

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

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The Honourable George Hickes  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stu	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
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LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Wednesday, June 13, 2007**

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

*PRAYER*

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 203—The Phosphorus-Free Dishwashing  
Detergent Act**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 203, The Phosphorus-Free Dishwashing Detergent Act; Loi sur les détergents à vaisselle sans phosphore, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, this bill provides for the banning of any detergent used in dishwashers or washer detergents from containing phosphorus. It would be an important step in helping to decrease the phosphorus load going into Lake Winnipeg, thereby helping to clean up Lake Winnipeg.

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

**PETITIONS**

**Provincial Trunk Highway 10**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Provincial Trunk Highway 10 separates two schools and residential districts in Forrest, Manitoba, forcing students and residents to cross under very dangerous circumstances.

Strategies brought forward to help minimize the danger pose either significant threats to the safety of our children or are not economically feasible.

Provincial Highway 10 serves as a route for an ever-increasing volume of traffic, including heavy trucks, farm vehicles, working commuters, campers and the transport of dangerous goods.

Traffic levels are expected to escalate further due to projected industrial expansions.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to act in this situation by considering the construction of a four-lane highway that would bypass around the village of Forrest.

This petition signed by J. I. Hamilton, Phyllis Bray, Bunny Phillips and many more.

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

**Lynn Lake Friendship Centre**

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, and these are the reasons for this petition:

Cree Nation Child and Family Caring Agency is a provincially mandated First Nation child protection and welfare agency. Operating under authority of the provincial Ministry of Family Services and Housing, the mission is to keep children, families and communities safe and secure and promote healthy citizen development and well-being.

Lynn Lake is located 321 kilometres northwest of Thompson, Manitoba, on PR 391. There is no social worker living and working in the community. The goals of the ministry are implemented from a distance and supplemented with infrequent and short visits from a social worker located in Thompson.

The Lynn Lake Friendship Centre is a designated safe house and receiving home providing accommodations, services and care to children and families experiencing difficulties in a safe environment. The designated safe house and receiving home are forced closed at this time due to outstanding accounts payable due from Cree Nation Child and Family Services Caring Agency.

Failure to have a social worker based in Lynn Lake providing immediate and sustained services and forcing the receiving home and designated safe house to close, children and families experiencing difficulties in Lynn Lake and area have their health and safety placed in great jeopardy.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) to consider restaffing the social worker position in Lynn Lake in order to provide needed services to northwestern Manitoba in a timely manner.

To request the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider mediating outstanding accounts payable due to the Lynn Lake Friendship Centre by Cree Nation Child and Family Caring Agency in order to allow the designated safe house and receiving home to resume regular operations and services and continued utilization of these operations and services.

This is signed by Clarissa Sewap, Stephanie Sewap, Angela Campbell and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Provincial Trunk Highway 2**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Verna Young, Jacque George, N. Patterson and many, many others.

#### **TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act):** I am pleased to table the

following Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance 2006.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Act):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the following: The Crown Corporations Council Annual Report of 2006.

#### **Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Kerry Auriat and his daughter, Olivia. These visitors are the guests of the honourable Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

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

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

##### **Child Welfare System Reports and Reviews**

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Over the last number of years we've had several tragic and disturbing stories emerge from Manitoba's child welfare system. We've seen several reports and reviews with respect to the various examples of mismanagement that have occurred within child welfare. We've seen a review of case files, a special case review regarding Phoenix Sinclair, an Auditor General's report. We've heard about, tangentially, in any event, evidence arising from the bail hearing. Now we have, with the most recent Children's Advocate annual report, a further report on serious concerns within child welfare and elsewhere through government when it comes to the well-being of children in Manitoba.

The report's contents are worrisome. We see, for example, in quotes, obvious oversights that occurred when the process of devolution took place; failure to adequately train and support front-line workers, failures to implement the Children's Advocate's previous recommendations, her review of emergency shelters, along with record high numbers of children sleeping in hotels, mass confusion in the child welfare system regarding case transfers, case plans, assigned workers, use of the electronic case-tracking system and a lack of communication between agencies and authorities. We've seen, through this report, example after example of problems raised, issues that have been raised in previous reviews and reports that were not dealt with.

When will the Premier take personal responsibility for exercising leadership? To simply shuffle from one minister to another is not doing the trick.

I wonder if the Premier will take responsibility and indicate whether we could have assurances today that the problems highlighted in this report are finally going to be dealt with to the satisfaction of all Manitobans.

\* (13:40)

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** The report, of course, deals with the '05-06 year. There's been two independent reports conducted by professional individuals that have been provided to the government, and those reports were accepted by the government. We accepted responsibility for that. The Child Advocate today made it clear, in a follow-up interview with one of the media outlets, and said: yes, progress is being made on the 300 recommendations that were made to the government.

I would point out that the member opposite talked about tracking of cases. I believe that the evidence on tracking, in those two independent reports, again that came out after the '05-06 year, indicated 14,998 cases out of 15,000 were completely properly tracked. There were only two 16-year-olds that were not accounted for and had been believed to have left the province. Obviously, that's not perfect. We would have preferred to have all 15,000 accounted for in the tracking system.

There were a number of other recommendations made that the Auditor General went on to report on, Mr. Speaker. In terms of many of the recommendations and, again, in a media outlet today, the Child Advocate said there was progress made on many of these initiatives. In fact, there's been a huge initiative by the government to respond to the two independent reports.

**Mr. McFadyen:** The trouble with that answer is that it bears stark resemblance to answers that have been given over successive years. Every time issues arise in Family Services, we get reassuring statements from the Premier and ministers indicating that all of the problems have been taken care of and, yet, one thing after another then emerges.

We've got a record high number of kids dying in care under the watch of this Premier and government. We've got significant systemic issues that have again been highlighted by the Children's Advocate. I know that he wants to try to minimize it by saying this report goes back to '05-06, but he had

been in government and Premier already for six years as of the dates that are covered. We need to have some assurance that, in the succeeding period of time, action has actually been taken and that we don't have simply a repeat of prior assurances which have then turned out to be not assurances at all but simply political rhetoric.

So, while he was in opposition, the Member for Concordia stood up in the House and declared that the then-premier was responsible for the children of the province. Is he prepared to make the same statement as it applies to himself in the role of Premier today?

**Mr. Doer:** [*inaudible*]

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, so given that the Premier is going to take personal responsibility, and that is the issues with Child and Family Services, does he take responsibility for the various very strong and serious criticisms contained within the report, including a lack of support for families and kids with FASD and mental illness, children in rural and northern communities unable to access the services they need, children falling through the cracks, inadequate training, failure to plan, a lack of communication?

Is he admitting today, given that he's responsible, that he has been a failure to date in this regard? What assurance can he give that the track record going forward is going to be better than what we've had over the past seven-plus years?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, we did make a decision to implement the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report to move the management of children closer to their own communities and closer to their own families.

The members opposite sat on the AJI judicial inquiry and sat on those reports. When we came into office, we took our time but we implemented the AJI. The independent reviews this summer indicated, Mr. Speaker, that was the right decision to make. It was the overall correct decision to make.

Mr. Speaker, 85 percent of the children—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

**Mr. Doer:** —in care are Aboriginal children and, therefore, the logic of following through in the Sinclair-Hamilton reports that gathered dust by members opposite are the logic of that, and the

integrity of those recommendations we have taken into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite will know that no child that's in the system that is harmed or dies is acceptable to any member of this Legislature. The overall numbers have gone down but they're still unacceptably high. When members opposite throw around rhetoric that's not correct. I would point out that one of the recommendations—

**An Honourable Member:** The report speaks for itself.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, I think this is a very serious subject and to have the heckling, I think, is completely beneath the dignity of members opposite. Mr. Speaker,—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** —and I would point out that members opposite, when they're acting holier than thou, the Child Advocate actually stated in previous reports in the 1990s that the government of the day tried to muzzle their reports and their findings. You'll find absolutely open relationships with the Child Advocate and the people of Manitoba under our government, something we're very proud about because you can't improve a system by censoring the Child Advocate as we saw in the past.

Mr. Speaker, the Child Advocate goes on to say that their relationships with foster parents have improved dramatically. The rates for foster parents have improved. The relationship with Aboriginal people and foster parents that could be, hopefully, utilized more effectively for Aboriginal children is in place.

The Child Advocate also points out areas that we can improve. I would expect that every year a Child Advocate's report should have both comments that are positive and comments that talk about how we can improve, but the Child Advocate today talked about the improvements that have been made with the two independent reports we commissioned, the improvements that have been made with the \$40 million we've invested. The improvements we've made, but we know there's a lot more work ahead, and we do respect the work and recommendations of the Child Advocate in Manitoba.

### **Child Welfare System Children's Advocate Annual Report**

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, the Children's Advocate report paints a bleak picture of the child welfare system in Manitoba. The report says: Devolution, were we ready? It does not say: devolution, we were ready.

We supported the principle of devolution, but our criticism was of the careless mismanagement of the process led by this government. The whole transition was rushed and it was rocky. We've gone from a system with problems to a system in crisis. Even the Children's Advocate feels there was no one advocating for children in need and those who may be in need but not in care.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this minister: Why has this government abandoned children in this province? Why has he left the Children's Advocate to do his work for him?

\* (13:50)

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear of the remarks of the Children's Advocate. I remind members opposite and indeed all Manitobans that, as she said, first of all, you have to understand that this fiscal year report was prior to the reviews that took place.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of the reviews that took place, in this budget that is now before the Legislature, there is a proposal to increase the investments in child protection accordingly by some 25 percent. I know the members opposite in the campaign talked about 2 percent increases. That would gut the child protection system.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Mr. Speaker, the minister will stand up and congratulate himself on the millions he's putting into child care, but he really needs to ask himself: Are children in care being treated better or worse today?

In February, Michael Bear, executive director of the Southeast Child and Family Services, said that the government's \$42-million investment will translate into one social worker for his agency, and his agency has 950 children. He said, and I quote: It's like putting a finger in the dike to hold back a tidal wave of water.

