the excuses that we have heard for six or seven years?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

* (1345)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, it is not a matter of making excuses at all, it is a matter of providing the member for Kildonan with the situation as it exists this year. As has always been the case and he knows full well, and we certainly have evidence of it right across Canada, all provinces and Manitoba for many decades have had issues like summer slowdowns in terms of the procedures, elective surgery and so on. When it comes to emergency requirements and urgent requirements, these are dealt with in a very short period of time. But, again, it is nothing new to be in a summer schedule situation affecting the timing of various procedures and services. So he knows that full well.

He knows we are taking a number of steps to address issues like recruiting and retaining our nurses, setting up a \$7-million fund; putting \$32.5 million into our budget that he supported, along with his Leader, I am sure for that very reason; that this budget has \$32.5 million to recruit 650 more nurses; putting in place 850 new personal care home beds to take the pressure off our hospital facilities. If you go back a year ago, we had over 200 panelled patients in our hospitals. Today that is down to 50. That is just a sample of a number of the steps that are being taken to address that very important issue.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, if the government has done so much—two years ago it was the flu, then it was the nursing; it is now the middle of summer where we are supposed to have no line-ups, no people in the hallways—why do we have a chronic problem in our hospital system with people in the hallways and unable to access our health care system? Is it not a result of seven years of miserable planning by this government and an inability to effect change, and their cuts?

Mr. Stefanson: No, Madam Speaker, and there is not a major chronic problem in terms of our hallways. We go day in and day out. I can give the member the last few days. You can go to a number of facilities, Concordia, you can go to HSC, St. Boniface; you will not find any of that. There still are some cases, and we have said that is unacceptable.

That is why we are doing a number of things. That is why we are recruiting more nurses in the province of Manitoba. That is why we have \$32.5 million in this budget to recruit more nurses. That is why we are building 850 net new personal care home beds right throughout Manitoba. That is why we have a bed co-ordination strategy making the best use of our beds right across our health care system. Those are just some of the steps that we are taking to address that issue.

I am assuming that when that member stood up and voted for our budget, he did so because this budget includes \$194 million to address those very important issues. I know some of his colleagues had long faces when they had to

stand and support that budget. I think that member was smiling because he knows that we are supporting health care with \$2.1 billion, \$194 million more than a year ago, to address all of these very important issues.

Mr. Chomiak: My question to the minister, who well knows that we supported that budget because that is the first time in six or seven years they have done anything to try to improve the health care system—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

An Honourable Member: For their electoral purposes.

Mr. Chomiak: For their electoral purposes.

My question to the Minister of Health is: can the minister explain, as Jenny Bellino was told when she was forced to leave Victoria Hospital, Madam Speaker, whether or not beds are being designated for the Pan Am Games? If that is the case, and of course you need to designate beds, why is it that we allow summer shutdowns in the face of all of these people coming to the city of Winnipeg when we need the additional beds that are going to be—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, an individual like the one that the member is referring to, and I am certainly prepared to look into her situation, will not be impacted in any way by the Pan Am Games. I have had questions about that in this House before. There is no reserving of beds at the expense of the citizens of Manitoba for the Pan Am Games.

Some of the beds affected by the summer slowdown, if need be, can be put in place to deal with any urgent requirements under the Pan Am Games. That is how the process is designed to work. There is no impact on Manitoba residents as a result of the Pan Am Games or any beds being held and putting a Manitoban in a situation where they cannot access a bed because of the Pan Am Games. Those are the facts.

**Beverage Rooms
Seating Limit**

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Unfortunately, in this province issues related to liquor and politics seem to be intertwined, one Cubby Barrett getting a licence when the previous owners of the Cross Lake Inn could not get it; the fiasco under this minister, the private wine stores with that objective accountant Gordon McFarlane, her official agent and the treasurer of the Conservative Party, giving assessment.

We learned in committee this morning that this minister made a decision to remove the 300-seat limit on beverage rooms without meeting with the hotel association before that decision was made, a decision that just happens to benefit, in fact, two hotels owned by one company with close ties to the Conservative Party, in fact, whose owner sits on the Keystone Club which gives a direct contact with the First Minister.

I am wondering if the First Minister can explain to the people of Manitoba when we are going to stop seeing the mixture of politics and liquor in this province and how he can justify this situation where even the hotel association was not consulted about this move.

* (1350)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I note that the individual who is being referenced by the member for Thompson also made contributions to the New Democratic Party in 1998.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, since the Premier seems to know quite a bit about this, perhaps he has not read the owner gave \$375 to the New Democratic Party as an individual. His company gave \$5,387.50 to the Conservative Party. Can the minister also confirm that Mr. Ledohowski, the individual in question, has confirmed on the public record he is a member of this Keystone Club and obviously has direct connections to this government to be able to benefit two of the hotels he owns by a policy change? They would not even consult with the hotel association.

Mr. Filmon: Of course, Madam Speaker, Brian O'Leary gave \$1,500 to the NDP party, which means that he has bought out of any need to obey the ethics of the NDP party, if they have any ethics. Brian O'Leary gets to buy his way out for \$1,500, I assume.

**Manitoba Liquor Control Commission
Privatization**

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I would be more than glad to table a copy of the Conservative contribution list, which I think lists every principal in that vote-splitting scandal. Pretty well, you know, half the people that get benefits from this government are on this list.

I would like to ask a final question to the Premier, whether he can confirm whether either this government, since the minister did not know about this, or the Conservative Party is currently conducting polling into the privatization of liquor in this province and whether this is in fact the real agenda of the Conservative Party, the privatization of liquor in the same way that they privatized MTS after the election in 1995.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act): Madam Speaker, as I said today in my remarks introducing the Manitoba Liquor Commission, the Manitoba Liquor Commission currently has a very good balance between private and our own government-operated stores, and we see no need to change that balance.

We have had difficulty in understanding where the NDP have been coming from in their series of questioning. The new NDP, they reinvent themselves every time we look at them. We have them objecting to expansion.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (1355)

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: Beauchesne's Citation 417 is very clear that answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

Madam Speaker, I asked about polling that is currently being done in Manitoba. We have been receiving calls from Manitobans about it. I asked the Premier whether indeed, through his position in this government or he as the Leader of the Conservative Party, whatever, whether they are involved with polling. I would appreciate it if you would have the First Minister answer that question. Are they polling about privatization? Is that their real agenda?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable government House leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): I think if you examine the record you will find out that in quoting the same citation from Beauchesne, in stating questions members opposite are often very verbose, very argumentative, very provocative, and that, of course, results in a similar reply. So I would ask you to draw that to the attention of all honourable members.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister responsible for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission, on the same point of order.

Mrs. Vodrey: Just in answering the question and clarifying, speaking to that point of order, it has often been very difficult to find out where the NDP are actually coming from in terms of their questions because they appear to stand for one thing on one day and stand for another thing on another day. So, Madam Speaker, in the answering of my question, it was simply to try and clarify who in fact are the new NDP.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the official opposition, on the same point of order.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, it is an important public issue that we know what the true agenda of the Conservative Party is. We want to know whether they are going to say one thing before an election again and have the sequel plan to break their promise like they did on the telephone system.

Somebody is polling. We want to know who is paying for it. Why is the government trying to cover up again their true intentions for the public assets here in Manitoba?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind all honourable members when speaking to a point of order to not utilize the time as debate on the issue but to relate specifically to the rule that has been violated.

On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I would remind the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey) to respond to the question asked and not provoke debate.

Education System Standards Testing Breach

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, earlier today I trust that I was hand-delivered a letter from the Seven Oaks School Division to myself, a letter that was submitted for the Winnipeg Free Press and the Winnipeg Sun editorial board.

My question is for the Minister of Education and to ask for him to comment. In the letter it states, and I quote: The government's own officials twice reported that no harm was done and that the matter was concluded. Each of the three investigations which have been done reached the same conclusions. There was no breach in security; there was a violation of protocol.

Does the Minister of Education agree with that comment from the Seven Oaks School Division?

* (1400)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Categorically not, Madam Speaker. The Deputy Minister of Education has advised me that his officials take strong exception to that position taken by representatives of the Seven Oaks School Division. More troubling to me or equally troubling to me is the assertion in the letter—which I assume is proposed to be printed

because I have not seen it yet. The letter is signed by the chair of the board, but it makes the point that the issue is more about partisan politics than it is about education, which we know there is plenty of partisan politics involved with this issue. But the fact that the school division would take the position that this is not about education is extremely troubling to me. It goes back to what I said about the initial report put out by Mr. Wiens, the superintendent of the division, the one that I tabled here in the House which makes the same point that no harm was done, that there are plenty of analogies about that to be discussed at further length later.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I ask for the Minister of Education to comment on the statement from the letter, and again I quote: The suggestion by Mr. McCrae, Mr. Lamoureux and Mr. Filmon that this matter still requires further investigation by an independent inquiry indicates that this issue has nothing to do with education and everything to do with party politics and the upcoming provincial election.

Does the Minister of Education recognize now the need for the independent investigation?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I do not hear much from the New Democrats on this matter except from their seats. They too have been asking for an independent investigation, and that would be about the first time they seem to have taken issue with Mr. Wiens or Mr. O'Leary on this matter.

As I said to the honourable member for Inkster earlier on in this discussion, this is a very serious matter. The honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans), speaking for the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), says that this is no more than making a mountain out of a molehill, and honourable members in the New Democratic Party agree with that statement. The honourable member for Brandon East has also said that this is much ado about nothing, speaking for the New Democratic caucus in this House, which speaks volumes about the commitment of honourable members of the New Democratic Party to integrity in our education system for our children.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I ask for the Minister of Education to recognize that the Seven Oaks School Division does not have any credibility in bringing this issue to an end.

My question to the Minister of Education on this issue: is the Minister of Education going to do what is necessary in order to protect the integrity of our standards exams and call for an independent investigation on this matter today?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, I share with the honourable member for Inkster concern about the credibility of the report that I tabled in this House. I share his concern about the position taken or the lack of a position taken, as usual, by the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) in this matter. I am determined to protect the integrity of the standards testing procedures in our province.

Community Colleges Waiting Lists

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, Manitoba's young people and skilled immigrants have been betrayed by this government. According to StatsCan, Manitoba has the fewest college graduates per capita of this decade. This is after the Roblin commission called on the government to get serious about college enrollments and dramatically increase college spaces. I agree with the headline in one of our local papers that calls this a national disgrace.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education if it makes any sense at all for people like Harbir Dhaliwal, who is a foreign-trained computer programmer, age 25, to be on a waiting list for three years to get into computer programming at Red River Community College, while Manitoba employers continue to experience shortages of computer programmers and this individual is driving cab. What is your answer to that?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Well, Madam Speaker, it turns out the good people over at the Freedom of Information office are not the only ones that use those little white-out bottles. It turns out the caucus research people for the New Democratic Party, in being very selective with Statistics

Canada documents, have omitted putting certain information in the hands of a certain reporter for a newspaper here which covered this matter.

When it comes to the issue of apprentices, for example, they very conveniently left out the fact that Manitoba is about fourth or fifth in the country ranking-wise instead of last, as portrayed by the graph that they presented which was missing the other provinces, Madam Speaker. The NDP applied 1998 population projections to 1995-96 enrollment statistics for the purpose of making their case.

So, you know, I guess the honourable member for St. James seems to be spending too much time taking lessons from the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale).

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, if the minister would like a briefing on how to calculate percentages, I am sure that the Free Press or our caucus would be willing to brief the minister.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. James was recognized for a supplementary question which requires no preamble. Would the honourable member please pose her question now.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, can this minister explain why his government, in response to the Mauro report and then the Roblin commission, not only cut spaces but did nothing for year after year after year, leaving little hope for Manitobans, for young Manitobans who eventually left Manitoba?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member has to square her comments today with the comments made by Nuala Beck, who tells us that 39 percent of Manitoba's population are employed in high-skilled jobs. So there is obviously more homework to be done, not only by the honourable member but also by myself, because we recognize the challenges that a buoyant economic situation in Manitoba presents, more buoyant in Manitoba, by the way, than most other places in this country, thanks to the leadership of the present administration in partnership with those in our economy who create the wealth and create the jobs.

Madam Speaker, \$4 million in the colleges growth fund this year will create 1,000 new seats

in our college system, which will have quite an effect on the statistics that the honourable member has to doctor before she brings them to this House.

Ms. Mihychuk: I would like the minister to respond to the question that I asked in my first question, and that is: what answer does the minister have to this individual who is a foreign-trained computer programmer, highly skilled, who has been waiting for three years and all of those Manitoba companies that are looking for an individual with exactly those skills? What is the government's answer to this individual?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I do not know all of the details respecting the individual referred to by the honourable member. I would be very happy if she would share with me more information about that particular individual because it is that very area where employers in Manitoba are crying out for skilled people. That is why, under the colleges growth fund, there will be 35 additional seats created at the Red River College for computer accounting technicians, 55 seats created for computer analyst programmer positions. That is the direction we are going.

If an individual is having difficulty, an individual with the kind of training required by employers in our economy in Manitoba today, many of whom are needed in the workplace, I will do whatever I can to assist that particular individual. But certainly there are jobs available in this area, so many that we have to apply some of those \$4 million in the colleges growth fund for the very area referred to by the honourable member, for the person she has been speaking to who is having difficulty finding employment. So if the honourable member wants to share more information with me, I will use whatever efforts I can to assist.

* (1410)

Pan Am Games Aboriginal Runners—Recognition

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): I have some questions for the Premier. In 1967 there were some aboriginal runners, Charles Bittern, Dave Courchene Jr., Patrick Bruyere, William

Chippaway, Fred Harper, William Merasty, Charles Nelson, Russell Abraham, John Nazzie and Milton Mallett, who took the Pan Am torch from St. Paul, Minnesota, to the Winnipeg Stadium, a run of some 800 kilometres in just six days, and the Premier knows that these runners were not recognized at that time, nor have they been to this day.

I would like to ask the Premier to consider awarding these runners the Order of the Buffalo or some other award to recognize their achievement for the Pan Am Games.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his advice, and I will certainly take that matter under advisement.

Manitoba Capital Fund Losses

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, I have asked a number of questions of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism in regard to the Manitoba Capital Fund concerning the amount of losses suffered by Manitobans through Manitoba's investment as one of the five partners in the fund. I wonder if the minister would be able to confirm today what the amount of the losses in regard to Rescom and Shamray, which total \$4.5 million for the fund, what proportion of that \$4.5 million does Manitoba as one of the five contributors bear.

Hon. Mervin Tweed (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, as I explained to the honourable member in Estimates and in other questions in this House, risk capital is exactly that. It is what Manitobans have said in the survey or the review that was done in 1994 that, in order to grow the jobs and the economy in a fast rate that we expected, that was the type of investment that was required. Companies that partook or were involved in the investment side of it, many of them have been successful. Many of them have created many high-paying jobs in the province of Manitoba.

When you look at the fund, it is a balanced fund. The investment at the start of the day and at the end of the day fluctuates in great amounts. Somebody told me that in 1990 the Dell investment in the United States, a \$2,500 investment today was worth \$1 million, so it just

shows that the risk capital that we need in Manitoba to make it grow is there for the people that need it.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, I would like to table a memo from the Workers Compensation Board which points out that the people of Manitoba, through their one-fifth contribution, pay the entire losses, all \$4.5 million of the loss, because of a secret share class, Class C, which the people of Manitoba bought for their \$5 million—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Crescentwood was recognized for a supplementary question to which no preamble is required. Would the honourable member please pose his question.

Mr. Sale: I want to ask the minister why he did not tell people, the people of Manitoba, and tell this party in Estimates and tell this House that Manitobans were responsible for the entire \$4.5-million loss on Rescom and Shamray because of a class of shares called, apparently, Class C of shares, that Manitoba said they would take the first \$5 million of loss. What kind of a venture fund had no risk for the CIBC, no risk for the private sector? All the risk is on the people of Manitoba. What kind of a venture fund is that?

Mr. Tweed: Madam Speaker, while not accepting any of the preamble or the information that the honourable member often brings forward to this House which is incorrect, I am pleased to report that venture capital-backed companies increase jobs by 23 percent, increase sales by 31 percent, increase exports by 36 percent and taxes paid to the province by 39 percent.