We know just throwing more money at a system will not help these children in crisis. I ask the minister: Will he try some leadership? Will he try

some mentoring? Will he try some preventative support systems rather than his government's reckless abandonment of children that we've witnessed over the last several years?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, following on my first answer, I think it was JFK who said something like: Those who only look to the past are certain to miss the future.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite seem unaware of all of the work that is under way and the investments that are made in the budget that is currently proposed to this Legislative Assembly. If they're serious about supporting the future and the future of our children and child protection, they should support a 25 percent increase to the child protection budget.

But, Mr. Speaker, yes, the past has taught us many lessons. This is a government that is learning those lessons and making sure that change is going to go to work for the children of Manitoba.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** This minister's silly rhetoric is just not appropriate in serious issues, Mr. Speaker.

I ask: Why are children in the education system not being supported? Why are immigrant children not being supported in transition into our society? Why are there so many kids in hotels? Why are there 20 percent more children in care? Why, in God's name, are children being held and abused in maximum security jail cells? Why did 31 children die, including Phoenix Sinclair?

This government has a Minister of Education and Youth (Mr. Bjornson). They have a Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), including mental health services. They have a Minister of Immigration (Ms. Allan). They have a Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) and they have a Minister of Family Services. Yet, children continue to suffer.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government restore ministerial accountability to child welfare? When will this government act responsibly for all children?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, the Children's Advocate this morning on the radio confirmed that she's seen good progress as a result of the external reviews and this government's commitment to the well-being of children. It is, I think, news that is important to share in this Chamber that since we've

come into office we've increased the investments in the well-being of children outside even of the education system, but in child care and Healthy Child and child protection by 90 percent.

Mr. Speaker, the changes for children agenda invests \$42 million in investments in fighting back against the decade of the '90s when foster rates were slashed by the members opposite, \$6.1 million for fostering. I am pleased to share with the House information from the authorities. They've been able, through the recruitment strategy, to get 300 more foster parents.

#### **Waste Water Management Facilities Sewers and Lagoons**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's infrastructure is deteriorating rapidly every day. This collapse is evident across all aspects of infrastructure, not just roads. Despite the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation's repeated announcements of funding, Manitobans know that their sewers and lagoons are placing demands on local governments that are not being followed up with the funding by this minister.

With all the funding that the minister says he has, why do Manitobans' waste management facilities continue to fall apart? Why is this not a greater priority for this government?

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. We're certainly working in co-operation with a lot of rural municipalities, not only on our roads and our infrastructure related to transportation, but also on sewer and water projects.

**Mr. Maguire:** Well, Mr. Speaker, just for an example, the Emerson and Russell lagoons are only two of dozens where conditions have deteriorated. They're leaking and are repeatedly being dumped directly into waterways to avoid their collapse. With this NDP government's feigned concern for the environment, they have raw sewage being dumped into our streams and rivers and finding its way into Lake Winnipeg where it contributes to the growth of algae and fecal coliform.

Mr. Speaker, if the NDP government is so concerned about Lake Winnipeg, will the minister today commit to increased funding for upstream infrastructure that would genuinely benefit the lake and all Manitobans?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation):**

Mr. Speaker, it would be very helpful if members opposite would actually do a little homework before they came into this Chamber. Getting their facts straight should be the first step before you get up to ask a question.

At Emerson, our department has been working very diligently with local people on their environment licence to make sure that the utmost of protection is given to our waterways. I want to remind—I shouldn't have to, but I will remind the Member for Arthur-Virden that, even in his region of the province, this provincial government, the federal government and local governments have contributed through the Canada-Man infrastructure projects millions of dollars to increase our capacity to handle sewage and water treatment in this province. He knows that.

**Mr. Maguire:** Well, Mr. Speaker, leaking and overfilled lagoons all across Manitoba are dumped into streams and rivers simply because they are not a priority of this government. New ways to deal with sewage are available today but not being fully developed by this government. For example, the natural cell water wetland in Roblin is effectively processing sewage from the community creating little if any contaminants. This government should be at the forefront of such technology.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister ignoring the state of the old community lagoon system across Manitoba? Why has he not invested in new methods that enable our infrastructure to benefit the environment, rather than continuing to harm it?

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, the member is a little too late, a little too little. It's already being done. The Department of Conservation works with local municipalities in terms of their environment licences. Every region of this province we're working, including his own backyard where we're working to make sure that those services are provided in an environmentally sustainable way.

We have put our money where our mouth is, unlike the previous government who didn't. We have been entering into agreements with federal and municipal partners in every region of this province to make sure that our lagoons and our water treatment—and the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) knows that in his own backyard we have done that. I know that he knows.

### **Water Quality Boil Water Advisories**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure deficit is not limited to highways and sewers. As of this April, there were 70 boil water advisories in place across the province. This figure does not include water quality issues on First Nations communities either. This government has done virtually nothing to help these communities find ways to end these advisories.

When will this government move to address water supply needs of our communities?

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** Well, in fact, our government does take boil water advisories very seriously. We have gone from a staffing complement of two to a staffing complement of 14. We are working with communities around concerns about water, both surface and ground. It is important to note that where we have notice that there are boil water—where there are concerns with surface water and ground water, we work with the communities through making sure that people are aware that there are issues, that they have to work with them.

We also reinstated the well-testing subsidy program that disappeared during the 1990s. In times when there are floods or other concerns of contamination, we pay 100 percent, Mr. Speaker. We are working with Manitobans around safe water.

\* (14:00)

### **Infrastructure Upgrades**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's hard to buy into the rhetoric from this minister when you look at the facts. Seven of those 70 boil water advisories have been in place since the year 2000. Instead of dealing with these issues, the government has brought forward even more strict drinking water regulations. The Department of Water Stewardship is forcing communities to meet these stringent regulations. Many communities do not have the financial resources to make the changes to their infrastructure.

When the communities go to the infrastructure fund, the well is dry. How are these communities expected to deal with these very expensive infrastructure requirements?

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member should be a little more careful with his questions.



First, he complains there's too many boil water advisories; then he complains that we're working too closely with communities to help them upgrade their systems.

Since 1999, we've worked with over 130 communities throughout Manitoba, including 30 in the north that I know members opposite would never look at. We have, through the Water Services Board, worked with upgrading water and waste water management to the tune of over \$130 million. Yesterday I met with the federal Minister of the Environment, and I spoke with him about upgrading waste water management. I appeared before the parliamentary Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, and also talked about the need to have long-term sustainable funding by all three levels of government.

Our money is on the table. I'm hoping the other partners will come with us, and I hope members opposite will be more responsible about clean, safe water for all Manitobans.

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, this government is big on flexing its muscles—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I can't hear a thing. Let's have some decorum here, please. Okay?

This is Question Period. There are people in the gallery that are trying to listen. We have the viewing public, and I need to be able to hear the questions and answers in case there's a breach of a rule.

If members wish to have a conversation, we have loges on the side. You can have all the private conversation you want. But I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers. I need co-operation here, please.

**Mr. Cullen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is big on flexing its muscles through tough legislation. However, if the financial resources are not available, communities could not meet these regulations. As a result, we see the number of boil water advisories increase. This has a direct impact on people's health throughout Manitoba. We see the federal government coming to the table with additional funding.

When will the provincial government take their obligations seriously and address this very serious infrastructure deficit?

**Ms. Melnick:** Again, Mr. Speaker, by taking water more seriously, we are seeing more boil water advisories because we are working with communities around safe water. Members opposite had two drinking water officers in the '90s; we have 14.

When you work more closely, when you put more investment in, yes, you might get more boil water advisories. But when you talk about the health of a province, it's better that people know that their water might be a concern rather than not know. That is the responsibility that we have taken on as the provincial government.

I ask members opposite to lobby their friends in Ottawa to come to the table, put the money down and let's work to make sure that we have even better water for every citizen in Manitoba.

### **Short-Line Railways Discontinuation**

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** Many short-line railways in Manitoba are being abandoned by rail companies. For decades these lines have been essential to rural Manitoba's infrastructure and economy. As they cease operating, communities are forced to rely on more heavy truck traffic on roads that have disintegrated over the past eight years under the NDP jeopardizing safety and the environment.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation update the House on efforts to address this issue as it continues to have a profound effect on Manitoba?

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Thank you for the question. I'm pleased to answer it.

In 1996, the federal Liberal government, as a matter of fact, made a lot of changes with regard to segmentation and abandonment of short-line railways. I know it's created some hardships certainly for communities. We worked very, very closely with a lot of rural communities, mayors and reeves in trying to address this situation. We know that many of them depend, of course, on not only rail traffic but certainly our highways.

We've dedicated many, many dollars, millions upon millions of dollars, to improve our highway system, and we're certainly in close contact and working very closely with a lot of those municipalities with regard to short-line railways as well.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Speaker, we've heard this minister say repeatedly that the rail lines are a federal matter and that he has no control over them. With that statement he has attempted to duck the issue, blaming Ottawa for not dealing with it. That's hardly an attitude a responsible Cabinet minister should take. He's failed to represent the interests of Manitobans.

Municipalities believe some short lines could be viable if they had access to national main lines. Mr. Speaker, will the minister today tell this House his short-term and long-term plans, if he has any, to address the deficit in rail line infrastructure?

**Mr. Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, certainly the Hudson Bay line, the Sherridon line, there are a number of other lines, and we work very, very closely with a lot of stakeholders to ensure that we've saved and we've ensured that they would become viable. I know I have worked very, very closely with my western transportation colleagues, been in conversation with the federal minister in attempting to deal with issues like this because it's not just a Manitoba and rural Manitoba issue.

Quite frankly, it's a western Canadian issue with regard to short-line railways. We're working diligently, Mr. Speaker, to try to attempt to work with a lot of these communities because we know the importance of rural economic development. On this side of the floor, we've put a lot of effort and finances into making sure that a lot of communities in rural Manitoba are viable and will continue to be viable long into the future.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for that plan.

Infrastructure, rails and roads are an integral part of the economy of rural Manitoba and the province as a whole. Without rail lines many rural businesses are incurring much higher costs for transporting goods by trucks. More trucks mean higher fuel and labour costs, all the while heavier traffic continues to pound away on roads that continue to crumble regardless of how much money the NDP throws at the problem.

Can the minister tell the House how small rural communities are to remain viable as the transportation system continues to erode and disappear?

**Mr. Lemieux:** We made a commitment to KAP awhile ago, in April, quite frankly, to undertake a stakeholder meeting on this issue which took place. We also looked at a number of different ways to help local communities, whether it's business plans that

we will assist them with. We've even gone as far as possibly providing technical assistance and advice and looking at financial assistance in different ways.

Mr. Speaker, we're committed to rural Manitoba. As a rural MLA, I speak to another rural MLA that just asked a question, but we're working very, very closely with the stakeholders in Manitoba. This is a multi-faceted issue that needs a lot of co-operation between not only western ministers but also our federal counterparts. We're working diligently every day to ensure our communities in rural Manitoba will be viable, and we'll ensure we're going to do everything we can to make sure that happens.

### **Dialysis Services Brandon**

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Mr. Speaker, citizens of Brandon and western Manitoba were disgusted and frustrated by the Minister of Health's rant when she was asked serious questions regarding the closure of the evening session of the renal unit at Brandon general hospital. The minister lacked to show any understanding, take responsibility or show any compassion for patients who need this service.

So I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province whether he will take responsibility for this issue and ensure that those people who require the dialysis treatment will be able to access that treatment in evening sessions, and whether that decision to close that evening session, which is supposed to start on June 18, will be reversed so that families, people who have jobs, people who have long distances to travel, can get this life-serving treatment that they require.

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, indeed, we did speak the other day about dialysis in Brandon, and as I said the other day the Brandon Regional Health Authority is working very aggressively to recruit nurses that will be able to fill the two vacancies that they currently have.

We know that there are 56 people that receive dialysis in Brandon, and we know that 15 of those patients are affected by the change in the shift. We know that the Brandon Regional Health Authority and the hospital has worked out a schedule with those individuals so that everybody will continue to receive their dialysis in Brandon and that they won't have to go anywhere else, Mr. Speaker

**Mr. Derkach:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that the minister, at least, has taken this matter a little more seriously today than she did the other day.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to address my question to the Premier (Mr. Doer) once again. People in the Brandon area and in western Manitoba have been told by this Premier that health care, dialysis services are important to those people in western Manitoba. A dialysis unit was promised to Russell eight years ago and still hasn't arrived. Today we have people who have jobs during the day, who can't take treatment during the day, but are being forced to either quit their jobs or take a leave of absence from their jobs to get dialysis treatment, all because we are going to see nurses taking holidays.

I ask this Premier whether he will take responsibility and, on behalf of the people of western Manitoba, ensure that service is reinstated before June 18.

\* (14:10)

**Ms. Oswald:** Mr. Speaker, as I said before and I'll say again, the Brandon Regional Health Authority is working with those 15 out of 56 patients that have previously received their dialysis during that third shift to ensure that they are able to have their dialysis and continue it in Brandon. The member opposite is not putting accurate information on the record.

I can say that the region is working on a case-by-case basis with these individuals to ensure that their work schedules, their day responsibility schedules, are taken into account so that they can get the service that they need when they need to get it. All of those patients are going to get their dialysis in Brandon, and that's really what the region of Brandon is committed to do at the same time that they're actively recruiting those nurses.

**Mr. Derkach:** When I said the minister lacked understanding of the issue, I think her last answer certainly indicates that. So I go back to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. I go back to the Premier because, I think, he understands that when a person has a job two hours away from Brandon, on a full-time basis, that patient cannot attend a dialysis treatment during the day unless that person leaves his job or, in fact, takes some kind of a leave of absence.

Now I want to ask the Premier whether he finds it acceptable for people who have family responsibilities, people who have jobs, people who have to travel long distances, to have to be shuffled into a day program because the evening program is going to be shut down because of holidays.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) whether he finds that acceptable under his administration and his leadership as Premier of this province.

**Ms. Oswald:** Mr. Speaker, again I'll assist the member opposite by saying that the Brandon Regional Health Authority has worked with these individuals on a case-by-case basis. They have not phoned him to update him on their conversations, but they have had private conversations with individuals that are being challenged by this scenario and they are being accommodated.

Further, we're ensuring that we're training more nurses that can do this work through the Manitoba Renal Program. We're doing that by adding an additional course, which we did this June, another course in September wherein we're almost doubling the seats. This is in stark contrast, I'd say to the members opposite who, when it came to nurses under their watch, they just fired a thousand of them and drove 500 more out of the province. We're training them. They fired them.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable Member for Inkster—

#### Point of Order

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

**Mr. Derkach:** You know, Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Speaker:** On a point of order?

**Mr. Derkach:** Yes, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. And I'm reluctant to get up on a point of order but—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Derkach:** Mr. Speaker, moments ago, we heard the Premier talk about the heckling in the House and that it was below the dignity of individuals in this House. Well, dialysis is a life-and-death situation. I think it is below the dignity of the government opposite to make fun of an issue that is truly serious in the minds and in the health conditions of people in western Manitoba.

Even though I asked the question three times of the Premier, he failed to get up. Mr. Speaker, I think that it is somewhat insulting to have the minister harken back to the '90s on a serious issue like this when she has responsibility for it.

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

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I think if you were to look at the member's comments, he does not have a point of order.

I understand why the member is reluctant to talk about the 11 lean years when a thousand nurses were fired and 500 left. I understand that, Mr. Speaker, but I note that the heckling was louder from the member's side of the House as he asked the question than it was from this side of the House.

We've had tremendous heckling from members opposite, and I think he ought to turn to his fellow members and talk to them about—*[interjection]* In fact, I can't even—oh, now I can hear myself speak and I want to indicate that you might want to call all members to order, particularly the member's accomplices because it has been rather loud today. I think it's an appropriate point to deal with that issue.

But I understand why he's reluctant to talk about the lean, awful, miserable years of the 1990s under the Filmon Conservatives where nurses were fired and doctors left.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Russell, first of all, points of order should not be used for debates. On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Russell, he does not have a point of order. It's clearly a dispute over the facts.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** We will move on, and the honourable Member for Inkster has the floor.

#### **Candidate Nomination (Wellington) Angie Ramos' Resignation**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Angie Ramos was a 63-year-old visible minority that had dreams and aspirations of being elected to the Manitoba Legislature.

We know that the Premier had talked to her the day after her resignation, and I have a very simple and straightforward question to the Premier. When he had indicated to Angie that she had made the right decision, can the Premier indicate to this House why it is he believed that Angie Ramos resigned as the candidate in Wellington?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the member knows there are matters before courts and other independent bodies, but I would like to say to the member opposite that nobody on this side of the House needs any lecture about electing visible minority candidates to this Legislature and electing women to this Legislature.

The Liberals should be very careful. They should be very careful to be holier than thou about representing all the faces of Manitoba because they don't.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** To the Premier, I would say that what he says just isn't true. Just because you have 34 trained seals to applaud you doesn't necessarily mean that you're right, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Premier should be aware. He had talked to Angie Ramos the following day and it's a very simple question. In his opinion, after all he called her, why did Angie Ramos resign? Does he not have an opinion as to why she resigned? It's a pretty straightforward question, I would think.

**Mr. Doer:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is in complete contempt of the democratic decisions that people make. To talk about the 34 members on this side of the House is the height of Liberal arrogance. It's the height of Liberal arrogance. Every one of the men and women that are elected on this side of the House and on that side of the House are elected by the people.

Democracy has determined the make-up of this Legislature and democracy is always right in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, last time I looked I actually had more votes than the Premier had in his own constituency.

My constituents, the constituents which I represent, are concerned about the allegations that led to potential corruption within the Premier's office.

Was the Premier aware that there was a meeting that took place that had individuals like Wayne Copeland and Eugene Kostyra meeting with Angie Ramos and what impact that might have had on her decision, Mr. Speaker? I think Manitobans have a right to know what the Premier knew about Angie Ramos' resignation.

Does he believe that Angie Ramos was intimidated or coerced or bullied in any way into resigning, Mr. Speaker? Does he believe that?

\* (14:20)

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of trouble understanding how the member opposite can be arrogant under the circumstances, but, you know, I can accept arrogance. But lack of understanding I do not tolerate, or integrity.

In the newsletter the member opposite said and I quote, and it was during the election: Inkster, more than any other constituency in Manitoba, has ensured that the Liberal Party has a presence inside the Manitoba Legislature. Did he forget about the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard)? Oh, Mr. Speaker.

The point is if the electors knew that all this member does is chide and talk about issues like we're going to bring a bill together to get the police to chase sign thieves, Mr. Speaker, they would know that the Liberal presence in the House does not move the agenda on crime, on health care, on education. They talk about issues that have relevance only to the Liberal Party and their own Liberal little self-satisfaction.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for St. Norbert—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I had recognized the honourable Member for St. Norbert, so she has the floor.

#### **Moving Around Manitoba Government Program**

**Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert):** Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the pleasure of attending a great event, Sneakers in Motion at the University of Manitoba. This event and similar activities all across Manitoba have been encouraged and supported through our Healthy Living programs.

In April, the Minister of Healthy Living launched Moving Around Manitoba, an exciting new initiative encouraging Manitobans to be physically active, to incorporate healthy choices as part of their daily eating habits and to participate in activities that help them manage their stress and support their emotional well-being.

Can the minister please update the House on this initiative?

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living):** Healthy Living strategy really includes physical activity as one of the key components, and Moving Around Manitoba is one of those initiatives that we have taken the lead on.

What we've done is we've introduced and welcomed all Manitobans to join us in walking across Manitoba. I'm pleased to say that over 2,100 Manitobans have registered and they have clocked in 50,000 kilometres. That is 12 times around the province of Manitoba; that is, as an example, from Winnipeg to Sydney, Australia.

Manitobans are engaged in this process of getting physically active because they see the importance of it for their mental and physical wellness. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

#### **Speaker's Ruling**

**Mr. Speaker:** After the Prayer on June 6, 2007, the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) raised a point of order regarding circulation of copies of the Throne Speech and asked whether it was the proper procedure and tradition of the House for the Throne Speech to be circulated before the Throne Speech has been completed. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities.