I am pleased to inform the member that Vision's \$3-million investment in Monarch Industries is currently rated at \$13 million, which he so conveniently neglects. When we look at the record of the previous administration on the loans that they put out—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: Beauchesne 417 directs that questions should be answered briefly and to the

point and should answer the question that was asked.

Madam Speaker, I asked whether the minister would confirm that Manitobans lost the entire \$4.5 million because of a separate class of shares which Manitobans guaranteed when they set up this so-called venture fund, while the Bank of Commerce, which is a partner, has no losses at all. I simply asked him to confirm that, not to go on a ramble about some other funds.

Madam Speaker: The honourable government House leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I can appreciate the sensitivity of members opposite to have the minister put his answer into the context of this fund over the years because it is very clear that the record of the member for Crescentwood's party when in government was absolutely dismal in creating any jobs with the use of that venture fund.

The minister has a right in his answer to place his answer in context of the fund and its success or failure over the years.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Crescentwood, indeed I will take the matter under advisement to consult the Hansard record and report back to the Chamber.

Teachers Pension Plan Maternity Leave Matching Contribution

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, though this government poses as being supportive of women and families, many of their policies are family bashing and women bashing. Consider for example teachers on maternity leave, and the majority are women, are losing pensionable service time because this government is the only one in Canada to refuse matching contributions.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education why his government refuses to match maternity leave pension contributions and so penalizes the pensions for teachers, again mostly women who are at home birthing children and caring for their

children. Are you for families or are you against them?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, since my appointment as Minister of Education and Training, I have had the pleasure of visiting numerous Manitoba schools and seeing those teachers referred to by the honourable member at work with the children of Manitoba, doing an excellent job and making a wonderful impression on those young people so that they can grow up and become productive and happy citizens.

The issue raised by the honourable member is one that has been discussed with me, and we continue to consider the matter.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Winnipeg International Airport

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): This morning I, along with the Premier (Mr. Filmon), Industry, Trade and Tourism Minister Mervin Tweed, and Winnipeg Airports Authority President and CEO Murray Sigler, had the pleasure of attending an event regarding future developments at the Winnipeg Airport.

The Winnipeg Airports Authority Inc. will develop detailed operational and facility plans to guide the future development of Winnipeg International Airport and its role in economic development for the city and province. The plans will be developed in a series of studies to be conducted with financial assistance from the Manitoba government. The province will provide 50 percent of the cost of the studies, too, from the Manitoba Business Development Fund.

The studies will focus on several areas of potential growth and development of the airport facility and surrounding areas. The project will look at setting out an updated airport master plan, defining elements of a plan to construct a new terminal building, creating an airport-related business park and developing a strategy to market enhanced air cargo services.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Airports Authority which, since taking over operation of Winnipeg International, has worked hard to improve services and also look for new business development opportunities. With its 24-hour status, proximity to rail and road links, convenient location to the city, and room for expansion, Winnipeg International Airport can continue to be a major economic development engine for the city and the province and will keep us on course for continued success in the future.

I would like to wish this operation continued success. Thank you.

* (1420)

Sayisi Dene Agreements

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, yesterday the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and I had the opportunity of witnessing the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the federal government and the Manitoba Dene people of Northlands First Nation at Lac Brochet and the Sayisi Dene of Tadoule Lake. The ceremony took place at Tadoule Lake and was signed by the federal Minister of Indian Affairs, Jane Stewart. It was indeed a day to be remembered by all.

Firstly, the admission by the federal government is a breakthrough after past denials and refusals to negotiate on this issue, which is critical to the Sayisi Dene and the Northlands Dene who have traditionally hunted, fished and lived on both sides of the 60th parallel.

I know that there is a lot of business that has to be done in the days ahead, the months and years ahead. Negotiations, however, can now begin on harvesting rights, land selection and reconciliation. It is our hope that these negotiations can be fast-tracked and completed quickly to allow the two First Nations to obtain outstanding treaty land entitlement.

The Northlands Sayisi Dene bands have been denied economic development due to a shortage of land, and of course, the Sayisi Dene—it is well documented—still have a major dispute with the federal government over their forced

relocation to Churchill in 1956. Hopefully, we will bring to final closure the unfortunate circumstances that the Dene people faced while in Churchill, which we have come to know as an experiment on genocide.

Madam Speaker, we also look forward to the time when the federal government will formally apologize to the Sayisi Dene for the treatment that these people received in Churchill between 1956 and the early '70s. Thank you.

Oakbank-Springfield Personal Care Home

Mr. Glen Findlay (Springfield): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise today and inform everybody in the House that we had a very happy day in Springfield and Oakbank last Friday with the sod turning for the 40-bed personal care home. This personal care home comes into being because of the community effort in Springfield and Oakbank over many years where the Kinsmen and Kinettes led a charge to have a personal care home. The local committee in the community worked very aggressively with Manitoba Health, with North Eastman association and have concluded with the announcement on Friday that with the sod turning, the construction is underway for this 40-bed personal care home.

The discussion over the years symbolized the kind of change in health care services being delivered, because from a 30-bed initially conceived, it ends up in a 40-bed personal care home plus a primary health centre, a primary health centre which has services such as community health services, home care, mental health, diabetes education, audiology services and substance abuse education awareness, all part of the facility in Oakbank to serve Springfield and area.

I want to congratulate the ministers of Health in the past and this government, and particularly the current Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) for being at the sod turning for the betterment of health care services in North Eastman association. All the citizens out there need to be congratulated, not only for the work to develop the final design of the project but in terms of responding to the request for the public funds to come forward for the matching grant of

\$841,000 from the community, which is citizens plus the R.M. of Springfield, to be part of the \$7.2-million announcement that we made last Friday. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Pan Am Games

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I want to recognize the 53 Manitoba-born or Manitoba-trained athletes who have made the Pan Am Games team. Twenty-three of the 41 sports will have Manitoba athletes, and I think that nothing is going to sell tickets for the Pan Am Games like promoting these athletes and having Manitobans get out and cheer for our home-grown athletes.

In athletics, there are Daryl Fillion and Byron Goodwin; badminton, Kara Solmundson; basketball, Todd MacCulloch; beach volleyball, Dan Lewis; cycling, Clara Hughes, Jim Fisher and Tanya Dubnicoff; equestrian, James Atkinson; field hockey, Christine Hunter; judo, Kevin McIver and Niki Jenkins; racquetball, Sherman Greenfeld; roller sports, Shaun Clark; roller hockey, Scott Burfoot, Jeff Leiter and Michael Martens; speed skating roller sports, Cindy Klassen and Christy Peters; rowing, Emma Robinson; rhythmic gymnastics, Julie Hayward, Katie Iafolla, Joanna Kreccsy, Jennifer Pudavick and Andrea Sellen; sailing, Kelly Hand; shooting, Henry Gerow.

Soccer, Brian Devenney; softball, Rick Elias and Sandy Newsham; squash, Marnie Baizley and Carolyn Russell; swimming, Kelly Stefanishyn; tae kwon do, Dominique Bosshart; handball, Ryan Biggs, Bill Coulter, Larry Hosegood, Kris Kendall, Trevor Nott and Jade Young; team handball, women, Rebecca Hoffer and Nancy Karpinsky; volleyball, men, Jason Dufault, Scott Koskie, Jules Martens, Keith Sanheim and Andrew Zurawsky; women's team, Wanda Guenette, Janis Kelly, and Louise Wlock; water polo, men, Darryl Bourne; weightlifting, Theresa Brick and Susanne Dandenault.

I want to have all members of the House join me in wishing these athletes congratulations and all the best on their performances in the Games.

Volunteerism

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to take this opportunity—as we know there are many different events around the province in which we are getting a wide number of people participating and volunteering their time and efforts and ensuring that these many events are, in fact, as successful as they have been in years past. That is all being put in the time frame of the Pan Am Games. I know, in the last couple of evenings, I have had opportunity to visit pavilions.

It is a showcase for all Manitobans. I just wanted to applaud all of the efforts, not only those who are participating and volunteering their time for the pavilions but for the many other festivities throughout the province. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I believe His Honour the Lieutenant Governor will be entering the Chamber momentarily with respect to Royal Assent for a bill which, discussions with House leaders, we require in order to convene a committee, a meeting of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission, to complete some regulatory work. So I believe His Honour should be here momentarily.

Madam Speaker: The Lieutenant Governor is expected momentarily for Royal Assent on Bill 28.

* (1430)

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Garry Clark): His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

His Honour Peter Liba, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Madam Speaker addressed His Honour in the following words.

Madam Speaker: May it please Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly, at its present session, passed a bill which, in the name of the Assembly, I present to Your Honour and to which bill I respectfully request Your Honour's assent:

Bill 28—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to this bill.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, to complete its work on Bill 40, will be called for this afternoon concurrently with the House for 2:45 p.m.

Madam Speaker: The Standing Committee on Law Amendments will be called concurrently with the House at 2:45 this afternoon. Is there leave? [agreed]

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, with respect to the passage of Bill 28, I would also like to announce that a Legislative Assembly Management Commission meeting will be called for this afternoon following the completion of the Law Amendments committee in the same committee room. So once that committee has concluded its work, a reasonable 10-15 minutes following the completion of its work, if LAMC could then convene in that same committee room.

Madam Speaker: For the benefit of information for all members, the Legislative Assembly Management Commission meeting will take place following completion of the standing committee in Room 255.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the difficulty that that may cause yourself, but I am sure, with a variety of Acting Deputy Speakers,

et cetera, that we will be able to accommodate your attendance there. As well, as I am sure members appreciate, as we are in the latter days of the session, the need, that there are some important regulations that require approval with respect to Revenue Canada, and in discussing this with the opposition House leader, and I do not think I have had the opportunity to speak to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) on it yet, but there is a desire, I think, to at least complete that business while members are here in the capital, as opposed to calling a meeting following their disbursement across the province. So that is why we are attempting to accommodate that at this time.

Madam Speaker, there are a list of bills, and I would ask if you could, with leave, call the reports from the standing committees that completed work on a number of bills.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have the reports of the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations and the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs? Leave? [agreed]

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Industrial Relations Third Report

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the Third Report on the Committee on Industrial Relations.

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Industrial Relations presents the following as its Third Report.

Your committee met on Monday, July 12, 1999, at 7 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building to consider bills referred.

Your committee heard representation on bills as follows:

Bill 29—The Victims' Rights Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits des victimes

Ken Mandzuik - Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties

Your committee has considered:

Bill 29-The Victims' Rights Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits des victimes

Bill 34-The Court of Queen's Bench Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour du Banc de la Reine et modifications corrélatives

and has agreed to report the same without amendment.

Mr. Helwer: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs
Third Report**

Mr. Denis Rocan (Gladstone): I beg to report the Third Report of the Committee on Municipal Affairs.

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs presents the following as its Third Report.

Your committee met on Monday, July 12, 1999, at 3 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building to consider bills referred. At that meeting, your committee elected Mr. Rocan as its Chairperson and Mr. Helwer as its Vice-Chairperson.

Your committee had met on Monday, July 5, 1999, to consider Bill 25, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale, and at that meeting had heard public presentations on the bill. The list of presenters to the bill is contained in the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs.

Your committee heard representation on bills as follows:

Bill 47-The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale

Mike McCandless - McCandless and Associates

Your committee has considered:

Bill 47-The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale

and has agreed to report the same without amendment.

Your committee has also considered:

Bill 25-The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale and has agreed to report the same with the following amendments:

Your committee voted to delete Clause 4(1) of the bill.

Your committee also voted to delete Clause 4(2) of the bill.

Your committee also voted to delete Clause 5 of the bill.

Your committee also voted to delete Clause 6 of the bill.

Your committee also voted to delete Clause 7 of the bill.

MOTION:

THAT Legislative Counsel be authorized to change all section numbers and internal references necessary to carry out the amendments adopted by this committee.

Mr. Rocan: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I would ask if you could please, with leave where it is required, call for report stage all remaining bills that have been passed and been reported by committee, followed by, again with necessary leaves, any bills that have completed report stage, if you could then with leave call them for third reading, if leave is required.

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to proceed now with report stage on Bills 25, 29, 34 and 47? Agreed? [agreed]

* (1440)

REPORT STAGE

Bill 25—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Praznik), that (Bill 25), The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 29—The Victims' Rights Amendment Act

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), that Bill 29, The Victims' Rights Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits des victimes), reported from the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 34—The Court of Queen's Bench Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura), that Bill 34, The Court of Queen's Bench Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour du Banc de la Reine et modifications corrélatives), reported from the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 47—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act (2)

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that Bill 47, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act (2) (Loi No. 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale), reported from the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to now proceed to third reading on Bills 25, 29, 34 and 47? [agreed]

THIRD READINGS

Bill 25—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), that Bill 25, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale, be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I want to indicate that I concur with the passage of this bill.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is third reading, Bill 25, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 29—The Victims' Rights Amendment Act

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura), that Bill 29, The Victims' Rights Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits des victimes, be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, very briefly, unfortunately I did not have the opportunity in second reading to put just a few words on the record on Bill 29. It is a positive piece of legislation which we have no problem in terms of seeing through its passage. It deals in terms of compensation, and I think all of us would concur that the compensation for the victims should be the first priority.

So, from what I understand, if there is any sort of action taken against government by an inmate, that any sort of financial compensation that the government would be obligated to provide as a result of something that maybe would have occurred for a prisoner in incarceration, that first consideration for that money would go to the victims, I think something that is quite positive.

With those few words, we are prepared to see the bill go through third reading.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading Bill 29, The Victims' Rights Amendment

Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt to motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 34—The Court of Queen's Bench Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded, I hope with his permission, by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that Bill 34, The Court of Queen's Bench Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour du Banc de la Reine et modifications corrélatives, be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, this particular bill does set out the framework, if you like, for the appointment and functioning of masters for the Court of Queen's Bench. Masters perform a variety of judicial functions, and in order to maintain the importance of judicial independence, we feel that the legislation that we have before us is, in fact, quite necessary. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading Bill 34, The Court of Queen's Bench Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 47—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act (2)

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the most honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), that Bill 47,

The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale, be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I spoke on this bill at second reading, and I want to put on the record on third reading some of the concerns that we have in our caucus about the situation that the government finds itself in.

* (1450)

First of all, we did predict this would happen. We raised this issue during 1996 during the debate on the privatization of MTS. In fact, if one recalls, we raised this in committee at that time. By the way, the committee never did deal with all the amendments we had.

Madam Speaker, we said at the time that this was an issue that had to be dealt with. Traditionally Crown corporations have received an exemption from assessment at the local municipal level. We said this was going to be a problem. At that time the government ignored it. Right now we have at least two municipalities which have passed by-laws assessing such property, which is I think something the minister is aware of. Not only that, I think there is every indication we were to have one court challenge. We were looking at the potential for several others.

I want to put on the record that we certainly predicted in '96 the fact this could lead to an impact on rates and of course on municipalities themselves. What we are saying now by passing this bill is that by no means is this over. I say to the minister, and I think he realizes this, what has happened now is, because of the decision made in 1996, we are seeing a compounding effect. This bill does exempt not only MTS, which is a way of preventing rate shock in that area, but other utilities that previously had not been exempted. So it appears that what we may see happening is some municipalities actually losing revenues. This is because they are now in a position of having to try to deal with certain classes of property as being the same.

I want to say to the government that, even though we are prepared to pass this bill today to give some protection against rate shock, I think it is fairly clear from the presentations we have seen and our knowledge of this issue from day one that this issue is probably going to come back and haunt the provincial government down the line. There may very well be legal action taken on this. There may be, I think, some presentations we will be hearing from the municipalities. I know of at least two, Grand Rapids and Lac du Bonnet, which have already put assessment in on the hydro poles.

I do say to the minister, because I know that he is going to be hearing from ratepayers, from municipalities, this probably is nothing more than a temporary measure. We are not prepared, by the way, to allow Manitoba ratepayers to be subject to further rate shocks. The bottom line here is that there have been enough rate shocks already from the fact that you have a private company now that is seeking to get \$100 million in profit from the ratepayers, which is far higher than was sought by the previous Crown corporation. It is higher because that private company is now subject to federal and provincial taxation. So they are now asking the ratepayers to pay for that taxation.

The difficulty we were in in this situation was that if we did not take some action currently we would see a situation where there would be a further rate shock. I know that is the only reason this government brought it in.

There are various levels of concern on this bill in terms of the whole issue. Obviously there is the question of what utilities should be subject to assessment or not. I put our concerns on the record.

I just want to finish off by saying that there are various issues, whether or not municipalities can assess taxation, the level of assessment, the apportionment, and I say on the record, we are supporting this bill to protect ratepayers, but this issue is going to come back in the future. I know our Leader will expand on our concerns. We want to put on the record, even though we are supporting this, that there are going to be further problems in the future. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): It is a regrettable responsibility to speak on this bill in this Chamber at this time, because many of us a few years ago raised the issue of taxation and taxation treatment dealing with the telephone system and its impact on consumers. In 1996, when the Tories broke their election promise of 1995 and proceeded to sell the phone system, we asked questions day after day about the tax ramifications of that decision and therefore its impact on consumers. We asked those questions based on (1) the issue of the treatment of Telus in Alberta, and its changed status from a public to a private company based on CRTC decisions. We had CRTC decisions that talked about both rate of return and taxation on a private company and its impact.

We further cited that Mike Harris, kind of the new spiritual leader of the Conservative Party opposite, had walked away from an Ontario privatization decision because of the consideration of income tax, that it could not sell Hydro because the income tax of a Crown corporation would mean a massive increase to the ratepayers of Ontario, on top of the debacles of the previous governments, Liberal and Conservative, in terms of nuclear power plants and their inefficiencies and their cost, which was ultimately put on hold by the NDP government of 1990.

Madam Speaker, we raised these questions and the government said, *qué será será*, whatever will be will be. We know that taxes will be lower under a private company, and they went so far as to take false information and give it to the editorial board of the Free Press where there was editorial that said taxes will be lower. They also went on to say that taxes will be lower, because the grants in lieu of taxes are higher for the phone system than the assessed value of the company would be in various municipalities.

Two broken promises on taxes to deal with a broken promise on the telephone system. So what do we have now? What do we have before this Chamber today? We have before this Chamber today a bill to deal with a huge band-aid that will be challenged in court based on the pipeline decision, will be challenged in court by people working for municipalities and lawyers working for municipalities. They will argue that

now that MTS is a private company, it should be treated like the Supreme Court has treated the Inner-City Gas or the TransCanada Pipelines. They will argue in the Superior Court that this legislation should be challenged because MTS now is private company, and poles and wires should be treated like pipelines, therefore should be treated as assessed assets, and therefore as assets that would be subject to the assessment roles of various municipalities.

Ergo, a \$6-a-month rate increase to deal with part of the broken promise on the massive broken promise of the Manitoba Telephone System by the Tories and by the Premier (Mr. Filmon), in particular. We, first of all, pointed out that we did not think they could amend the previous Municipal Act, that it would be out of order, and how unwise of a government to put a band-aid that was on a bill that was already before the Legislature to deal with their utter incompetence, I would argue, to deal with their deceit by putting an amendment to The Municipal Act in the second reading committee stage that substantively changes the bill and substantively changes the regime of the property tax assessment, particularly, as it pertains to municipalities.

Madam Speaker, the government should have thought of this legislation when it dealt at committee and when it broke its promise to sell the phone system. It did not. On the taxation score, we have now a private corporation that is going to be subject to private corporate considerations by the federal government, which is going to raise the rates 40 percent. We also have on top of that an issue of taxation for property taxes that are also going to raise the rates considerably. Therefore, what is this Legislature supposed to do on this issue?

We are really faced with a Hobson's choice, because we could stand here and vote against it and say: we told you so. That would be inconsistent with us. We, in the NDP, are always on the side of the consumers and always voting with the consumers of telephone and telecommunication services by wanting and voting to keep the company owned by the public.

* (1500)

Madam Speaker, I think that therefore we have to vote and continue to vote with the consumers. The Tories have voted with the brokers. The Tories have voted with the brokers in the sale of the company. They have voted with the brokers in disallowing a vote by the people of Manitoba when we had proposed a referendum and plebiscite, then we were disallowed of even having that vote by the Speaker of the day, prohibited from having the vote in the Legislature to provide for a referendum for the people. The Tories opposite were dancing to the tune of the downtown business community from Toronto and we were listening to the people here in Manitoba.

We did not have the ideological position of the Liberal Party that said: we are not opposed to privatization, we are just opposed to the way they are doing it.

An Honourable Member: We changed Leaders since then.

Mr. Doer: Oh, you changed Leaders. I cannot keep track. There have been three Leaders since 1995. Who is the present Leader of the Liberal Party and what is their present position? Because I know that the present Leader of the Liberal Party voted, well, first of all, they promised not to sell CN. John Chretien, in 1993, standing in front of the gates of CN, standing in the gates at Transcona saying: we will not sell CN. Jon Gerrard I am sure was saying the same thing. We will not sell the Canadian National Railways.

You know, you can put that with their promise not to cut health care; you could put that with their promise not to abolish the GST. I mean, if this person has moral problems, and we are dealing with politicians, he should not even be running for the Liberal Party after the broken promise on health care, on education, on CN, on GST. You know, what kind of integrity is that? What kind of party is this member a part of? He rails away against the Seven Oaks School Division. My God, all of them have a superior moral standard, I would argue, than the rascals in Ottawa and some of the defeated rascals in Ottawa that are presently trying to play some part here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, the Liberals at the Seven Oaks School Division I find having greater integrity than the Liberals in Ottawa and the defeated Liberals that have been thrown out of Ottawa because of broken election promises, but I digress.

An Honourable Member: We just want him to come here and see the farms. That is all we want.

Mr. Doer: Yes, we would like to see John Chretien in the fields. We would even loan him rubber boots. I know he does not have any of his own rubber boots. I will even loan him work boots. He probably does not have any of those too. We will loan him anything to get him out in the fields of southwestern Manitoba and southeastern Manitoba so he can see for himself not only the flooding but the telephone poles that used to be owned by Manitobans and have been sold to private interests. Do you want to speak on this bill?

An Honourable Member: I do.

Mr. Doer: Okay. Because I would love to hear you speak on the bill, because I still recall with the greatest respect to Neil, to you in your legacy, I still remember the vote from the Liberal Party, the most profound vote I ever saw when three members voted three different ways. One voted for it, one voted against it, and one abstained. Today I know we have a unanimous position in the Liberal Party, this week at least, from the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). I need a cup of hot water. Excuse me for a second.

Madam Speaker, I was trying to engage the member for Inkster, and I apologize. Having said that, I am sure he will agree with us that this is the biggest legislative band-aid I have ever seen on a broken political promise in all my years in this Legislature. This is a huge political band-aid to deal with an incompetent government that did not deal with this in 1996 and to deal, quite frankly, with a government that misled the people in the 1995 campaign. This will come back to haunt you. [interjection] I beg your pardon. Yes, and so did the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). So did I and I got criticized.

You know, I got criticized in an editorial about this. I was told that we were wrong on taxation in a Free Press editorial, and they waved it around. In fact, they blew it up so big, I do not know how much the taxpayers paid. How much did the taxpayers pay for Tories to blow up an editorial with "Doer is wrong" to be almost the size of some of the murals on these walls to try to embarrass me? You know, the editorial said we were wrong on taxation, both income tax, and they were wrong on municipal taxation.

Now the editorial page is writing editorials: Where is the NDP on this issue? I mean, give me a break. Give me a break. It is a good thing I have a sense of humour, because the members opposite wave this around, you know, taxation is going to be lower under a private company. Well, when am I going to get the retraction from members opposite for waving around those editorials that were paid for by the taxpayers? Just do not bother me at all, by the way. I mean, if you cannot take a bad editorial, you better not be leader of the NDP. You are bound to get 10 a month at least. And if you vote one way, you will get it that way; if you get it the other way, you have it the other way. That is just part of the job and if it has some import and gravitas to it and some good facts. Yes, sometimes they may be right, because we cannot be right all the time. Sometimes the editorials can be right.

But when they are wrong and the government is wrong, why are they not standing up apologizing? Why are they not grovelling before this Legislature, as they should, for not telling the truth? Why are they not saying, oh, please, members of the opposition, do not hammer us for being wrong. Please pass this bill to deal with our sins and our omissions and our weaknesses and our faults and our deceptions and our dishonesty and our incompetence and our lack of any foresight and lack of any planning? Please, come forward and pass this bill.

Well, the member heckles about the budget. I am proud of the fact that we voted against nine budgets. I am proud of the fact we voted against the budget that fired a thousand nurses, and when there is a budget that tries to rehire some of the nurses back, we are okay with that. The members opposite may operate like Pavlov's dog and operate like everything they do is right;

everything we do is wrong. They got nine budgets wrong, and this legislation is wrong. This legislation-[interjection] I want to speak to the bill here not the heckle from members opposite. It does speak to the issue of incompetence and why this bill is before the legislature. It does speak to the fact that this government is utterly and totally incompetent. In fact, when you talk about incompetence, the members opposite could not run a first-aid kit. They could not run a first-aid kit for the people of Manitoba. That is why the people that are in the hallways of our hospitals are still going to be subject to a higher taxation potentially with a court ruling, because of their incompetent, deceitful decision to sell the phone system.

Madam Speaker, why is the government not admitting they made a mistake? Why are they not saying that we misled the people of this province when we said that the telephone system would be taxed in the same way privately as publicly? Why did the Premier stand up in this House day after day after day in October of 1996 and basically said that this will not have any impact on taxation? Why did that happen? Perhaps if the House was not shut down, we could have gone on a little bit further. Maybe we would have found this out.

Maybe the government would have listened to our points of privilege, if our microphones had not been silenced. Maybe we could have made some amendments to the bill that would have prevented us from dealing in a haphazard, I would argue, incompetent way some months later. What is going to happen some time after the election campaign when we are in office and we have to deal with this botched privatization? What is going to happen if the courts rule and use the gas pipeline decision to jack up telephone rates, because the members opposite only cared about the brokers in Winnipeg and Toronto and did not care about the consumers? What are they going to do then? They will probably stand up in Question Period and ask us to fix the problem. They will probably do that. Shameless. Utterly, totally, politically and principally shameless in terms of what they are going to do.

So I would argue strongly that this bill will be tested in the courts. This bill is not as good as our proposal to cancel the privatization. This bill is not as good as our proposal that we had put forward to have a plebiscite. This bill is not as good as the absolute security of Supreme Court decisions to protect many public assets from the assessment rolls of municipalities through the provision of grants in lieu of taxes.

This Legislative Building is treated differently than Great-West Life across the street. This Legislative Building pays grants in lieu of taxes to the City of Winnipeg. The Manitoba Telephone System was treated differently than TransCanada PipeLines. The wires on Manitoba Telephone System and the poles were treated differently than the pipeline in the ground through Manitoba. In fact, you can even see in rural Manitoba the pipeline areas adjacent to the telephone wires, adjacent to the hydro wires. The courts had made a decision that the pipelines were taxable, and because these are public enterprises, they were not taxable. It was grants in lieu of taxes.

So did anybody in that cabinet or that caucus raise that issue, or did you not care? Oh, do not worry about it; we will just pass a law, and, you know, if the courts overturn it, it will be after the next election. We do not care. We do not care about the people. We do not care about the public. We do not care about the consumer. We can dodge this and fudge this and amend this and cover it up and band-aid it up. We only care about the short term. We only work in a four-year term. We just do everything possible to get elected, we try to get elected, and then darn the consequences after that.

That is what this bill says. Regrettably, we are the ones that are going to have to deal with this bill because we feel strongly that when the members opposite screw up their courage to call an election, we are going to have to deal with municipalities challenging this legislation and pointing out the pipeline decision.

I do not know whether the government opposite has a legal opinion on this bill. If they do, they should table it in this House. The government House leader should table the legal opinion in this House, because this is, at best, a

band-aid to deal with their broken promise, a band-aid to deal with a broken commitment to the people of this province. It is not the best guarantee that the consumer has to protect themselves from taxes. The best guarantee a consumer had was breached with the Tory sale of the phone system and regrettably breached with the passage of the privatization bill.

So we will vote for this massive band-aid because we have always been on the side of consumers, but we understand municipalities will be challenging this decision. Regrettably, the consumers will be the victims, as they have been all along, of the Tories' priorities to deal only with the privileged few, the financiers, the brokers, the banks that made the money on the phone system, the shareholders. The privileged few are the only ones the Tories care about, and we care about the hardworking, fair-minded Manitobans who are trying to make ends meet.

So we will be voting for this band-aid but with deep regret that we could not have prevented this by supporting the amendments of the NDP to keep the phone system publicly owned. We know that the Hydro will stand court challenges because it is a publicly owned corporation. We know that grants in lieu of taxes have been tested in courts for decades, and Hydro itself, the only peril to Hydro is the re-election of a Conservative government or a Conservative-Liberal minority that would sell off Hydro.

We will not let that happen. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading Bill 47, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act (2). Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would ask if we could then return to the concurrence process.

Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs and Housing (Mr. Reimer), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and that this House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Consideration of Concurrence Motion

The Acting Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): The Committee of Supply has before it for consideration the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of the expenditures for the fiscal year ending the 31st of March, 2000.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Chairperson, you know they say timing means a lot in terms of virtually any aspect in life, and prior to walking into Question Period, I was in the cafeteria and made a quick jaunt up to my office to grab my jacket. Leaning against my door was an envelope from the Seven Oaks School Division, which I just kind of grabbed and took along with me and opened it up during Question Period. I started to read the letter that was inside and felt actually compelled to ask this question. I can honestly say I had no intentions on asking this particular question or a question related to the Seven Oaks School Division today, but, upon reading the letter, I thought it would in fact be appropriate. I say that because I think what it does is it again assists in the arguments of the need for an independent inquiry.

Mr. Chairperson, I do not know if I need to read the entire letter into the record, but there are two or three points in particular that I take great exception to. A couple of the points, I believe the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) has addressed, and I would think should cause grave concern from the Minister of Education in the sense that I cannot say with a hundred percent certainty who is right and who is wrong. But, suffice to say, someone is definitely right and someone is definitely wrong, and there is no doubt about that.

I say that because, and I quote right from the letter: The government's own officials twice reported that no harm was done and that the matter was concluded. Each of the three investigations, which have been done, reached the same conclusion. There was no breach in security; there was a violation of protocol.

Mr. Chairperson, the author of the letter, or at least the signatory of the letter I know is Claudia Sarbit, and no doubt is acting at least in good faith by getting information from the school division. The Minister of Education has been very clear in his response to me, and for that reason I have continuously tried to get to the bottom of this particular issue. But someone is wrong here. Is it the Minister of Education? Is it the signatory of this letter? I think that is a legitimate issue that does need further comment on.

* (1520)

Another point again reinforces the first point. Manitoba Education, and I quote: Manitoba Education officials investigated this incident immediately and declared that while protocol had not been followed, Mr. O'Leary's actions represented no threat to the examination, security, and they deemed the matter closed. Well, again, I would argue someone is wrong here, and I would like to know who is wrong. I think that is quite legitimate, to pose that question.

I cannot recall the last time I had talked to Ms. Sarbit. It has to be a good year at the very least, and this incident is about that age. I can assure you that I have never discussed this matter with Ms. Sarbit.

Another part of the letter, which really offends me, and I question whether or not it was Ms. Sarbit that actually wrote this letter, I would be interested in knowing if in fact she is the one who wrote this letter or did she have the letter written, and then she had signed it off. That is the suggestion, and I quote: The suggestion by Mr. McCrae and Mr. Lamoureux and Mr. Filmon that this matter still requires further investigation by an independent inquiry indicates that this issue has nothing to do with education

and everything to do with party politics and an upcoming provincial election.

Mr. Chairman, if Ms. Sarbit made that allegation inside this Chamber to me, I would take great exception to it and, in fact, would be up on my feet in some form and using one of our rules, whether it is our rules and procedures, Beauchesne's, privilege or points of order, in reference to imputing definitely unworthy motives.

I have continuously maintained, virtually from the onset, that what we are talking about is the integrity of the standard exams in the province of Manitoba. For someone to believe that that integrity is not worth protecting and being a school trustee, I think that there needs a re-evaluation in terms of why it is that one might even be in that position.