The honour Member for Inkster has raised an interesting point, and I would like to share with the House the dilemma that the Speaker is facing regarding this matter. Generally, when items are distributed or made available to the members, they are items that in fact have been tabled in the House and, once tabled, copies are officially available to members. Examples of items that fall into this category include: legislation that is introduced, annual reports of Crown agencies and government departments and special operating agencies, annual reports of independent officers of the Legislature, tabled papers and sessional papers. Even in the case of the budget, copies of the Budget Address and the departmental Estimates are tabled in the House and provided to the caucus offices for members as soon as the Budget Address is completed.

Yet, in the case of the Speech from the Throne, this item is a bit of an anomaly in that no copy of the

speech is officially tabled though the speech does appear verbatim in *Hansard* and in the Votes and Proceedings after the fact. As a courtesy, a copy of the Speech from the Throne is provided to the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and to the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) after the Throne Speech has been presented by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, but no other copies are provided to members.

I am aware that the government may also be providing copies of the Throne Speech to the media, but this distribution to the media is not carried out by the House and is not done by House staff. In addition, there are no formal rules and practices of the House that dictate when the government is free to release the Throne Speech.

In the past, I ruled on March 21, 2005, that copies of legislation should not be provided to the media before being provided to members in the House. I also ruled on September 8, 2003, that although it was not a matter of privilege that the media appear to have copies of the Auditor General's report on the Dakota Tipi First Nation Gaming Commission, I did take steps with the independent officers of the House to ensure that members received copies before the media and that nine copies would be provided for tabling instead of the customary three copies.

Again, I note that in the case of the Throne Speech, copies are not tabled or given to members, so I must rule there is no rule or practice that the Speaker could be enforcing in this instance. However, the government might wish to reflect on this for the future. In addition, if this issue is one of concern to members, it could be raised at a meeting of the Standing Committee on the Rules of the House.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### 2007 Farm Family of the Year

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, Manitoba was built on strong agricultural traditions. Despite hardships, many farm families have survived and remain dedicated to the way of life they love. Today I would like to recognize one such family.

The Boulanger family of Grande-Clairière has been chosen as the 2007 Farm Family of the Year by the Red River Exhibition Association. I would like to congratulate Gaston and Nicole Boulanger and their children, Marc, Adam, Daniel and Janine for this

well-deserved honour. Their homestead celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1994. Today, the family operates a 2,240-acre operation that specializes in organic grain and beef near Hartney and Grande Clairière.

Gaston and Nicole have embraced innovative agricultural ideas while maintaining their family's farming heritage. In 2000, they began to change their conventional operation to use organic production. Certified by the Organic Producers Association of Manitoba, they produce and market quality organic oats, barley, buckwheat, flax, fall rye and beef cattle. The Boulanger family is an outstanding example for others and should be credited for demonstrating the importance and sustainability of agricultural diversity.

Their business has grown because of their hard work and ingenuity. The legacy of Gaston and Nicole has been continued with the next generation. Two of their sons, Marc and Adam, along with their families, have begun organic operations near the original homestead.

Their award will be presented next Monday, June 18, at the Red River Exhibition grounds.

Mr. Speaker, I wish the Boulanger family continued success and congratulate them once again on being named 2007's Red River Exhibition Farm Family of the Year. Thank you.

\* (14:30)

### Tom Chan

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour an inspiring educator and an asset to the community of Elmwood, Mr. Tom Chan, the principal of River Elm School. Mr. Chan takes the education of his students seriously and for the last 14 years has posed unique and creative reading challenges to these students. The students are able to read a set amount of pages, then Mr. Chan will reward their efforts with a wacky stunt such as eating fried worms or kissing a pig.

Each year Chan puts the year-long challenge to the students in a June assembly to encourage summer reading. The children are able to choose the task that Chan must undergo if they accomplish reading the mandated number of pages. The challenge also includes all pages read by parents and siblings within the household. This encourages adults to be positive role models and to create good reading habits in their children.

The intent of the challenge is to motivate students to read and to demonstrate that reading is, indeed, fun and rewarding. Chan's overall goal is to transform Elmwood into a reading community. He knows that literature cannot be appreciated without literacy.

Mr. Speaker, Tom Chan also believes that reading and writing are tickets out of poverty and will enable his students to be anything they want to be. These reading challenges have created a student body that is enthusiastic about reading and learning. Also, Chan has established an impressive literacy trend across the country where other schools have implemented their own unique reading challenges.

Mr. Speaker, from the promotion of literacy and the early encouragement of the interest in reading to the simple enjoyment of a good book, the benefits of this solid education are lasting and significant. I encourage the members of the House to join me in congratulating Tom Chan's innovation in educating our youth and in raising the profile of reading. Thank you.

#### **Progressive Agriculture Safety Day**

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** Mr. Speaker, we all know how important safety is for farm families, especially those with children. We have seen devastating injuries and young lives lost to preventable and unfortunate accidents. I am pleased to share with the House one local effort in the Carman constituency that is increasing awareness and teaching farm safety to young people.

On June 7, over 100 students from Miami, Roland and Manitou schools gathered in Miami to attend a Progressive Agriculture Safety Day. This important event was presented by the Progressive Agriculture Foundation, South Central Chapter of Farm Safety 4 Just Kids and Miami Children's Facility.

Students from grades 5 to 8 learned about and how to respect farm safety. Students were encouraged to become responsible for their own safety and to share safety tips with family and friends. Qualified presenters shared knowledge and skills that could save lives, such as how to use a fire extinguisher.

I would like to thank the volunteers, presenters and many generous sponsors who made this event possible. These community leaders, local businesses and organizations have demonstrated once again their commitment to our community and young

people. I know myself and the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) would like to thank the following: Manitou and Miami Agassiz Credit Unions; Agricore United; Bayer Crop Science; Buck Knives; Callum Insurance; Canadian Agricultural Safety Association; Carman Meats; D & T Glass; Delmar Commodities; Greenland Equipment; Greenvalley Equipment; Hometown Ford Services; Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation; Manitoba Hydro; Miami, Morden and Pembina Co-ops; Miami Collegiate; SkeetSafe; Stepler Charolais Farms; Todd Vanstone Farms; Wally's Repair and Westaway Pharmacy. Also, a special thanks to Darrin and Wendy Pearson. Wendy acted as co-ordinator for this event.

Mr. Speaker, I know this fun and informative day was appreciated by students, teachers and their families. Miami's Progressive Agriculture Safety Day was an investment in the safety of today's children and tomorrow's farmers. Thank you.

#### **Career Internship Program Windsor Park Collegiate**

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great pleasure to speak today about the exciting Career Internship Program at Windsor Park Collegiate. CIP was launched in September 2006 at the beginning of the school year and has been a great success. It has been honoured with the Canadian Council on Learning's Promising Practice Recognition in the Work and Learning category.

CIP's goal is to help the students build career focus and transferable skills that they can use after high school. This year CIP students participated in a variety of activities and employability skills training to prepare themselves for their internships in May and June. The students were required to practise their job-finding skills by seeking out their own internship experiences. They had to write real cover letters, resumes, go to real job interviews, engage in transferable skills training and create business plans. They also went to MTC theatre productions, participated in Toastmasters, were group leaders, performers and facilitators during the school workshops, and were important volunteers with the Special Olympics Manitoba Winter Games.

Their hard work made the program a success, and the students earned glowing praise from the parents and partners who hosted their internship. I was pleased to offer an award established in my name as MLA for Radisson to this particular workplace award. The recipient was Shaleene Allard

who excelled in her academic program and shone at her internship.

The program worked so well this year that Windsor Park Collegiate plans to expand it beyond the one-year grade 12 currently to grade 11 CIP literature class by allowing students to explore what the world has to offer to them. The new class will include literary studies, attending six MTC productions, career focus activities, entrepreneurial conference and their experience in volunteer work.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank Adriano Magnifico, Raymond "Chip" Berry and Irene Nordheim, without which this was not possible. Thank you very much.

### Upper Fort Garry

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Just seven blocks from the Manitoba Legislature is the birth place of our province. It is the site where Louis Riel's provisional government was established. It is the site which was the commercial, social and governmental hub of Winnipeg and Manitoba for many years. It is a site of local, provincial, and national historic importance.

Sadly, the future of the Upper Fort Garry site is today in jeopardy, not from vandalism or riverbank erosion or traffic. It's in jeopardy from dumb growth and neglectful politicians.

Right now, a 15-storey apartment block is scheduled to be built on a critical part of this important historic site. Right now, the City of Winnipeg is busy selling this critical part of the site to a private developer. This week our esteemed provincial government said: we have spent \$16,000 on the north gate. We're happy.

Happy? Why, I ask, is the provincial government so happy, when the very future of this site of such provincial and national historic importance is now in jeopardy of being overwhelmed by 15 storeys of concrete?

In Italy would they allow a highrise apartment block inside the Roman Colosseum? In Washington, would they allow a highrise apartment block a metre away from the Lincoln Memorial? Hardly. But, incredibly, our Premier (Mr. Doer) is allowing a highrise apartment building on the Upper Fort Garry site.

For whatever reason, the NDP seem to think that the part of this site where the apartment block is to be built is not really that important. You know, I'd

hate to think that the government doesn't think that particular piece of land is unimportant because it happened to be the place where First Nations and Métis people camped beside the fort.

"Mr. History," that is, the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), should take note because he's spoken a lot about the importance of students re-enacting our history. Our history should include those who often camped beside the fort as well as those who were inside. We are, after all, one province. The essence of who we are as Manitobans is at stake. There must be one complete site which tells our history where students and, indeed, all Manitobans—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we might move into Committee of Supply to consider the Interim Supply.

**Mr. Speaker:** The House will resolve into Committee of Supply to consider the resolutions respecting the Interim Supply Bill.

#### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

##### Interim Supply

\* (14:40)

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

The committee has been considering the first resolution respecting operating expenditures. At the last sitting the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) had posed a question to the honourable Minister of Health. The question was posed by the member for Winkler.