As a school trustee, you are trusted with the responsibility of providing quality public education. There are expectations that, as a trustee or as a board, you are expected to follow. I find it incredibly difficult to understand how someone can or the board, to quote: imply that this issue has nothing to do with education and everything to do with party politics.

If we look at what the public, including the constituents that live in Seven Oaks School Division, would want to see, it is quality public education. Well, I think Manitobans have acknowledged and recognized the important role that standard exams play in ensuring that quality public education, and all three political parties inside this Chamber agree with that.

I was on CJOB, the Adler on Line round talk show in which there was the Minister of Education, the critic from the New Democrats and myself, and all three of us, speaking on the behalf of our respective political parties, endorsed standard exams. One has to realize that the standard exams have virtually no value if in fact you are not able to protect the integrity of those exams. I do not know if the entire board has actually read the report. If I were a school trustee, I would be quite concerned in terms of it appears there are allegations of more than one breach, of allegations of potential conflict of interest in terms of who is conducting

the investigation. These are things in which I would be a little bit more careful or selective, as I am attempting to be. Members might know that quite often I will say some things which I feel and maybe not have done as much research as I could have done, but I always like to believe that I am doing what I feel is right and must be addressed.

The integrity of those standards exams has been called legitimately into question. To this date I do not know if there was any sort of reprimand. To the best of my knowledge, there was not any formal or informal reprimand of the individual. At the end of the letter, the school division then talks about Mr. Treller and says not to worry, not to fear, that this is something which always happens. Well, how naive. That is so incredibly naive to believe that Mr. Treller's reputation has not been damaged by this.

I was there when there was a number of teachers, his former peers, who sat around and said that this teacher was being demoted because he ratted on the principal. Now, if we want to try and say, well, those people that were sitting around, because I did not see their teaching certificates, that is a given, but if you want to say that I was set up to walk into this particular meeting, that they knew that I was meeting with other people there, well, that would be stretching the coincidence. But I will tell you something, the perception is very important. I believe politicians, of whatever political stripe, even apolitical politicians at our local level, realize the importance of perception.

The perception that Mr. Treller was just transferred over because he was a wonderful teacher and this is just normal procedure, if they believe that that was the perception that is out there, I think that they really better start questioning the superintendent and anyone else that was involved in this whole issue. I know, at least it has been indicated, because someone, and I hope to, and if I do not, I trust that the Seven Oaks School Division will ensure that the school trustees are provided a copy of the comments this afternoon. But, Mr. Chairperson, I find the whole issue of Mr. Treller absolutely amazing. I do not want to claim to know the reality of all of the details, but I do know in terms of a good deal

of the harm that was caused to Mr. Treller, who has been—and I tried to get hold of Mr. Treller a while back, and I was told by someone else who had given me a call that Mr. Treller will not be able to return my call because he has been instructed not to talk to me. Well, who is the one who actually instructed Mr. Treller not to talk to me?

*(1530)

I would welcome correspondence or communication from Seven Oaks School Division. If there is no election that comes up over the next little while, maybe we can even attend one of these school division meetings and try to get some of those questions answered. Why was Mr. Treller instructed that he cannot talk to me? If they believe that there is absolutely nothing wrong, nothing to fear, then what fear do they have in Mr. Treller talking to me? Was it the school trustees that instructed Mr. Treller? Was it the administration that instructed Mr. Treller? Was it the school division or the school trustees who instructed the administration to instruct Mr. Treller not to talk to me?

Well, you know, if we want to get to the bottom of this, Mr. Chairperson, in reading the letter, as I indicated, offends me, offends personally my intelligence and my motivation for pursuing this. I really believe that the letter gives credibility to the whole notion, which I have been arguing now for weeks, and that is for an independent investigation.

I do not know what more the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) needs in order to see the merits for an independent investigation. In fact, I would argue that the Minister of Education only has two choices. The first choice is to accept the report as written, and the second choice is to agree to an independent investigation. I do not understand why the Minister of Education continues to want to avoid making the commitment towards that independent investigation, especially when things continue to happen to justify the need for an independent investigation.

Yesterday, I brought to the attention of the Minister of Education other concerns that have

been raised to me by individuals that I have respect for in terms of political affiliations of certain members of the school division administration and the potential for conflict. Today I bring forward a letter which he was cc'd a copy of.

You know, I found it interesting. Someone had made reference to, well, in the letter, everything to do with party politics and upcoming provincial election. Well, read the cc list, Mr. Chairperson. The cc is to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), to the education, to the deputy minister, the Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh), the Leader of the Liberal Party, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, and myself.

Well, I guess at least in part, you know, I would agree with the school division that there is a political background to this. That is the reason why I have consistently argued that any investigation of any value cannot be tied into the Department of Education. You cannot have Mr. Carlyle conducting an investigation. It would be no better than the investigation that we received from the Seven Oaks School Division. You know, the politics of this issue are there. There is a lot of politics in it, and I acknowledge that.

You know, one of the things that I have always been convinced of, and I somewhat heckled it to the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) yesterday, was that if this principal had been a Tory principal—you know, the Finance minister is the former principal I think out in Minnedosa. If this would have been Mr. Gilleshamer and he was still a principal, we, and I say we collectively, the opposition, it would not be just two of us in the Liberal Party fighting for justice on this issue, would have at the very least 25 MLAs fighting on this issue and to the extent of asking for the minister's resignation. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

So is there politics? Sure, there is politics in it. I do not question that. That is the reason why I have stated that it has to be an independent investigation. In reading the report, I do not know if the school division actually has a copy of the report. The school trustees will have more information than what I would have if they have

the report, because my edition is whited out. But, surely to goodness, they must give some credibility, I would hope, to some of the other allegations that are being made. Right offhand, I can recall one individual quoted as saying that he would be able to attest to another breach in a court of law. Well, that raises a great deal of concern.

What is really interesting is in reading the letter one would get the impression that maybe you get the Liberals and the Conservatives kind of wringing their hands, saying, yes, justice has to be served here, so let us do what we can. I can honestly say, Mr. Chairperson, and I will not mention names, but I have had members from the New Democrats and the Conservatives who have expressed a great deal of concern in regard to what has taken place, that there are even New Democrats who do not support what has actually taken place, and I respect that. I make reference to it because to try to heighten or to enlarge, to demonstrate the importance of this record-[interjection] And I am sure that the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) will concur that there are all sorts of discussions that occur amongst MLAs, and if I have misspoken any confidence, I would apologize for it.

But what I do know is the issue that is there, politics aside, is of a very serious nature. I would like to see the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) address this issue, and there is only one way in which the Minister of Education can address this issue. I posed the question yesterday to the minister, and I have posed the question previously to the minister to call for an independent investigation. The minister has a copy of the letter. I know he has a copy of it because it is cc'd to the minister, and I see it in his hands.

Surely to goodness, the Minister of Education has to acknowledge that there is no chance or opportunity for an independent report coming out of the Seven Oaks School Division, and if you do not agree with the report that we have here today, well, Mr. Chairperson, then the Minister of Education only has one choice, and that is to have another investigation. If the minister believes-[interjection]

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. The honourable member for

Inkster has been recognized. Honourable members who wish to carry on a conversation should do so outside the Chamber. Order, please.

Mr. Lamoureux: As I was saying, if the minister wants to draw this issue to a conclusion and a conclusion that would include protecting the integrity of the standards exams, the minister needs to call for an independent investigation. I appeal to the Minister of Education, and, no doubt, when I sit down the minister tends at times to be somewhat long-winded. I should not complain too much. At times I am too a little bit long-winded, but somewhere in that wind, that we see an answer, a very specific commitment to the need for an independent investigation.

* (1540)

The Minister of Education, I am not asking for the minister to say, yes, we will have an independent investigation and Mr. or Ms. X is going to be responsible for that investigation. All I am talking about is a commitment to the independent investigation, and then we can have some dialogue over the next week, if it takes a week, to come up with a name of an individual. I do not believe it would be appropriate. I personally would not have any problem in terms of sitting down with the author of the letter that I have made reference to and the Minister of Education and seeing if there is a name which we can all concur to in terms of conducting this independent investigation. It does not have to be a costly adventure or venture. "Adventure" is probably a poor word to use in describing it. In terms of cost, I think we are looking at a fraction of the cost of what the cost of the standard exams actually is.

We spend millions every year in the standard exams. I think that spending a fraction of that cost in order to protect the integrity of those standard exams is money that is well spent because, and I will say it very clearly so that all members of the Chamber understand, there are a great number of people that are watching what the government is doing. I was in fact at an event over the weekend where someone from the public who I did not know approached me and posed questions about this very issue. It is the

first time that I know of that I actually met that person. So there are a great number of people that are watching the actions of this Chamber in addressing the issue of the standard exams.

So, in conclusion, I would ask for the minister to indicate very clearly that he will in fact be conducting an independent investigation, thereby protecting the integrity of the standard exams and provincial directives as a whole.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): At the outset let me tell the honourable member, as I have done before, I believe that the vast majority of the people of Manitoba want quality in their education system; the vast majority want fairness in their education system. When I say they want that quality, they want good, solid curriculum. In the last few years under the New Directions to education begun by my predecessors and carried on by myself, one of the pillars of New Directions is good, solid curriculum.

In my travels, and they have been fairly significant in the few months I have been minister, I have learned from members of the teaching profession, whom I respect, that we have good, solid curriculum and we continually develop it. Our teaching profession would like to make sure that the government is mindful that they have got a big job to do in adjusting their methods and their approaches to these new curricula. I am mindful of that and sensitive to that.

Another pillar is parental involvement. Parents are very clearly in favour of a system of standards and a system of testing against those standards and the performance of the system and the individual performance of the children in our system. So that at the earliest possible time in the development of children, we can find out where we are succeeding and where we are not succeeding and where we can improve and make adjustments to make the learning experience one that is fulfilling for our children and one that results in their being in a position to live happily and fruitfully in this province in the future.

So testing against those standards is one of those pillars, too. If you are going to have a province-wide system of testing, in no matter

what grade, whether it be Grade 12, Grade 9, Grade 6 or Grade 3, which is the position that this government takes and for good reason, if you are going to do that, then you better have a system that is fair to the children in every corner of the province of Manitoba, so that children in every corner of the province of Manitoba can confidentially go about their school career knowing that there is integrity in the system in which they are engaged day in, day out, year in and year out. That message is equally important to be received by parents of those children across this province and perhaps at least as important, if not more so, to every teacher engaged in the development of our children through the public school system.

So if there is a suggestion that a teacher somewhere or a school principal who has a significant responsibility in the school environment, if there is a suggestion that a principal somewhere in Manitoba has breached the protocols associated with the standards testing system, then something needs to flow from that. What needs to flow from that? Well, it is like anything else, and I do not equate what Mr. O'Leary did with what happened in other matters which were the subject of the Monnin review. I do not equate it with what goes on in our criminal courts. I do not equate it with what goes on anywhere else but in our education system. There are dimensions here that go well beyond that which I will get to.

But I take this allegation—this fact, because Mr. O'Leary has acknowledged his misdeed here—and look at it from the standpoint that I must as the one who is charged with the responsibility for having some integrity in our education system. I am taking what the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has said most seriously. I, in no way, wish to make light of anything the honourable member for Inkster has said. I especially put that on the record because of all of the people in this House, I think the honourable member for Inkster is probably the best acquainted with the circumstances, perhaps not all the details, but certainly the people, the neighbourhood, the region of the city of Winnipeg in which all of this has transpired. So it is out of that background that I approach the questions being raised by the honourable

member for Inkster. He has people no doubt inquiring of him, well, what is going on here, who did what, to whom and when, and all of those kinds of questions.

What are we supposed to think about the way the government is running its education system if there are people who without any care or concern seemingly break the rules of security and cheat on the tests? I mean, what are we supposed to think? If it is okay for a respected person in our community, the principal of our high school to break the rules and with impunity, does that mean it is okay for everybody else including, as the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) asks: what about John Carlyle? John Carlyle is the Deputy Minister of Education.

The honourable member for Kildonan is not wrong to raise the question because as the letter points out today, it is the allegation of the Seven Oaks School Division in the position it takes. It wants to be totally politically aloof of course. In this letter copied to the CBC Radio and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of Manitoba, myself, the Deputy Minister of Education, the former Minister of Education, Dr. Jon Gerrard, Leader of the Liberal Party, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, and the member for Inkster, this nonpartisan approach that the school division is taking, we do have to remember here that there are political dimensions to this. [interjection]

* (1550)

Anybody who thinks there are not political implications and dimensions to this issue is living in some other world, and the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) knows that. You cannot escape the fact that the school principal I referred to is presently the chairman of the election campaign for the New Democratic Party of Manitoba. This is not denied by anybody. But that is another dimension of this.

Speaking as Education minister, it is a very important issue the honourable member raises respecting the integrity of the standards test. Just because the NDP do not believe in standards, just because the NDP just want to let

us just all be brothers and forget all about whether our kids can succeed or not, we will just give them welfare when they grow up, never mind having a quality education, and will even have classes to show them how they can get welfare. This whole issue points out a whole philosophical difference between the New Democrats and members of the other parties in this House. I say "parties" because I assume the Liberal Party does not agree with the NDP on some of these things. So there is a very big political dimension, and anybody who wants to pretend there is not is on some other planet, or they are certainly extremely naive. [interjection]

So the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) asks a very interesting question: how can there be an independent inquiry if this is the environment within which all this is taking place?

Well, you know, I think, as a department, the Education department has to take for granted that school divisions are headed by elected people and will do the right things. That is what you have to do until something demonstrates otherwise.

The honourable member for Broadway would be the first to remind me of this: we are all expected to look upon each other in this House as honourable members. In fact, even the rules tell us, we have to accept the word of an honourable member in this Chamber. That is our duty to do that unless and until something intervenes to show that we should not do that anymore. Then there are certain sanctions in place for that.

Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

The same goes for the relationship of the Department of Education with the school divisions with which it partners in the education of our children. Why a year ago, back in June-July of 1998, should the Department of Education have taken any other view but that the Seven Oaks School Division could be trusted to look appropriately into this alleged breach that had been made? Why should anybody suggest the Department of Education should have treated

Seven Oaks School Division some way different from any other school division in this province?

The answer is: it should not. The answer is: it did what it should have done and asked the division to conduct an inquiry or an investigation—actually, what was asked of the division, I think, gets forgotten in the debate. But we were asked: there was a breach that took place in your division; what are you doing about it? That was basically what was the genesis of all of the things that have flowed since. Mr. O'Leary's wrongdoing is something he acknowledged, so that what flowed from that, all this business about Mr. Trelle, the allegations coming forward, is very disturbing.

You know, if you read the report and look at all the blanks, those blanks stand for names of people, real, living, breathing people in our Manitoba community. There are people in this House who, for their own reasons—none of them have told us what those reasons are—tend to gloss over the fact that real, breathing human beings are affected in some way or another by this matter. So, if somebody does wrong, other things happen. That seems to be the suggestion here.

So a whole lot of other things come out of this. We end up getting people like Mr. Brodbeck writing for the Winnipeg Sun saying all kinds of things, things like: "Doer changes rules to suit the NDP. After criticizing Tories, he bends his own ethics."

We get people, Frances Russell, writing in the Winnipeg Free Press, saying: "Mr. Doer dropped the ethics ball on the very first pass." That is what Frances Russell said.

So I guess when we get any lectures about ethics from New Democrats, we cannot assume that we are hearing it from those who have any particular expertise in the matter. So that is another dimension. There are two main dimensions here. Both of them are important. I think there are those who suggest the political one is not important. Well, those who suggest the political one is not important are those who have something to hide or something to protect. I suggest they all sit on the other side of the Chamber from myself.

We have been through a difficult time with respect to wrongdoings by people. We have been through that, and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of Manitoba very courageously did the right thing by asking former Mr. Chief Justice Alfred Monnin to look into all matters, and if the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) wants to suggest that that was not done with vigour by Mr. Monnin, let her do so.

Point of Order

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): On a point of order, I would like to remind the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) stated in this House day after day after day in June of 1998 that there had been nothing wrong that had happened. He had "investigated," and nothing had happened.

It was only after repeated questioning day after day in the House by the official opposition that the Premier finally, not with vigour and not courageously but with his tail between his legs, did the right thing. So let the Minister of Education not sit here in this House and impugn motive to members of this side of the House when he puts inaccurate information on the record about the behaviour, the despicable behaviour of his own Leader.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Helwer): The honourable member for Brandon West, on the same point of order.

Mr. McCrae: On the same point of order, Mr. Chairman, in response to the honourable member for Wellington, this is June of 1999, and today the tail of the Leader of the Opposition is not between his legs. The Leader of the Opposition is not part of this discussion. He has made sure that he would not be part—[interjection] This is July of 1999. Thank you to my colleagues in the NDP for bringing that clear.

On the point of order, Mr. Chairman, I remind the honourable member of what I said on June 23 about this point of order. The one thing the Leader of the Opposition needs to understand, if he wants to have credibility with the people, he should learn to face issues head-on instead of running away from them and

hiding. That is not leadership. Leadership requires courage, something the honourable member does not have, and he is not willing to ensure that his own campaign manager is above reproach.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Helwer): The honourable member for Wellington does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: One thing I can say about the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), I think what we heard from her today is, other than the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), I believe—probably more said by the New Democrats about this matter has been said by the honourable member for Wellington today than has been said in total by the whole party. The silence is absolutely deafening, but it was interesting to hear the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) from his seat say that what Mr. O'Leary did is much ado about nothing, what Mr. O'Leary did, and that the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is just making mountains out of molehills.

Well, let us talk about that molehill, because Mr. Brodbeck did in his comments or in his writing in the Winnipeg Sun. He says that teachers might have been tipped off about what was on the exam. Well, we do not know that and I am not saying that, but that may have happened, too, and that would have given some teachers an unfair advantage over others when preparing their students. It is the very reason why there are strict rules governing the administration of standards exams.

Were O'Leary's actions a deliberate attempt to give his school a leg up? Well, that is a good question, because we do know that this particular school in terms of the published results of these exams was behind the average. But we do not know that. I know the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) would like to find that out. It is the very reason why there are strict rules.

* (1600)

Did anybody else see the exam? Mr. Brodbeck asks. We will never know. The point is, Mr. O'Leary knew releasing the exam could compromise the fairness of the entire exam process. I guess that would be making a mountain out of a molehill, the fairness of the exam, total exam process in every corner of the province of Manitoba. Much ado about nothing, I guess, according to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) spoken through the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans).

The students rely heavily, and this is very important, on Grade 12 exam results to get into university. Well, they also rely on it for other reasons. I will point this out to Mr. Brodbeck. I mean, they want to get into college. They also want to be able to do a good job if they go straight to the workplace or wherever else they are going. They rely heavily on Grade 12 exam results to get into university. I know people who have their Grade 12 diploma on their office wall. They are proud of it. It is an achievement.

But now the suggestion is that, because of this breach of the protocol, the security protocol, what is that diploma worth? Until we know the answers, I do not think we know the answer to that question either. You simply have to have not only examination security being done but also being seen to be done, and this is important.

It was a clear breach of his ethical responsibility as the head of Maples Collegiate to ensure all students in Manitoba had a fair crack at writing the exam, but apparently it was not a serious enough breach of ethics to warrant a reprimand from his other boss, Gary Doer. Now that is the other dimension here, the political side.

The honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) rightly asks—and the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) may have some wisdom to share with us on this point as she did on the last one. The honourable member for Inkster was raising the question about the role of Mr. O'Leary, and I am raising it in relation to his role as campaign manager for the Manitoba New Democratic Party. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) has patted him on the back and said: You know, you said

you did wrong and therefore it is all over; no harm done.

Well, with regard to that, why is it that we see such a double standard on the part of the New Democratic Party? Why do we have such a double standard, especially of the Leader of the New Democratic Party, who has waxed—

Point of Order

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Chair, on a point of order. I would like to remind the honourable Minister of Education that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) finally last week, or within the last 10 days, after days and days of questioning in the House admitted—well, four different kinds of stories, but finally admitted that he had made an error and took responsibility for the gang hotline not being confidential as it should have been. So he admitted to his mistake, his error in judgment.

The Premier (Mr. Filmon) did not do anything other than say in the House—and I think if you check Hansard, the Minister of Justice, I cannot remember the exact language, admitted that the situation had not unfolded as it should have, and that was the end of it.

Now I would like to ask the Minister of Education—and this is the Minister of Justice's job we are talking about, not a volunteer position. The principal of—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. The honourable member had risen on a point of order, and I would ask her to address the matter with regard to the point of order and make her point of order now, please.

Ms. Barrett: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am in the process of doing that very thing.

An Honourable Member: She was just about there.

Ms. Barrett: I was just about there. My point of order, Mr. Chair, is that the Premier accepted the Minister of Justice's acknowledgement that the process had not functioned as it should, did not remove him from his position. I would suggest that the parallels are striking here and that the Minister of Education, who talks about

the role of the principal of the Maples Collegiate in his role as a volunteer, is way out of line, that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The political games that are being played here are games that are being played between the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) and the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): The honourable member for Inkster, on the same point of order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I do not know if it is the same point. I will let you determine that after hearing my comment on it, because I am concerned about the potential of imputing motives.

If I understand the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) correctly, she is trying to say that of the hundreds of schools in the province of Manitoba that if a principal opens or breaches the security of standard exams, that if they get caught doing it, all we have to say is that I should not have opened it and nothing should ever come of it outside of that. If my interpretation is wrong, please ask the member for Wellington to correct me on that point.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): The honourable member for Wellington does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Point of Order

Ms. Barrett: On another point of order, I would like to say that the member for Inkster is not putting accurate information on the record. The employer of the principal, the school board, Seven Oaks School Board, has done three investigations, two or three investigations of this situation and has ruled, as a result of those investigations, that the situation had been dealt with adequately.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order.

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The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): I would remind all honourable members that when

they are rising on a point of order that they do address the point of order and not get into debate about the issue that is on the floor. If there is a legitimate point of order, then the Chair is willing to acknowledge and listen to that, but I would ask the honourable members not to abuse that right of the House to rise on a point of order for no apparent reason.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: On a point of order, I am not a hundred percent sure if it is a point of order, but I think that there is some benefit, and I do not know if the rules can accommodate it, but I know that there has been a lot of will from other parties so that we could actually ask questions in regard to this particular issue to try to get a better understanding of people like the member for Wellington. Are there any rules that would allow for us to pose some questions, whether it is to the member for Wellington or other members, which could ultimately have an impact on an independent investigation?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Just for the benefit of the honourable member for Inkster, we are in the process of concurrence, which is an opportunity for the member to ask questions of the minister. That is the scope of this exercise.

* * *

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): When the honourable member for Wellington rose on a point of order, the honourable minister had the floor, and I would ask the honourable minister if he has concluded his remarks.

Mr. McCrae: I am just getting my throat cleared, Mr. Chairman. The plot thickens. The honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) has put some flour and milk into the pot and it is thickening, because the honourable member for Wellington wants to be the honourable member for Inkster. As I understand it, in the upcoming election, the honourable member for Wellington is proposing to put her name on the ballot for the New Democrats and run against the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in that constituency where I understand the Maples Collegiate and many people who are interested

in this issue reside and vote. I think the people of Inkster—and what is the riding where Maples is located?

An Honourable Member: The Maples.

* (1610)

Mr. McCrae: People from Inkster and people from The Maples and all Manitobans are interested in knowing that there is integrity in our school system. The people of Inkster and the people of The Maples are interested in knowing that their MLA is concerned about this matter. The people of Inkster would not be very happy to know that their New Democratic candidate is among those who are laughing at what happened at Maples Collegiate, that the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) who wants to be the member for Inkster joins with her colleagues in saying that what we have here is much ado about nothing and in associating herself with all of the comments made by the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale).

The people of Inkster would not be very happy to know that about the honourable member for Wellington who wants to move over to Inkster and take the place of the honourable member, the present member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) who is trying to get the government to get to the bottom of this situation so that the people can be assured that there is some integrity in the school system, and as I try to make my case for integrity in the school system, the member for Wellington in her trite, protective cover-up way, stands to her feet to try to interrupt the proceedings, to try to deflect attention away from what her friend Brian O'Leary has done.

I hope that the honourable member understands this Mr. O'Leary did something that he has acknowledged is wrong. That is a done deal. That is over with. Now, where do we go from here? What do we learn from that? The honourable member for Wellington would suggest that we have nothing to learn; we are New Democrats. We know better, and this is making mountains out of molehills. We are sure going to go after the Tories when they do something wrong, and we are sure going to

demand the head of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) when he does something wrong, and we are going to demand the head of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and anybody else whose head happens to be sticking out when it comes to any other matter that might be the subject of criticism, as long as they are a Tory. But, oh, if they are a New Democrat, Mr. Chairman, they have that royal jelly. They are anointed. There is something about them that is not accountable, that makes them so that they are above that sort of thing.

That is the position of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) who wants to take on the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and replace him, representing the people of Inkster. That is what she wants to do. She wants to substitute her values and her ethics for those demonstrated daily in this House by the honourable member for Inkster.

Point of Order

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, on a point of order, I draw your attention to Beauchesne's and to our parliamentary practice here where there should bear some resemblance between the question asked and the response of the minister, some sense of relevance. The minister has spent the last 10 minutes attacking various members, which is his right to do, but not in the form when the member for Inkster asked a specific question, and I will paraphrase the question again, are you going to conduct an investigation, and the minister's announcement again, another 10 minutes of going through his usual diatribe that he has done for the past few days on the same issue.

It is not relevant to the question asked, Mr. Chairperson, and I ask you to call the minister to order because there is much business that must be conducted in this Chamber with respect to concurrence, and if the minister continues to go off on irrelevant matters—the minister can go on as long as he wants and for half an hour on relevant matters, but he is completely irrelevant when he goes away from the issue of the investigation which was the question posed by the member for Inkster and when he goes down the track of attacking the member for Wellington

and then giving us a political discourse as to what might happen in the future. It is not relevant, and I ask you to call him to order.

Mr. McCrae: On the same point of order, two points here. The honourable member, he forgets altogether this is not Question Period, and the rules that apply to Question Period do not necessarily apply to Committee of the Whole, where there is a level of tolerance on the part of the Chair which usually prevails in these matters.

The other point he forgets altogether, this is indeed concurrence in the Estimates. We already know the outcome, Mr. Chairman. The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and all his colleagues in unison rose to their feet to support the budget brought down by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshamer).

The Liberals tested them during the process of Estimates review, tested them a few times to see if they had the courage of their conviction to stand in unison and joyfully support a Tory budget, with the expectation that an election was around the corner and they knew they could not do better anyway. All the while, the member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) says it is an unsustainable budget, but if it is so unsustainable, why are all those New Democrats standing to their feet and supporting it?

These people are very hard to understand, Mr. Chairman. So on the point of order, on the matter of relevance, the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has been raising questions about what happened at Maples Collegiate and what is being done about it. That is exactly what I am talking about. The New Democrats are tremendously sensitive about this matter because who was it that did this thing that was so wrong? That was Mr. Brian O'Leary, who has been given a pat on the head by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), who said it is all right, we can weather this particular little storm.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) does have a point of order. I would remind all honourable members when they are speaking to the issue that has been

raised that they do remain relevant with regard to the questions that are asked and what is before this House. Regardless of whether it is in Question Period or in Committee of the Whole, relevance is a factor. So I would remind all honourable members when they are speaking to the issue to remain relevant.

The honourable minister, to complete your response.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your ruling and accept it, of course.

With regard to the question raised by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), in regard to this particular matter and very relevant there too, raised the issue of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) and said that the Minister of Justice took responsibility, and this is true.

As I said at the very beginning of my comments, none of these cases are exactly the same, but let us take this very case and let us assume that Mr. O'Leary was the campaign chairman for the Progressive Conservative Party or, for that matter, campaign chairman for the Liberal Party of Manitoba. Let us ask ourselves: would the New Democrats be calling that making a mountain out of a molehill? Would the New Democrats be calling that simply much ado about nothing? Would the New Democrats be saying to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of Manitoba your campaign manager breached security protocol? Well, actually we do not believe in tests anyway. We believe in allowing our children to go forth into the world unprepared so they can seek welfare. So I guess it is all right.

How does that scenario add up? Do you really think that would happen? And can pigs fly, Mr. Chairman? I am asking you, if you think the NDP for one minute would sit silently and talk about much ado about nothing if Mr. O'Leary were campaign chair for the Progressive Conservative Party? Now, that is a case that has been made by the honourable member for Inkster, too.

* (1620)

You know, the honourable member says, well, so what are we going to do now? I do not blame the honourable member for Inkster for pressing me on this matter and doing it quite a bit actually. I do not blame him for doing that because I know his constituents, served by the Maples school catchment area and others, are on his case, probably daily, saying, what are you doing about this? I mean there are things here that need to be looked into, and the Seven Oaks School Division does not appear to have done a very good job investigating this matter. What are you doing about it as our elected member?

Well, if the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) were the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), we know what the honourable member for Wellington would be doing. Guess what? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. That is why Frances Russell says the ethics test stumps Doer. Because ethics to honourable members opposite is simply having a standard for everybody except yourself, exclude yourself from that standard. It brings about all of the worst elements of the human condition to present to the people of Manitoba. That is what New Democrats are doing in the face of this matter.

I simply have to do my job. The honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is pressing me to do my job. New Democrats are off somewhere else, wallowing in their own little world of let us stick it to the rest of the world and protect ourselves at all costs. That is where they are at, and it is regrettable, because people like to think they have choices between two or three good options, although, unfortunately, for various reasons, people tend to go to the polls thinking: well, I have to pick out the best of these three evils. I feel badly about that, always have. I do not think that is deserved, but that may sound a little defensive coming from a politician, so I will not dwell on it for very long.

The fact is that we, I guess, share responsibility, all of us do, for the regard in which we are held by members of the public. Sometimes that regard is not particularly high. To that extent, I regret that. I would like to work to improve that. I think some steps have been

made to try to improve that impression of the politicians. But I would not be doing my job if I did not do something to ensure some integrity in something I believe in, that being standards tests. Is it because the New Democrats hate tests that they are taking this position? Is it because they like Brian O'Leary? Is it because they like Mr. Wiens?

Yesterday, the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), raised questions about Mr. Wiens. I do not have the answers about the political persuasion of Mr. Wiens, although the honourable member for Inkster has made some interesting suggestions about that. I have no particular evidence to suggest that-[interjection]

The last person who called me a jerk in this House was Eugene Kostyra, and I do not appreciate being called a jerk by anybody, including the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett). If this is the way she is going to approach her conduct as a member of the Legislative Assembly, woe betide her when she faces off against the present member for Inkster in that particular riding and faces the judgment of the people. You do not get places by calling people names, and the honourable member for Wellington ought to know that by now. If that is what they resort to when they are put under the slightest bit of pressure, woe betide us all should we ever look to them for any particular kind of example for how to conduct ourselves in public life. I do not call you names, ever.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I wanted to reread one part of the letter. It states: The suggestion by Mr. McCrae, Mr. Lamoureux and Mr. Filmon that this matter still requires further investigation by an independent inquiry indicates that this issue has nothing to do with education and everything to do with party politics and the upcoming provincial election.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I ask a fairly specific question for the Minister of Education: given that you have the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party calling for an independent investigation, and I think, from what I interpret with the dialogue that has been coming from the government benches over the last number of days in which we have been dealing with this issue, that dialogue being that the government

does not appear to support the report as submitted, then I would go further to make the statement that all three political parties do indeed want to see an independent investigation.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think that in itself addresses a major component to the letter. I believe that the letter, at least my interpretation of it, is that we just leave the issue and consider the issue resolved. Given the position of the three political parties inside this Chamber and the willingness to see another investigation done, but via an independent mechanism, I would then ask the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) whether or not he will take this into consideration when it comes to making a decision sooner as opposed to later.

There is a suggestion in that statement that it is being done in order to pre-empt a potential provincial election. If members feel that that is in fact the case, one could always have a report back in the latter days of September if that would address that particular concern, or immediately following the provincial election, if that is one of the roadblocks for this issue as being suggested by the Seven Oaks School Division when they imply that it has to do, and quote: with party politics in the up and coming provincial election.