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Madam Chair, there was a question from the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) concerning Tabor Home. We have had a previous conversation about that capital project. Our second most recent conversation about that project occurred when we were out at the Boundary Trails Health Centre, a spectacular centre in rural Manitoba, when we were both able to witness the beginning of the installation of the MRI out there.

I'm paraphrasing here when I speak of the board member and executives' reaction but that indeed it was a dream come true for the region. We're very



pleased about that. We had an opportunity to speak about the capital project, and the member suggested that we may be able to arrange for the people from the Tabor Home to speak with me or to speak with staff from the department. I do believe that that discussion has taken place with the department.

As I indicated in our most recent conversation yesterday at the close of day, I remain committed to meet with those people if that's what the member so chooses and in the meantime will investigate exactly where in the plan for capital investments in the province that particular personal care home now stands and will investigate and get back to the member.

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa):** Madam Chair, my question is to the minister regarding the ARHA and nursing shortages. Of the 20 hospitals in the ARHA there are a good half-dozen that are experiencing different levels of closure, all of them in acute and emergency care.

The aging nursing population is evident in the communities that I represent, and there's a feeling of concern and, I guess, more questions that are being put forward in regard to the pressures of new nursing staff being employed in the front-line roles that are definitely creating a problem.

The community of Wawanesa is currently closed in acute care and emergency and that is because of nursing shortages. I guess the question I have and that has been asked by members of the Wawanesa health action committee and area is this: What is the minister's strategy to ensuring that this hospital is reopened and, indicating that there are going to be a number of new grads coming out, what is her strategy to ensure that these grads are going to be working in or going to be actively and aggressively recruited into the rural areas?

**Ms. Oswald:** Madam Chair, certainly, when we look at recruitment and retention efforts across Manitoba, recruitment efforts to the north, recruitment efforts to rural Manitoba and even in urban centres, we know that it's a very competitive environment. It's a competitive environment on a national stage. So in partnership with regions around Manitoba we need to make sure that we're doing as much as we can to enhance rural regions' ability to recruit nurses into rural Manitoba.

Certainly, the most important thing that any Department of Health or ministry can do is build the workforce. That would be No. 1. That's why we have

committed to hiring an additional 700 nurses into Manitoba. We made that commitment during the election, and in order to do that we have made a commitment to expand training by adding a hundred new nursing spaces over the next four years.

We know that we have had success in the past in recruiting in rural Manitoba. We know that, since 1999, 911 nurses have relocated to Manitoba with the assistance of the Nurses Recruitment and Retention Fund. Through that fund, 199 rural positions have been filled through the Conditional Grant Program by which nursing students receive financial assistance in return for promising to work in rural and in northern Manitoba.

We've expanded the role of nurses which is another thing that they tell us is very important to ensuring that they can work and thrive in Manitoba, in rural Manitoba. That includes being able to order diagnostic tests, prescribing drugs, performing minor medical procedures like suturing. Madam Chair, certainly expanding nurse practitioners has been a commitment of our government as well.

I think it's also important to address likely one of the most prominent issues and that's the issue of remuneration. We know that since '99 remuneration for nurses has increased by 38.5 percent. We're going to continue to work with our regions to help ensure that nurses are here in Manitoba and working in the Assiniboine region and elsewhere.

It's a job that's a challenge on a national stage, as I said, Madam Chairperson, but we're going to work in partnership with our regions to secure nursing positions in rural Manitoba.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Chairperson, my question to the Minister of Health: I'm sure the minister must be extraordinarily disappointed by the results of the recent CIHI report which showed, when it comes to hip fractures, that the time from hip fracture to surgery was the worst in Manitoba of any provinces, that the percentage of patients receiving surgery on the same or the next day was 53 percent in Manitoba and it was much higher in other provinces and that the percentage of patients receiving surgery on the same day, the next day or the day after was 75 percent in Manitoba whereas it was much better in all of the other provinces and indeed in the three territories.

So my question here is, it's rather extraordinary that we've got patients with hip fractures, one-quarter of them waiting in pain for at least more than three

days after their fracture and that, as we know and as the CIHI report points out, when people wait this long, the chances of complications including death are much higher.

So I would ask the minister, what is her reaction to this part of the CIHI report and what she's going to do about it, recognizing that eight years have not done it under her government?

\* (14:50)

**Ms. Oswald:** Certainly, when we look at reports that come from CIHI, they're very instructive to all the provinces in our country and that, of course, includes Manitoba. We know that we can learn much from the studies that occur, whether it's on orthopedics, on cardiac, on cancer, or health work force. We know that, in the CIHI report that the member speaks of, the 2007 Health Indicators report, that Manitoba performed better than the national average on 13 out of the 18 indicators reported, and that's, of course, a very positive thing for Manitoba. But we did see concerning numbers regarding the issue that he raises about same-day or day-after surgery for hip fractures. As a result of that report, we immediately—or I immediately directed the WRHA to review what specific causes might exist as a result of—might be the causes of this delay in wait time, and to report back by the end of this month what the findings might be.

There has been some suggestion about blood thinner medication and whether or not surgery is, indeed, prudent and safe. These kinds of things are being investigated as to what is occurring in other jurisdictions under those same circumstances. These, of course, are very complex issues that need to be addressed by medical experts, by doctors.

We do know, again, when we're looking at those 13 out of 18 indicators on which Manitoba performed better than the national average, it includes the fact that we have reduced our overall median wait for orthopedic surgery broadly by 45 percent since we announced our plan for orthopedic wait-time reduction in 2005. We also know, specifically, on hip and knee surgeries, that that number is down almost 40 percent since 2005. We performed, in '05-06, over a thousand additional surgeries, well on our way to meeting our target of 2,500 more hip and knee surgeries over the next three years.

Also, as I indicated yesterday, Madam Chair, we have focussed on reducing the number of long

waiters. We've seen other jurisdictions make other choices, but that is not the choice that we have made. We know that we have decreased that list by some 60 percent from 1,300 patients to 503 from '05 to '07.

The other important thing we're working on in partnership with the federal government is a pilot project to improve the referral system where we see people waiting before the wait, essentially, and we believe that this particular project is going to have national implications for improvements in health care. We know that, by building two new state-of-the-art ORs at Concordia and doing more surgeries in Brandon and Boundary Trails, we're working hard to bring down wait times.

Again, as I say to the member opposite, we know that that particular number in the CIHI Report about Manitoba having a lower percentage of people that get that same-day surgery is concerning, and that's why we've directed the WRHA to investigate and report back before the end of June.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Chair, I'm going to, in terms of the limited time that I have, ask what is, in essence, more than one question, but I will, first of all, make a couple of comments. One is that I would ask that the minister look into the availability of Rituximab in lymphoma in Manitoba. I have had some concerns about its availability raised. On the other hand, what I'm hearing is that its situation may be under control in Manitoba, but, certainly, it warrants the minister's attention.

Second, I know that the minister's government has been talking for a long time about sorting out things in the emergency room and there consistently are huge problems, of course, particularly at the Grace but not only there.

The third point that I would like to raise, and specifically ask for an answer from the minister, deals with the problems in getting access to foot and ankle surgery in Manitoba at the moment. This, of course, is a basic need in orthopedics, but it is an area where it is difficult to get surgical procedures done in Manitoba. Can the minister provide an explanation, and what she's doing about it?

Lastly, I would ask about the situation of a woman by the name of Cindy Perrin [*phonetic*] from Reston who was, as I understand it, fired from her position because of some allegations. It was investigated by the College of Licensed Practical Nurses which completely said that the allegations were not of any substance. So the question is: Why is

she unable to get, at the minimum, severance pay which she should've had?

So I would ask the minister if she can deal particularly with the issue of foot and ankle surgery and with the issue of why, after allegations were proven wrong, there is not at least severance pay provided.

**Ms. Oswald:** I am presuming by the nature of the formulation of the four-pronged question that the member opposite has been informed about how much time he has or doesn't have, which would imply how much time I have or don't have, I think. So I will say that I will take the item on Rituximab forward and do some investigating. The member opposite knows that decisions about cancer drugs are made by doctors, naturally. He knows that we have increased our budget to CancerCare Manitoba by some 130 percent in the decisions that we make about these drugs, but I'll take what he's saying and go forward with it in the name of time and not say anything else on that subject.

On the subject of emergency rooms—*[interjection]* It's the teacher in me. I can't help myself. On the subject of emergency rooms, the member is right that we have had some discussion over time about strategies to ensure that our emergency rooms are open, to ensure that they are staffed and to ensure that people who are presenting in emergency rooms with serious health issues are taken care of in a timely manner.

We've discussed on a number of occasions in this House the fact that it must be a multi-pronged strategy, that we have to look at immediate issues which, of course, include issues of remuneration, where we have opened early the MMA agreement, and there are active negotiations going on. We, of course, have worked with the regional health authority to ensure that staffing in the ERs continues our commitments to keeping ERs open. Indeed, redeveloping ERs through capital construction is on the record. It's very clear. It's in contrast to what we've seen historically from other political parties, and, of course, looking at the medium term, like adding clinical assists specifically to the Grace. This will be the first time we see this in Canada, we believe, to provide even better support to doctors, doing things like creating a new free-standing mental health crisis response centre, a mental health ER, again the first of its kind in Canada which is going to provide specialized care for we believe up to 10,000 mental health patients who visit emergency

rooms each year; and looking in the longer term, of course, in how emergency doctors are educated in this province, which has been hailed by emergency room doctors themselves, by the Faculty of Medicine, as visionary and a very important investment.

So with that we continue. We don't deny that there are challenges. We all know that there are challenges and that's why we have to put our shoulders to the wheel and make sure that our ERs are staffed and that our patients are taken care of.

On the issue of foot and ankle surgery, I know that the member opposite is well aware that one of the most important things that we can be doing to reduce wait times is ensuring that we have centralized wait lists. There are many things that we can be doing, of course, investing in human resources and building state-of-the-art ORs so there is more space and more capacity.