The timing of the actual reporting in of the infraction or of the breach and alleged additional breaches, there does not have to be an obligation to have that report itself in prior to the next election. The issue is to ensure that some form of independent investigation occur. My preference is that it occur immediately and it report back within two weeks, two, three weeks. It does not have to be a long drawn-out process, but if that is in fact the concern from the school division or other members inside the Chamber, I would even be prepared to enter into dialogue as to when that report should be released to the public, that independent report. As I indicated, I personally would have no problem whatsoever in sitting down with the author of this letter and the Minister of Education, in trying to resolve this, with the idea that the most important thing here is the quality of our public education and the important role that standard exams play in ensuring quality public education and the importance of the integrity of those standard

exams through the security measures that we put in place.

Again, I would illustrate that the cost of this would only be a fraction of what the overall cost of administering the standards exams is. Specifically, to the minister: would he agree to have a meeting that would include, but not necessarily prevent additional from being added to it, myself, the Minister of Education, the author of this letter in hopes that we can come up with a name that would be through consensus as to who could conduct the independent investigation? Would he be prepared to sit down and at least have dialogue on that point?

Mr. McCrae: I know the honourable member for Inkster has raised the issue of cost in the past, I think, to head off any argument I might make about cost with relation to getting to the bottom of the matter of test security in Manitoba. I would just like to say to him: the cost is not the issue here. I know that whatever needs to be done will cost some money, and it is always prudent to keep that in mind. But it ought not to be the reason to ignore some of the things the honourable member is raising, to say, well, it might be nice to get to the bottom of it and protect the integrity of our system of education in Manitoba, except that the cost would prevent us from that. I simply want to give him some comfort about that, because I am not into spending money with gay abandon.

* (1630)

Mrs. Myrna Driedger, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

We have seen what happens to us as a province when governments get involved in that sort of thing. We have tried to steer a different course from that approach. But in the ordinary course of doing the government's business, from time to time inquiries of one kind or another or whatever steps need to be taken need to be taken, and so you have to deal with that.

The honourable member in this regard as well refers to the cost of the administration of tests. This is something that the NDP—I know the Manitoba Teachers' Society have raised the cost and have said, you know, you should not be

spending any money on this assessment business, you should be spending it in the classroom. I am sensitive to what is being said there, but on the other hand, it is used as an argument not to satisfy ourselves that we have quality being built into our education system. I do not accept that argument. I believe that something less than 1 percent of the total expenditure in education being spent on evaluation of whether we are spending it well is probably a good idea. Not probably, is a good idea. Anybody engaged in results-oriented efforts needs to know that they are getting results.

We were being told prior to New Directions in education that our kids were arriving at university and college unprepared, and yet we were spending more and more money every year on education. I simply have no difficulty explaining or defending the concept of spending a few dollars of a large budget or a small percentage of a large budget to ensure quality. I think anybody engaged in any initiative of importance would agree with that, unless you are a New Democrat.

The New Democrats think you measure the success of something by how much money you can spend on it. That is not an approach with which we have ever agreed. We have learned that we should measure the success of our education system by what our children are learning. How are you going to find out what your children are learning if you do not have a system of tests, something to assess how you are doing? So, that being said, I wanted to give the honourable member some comfort on that point.

Yesterday he actually went on to name a name of a person who might conduct a review of this matter.

An Honourable Member: Who was that?

Mr. McCrae: Well, he mentioned Bill Norrie. That is okay for the honourable member to do that, but you know it was interesting. A lot of things have come to light. The honourable member for Inkster also raised the suggestion that Mr. Wiens may be an adviser to the New Democrats on education policy. I do not know that, but in the light of that suggestion, I am not

likely to go along with what the honourable Leader of the Opposition has said, and that is if there is to be a review, then it needs to be done by somebody who is acceptable to the Seven Oaks Division. Excuse me. And this is where I am having problems with the suggestion of the honourable member for Inkster as well.

If the honourable member is suggesting—and I am saying they did not do a good job. I am saying the report that has been produced is not satisfactory, and if I am going to have that reviewed, I do not know that I want to be consulting the school division on my choice of who or how we are going to go about remedying that situation. So I say that for the benefit of the honourable member because the Leader of the Opposition puts his tongue firmly in his cheek, and gives that little grin, and says, yes, there should be an inquiry as long as it is somebody acceptable to the school division.

Well, you know right away where the Leader of the Opposition is coming from. More cover-up. More covering up for your friends, more double standard. And I am simply not going to play the game with the Leader of the Opposition of you have a standard for you, and we can have our own standard. I am not going to do that.

Speaking of standards, the Manitoba Teachers' Society also has a role in our education system, a very important one, and I have enjoyed what I think to be a cordial and hopefully fruitful relationship with the Manitoba Teachers' Society. But I think if there is to be a further review of this, whatever measures I take, it should take into account the issues we have been discussing in this committee, the honourable member and I, because it is a two-way discussion because the New Democrats simply do not want to get involved. This is just a little too close to their political nerve endings, but the NDP has introduced a code of ethics. Of course, we know what has been said about that, not only by myself, but also by Frances Russell and Tom Brodbeck and now others.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society has a Code of Professional Practice too, and the Manitoba Teachers' Society, I understand, represents or

represented Mr. O'Leary, depending on which job he was in.

I have a document from a handbook revised in 1995, Code of Professional Practice. This is a Teachers' Society document. It says as follows on page 20: The Code of Professional Practice states the general principles of conduct for all members of the Manitoba Teachers' Society. These tenets are intended to inspire each member to engage in professional behaviour of the highest order. A teacher's professional behaviour reflects the spirit as well as the letter of the code.

First, the teacher's first professional responsibility is to her or his students. Well, what about that? Does this have a bearing on the matter being raised in this place by the honourable member for Inkster? Professional responsibility to his or her students.

Second, a teacher acts with integrity and diligence in carrying out professional responsibilities. Are all the allegations being raised about this matter consistent with that second tenet of the Code of Professional Practice of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, that having to do with acting with integrity and diligence?

Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Third, a teacher avoids involvement in a conflict of interest, recognizes that a privileged relationship with students exists, and refrains from exploiting that relationship for material, ideological or other advantage. Well, we know Mr. O'Leary is a staunch New Democrat. After all, he is their campaign manager. We know the NDP hate tests. Where does Mr. O'Leary stand on that? Does he love them? Does he hate them? Where does he stand? How does that fit with this third tenet of the Code of Professional Practice of the Manitoba Teachers' Society? A teacher avoids involvement in a conflict of interest. Does this have the flavour of a conflict of interest?

Fourth, a teacher speaks and acts with respect and dignity and deals judiciously with others, always mindful of their rights. This is beyond the scope of what I will be doing in

furtherance of this matter, but the honourable member rightly raises the issues related to Mr. Treller and, I assume, other teachers at The Maples school whose names are in the report, but blanked out.

I think probably of all the people in this House reading the report, the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) can make the most sense out of that report than any of us. Even so, he wants to know what the government is going to do to ensure that there is integrity in our education system, and that is a reasonable question.

Fifth, a teacher respects the confidential nature of information concerning students and may give the information only to authorized personnel or agencies directly concerned with the students' welfare. Now, I do not know whether or not this item has a bearing on the actual opening of a test protocol. It has a sign on the front of it: do not open. I do not know if this comes into the code of the tenet No. 5 here respecting the confidential nature of information. I think it has a reference to confidential information about individual students, and I do not think there is any real suggestion here about that.

Now, No. 6, however, is the following: a teacher's conduct toward colleagues is characterized by consideration and good faith. I will just leave that one there and ask the honourable members to consider that tenet of the MTS Code of Professional Practice. A teacher's conduct toward colleagues is characterized by consideration and good faith. Was all that demonstrated here? I mean, was it simply a matter of breaking open a test package or did that then amount to something else? I am sure these questions arise.

* (1640)

No. 7: Tenet of the MTS Code of Professional Practice says: A teacher directs any criticism of the professional activity of a colleague to that colleague and only then, after informing the colleague of the intent to do so, may direct, in confidence, the criticism to appropriate officials. It goes on: It shall not be considered a breach of this clause to report

reasonable grounds for suspecting child abuse to proper authorities according to legal requirements.

The first part of that tenet may be the area which I would prefer not to get too close to because, as the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has said rhetorically, I think, was one person here rewarded and another punished, and what is the perception of all of that?

So I simply read these tenets from the Code of Professional Practice into the record, because I think it is important for Manitobans to know that the members of the Manitoba Teachers' Society do attempt to bring out the best in members of the teaching profession by having things like a Code of Professional Practice. I give them great credit for having a Code of Professional Practice.

The eighth tenet says: A teacher does not by-pass immediate authority to reach higher authority without first exhausting the proper channels of communication.

No. 9 says: A teacher makes an ongoing effort to improve professionally.

No. 10: A teacher adheres to collective agreements negotiated by the professional organization.

I think I will just move right along and not say anything more about that one.

No. 11: A teacher neither applies for nor accepts a position which is included in a society in dispute declaration.

I am not going to touch that one with a 10-foot pole either.

No. 12 says: A teacher or group of teachers makes only authorized representations to outside bodies on behalf of the society or its local associations. Without the express permission of the society, no member conferring with outside bodies may explicitly or implicitly claim that they represent the society.

I think that is enough to give you the flavour that for the most part, other than those parts I did not want to really talk about very much, the Manitoba Teachers' Society maintains a Code of Professional Practice and encourages its adherence to all teachers throughout the province. No doubt, in any review, I do not know if the Seven Oaks School Division made reference to this Code of Professional Practice when it did its review of this matter. But as I say, reading the report, one is left with the impression that there is something missing here.

One is led by the letter referred to today by the honourable member for Inkster written by Claudia Sarbit, chair of the Seven Oaks School Division, copied to CBC Radio, the Honourable Gary Filmon, James McCrae, John Carlyle, Linda McIntosh, Jon Gerrard, Gary Doer, Kevin Lamoureux, protesting too much politics makes me think maybe there is somebody protesting too much about the politics dimension of this matter. There certainly is politics, which is one dimension, but there is another dimension which probably has a more important and lasting import here, and that has to do with our children.

I think that the honourable member for Inkster is doing his duty in raising these questions. I have said to him that I look at The Public Schools Act and I see very, very significant powers at the disposal of the Department of Education, shared powers with school divisions that to this point the department has done what it could do in asking the school division to carry out a review and certainly to advise what has been done about this. We are told that nothing has been done about this by the division itself and that no harm was done.

Well, in saying that, you know, to say that, as the NDP say, no harm was done. So Brian O'Leary is a fine fellow. As Mr. Brodbeck would say, that is about as credible as arguing Tory efforts to rig the election in 1995 caused no harm at all, because all the ridings targeted by them were won by the New Democrats. Well, the NDP did not accept that argument—[interjection]

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. I would ask the honourable members, if they wish to carry on a

conversation, that they do so out of the Chamber.

The honourable Minister of Education and Training, to continue a response.

Mr. McCrae: In direct response to the question raised by the honourable member, I just simply say I have trouble, having said that I find the report of the Seven Oaks School Division to be unsatisfactory, running off to them to ask their permission as to who or how the matter should be taken forward from this point. I do hope the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) will understand my position on that matter. There are analogies that I prefer not to use, but I might do so privately in discussion with the honourable member about that particular aspect of his inquiries to date.

I do find a lot of things about this report to be interesting. One of the things that I find most interesting is the derision of the members of the New Democrats to the fact that, in order to protect people's names and reputations, their names are blanked out of the report. They find that funny, and they find it comical. They are just having a wonderful old time over there in the ranks of the New Democratic Party celebrating the wonderful achievement of their friend and leader, Brian O'Leary.

They are going to find out from the people of Manitoba that this is not so funny, because if the roles were reversed, as the honourable member for Inkster has pointed out, there would be demands for people's heads on a platter if Brian O'Leary was the campaign manager for the Tories or for the Liberals. Yet is it not interesting how positions can change and how the horns can come in when you are dealing with your own?

So I guess the NDP family is looking after itself, and that is about as much as can be said about the way the New Democrats are handling this. But I find it hard to understand people who stand to their feet to talk about ethics on a regular basis, people like the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), and others, who, I say, is an ethical person and he stands in his place and talks about that. But what is he doing today? What is he doing today in light of what

is going on in his own party, in his own political family?

I wonder, does he agree with the member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) when the member for Brandon East suggests that the events surrounding the wrongdoing of Mr. O'Leary is simply making a mountain out of a molehill? Does the member for Broadway agree with that? Does he agree with the member for Brandon East, who says that the questioning of the honourable member for Inkster is much ado about nothing? Well, I will tell you.

An Honourable Member: How can I answer?

Mr. McCrae: On a point of order, you can answer.

The Acting Chairperson: The member for Broadway, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): It is not a point of order. I just want to respond. I do not break the rules just to make a statement. If it is a point of order, it is a point of order. If it is a response, it is a response.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. If the honourable member wishes to respond after the honourable minister sits down, the honourable member may do so.

Mr. Santos: I will read from the—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. I just finished saying that when the honourable minister is finished his response, the honourable member for Broadway will have an opportunity to answer that concern.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, speaking for myself, I would give the honourable member a couple of minutes to make a response. I would ask for leave for that to happen.

* (1650)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Is there leave for the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) to respond to the honourable minister? Is there leave? [agreed]

Mr. Santos: I am grateful to the honourable minister for giving me this opportunity to make a statement which is not mine. This is the statement that I read from page 209 of The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis, and I quote: "For the most part of men are given to talk much, and therefore little trust is to be placed on them." Thank you.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): The honourable minister, to finish your response.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I certainly appreciate that statement, which I think brought some new light on this whole discussion. We will have to analyze the statement made by the member for Broadway quite carefully, I think, to be able to grasp the profound nature of its implications for all of us in this discussion this afternoon.

Having heard from the honourable member for Broadway on the point, who has admitted that he simply was quoting someone else, we are left in somewhat of a vacuum yet on where the true ethics of the members of the New Democratic Party are.

I think that Frances Russell put it rather well. I think Tom Brodbeck put it rather well. I think on that side of the issue, they are facing a serious issue of hypocrisy in their ranks. They have a serious problem with a double standard. The trouble with double standards is, until you realize you have a problem with it, you do not think you have a problem with it. You go merrily on your way thinking, I'm all right, Jack, and that the whole world can go by and you can just go along in your little make-believe world that everything is okay in our camp. It is all those other people that are bad.

It is only my, what is it, the mother watching the parade of soldiers going by and her boy was the only one out of step, but the mother looked at the parade and said: everybody is out of step except my son, Johnny.

You know, I think that the NDP are a little bit guilty of that right now. They are simply not able to be objective enough to look at their own concept of what is right here and what is not right here. They can so easily and quickly see what is deficient in others, but they are having a real problem finding any shortcoming in their own rank.

An Honourable Member: What is it about sty in the eye or something?

Mr. McCrae: There is a biblical expression, and the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) might be able to help me if the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Radcliffe) cannot. It says something to the effect that you do not talk about the mote in the other fellow's eye if you have a beam in your own. Now, I think that is fairly loosely put, but it comes to mind. Like I said, maybe somewhat simpler, I said: maybe honourable members opposite should look in the mirror once in a while and take a harder look at themselves when they set out each morning to go out and simply criticize everybody else and get paid for doing it. That is what they do. That is their job. They are paid to be critical. As they get up in the morning and look in the mirror looking forward to another day of Tory bashing, maybe they should take a little harder look in that mirror and say, oh, but, you know, is my own backyard clear here?

Another one is that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. I heard that one too. I imagine a few more could come forward.

But the honourable members, I am so used to hearing those things from them that I am surprised at the dead silence that I am getting, other than the odd bit of name calling, which I hope does not persist, because I do not think it is very becoming of the parliamentary traditions of this place for people to be calling other people names.

The last person who called me a jerk was Eugene Kostyra, and whatever happened to him? We know that he is a big shot in the labour unions, but we know what happened to him in the election that followed his calling me a jerk.

An Honourable Member: "Ignomonious" defeat.

Mr. McCrae: "Ignonimously."

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. McCrae: "Ignonimous."

An Honourable Member: "Ignomonious."

Mr. McCrae: Is it "ignomonious?"

An Honourable Member: "Ignomonious."

Mr. McCrae: Check it out. I think it is "ignonimous."

An Honourable Member: Maybe you are right.

An Honourable Member: The Education minister would like that spelling.

Mr. McCrae: We are debating on the spelling of that particular one. I know that in a moment of parliamentary debate and the heat that surrounds it, Eugene spoke of me in that way, and I did not like it then. I think of it to this day, and I thought: what a hurtful thing to say to somebody, when really all you are doing is engaging in debate. Calling people names, in my view, does not really fit.

I hope the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) reconsiders that because I have always enjoyed the honourable member for Wellington in this House, in the sense that she does try to look on life a little more lightly than her latest outburst suggests, but maybe the honourable member for Inkster has got her pretty frightened about what is going to happen in the upcoming provincial election. If that is the case, maybe I will not bother her anymore or bring out that sort of response from her, but by calling people names the member for Wellington may soon learn that constituents do not appreciate that sort of demeanour in this or any other place.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. I would like to suggest that the committee temporarily interrupt its proceeding

so that Madam Speaker may resume the Chair so that we can determine whether there is unanimous consent of the House to waive private members' hour. If there is, the Committee of Supply can immediately resume sitting to continue considering the matter now before it. Agreed? [agreed]

IN SESSION

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Acting House Leader): I believe there might be interest in waiving private members' hour this afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave to waive private members' hour this afternoon? Leave? [agreed]

Committee can resume now. Thank you.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Consideration of Concurrence Motion

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Chairperson, I was expecting, you know that at times inside the Chamber there is always a little bit of jostling and words being tossed out and about, that type of thing, and I always respected the individual from Broadway (Mr. Santos) in terms of the way in which quite often he is quite candid in his place. When the Minister of Education was trying to express some frustration in terms of how we sit trying to as much as possible address this particular issue, I was a little bit optimistic that, when the member for Broadway would stand, he would actually state something in terms of what he felt was important from his perspective on this particular issue.

* (1700)

Outside of his Leader's call for an independent investigation, there is very little that has been said, and I am sure that the member for Broadway would acknowledge, at the very least, that this issue is of some significance in which

the official opposition did have a role, at least on one occasion to raise the issue. Being an educator himself, I am sure he can appreciate the importance of professional behaviour and provincial directives. The member for Broadway, who, I have indicated, has been very candid in the past, I would look to the member for Broadway in possibly entertaining one or two very brief questions. He departs wisdom every so often in terms of when we had the member stand up and he had asked for leave, we had given him the leave, and he made a quote something to the effect that if you talk a lot does not necessarily mean that it is good talk.

Now somewhat profound, one might say, but I am sure that the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) would acknowledge that many of the issues that the public have given attention to via or from the media is because of persistence of members of the opposition day in and day out. Very repetitively, opposition members will bring up an issue and appear to bring it up endlessly. I could talk about speeches that I have heard in the past where members of his own caucus have stood up and debated endlessly. You want to talk about repetition, whether it was the Jay Cowans of the past on final offer selection or the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) on the Manitoba Telephone System. I am sure the member for Broadway would acknowledge that it all serves a purpose.

We would not want to take away from the importance of that purpose, much like I am baiting the member for Broadway in hopes to get the member for Broadway to take some form or state some opinion on the record as to what he believes actually had taken place. Was it an ethical behaviour by what happens to be their campaign manager? Is it appropriate? This is the question that I would be asking the minister: is it appropriate for a principal of any school to stand up, open up an exam, and this time—and I do not know if there were other times, there were allegations, but if you unseal or break a provincial directive, all you have to do is acknowledge that you broke the provincial directive and there should not be any sort of consequence outside of that?

On the surface, that is what it would appear. As I have alluded to and the Minister of

Education has alluded to, what would the members' opinions really have been if it would have been someone, a principal, that was completely apolitical? My suggestion to you would be that in Education Estimates, if not in Question Period, your critic would have stood up and asked the question in terms of what took place and what is the government doing. Given the political nature, if it would have been the Conservative campaign manager, I really believe that I would not be alone. And the only reason why it is getting as much debate as it is today is because of the political nature of the principal.

So there are a number of things that come out of this. One is the standard exams, the integrity of the standard exams, along with the issue of a teacher and his reputation amongst his peers that was perceived. Because of his reporting it, this teacher and many of his peers perceive that he was demoted as a result. The teacher in question was even, from what I have been told—because the teacher has been banned to talk to me, I have been told cannot speak to me. And there are many within that school that he was transferred out of that believe he was transferred because he reported the breach of security.

In that document, and I do not know if the member or other members of the caucus have actually read the report, there are other allegations of the same school breaking the breach of the standard exams on more than one occasion, one of which a person is prepared to attest in a court of law that it actually occurred. So the message that goes out to the other high schools, whether it is our Gordon Bells of the north end, the Sislers—and I say those schools because those are schools where I know the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) is familiar with kids who graduate from these schools. What we are talking about is what obligation is there, and I believe that the minister sent out a directive. If you disagree with a directive entirely, there still is a professional responsibility for you to fulfill that, even if you disagree with it. There are a lot of questions regarding that particular issue. If we do not address it, then what message are we sending to other jurisdictions, and that is the reason why, first and foremost, I believe it is an issue.

I did not make the political connection when I first brought it up back in July of last year. In fact, when I brought it up a number of weeks ago in the Education Estimates, the Minister of Education was doing nothing. I had to get the minister to get him to go and find out in fact what has actually taken place. It was not politics that was driving it originally, but it has taken on a very political flavour, and that is the reason why members of your caucus would shiver if in fact you were to agree through leave to answer questions.

One of the allegations that has been put forward is the super-[interjection] For sure, and this is the backdrop for the minister in posing the question—one of the allegations that I made reference to yesterday was there is the strong connection with the superintendent who conducted the investigation. I have been told he was a speaker at NDP conventions, that he is an education policy adviser for your political party, and he is the one who conducted the investigation. Is that not a conflict of interest?

You read the letter that I just got today which your Leader was sent a copy of. The statement that is given shows that no, no, there is absolutely nothing that is wrong that occurred here. [interjection] Well, I do not know if my vocabulary would allow me to articulate to the point in which this issue needs to be addressed. But what I do know is that a principal is one of our leaders in our communities, and we expect our principals to behave in a professional manner. When there is a breach of that professionalism or breach of the standards exams, is there not some sort of an obligation to, at the very least, get on the record in expressing that: Look, I should not have done it. Maybe it is just a slap on the wrist that would originally have occurred.

But today what we have is many, and I have heard from people outside of the city of Winnipeg who are familiar with what has taken place. I have heard stories of other breaches that I have not been able to substantiate. One was where a principal had students doing other activities, so they would not have to write the particular exam. If three political parties all agree to the standards exams, is there not an obligation for us to ensure as much as possible

that there is a sense of fairness and that that security is an important component to the standards exams? That is why I believe that it is a critical issue.

Having said that, you know, the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), whom I do respect and I am not trying to trap to get onto the record—I make mention of that just for food for thought. I know the member for Broadway will do just that.

* (1710)

Having said that, I do think the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae), given the background that I have just talked about in regard to the issue—there is one question that I would ask, and that is the time frame issue. The Minister of Education is not committing to calling an independent investigation but would appear to be committed to having some other form of a report or something else done in regard to the issue before us.

Could the Minister of Education indicate very clearly to the House: what time frame does he believe he has to operate under in terms of calling for an independent investigation? Is there not an obligation sometime in the near future that in fact an independent investigation would be called if it is going to be called? Can the Minister of Education enlighten us?

I do have a couple of questions that I was also wanting to pose for the Minister of Culture and Heritage, so unfortunately this would be my last question to the Minister of Education on this issue. So I hope that I would be provided the opportunity to do a couple of follow-up questions with the Minister of Culture and Heritage. Thank you.

Hon. James McCrae Minister of Education and Training: The honourable member for Inkster throughout his conduct of this matter, in my view, has attempted to steer a fair course. He has attempted to represent in an appropriate way the views of constituents as brought to his attention. I think I need to say that because not everything I do meets with his approval, and I guess maybe, if I say that, I could hope that he would blunt his criticisms somewhat, but I am sure I would hope that in vain because that has

not been my experience in my dealings with the honourable member for Inkster. My impression has been that he tends to call them as he sees them, and after a fair examination of the issues from his standpoint and from that of his constituents, he brings these matters forward in a somewhat relentless and tenacious way that defies one's ability to put him off. I accept that, knowing the important nature of these allegations and the implications for all of us, for our children and for the system of education that we have carefully cultivated over generations in this province.

So I do not in any way wish to treat this matter in any way that is not with a great deal of responsible deliberation on the issues that we are looking at. They are serious matters. I know that some have said that they are nothing, they are not important and do not matter. I have tried to be fair about that particular allegation or suggestion too and look at it from the point of view of the likes of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) who says that this is much ado about nothing. The more I look at it from that standpoint, the more I have to disagree with the honourable member for Brandon East and his Leader, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), who has chosen to be silent about this matter, simply to hope that it goes away pretty soon. I do not think the honourable Leader of the Opposition will get his wish on this matter because, unlike him, I have to be responsible for our education system and the stewardship of it.

I see the joking continues on the other side of the House, and at some point they will take this matter seriously, I suggest, Mr. Chairman—at some point. I am not the one who can say exactly when that will be.

The issue of standards tests, put yourself into the Manitoba scene a year ago when standards tests was a much more hotly debated item than it is today. Thanks to the good work of educators right across this province, the department, my predecessor, Manitobans have come not only to accept standards tests but to embrace them and to respect them and to see the value of them, but to demand that there be integrity in their administration, to demand that there be fairness to every child no matter where

in this great province of ours. That is what is at the base of what the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is raising with me, and that is what is at the base of what I will do in response to the issues being raised by the honourable member.

I ask him to give me enough credit for wanting to be very careful in the way that I handle this, knowing there are tremendous political overtones to this matter. I do not want to be any part of any response that suggests only a political response to what is a real issue, a real fairness issue to the children of this province. I will not sacrifice the rights of the children of this province to protect one person. I will not do that. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) tends to want to do that, and his colleagues, but I will not and I do not have to. I would not do it for somebody on my side, should the same thing have happened. Now honourable members opposite will no doubt have their comments to make about that, but the silence on the other side speaks volumes about where they stand on this matter.

So if the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) will bear with me for just a little while longer, I will be able to make known to him the response of the government to this matter. I hope it will be seen by him and by all Manitobans to be an appropriate and measured response to what is surely a serious matter that needs to be dealt with in a serious way, because all of the children across this province are potentially affected and all of their parents are watching. For that reason I ask the honourable member simply to bear with me for a short while longer as I very, very carefully study the appropriate response for the government to make.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for his comments. I can respect the fact that he has to go through a number of loopholes, not loopholes—

An Honourable Member: Hurdles.

Mr. Lamoureux: "Hurdles" is the word I am looking for.

* (1720)

Having said that, I do have a few questions for the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey). It is in regard to immigration. Immigration has and will continue to be of the utmost importance to me personally because so many of the constituents that I represent are very much so attempting whether it is reunification of families to visitors and so forth, trying to, what I would say, enhance our community by having more full participation.

Having said that, one of the biggest concerns I have always had is in regard to visiting visas. The reason why I bring it forward to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship today is because I want to see if I can get assurances in terms of that the minister is aware of the problems that many Manitobans are having in terms of getting visitors to the province. In particular, I am thinking in terms of whether it is from the Philippines, from India, from the West Indies, areas in which I get numerous requests in terms of assistance in trying to get people that have been turned down visas to come to the province.

Just as a general backgrounder, Mr. Chair, the impact that people visiting the province make is very positive, and I am sure the minister could talk to her colleague the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism and will see, whether it is the social fabric or our economy, how it benefits us having people coming to the province to visit. Now what I have found first-hand by trying to represent people who are hoping to get members of their family and others to visit the province is that visiting visas are turned down more often than I care to see, and I do not know if, in fact, it is justifiable in terms of the numbers that are being turned down.

In fact, Mr. Chairperson, I would suggest to you that there are many want-to-be visitors that are turned down that should not have been turned down. I have attempted to pursue this in different ways in the past, have yet, to date, got any sort of numbers of visas that are in fact being turned down of those who want to visit our province. My question for the minister is: does the ministry keep track or have any idea of the number of individuals that come to our province via a visiting visa?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): The member has raised an important issue and one that I believe he also raised last year in Concurrence or in the Estimates process, and the answer, in a general sense, is very much the same. The issuing of visitor visas is completely and totally the responsibility of the federal government. It is totally and completely the responsibility of his federal colleagues in Ottawa, with whom I would expect that he would have some influence through himself or through his leader, who was a former member of the cabinet of the federal government. So the issuing of visitors' visas is, again, done generally at the post abroad where the assessment is made of a number of issues, and I am led to understand part of that issue is whether or not the individual will be a bona fide visitor or whether there is some expectation that on arrival they may decide to seek another status.

Manitoba, to start with, let me just say, is very, very supportive of immigration. If people coming as visitors would like to come for an opportunity to see our province, return then to their country of origin or a country where an application can be made, a post where an application can be made for immigration, Manitoba is very, very supportive of immigration. We also are very supportive and continue to support our complement of refugees, which, as the member knows, as a result of the recent difficulty, particularly for the people of Kosovo, Manitoba has, in fact, accepted a much larger number of refugees and is very, very supportive of doing so.

Manitoba is also very supportive of the temporary visas for working which would assist in terms of the sewing machine industry, and it has made application to the federal government to reconsider where they have denied those temporary visas to the sewing machine operators that were applying. Beijing was the most recent post where there has been a very large denial. So Manitoba's position is that we continue to be supportive of visitors who wish to come here, who may, in fact, eventually wish to make this their home through the usual process, but it is completely and entirely the responsibility of the federal government to make that decision. Although Manitoba may do everything that we

can to impress upon the federal government that we are supportive of these visitors coming here, sometimes that message is not accepted in the posts abroad, and so we are left with some difficulty.

I would suggest to the member then that, in attempting to look at how to increase the number of visitors or the ease at which people may, in fact, get these visitors' visas, he does need to work with his own federal colleagues. In terms of the exact numbers, I am not aware that we do keep in Manitoba a list, provincially, of the number of people who come on visitors' visas here and the return rate or problem rate. It would certainly make sense to me that that would be a reasonable kind of statistic to keep, because we certainly have access to others which have given Manitoba an extremely good record in terms of support to family members on immigration, that there is an extremely low default rate of support. I believe it is less than 1 percent, extremely low, probably the lowest across the country. So there are a lot of statistics in terms of immigration. It is very possible that those statistics are available. I do not have them today, but certainly we would be willing to get them for the member.

But just, Mr. Chairperson, while I am answering this in general, I would like to take another opportunity to address an issue to the member of the Liberal Party, because as this provincial government has supported immigration, we also are very, very much against those policies of the federal government which limit immigration, which tend to deter immigration and which are barriers to immigration.

Any of the taxes, the head tax most specifically, tends to act as a deterrent, and the federal government by policy has given us no indication that they are ever prepared to review that. I have met with the federal minister. I have explained to the federal minister in person Manitoba's opposition to this tax and have not met with any success whatsoever in having the federal government reconsider this tax which really acts as a bar for immigration in terms of our province. In addition, the low income cutoff, I have asked the federal government to reconsider Manitoba's inclusion in the same

group of cities of over 500,000 in which Toronto and Vancouver appear, because they are very much more expensive to live in.

So, Mr. Chairperson, our position as a government has been very, very supportive of immigration, very supportive of taking our number of refugees; in fact, accepting more this year. We certainly are interested in the temporary visas for work and in visitors' visas, so that people can come to Manitoba and actually have a look at what this province is about and perhaps then may wish to go back and make an application. But we are not in favour of the federal government's decision of deterrence in relation to the tax, particularly the head tax, and the inclusion of Winnipeg in the same group of cities of over 500,000 as Toronto and Vancouver where the cost of living is much greater.