\* (15:00)

But one of the most important things we can be doing is centralizing a wait list. That is really a cultural change in the medical community. We know that, but we are seeing very good success with hips and knees, and as we broaden our strategy with wait-list co-ordinators and centralized wait lists, we know that we're going to see as much progress as we have with hips and knees.

Sometimes, it's a little more challenging to have some doctors get on board with signing on to a centralized wait list, but we know that the majority are on board, and we're seeing very good success with that.

Lastly, on the issue of an individual person's employment situation and termination of employment, it would be wholly inappropriate for me to discuss that kind of specific issue on the floor of the Legislature. I can say that, generally speaking, without citing a specific case, when these issues are reviewed, there's correspondence sent from the appropriate bodies, whether it's from a college, whether it's from a minister's office, whether it's from the Department of Health, to individuals that have these questions. I would suspect that this particular case is no different.

If the member has specific personal issues he wants to speak about with me outside of the Legislature, he knows, as always, my door is always open.

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** I have some questions for the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh).

Today being the 13th of June, it was just two years ago that Phoenix Sinclair was reported—it was reported that she died on June 11, 2005. Unfortunately, no one knew that for almost nine months. So I did need to ask some questions in regard to this. I do know that, of course, there is an investigation going on, but I think that we need to be proactive and look at some of the information that may have come forward already, so that we can use this information in the course of protecting other children in similar circumstances, unfortunate circumstances.

I'd like to draw the attention to the minister that I did write a letter to him last November 6, and I asked for some general information regarding the dates of the visits to Phoenix Sinclair while, from the time of her birth until the time her case was closed, and that information was denied. I was not asking for personal information, but I will respect the fact that the information was not forthcoming for confidentiality reasons.

However, I would like to ask the minister if this letter did alert him to the fact that there may have been some issues here, and whether or not he went further and investigated to see what the dates and times of the dates of visits to this little girl were, and if there were any irregularities that would have perhaps been useful in determining processes for the care of other children.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** By the nature of the question in the letter, I'm taking it that the member, at least at the time, was advocating or wanted the minister to breach the act in terms of his confidentiality or may have been suggesting that the confidentiality provisions be changed. She might want to clarify that today.

But, by her remarks today, it appears that she recognizes the confidentiality requirements of the legislation. Those confidentiality requirements, of course, make it difficult to publicly discuss the nature of cases and services that may be provided. My understanding is that some of the historic basis for that is that when child and family legislation, child protection legislation, was promulgated—not just here but everywhere in the modern world—there was a recognition that, while giving the power to the government to interfere or to get involved in families

was important and an overriding consideration, the government should not be empowered to be able to go around and talk about what services or what difficulties or troubles a family may be in. So I take it, then, from the question that the member is not advocating that I've breached the act or that the act be changed, but if otherwise, we can have that discussion.

But the government went further than just the minister making inquiries. The government, as the member I'm sure knows, commissioned outside reviews. Indeed, some reviews were triggered automatically. It's those reviews that have been informing the recommendations made in those same reviews and which the government is committed to acting on.

As well, there are other proceedings that are under way and will be under way in the future that will further inform on how we can learn from tragedies and not just governments and child protection but also the role of others that may be involved with families, other systems and it may in fact, as the results of the public inquiry, lead to some serious questions about how it is that a little girl could have been deceased for nine months and no one knowing that and reporting that accordingly.

That raises questions about the role of not just governments but the broader community, about other agencies and about family, extended family and so on. I say that in the context of a recognition and a deeply held belief by this member that the role of child protection is not only that of a child protection service in a government. There is an obligation that extends way beyond the child protection service and even government as a whole. To suggest otherwise is only to encourage a careless society.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Madam Chairperson, I take that answer as a no, that no further investigation was done by this minister. There would be some information coming from the preliminary hearing which, of course, we know that there's a publication ban on. That information, I think, should be looked at in terms of what are the issues around the care that was provided. What kind of problems led to the death of this little girl? Because it was nine months that she was gone and missing and no one knew where she was. We need to prevent these types of terrible things from happening. We need to look at what we can learn from this situation.

The minister did bring up the issue of the public inquiry. The public inquiry has been called. We

would have preferred it had been called earlier than it was, but it has been called. But I think seven or eight months has passed since that inquiry was called. I know that there is an ongoing criminal investigation. I understand the logistics of that.

But I wonder if the minister can say what homework, what basis, what foundation has been laid to prepare for a public inquiry, and if the terms of reference have been drawn up or have been looked at for a public inquiry into the death of Phoenix Sinclair.

\*(15:10)

**Mr. Mackintosh:** The information that has come from the external reviews, the Chief Medical Examiner review, the section 4 review, any information that comes from criminal proceedings, any information that comes from the public inquiry will be most important for this government, and I suspect for many others, to learn from this tragedy and ensure that action is taken accordingly. So the process of learning and discovering is one that must be ever constant and ongoing.

In terms of the public review, of course it is critical that absolutely nothing undermine, get in the way, or in any way skew the most important exercise in accountability, which is bringing to justice any person who may be criminally responsible for a tragedy. In this matter, there are proceedings before the courts with which all of us as members of the Assembly, whether in government or opposition, we have to be extremely vigilant in ensuring that there are no collateral or undermining efforts made as those proceedings progress.

I can advise the member that there has been some preliminary work done to look at the nature of different options of how the inquiry could be conducted in terms of what kind of expertise or what kind of background would be preferable and, as well, we can look to see how other public inquiries have been conducted. I have been involved in striking two of those, along with my Cabinet colleagues, and I am very aware of different models that are available and how those can best be supported by a government to ensure that the important questions of public interest are unveiled and in a transparent way.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Again, I say it's been two years since the death of Phoenix Sinclair. It's likely that we could see another couple of years before we actually reach the point of having a public inquiry, and it's

very unfortunate because memories do wane over time.

I'd like to move on to another question. The official launch of the ANCR agency mandated by First Nations of Southern Manitoba Child and Family Services was recognized on February 3, with a celebration of a grand opening on the 22nd. I want to congratulate them for that. But I just wanted to ask a question arising from the recommendations of the special case review in regard to the death of Phoenix Sinclair. That was that the concerns expressed by Winnipeg Child and Family Services regarding the implications for increased caseloads within their agency be addressed prior to the full institution of the Joint Intake and Response Unit as an independent body, recognizing that ANCR is the body that replaced JIRU, and as recognized as an independent body. I'm wondering if this recommendation has been implemented before the grand opening.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** That recommendation was certainly one of the considerations by all of the stakeholders, all of the parties to the move towards the establishment of ANCR. As well, the question was addressed by the leadership with the Changes for Children team. It was determined that the time was right to move ahead and, indeed, that there was only one direction that had to be followed on a timely basis to not only proceed with AJI-CWI, but also to address some outstanding issues of lines of authority and accountability. So it was a result of some very careful planning and consideration of that recommendation that the decision was made to proceed with the formal launch of ANCR.

Having said that, there was a careful transition process, some of which is still in play, and the devolution now of that program is well under way.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Madam Chair, is the minister then saying that they did not address the increased caseloads before they implemented the independent body ANCR?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** The decision was made in light of all of these circumstances that there was a need to move and to address caseloads more effectively by moving toward the devolution of ANCR.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Can the minister say then what are the caseloads of social workers now in the Southern Authority?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** That is a matter I can report back on to the member in terms of getting some updated information.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** There were a number of other recommendations and, well, that funds be made available to Winnipeg Child and Family Services to ensure the computerized information system provides timely and co-ordinated information on children at risk and their families.

I know this has been an issue through the devolution process and continues to be an issue that the computerized systems are not as useful or as available as they should be. The other one is that an advisory council be established to provide guidance and accountability and resolution of internal issues for the Winnipeg Child and Family Services. This was to be instituted within six months of this report. So I'd ask the status on this, whether this advisory council is established and who might be on it.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** On the issue of the computer system, the CFSIS system, the recommendations are very clear on the need to enhance that system and to enhance accessibility to it. Further suggestions on incremental improvements to CFSIS have been collected from front-line workers, as well as from supervisors and my department as well. So there was a priority listing of suggested improvements that was just recently concluded, and work on priority enhancements actually begins this month.

An RFP has been prepared by the implementation team and my understanding is that that is going to tender, I think, within days or something like that, so that we can see the work get under way presumably this fall as a result of those time lines.

Funds have also been provided to help the authorities with the task of ensuring entering all open cases, both federal and provincial, onto CFSIS. As well, funds have been provided to the authorities to deal with the challenge of some connectivity issues experienced by some agency offices when they're trying to use the Child and Family Service applications. So that's sort of a status update on that.

I can say that the member should know that there was a designated working group put in place specifically to deal with the computer challenges and as I've just described, the work is well under way now.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Since the minister didn't answer the question on the advisory council, whether that was established, I'm not sure that I take that to mean that there isn't one established. I'd like to ask him just to respond quickly to that.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I had heard from the member questions about the computer system. Perhaps she can just repeat her question on the other part of the question.

\* (15:20)

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Madam Chair, one of the recommendations was that an advisory council be established to provide guidance and accountability and resolution of internal issues for the Winnipeg Child and Family Services. This should be instituted within six months of this report, this report being dated September of '06. So I'm wondering if this has been done.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I can get back to the member on the status of that advisory council within Winnipeg Child and Family.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** To Madam Chair, I'd like to ask the minister about the situation in Lynn Lake. I have been presenting a petition for the people of Lynn Lake who actually wrote that petition themselves and asked me to present it. I've written a letter to the minister, April 18. I've not received a response back. I did write to the Children's Advocate, and she actually visited Lynn Lake and confirmed my concerns. The last I spoke to Lynn Lake, which was late last week, they had not heard from the minister or the minister's office.

I'd like to ask the minister when he intends to address the situation in Lynn Lake.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** First, I know the member has been presenting these petitions, but, as I recall, there were three questions raised by the member, back before the election was called, in the House in Question Period about Lynn Lake and allegations that there was no social worker for that community. I think I responded at that time—I stand to be corrected, but, as I recall, I responded by advising the House that that matter was being addressed. It's my recollection that a social worker was made available for the community in late March actually before the member asked her question, and the availability of that person for that community, of course, will continue to be assessed in terms of whether the time available to deal with Lynn Lake is sufficient or not. But I believe that she was in place on or about March, sometime in late March.

The other question raised was with regard to the use of accommodations out of the friendship centre and an outstanding bill, and my understanding is that there is some dispute about that as between the

parties, and I've had some information come to me that suggested there could be some error in what the member has been advised. But it's my understanding as well that further discussions are taking place to deal with that.

I think those were the two issues. Oh, the other one was the use of the accommodations at the friendship centre, and information that I had received from the authority and the agency in particular indicated that the agency was preferring not to use that and was preferring instead to find foster home placements. That was the information I had at least a couple of months ago.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** I would suggest that the minister make a trip to Lynn Lake and speak to the people there and find out the issues and mediate in this particular instance if there is an issue that needs mediation because there is a problem. There is not a qualified social worker. The safe house is closed. Children are going out of the town. They don't know where they're going, and they are housed in hotels, Mr. Minister, so I suggest you take this a little bit more seriously.

I want to move on to a question in regard to Manitoba Housing Authority review. There was a review last year struck, just about this time last year, Madam Chair. In fact, the discussion at the Cabinet table, I guess, because I have a Cabinet document here, says that there were a lot of issues in Manitoba Housing Authority and there needed to be a review. Of course, this review was advertised on a very obscure Web site. There was a lot of secrecy behind it, the operational review.

We wrote to the minister and asked when he would be conducting this review, and we did get a response back that the work started on December 11, 2006. The contract called for completion of the project within a six-month time frame, which would have been June 11, last Monday. We haven't seen any report of the operational review of Manitoba Housing Authority. Can the minister say where the report is?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I know, as a result of discussions between the parties and the firm, that, rather than just a review and a list of issues, there was to be a more robust, shall we say, find-and-fix approach to the review of Manitoba Housing, MHRC. As a result of that, we understand that we can expect a final report, and I'm more than happy to share that publicly this fall. So the time lines are a little bit longer, but that's because the nature of the review is, I would say,

more robust than was initially contemplated. I think it's a more effective way to bring about improvements and change.

I've seen, for example, where a consulting firm can be brought in to look at an area of public administration and not work very closely with those on the front lines, for example, and then comes back with recommendations that may be not quite in sync with what the challenges really are and come back without any movement, of course, toward change. I think that the enhancements to the review are very positive so I look forward to seeing what comes of this. I always think there's room for improvement, and I think that the approach is good so I think we're not far from a final report on that one. It's June now, and I'm advised that we can expect to discover the final report this fall.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Madam Chair, then I understand that this review is quite a bit behind schedule, if it was due in June and we're not going to see it for this fall. But I draw attention to the request for proposal when it says that during the implementation stage, the selected proponent shall be required to provide to the project team with regular reports in a form satisfactory to the project team, setting out the progress and status of the implementation of the recommendations made in the interim report and approved by the project team, and this is to be followed by a final report. So I'd ask the minister if he could provide details of the preliminary report.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** My understanding is that the find-and-fix approach is ongoing, that there are different models of accountability being looked at, and that there hasn't been any conclusion on those kinds of issues. My understanding is, as well, that they're looking at the nature of organizational structures, and that, I'm sure, will be available for the member when the report is prepared.

\* (15:30)

**Mrs. Taillieu:** I noted that the cost of this review was in or around \$100,000, and that would have been for the six-month time. Now that it's been extended indefinitely, we have not been given a date. Can the minister say what the extent of the extended costs will be for this review, and where will that money come from?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes, I can make inquiries into that, but I don't want the member to be putting words on the record that don't reflect what I said. My

understanding is that the final report will be concluded this fall.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Madam Chair, I do have a question in regard to a housing unit at Carrigan Greencrest where the tenants there are experiencing mould in their units. They've had to move out while mould is being removed but the mould still reoccurs and they're experiencing a lot of difficulties. There are people with small children, babies; there are people that are immunocompromised, in that they are on chemotherapy, and these conditions with mould growing in the suites has caused them some distress.

I want to ask the minister if this has been brought to his attention and what he is doing about it.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I have been advised by MHA that the remediation work is to be concluded by mid-July.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Madam Chair, we would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) in regard to grain bins in regard to the taxes that have been imposed upon some farmers. There's a misconception out there about what is equipment and what is counted as farm equipment and the others for assessment. KAP's example that they use, with the tin grain bin annually will pay about \$1,500 if they're assessed as property, and I would like to ask the minister if she or anybody from her department has tried to address this issue, and will she work with the Department of Finance in order to get the act straight so that the farmers will have some continuity as far as the assessment on grain bins.

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Madam Chair, yes, KAP has raised the issue of how buildings are assessed, and, yes, I am working with them and will continue to work with them.

**Mr. Eichler:** Could the minister, just for the record, state her position that she is in fact wanting to see it taken off the property and shown as equipment, or, which is her position?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Chairperson, no, that's not what I said at all. I did not say that I would want to see the taxes taken off farm buildings. What I said is, KAP has raised the issue and we will continue to work with them.

**Mr. Eichler:** You say in particular, we're talking just about the grain bins, though, Madam Minister. The grain bin issue has been going on for quite a while from my understanding, and that's why we are asking

for clarification. If we are just dealing with the grain bins specifically, does the minister support the fact that they be counted as equipment rather than property?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Chairperson, you know, the member talks about taking the tax off grain bins, and the next time we're talking about the other kind of buildings having tax taken off of them, or having them taken off the assessment roll. We have taken significant steps in reducing taxes for farmers. The issue that was very important to KAP and to producers was the education tax on farmland. We've taken that step and that has put money back into producers' hands. But the member is looking to have the way assessment is done changed, I believe. If the member is wanting to have farm buildings, some of the farm buildings not to be assessed as buildings, that's opening up a very large issue because many other businesses could then say, well, I just use this building for storage and it shouldn't be assessed on my property either. As I said, this is an issue—farm granaries have been taxed since time. They were taxed all through the Conservative years, and they were assessed at that time.

So this isn't a new issue. It's not the one that has been high on the list of priorities. The one that was high on the list of priorities for farm groups was the farmland school tax. We've addressed that one and we'll continue to work to increase the amount of rebate there.

We have made exemptions on taxes in many areas. If you look at issues that relate to the environment and to the pork industry with regard to slurry, lagoon liners and in other areas, we work with the producers, with the farm organizations and continue to make progress in those areas.

**Mr. Eichler:** We understand where the minister is going as far as the buildings are concerned, and that wasn't the question. It's specifically in relation to the grain bins, that some of them are movable. Some of them are very easy to move and those grain bins was a specific question, not anything to do with the buildings themselves, because we there agree that those buildings can be used for anything and more than just grain storage.

But the specific question that KAP is concerned about is the fact that grain bins themselves be counted as property which is assessment, or equipment which then also boils down to different classifications as far as tax deductions and that type of thing.



So it's pretty important that we have a consistent reading for the farmers whenever they're out there because it does vary from municipality to municipality.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** As I understand it, grain bins are considered to be farm property and are assessed as buildings throughout the province. I am not aware of municipalities where grain bins are exempt because assessments are done on a provincial basis. I do not believe that there are exemptions.

If the member has specific cases where a municipality is making exemptions on that basis, he could share that information with me. But, again, this is how assessment on farm property has been done for years.

We have made certain exemptions and continue to look at ways that we can make improvements to the taxes that are collected on farm property. That is why we have rebated on the education tax and that's why we've made quite a few exemptions in the area of manure management and lagoon covers and lagoon liners, as an example.

**Mr. Eichler:** I will get the information for the minister and thank her for her agreement to look at the fact about whether or not grain bins will become part of that assessment because I know there is inconsistency. I've seen different farms that have been assessed on their grain bins, some of which are portable. I think that's the item that really is in question, not the building portion of it. So I will provide that information to the minister for her follow-up, and if she could get back to us, that would be great.

\* (15:40)

I do want to deal with Norm Branson. On March 8, the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that the former deputy minister of Water Stewardship had been removed from the CEC. That was about three weeks into the hearings for the moratorium that was put on the hog barns and the CEC hearings. I think he could have had a great contribution to those CEC hearings. He was put back into place four weeks later through an Order-in-Council, and I was just wondering if the minister had any input into whether or not Mr. Branson was in fact put back on and if his missing in action, so to speak, for that time period—what was the CEC's role in trying to deal with some of these issues that are so important during that impact on the agricultural industry?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I would remind the member that there's not a moratorium on the pork industry. There is a temporary pause, as the Clean Environment Commission does their work and review of an industry that has grown very quickly in this province. With regard to the position of Norm Branson on the CEC, that is not under my department.

**Mr. Eichler:** Does the minister have any input onto who sits on the CEC committee or is this done through Order-in-Council, which she has no input?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Chairperson, when Orders-in-Council come to Cabinet from various departments, all ministers have the opportunity to have input into it and have discussion.

**Mr. Eichler:** I'd like to switch over to the Yorkton canola plant, Madam Chair. The James Richardson International has put its plans on hold to build that plant. We are certainly very excited about that opportunity maybe coming back to Manitoba.

I wonder if the minister could highlight for us today whether or not there have been any talks in regard to the Richardson corporation bringing that facility into Manitoba, trying to save some of those costs, and whether or not there are initiatives in place to encourage that project to come forward in Manitoba rather than Saskatchewan.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** When James Richardson made an announcement that they were going to be building a canola crushing facility, staff in various departments worked very hard to put a package together. I thought it was a very attractive package, and it was our hope that James Richardson would make the decision to build that facility here in Manitoba. They made the decision to—they made their announcement that they were going to go to Yorkton. Since that time, as the member has said, they have put their plans on hold. As they make their decision as to whether they're going to move forward or not, certainly Manitoba would welcome them with open arms if they were ready to make their decision to come back to Manitoba. We had an attractive offer on the table, and certainly we would be prepared to work with them.