But, ultimately, the acceptance of people into Manitoba on a visitor's visa, on a temporary work visa, for immigration or as refugees is absolutely and entirely the decision of the federal Liberal government, and I would ask the member opposite to use the influence of himself and his Leader, who is a former member, a cabinet minister of that federal Liberal government, to assist in asking the federal government to reconsider the bars for Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, one of the things-[interjection]

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. I would remind the honourable members in the Chamber that there is an opportunity for all members to participate. I was about to recognize the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) when I had some difficulty overhearing my own thoughts in the Chamber here, so I would ask honourable members that if they are going to carry on any discussion, that they do so outside the Chamber, so that we can carry on with the order of business in the Chamber here today.

I recognize the honourable member for Inkster.

* (1730)

Mr. Lamoureux: As I indicated, I do have a number of questions that I would like to be able to put forward. You know, quite often, I feel somewhat flattered, I must admit, in terms of how the government on a number of different issues feels that if it is a federal responsibility, that I could pick up the telephone, and I must admit on occasion I do that when I do feel that it is appropriate. Otherwise, I could end up on the telephone every day, and that would then cause me to neglect my responsibilities inside this Legislature if I ended up being on the telephone every day for hours lobbying the federal government.

Having said that, Mr. Chairperson, I can assure the minister that I have had occasion to meet with the former Minister of Immigration and staff of the current minister where I have had the opportunity to express a personal concern, our provincial party concern, relating to a number of decisions being made in regard to a policy that the national government has in regard to immigration. But one of the things that I do acknowledge is that my value is maybe somewhat—I do not want to criticize myself, so let me reword it and say that I would look for the minister to recognize that there is a role for the provincial government in terms of advocating what is in Manitoba's best interest.

For example, I know first-hand that there are many, many visiting visas that are rejected. Well, it is easy for us to say, well, that is federal responsibility; it has nothing to do with the province. Well, that is not true. It has a lot to do with the province. It contributes tremendously to our economy as people visit. It contributes immensely to the social fabric of our province.

When I say social fabric, let me give you a couple of the types of cases I am referring to. I have had in the last year a number of people who want to come to Manitoba in order to go to weddings. I write probably more letters to Immigration or the embassy in the Philippines than I do to any department within this government, and it is because even though it would be very easy for me to say, well, contact Judy Wasylcia-Leis or Dr. Rey Pagtakhan, they are your member of Parliament, I believe that we have a responsibility.

It is in Manitoba's best interests to ensure as much as possible that we are getting as many visiting visas approved as possible, and what is important from my perspective is that the minister is at the very least aware of the visas being turned down. Last year, I raised the issue with the minister, and that is why I was pleased when she made reference to it in these comments, pleased to the extent that she realizes the importance of this particular issue. Surely she would recognize the importance of her department not only being aware of a ballpark figure or being able to guesstimate the number of visas being turned down, but this is an issue not only that I have a responsibility for lobbying my federal counterparts, but so does her department.

I get the impression, Mr. Chairperson, that if I pose the question in the sense of can the minister table documentation, any form of documentation that would clearly indicate that this government has an interest in fighting for those visiting visas being approved or is trying to get down to the nitty-gritty as to how many are actually being rejected, that it, in fact, might embarrass the department because I get the impression that they have not been looking into that. If, in fact, I am right in my assessment, it then becomes a question of opportunities lost, economically, for the province, but, more importantly, I would suggest is for those who are here who are trying to get family members to attend events.

I have written in the past some fairly hard letters to the embassy, and I am sure—at least I would anticipate that I am not alone. It would be very easy for me to pass the buck on it. I will, and I give assurances to the minister that I will continue to lobby Ottawa, the department of Immigration, but my resources are more limited than your financial resources, yet I will take the responsibility that I have—because I am a Liberal MLA and it is a Liberal administration—to try to assist our province.

But as the minister is fully aware, I lose some battles. I was not a big fan of the landing fee. I have attempted to try to get modifications or changes to it to make it easier for the province. But I do not want this government to believe because I happen to be a Liberal MLA

that it is only my responsibility, and I look to the Minister of Culture and Heritage to at the very least acknowledge that her department also has a responsibility in dealing with visiting visas.

Would she not concur with that statement?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, let me start again with repeating some of the comments that I made in my last answer.

First of all, Manitoba is probably one of the most active, actively recruiting, provinces across this country in terms of immigration. One strategy to encourage people to immigrate here is to see that they have visitors' visas to come and have a look, and that when they have a visitor's visa and they come and have a look they have an opportunity to see that there is perhaps some reason that they would like to, in fact, come here.

We send out information basically around the world about Manitoba and what we consider to be the Manitoba advantage. So I certainly want the record to show the very active role that this government and my department, as their working arm to do this, very actively works on this issue among others; provincial nominee for our economic development, immigration, supports of refugees, temporary working visas as in the sewing machine operators and visitors' visas.

But the insurmountable hurdle is that it is the federal government alone who determines the criterion, and it is the people of posts abroad who make the decisions. So the concern of Manitobans has to be registered to the federal government and to the federal minister. Now I, as minister, have done that on behalf of the people of Manitoba. I have had the opportunity to meet with my federal colleague, and I would say that my federal colleague does attempt to understand the initiatives that we have wanted to put forward in Manitoba.

However, the federal government has now shown itself to necessarily be particularly open to a lot of change. So it is important not only for our government to make our representation in the area of visitors' visas but to ask other members, particularly of the Liberal Party, if

they are willing to put themselves on the line to take a position, which is probably not a particularly popular position with their colleagues in Ottawa, to in fact fight for the people of Manitoba and not necessarily to toe a party line. That has been the difficulty, and that is what I am asking the member to put forward and put on the line.

* (1740)

If he really believes that the people of Manitoba can have this benefit, join with our government, put that position forward to Ottawa, risk the wrath of your Leader who is a former federal cabinet minister, a federal cabinet minister in cabinet at the time that these policies were being developed, and he continues, it appears to me, to support everything that is done by Ottawa. I have not heard him at any time take a position on the head tax or a position on the low-income cutoff where Manitoba is included with Toronto and Vancouver as a city over 500,000, nor have I heard him being willing to risk and take a position on behalf of the Liberal Party in the area of visitors' visas, of temporary work visas, of provincial nominee of immigration or of refugees. So my answer to the member is you really can have no doubt of our government's support in the area of immigration.

I would just like also then to focus on the visitors' visas, because I too am aware of the importance of family reunification, even for a short time, that a visitor's visa provides. Sometimes it is the opportunity for a family to reunite here in Canada, here in Manitoba, that perhaps has not been together for some time. I think all of us are aware of cases of families which for whatever reasons, as a result of conflict in their homeland or other economic opportunities, live around the world and therefore make applications to come to Canada for a reunion.

I certainly believe that our government is in support of that, whether people originate from the same place or from countries around the world but, as I have said, the insurmountable barrier is that it is the federal Liberal government who determines all of the criteria, who develops the risk assessment, and who makes the decision in the post abroad. So for

Manitoba's immigration policy, for Manitoba's tourism policy, we would require them to understand the specific circumstances of Manitoba, not only, as the member has mentioned, for in some cases family reunions, but also potentially they may be, in fact, people who might like to be part of our wave of immigration.

There is no getting around the main feature here. The federal government has put forward barriers. The federal Liberal government has put forward barriers. If the member across the way representing the Liberal Party is prepared to put his position on the line in opposition to his federal Liberal colleagues and stand up for Manitobans, that would be appreciated.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, actually I believe in the past I have given detailed comment in terms of a number of the issues that the minister brings forward. What I am interested in doing is pursuing a line of questioning to find out in terms of whether or not the department realizes the potential that it can serve in terms of enhancing visiting visas.

Maybe the best way to do that is if I said to the minister today that, and this is purely hypothetical, 5,000 visiting visas are rejected every year from the Philippines alone. Now, I have absolutely no idea if that is even close, but if I say 5,000 visiting visas, the minister is going to sit back in her seat and say, wow, is that a huge number or what? Imagine if those 5,000 people were allowed to come to the province, the many different contributions that they would have been able to make.

On the other hand, if I said that there were five people that were turned down, the minister would say, well, maybe they were turned down for good reason. Maybe Ottawa is doing a good job. Well, I am not saying either. I am not saying 5,000 or five. What I am saying is that I know that there is a lot. I have no idea in terms of the actual number. I have posed the question not only to the federal government informally, I have posed the question to this minister in the past, and I pose it today.

The government should at the very least be aware of the situation. The reason why I say it

should be aware is that if it was 5,000 people wanting to come to the province to visit in any given year from the Philippines, from the Punjab, from the West Indies, or wherever, and they are being turned down, well, that has a significant impact in the province of Manitoba.

Therefore, I would suggest to you that for no other reason but than the numbers in itself would cause the minister to hop on the next flight—Air Canada has some pretty decent sales—get down to Ottawa and say, well, look, and I will accompany. If the minister wants me, I would be more than happy to accompany her down to Ottawa on this particular issue. We could even throw in a token New Democrat, if that would make it feel better. [interjection]

Well, we will just be selective on which one, you know. Like, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) I do not have any problem with, or the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), you know. We could talk about it and come up with one. But, anyway, the point is, Mr. Acting Chairperson, that if you had an idea—I do not believe the department does have an idea of the number of visas being turned down. So, as opposed to asking the minister that question, I want to move on to another issue in dealing with immigration, but I would suggest that the office does look into the numbers that are out there, because it can assist in facilitating some changes with Ottawa. When I had posed the question there, they could not give me the answer immediately, but it would have been nice for me to have been able to say, well, these are the numbers at this particular embassy. So getting the information I think would be most valuable.

Mrs. Vodrey: As I said, I will certainly look to find out whether or not that information is available to my department. We do have quite a lot of information, so we will certainly find out.

But, in the member's co-operative spirit then, it would really be very helpful to me to have him write to me and clearly state his position and the position of his Leader, the provincial Liberal Party. Put it on paper. Give some additional support to a position that this government has taken that the federal government needs to review the bars to immigration to this province, because this

province is interested in attracting immigration, and if part of that attraction of immigration is through the issuance of visitors' visas so that people can come for family reunions, for the opportunity to view this as a potential place to immigrate, and go home and apply through the process, then if the member and the provincial Liberal Party is willing to put that down—now, in the process of speculation, I would say I probably will not see it, because it would really be, I am sure, very difficult for them, particularly his Leader, who sat as a federal cabinet minister and passed and supported those bars to our provincial immigration, to actually put that on paper. But if the member wishes to be a part of an initiative to assist in immigration, it would be very helpful to see that put in writing, the position of the provincial Liberal Party, so that there is support for the position that this government in Manitoba has taken. I will, optimistically, look forward to that.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I think the minister underestimates the value of her department. Manitoba could have thousands of additional immigrants come to our province every year if it was managed properly. Manitoba, through family reunification, could benefit tremendously if the government were to take more of an interest in directly getting involved, being aware of some of the statistical information.

* (1750)

You know, if I place the call to the embassy, which I have done, and I pose questions, both in writing and in person, and via telephone, it does not have the same impact as—I am talking with the embassy; I am not talking with Ottawa—if the government of Manitoba approaches the embassy and says: Look, what is happening here? What we would like to be able to know is how many visa requests are you actually turning down. I think there is a moral obligation.

Then, if the minister came to me and said, well, look, the embassy refuses to give us any of that kind of information, well, then, I would be more than happy to join with the minister in seeking the assistance from Ottawa. If we want to put forward a presentation to Ottawa in feeling that we are not getting fairly treated

through the embassy—because a lot of this is through the embassy.

The way in which maybe I can highlight that particular problem is that it is the student visas. You know, Manitoba spent about a hundred thousand dollars, I believe a hundred thousand dollars, through Red River, had a college set up in China, with the idea of trying to get some of those students there to come to Manitoba. I understand there was something like 13 or 14 students who were hoping to be able to come. From what I understand, they are having a problem right now. Now I am doing what I can to rectify it. I do not know if the minister has any idea about this issue. Other provinces appear to be able to be getting their students. Now, is it Ottawa? I do not necessarily believe that it is Ottawa. If it is Ottawa, well, then I am prepared to advocate on behalf, and we have initiated some discussions because we found out about it just the other day.

So a lot of it has to do with the government just taking an interest in getting some of the information. You cannot make the assumption that Ottawa knows exactly what is happening in every embassy if no one is raising the issue. I do not know if Bill Blaikie or the Tory M.P. from Brandon has raised the issue in Ottawa. If I was to speculate, I would say that they likely have not. So when you are critical of me in terms of my lobbying, maybe what I should be doing is asking you to see if your Tory counterparts in Ottawa, or for some of your members, Reform counterparts in Ottawa, been raising this issue. Have they been attempting to address it? What are you doing to ensure that they raise the issue in Question Period? You know, a lot of that is informal lobbying that takes place. Has the minister, in fact, lobbied her own political party to raise the issue more inside the Chamber? Well, I think that those are all legitimate ways in which we can assist.

Mr. Chairperson, I digress somewhat. The purpose of posing the questions is to heighten the sense of awareness of the department to a couple of critical issues which I believe the department needs to raise in a more formal way with our counterparts in Ottawa. In an informative, whether it is presentation, whatever it is that you want to call it, let us get a better

understanding of what is actually happening. It does not have to be a confrontation. I am not talking right now about the landing fee or the head tax, whatever one wants to call it. That is a totally different issue which I have spoken to in the past, I will speak to no doubt in the future. I can assure the member of that. My New Democratic friends would never allow me to get away without commenting on that issue at the doors.

You know, I have opposed that particular tax in the past and I will continue to oppose it to demonstrate that the courage is there to state in terms of what it is that I feel. But by making that statement, hopefully, the minister now does not avoid the real issue that is before us, and that issue is the need to heighten the sense of awareness within her department and the role that department can have in facilitating more visitors coming to the province of Manitoba, and ultimately I would argue, in a positive way, facilitate more immigration.

A great example of that immigration was when the department—I had taken a tour of a number of garment factories and raised the issue with David Walker, members of your government. We then sat down and before you knew it, we had a committee that was established that had two levels of government and members from within that industry and we had immigrants coming to fill some of those badly needed jobs. There was a sense of co-operation, and I think in certain areas that we need to expand that sense of co-operation.

There are many other ways in which we can be critical of the government and condemn the government. We all know that this government is incompetent in many different ways. That is the reason why I voted against the budget, at least in part, Mr. Chairperson.

But, having said that—that is somewhat provoking debate, and I do not necessarily want to provoke debate—I just want to get the minister to acknowledge that there is a role for the department to be more aware of what is happening in some of those embassies because there will be tremendous benefit for the province by that heightened sense of awareness, just strictly the awareness. If she could address that

awareness issue first, and then if she wants to take some shots at the federal government, she can, by all means, do that. Lord knows I have attempted to be critical of this government in the past, too, so fair is fair.

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, again, I am very interested in the member for Inkster declaring his opposition to the right-of-landing fee, his personal opposition. What I am very interested in seeing is a Liberal Party platform position which opposes the right-of-landing fee, which takes a position against their federal Liberal counterparts and actually puts forward a position on behalf of this province, the needs of this province, that they oppose the barriers of taxation, the right-of-landing fee being one. I would very much be interested in hearing the member for Inkster's position on this, that the Liberal Party, his Leader, a former Liberal cabinet minister of the federal government, actually comes forward and puts that on paper and lets the people of Manitoba know where they stand, because to this point I have not seen this.

This government has clearly taken that position. This government has taken a clear and firm position against the barriers to immigration in this province, the right-of-landing fee, taxation, the inclusion of Winnipeg in the group of cities over 500,000 which includes us within a group of cities for the low-income numbers, includes us with cities such as Toronto and Vancouver. All of those points have been raised in an active way by me as minister to the federal minister and in letters to the federal minister.

So these positions are clearly on the record. My department also works with the posts abroad to not only assist but to make very clear Manitoba's active position in wanting to encourage immigration to our province. We work with the posts abroad. We were very concerned with some of the decisions in the posts abroad in terms of the issuance of temporary visas in terms of work. We have very much supported that.

The member references some of the labour shortages which are a result of our booming economy. Manitoba has clearly a booming economy, and it is very useful for us to have programs such as the provincial nominee. My colleague, now the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshamer), signed the first provincial nominee program in Canada in his previous portfolio.

Mr. Chairperson, all of these are ways to assist us in terms of increasing our immigration, the provincial nominee, our efforts to recruit in posts abroad—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, July 13, 1999

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