**Mr. Eichler:** So, at this point in time, just for the record, we have not had any discussions, at least at your level, whether or not the Richardson family would reconsider and bring that facility into Manitoba somewhere where we could be more competitive. I know that the minister did say that they did have a very significant plan brought forward

by the provincial government trying to lure them into investing in Manitoba. We do know that rural Manitoba certainly could use that value-added sector. I was wondering if the minister would share that plan with them again to reiterate the position of the Province of Manitoba.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The member is right. Value-added is very important. That's why we've made these decisions that we have. That's why we reorganized the Department of Agriculture to the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and why we've put such a focus on value-added. That's why we've put economic development offices in every region of the province so that we can have that kind of activity and value-added. Certainly, the activity that's taking place in the biodiesel, wind energy, ethanol, all show signs that there is activity. I can assure the member that our staff at Community Economic Development and staff in my department meet with people on a regular basis when there are opportunities to attract people to this province, and we will do that in this case as well.

**Mr. Eichler:** Madam Chair, I know the slaughter capacity that we've been talking about in regard to both pork and beef. I'd like to concentrate on the pork first, and it's something that we haven't talked about in the House and certainly hasn't been talked about much out in the public is the closure of the Maple Leaf plant in St. Boniface. My understanding from talking to the various business sectors at Maple Leaf, we're talking about 1,100 jobs, direct or indirect, as a result of that plant closing.

I was wondering if the minister could share with the House the department's attempts in order to try and salvage that plant or whether or not they've been working with Maple Leaf to increase slaughter capacity in Brandon to make that plant indeed a 24-hour plant. My understanding is that the work force is not there in order to have that happen and in fact for the jobs to be transferred out of Winnipeg there, again my understanding is the fact most of those people don't want to relocate, so we're going to be short again as far as slaughter capacity is concerned with regard to the hog processing within Manitoba.

*Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Acting Chairperson, well I'm surprised. I'm surprised that the member opposite would recognize the importance of slaughter capacity and has concerns about slaughter capacity closing in Winnipeg when his leader was very clear

that he didn't want to see new slaughter capacity and I would imagine existing slaughter capacity in the city of Winnipeg in the St. Boniface area. When there was an opportunity, his leader was quite clear that he didn't support that facility.

But, Madam Acting Chairperson, there is a very important issue that's facing our industry and that is the whole country-of-origin labelling, concentration of the industry in certain areas, closing of plants in other provinces. That takes opportunities away from our producers. I very much believe that there is need for slaughter capacity to meet the needs of our producers, but part of the plan that Maple Leaf has put forward is that they are going to be doing more of the work in Brandon. That's a decision that they have made, not one that our government has made.

**Mr. Eichler:** I didn't think she was going to go that way today, but I'm not surprised about the political rhetoric that I didn't think she might want to go into. But, to correct the record, our leader did say that the site was a site that may not be the right site for the new Oly mill processing plant that was being proposed. We did not say we're not in favour of increase in slaughter capacity at any point in time.

So I do want to correct the record for the minister and for our leader. We are very much in favour of seeing an increased slaughter capacity within the province of Manitoba at whatever level that may or may not be. But it's a shame the minister decided to play politics with this particular issue because we certainly did not intend in any shape or form to bring about the fact that maybe OlyWest was maybe not in the right place, but we did make it very clear that we wanted to increase slaughter capacity within the province. I am a bit disappointed that she has not had discussions with Maple Leaf or any other part of an industry coming forward to take up that slack and look after those jobs. Those 1,100 jobs that are possibly going to be lost average out to closure of the plant in St. Boniface.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Acting Chairperson, the member is saying that I haven't had discussions with Maple Leaf. I'm sorry, he's very wrong. I've met with Maple Leaf. I'm quite aware of how they have changed their plan. I am concerned about jobs in Winnipeg. I am also concerned that the member doesn't want to talk about the fact that his leader, in fact, did speak out against the proposed plant and said that it shouldn't be in Winnipeg.

\* (15:50)

Now the member is talking about jobs in Winnipeg. These are jobs that would have happened. That decision has not been made, and we continue to work with other people who look at opportunities to increase slaughter capacity in this province because it is a very important issue. We have a large production of pork in this province. We are committed to value-adding. I am very concerned about country-of-origin labelling legislation. I am very concerned about countervails and anti-dumping charges should we have to start moving more hogs into the United States.

So the member raises very important issues that are ahead of us. I can assure him that my department continues to work with people who have interest in slaughter capacity, both in the pork and in the beef industry, because both are just as important. It's important that we move in the direction of value-added, capture more of those jobs here in this province rather than having them go to another area. When they go in another area, we lose out on the opportunity for jobs, but our producers also lose out.

If you remember the whole situation with BSE when our animals were shut off from the United States, and animals of 30 months still are, it was very difficult for our producers to get into those slaughter facilities with their older animals. In fact, they were getting nothing for them.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Madam Acting Chair, my question is for the minister. It's regarding issues with the Husky ethanol plant in Minnedosa. One issue, in particular. I just want to put on the sidebar that I found it rather interesting the minister is concerned. I'm pleased that she's concerned about the beef and pork production challenges because those are my producers in my riding that have come forward and have indicated their frustration with this minister. So I'm looking forward to her plan for the future in value-added. I look forward to her vision for rural Manitoba, which has been lacking in the past.

Regarding the Husky ethanol plant in Minnedosa, they've been moving forward and have actually moved past challenges based on this government's lack of financial support for their infrastructure upgrades, Madam Acting Chair. I find it passing strange that this minister and this government continually speak about their role in the Husky ethanol plant. I think credit has to be given to the community and the committee that have worked diligently in getting this upgrade happening.

My question to the minister, and I would hope that she can provide an answer, is: the manufacturer's agreement, which was a big piece of this government's mandate for ethanol; the manufacturer's agreement which, I understand, dictates to the community involvement for product supply to the plant, I'd like to know what the status is of the manufacturer's agreement that needs to be in place for this plant to continue to operate.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Acting Chairperson, we are very excited about the facility at Minnedosa, and I know that the member opposite has a really hard time giving anybody credit. She'd like the full credit to go to herself, like she's the one who got this plant. It doesn't matter to us who gets the credit. The real issue here is that we get value-added in this province. That's really what it is. I know the member opposite would have such a hard time giving this government credit, but she did take the time to tour the plant with the Premier (Mr. Doer) when he was in Minnedosa, so she did have to give a little bit of credit to the Premier when—*[interjection]* Maybe she arranged the tour for the Premier, I'm not sure.

But, with respect to the member's question, more seriously, there are many agreements. There are purchase agreements. There are production agreements. There are a variety of agreements that are being worked on, we continue to work on. One of the things that we did work very hard on was an ethanol mandate. That's what made it possible for this plant to go forward. I would encourage her to talk to her federal counterparts to ensure that the federal government would also expand their mandate so that we would indeed be able to see more growth in this area.

With regard to the manufacturer's agreement that the member is speaking to, all agreements are being worked on.

**Mr. Stu Briese (Ste. Rose):** My questions are going to surround the Crown Lands issues and the Crown Lands job transfers out of Neepawa and Minnedosa. I know that, when the Crown Lands Branch was first placed in Neepawa, there were approximately 23 or 24 jobs in that building and some more in Minnedosa. I know that there are different branches and Crown Lands employees. There's agricultural; there's Aboriginal and several others.

But I am curious about the costs of transferring those jobs out of Neepawa and Minnedosa. I want to know if there are facilities available for them, even,

in Portage la Prairie where they're being transferred to and what the costs are in making those moves.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Acting Chairperson, I guess when we look at why the decision was made to create a Crown corporation with Crown lands, the reason was that there was some real mismanagement of Crown lands under the previous administration, some very, very serious mismanagement issues that had to be addressed, and there is a report that led to the creation of the corporation and the movement of jobs.

Madam Acting Chairperson, the member asks specific questions that I would have to take on notice or pass on to another minister because the movement and the creation of the new facility does not come under this department. But I can say to the member that we did make a commitment that we would fill those positions that were moved from Neepawa and Minnedosa, and, in fact, the people who had been in those positions, some of them have moved. One of them has taken a position with the federal government, and we've put other jobs in. In fact, we just got a letter from the mayor of Neepawa thanking us for filling the positions that are in agriculture.

But, again, I say to the member, specifics that he is looking for I would have to refer to the other minister to get details of that for him, and I will do that.

**Mr. Briese:** It's my information that quite a number of these people have quit their jobs so that they could stay in their communities and went to other jobs. You've alluded somewhat to that. I know the job was advertised for the agricultural Crown Lands position in Neepawa, but as far as I know—maybe you can enlighten me—it hasn't been filled.

But roughly one-third or more of my constituency is Crown land. The most common complaint I heard during this election campaign was complaints about Crown Lands and the way Crown Lands was treating our producers, mostly in Alonsa municipality and northern parts of my riding.

\* (16:00)

If this is better, it's sure not showing up. We're not seeing any improvements yet and these producers aren't seeing any improvements. You referred to the previous administration, but we're eight years into this one and I would hope to see some of those problems looked after. There are various interpretations of the legislation, and there are huge delays in any of the things that are being asked to be done by

those producers out there. At a time when we've got some pretty serious problems in the livestock industry anyhow, this just adds to their anxiety.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Just for the member, I would tell him that the Ag Crown Lands Branch of this department previously employed 12 staff in Minnedosa. Of those, eight were transferred to Crown Lands, the property agency, to the SOA in Portage la Prairie. Four positions remained with MAFRI based in Minnedosa. So that's how the breakdown was.

As well, there were some staff that did not want to move. In fact, one has retired but the others, there was a commitment to have employment for them. They have not been let go. One has retired; others are looking for employment. They've taken various positions.

With regard to the delays, I want to tell the member that I've had the same concern raised with me and I've raised it with my staff to find out what can be done to improve the time lines, because there are some additional delays that seem to be occurring with regard to the processing of the—*[interjection]*

Madam Acting Chairperson, I'm having a very difficult time hearing over the voice of the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat). I'm having a very difficult time and I would appreciate her—she has a new Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) who is asking questions and I know he wants to ask the questions, so could you call the member to order, please.

**An Honourable Member:** Are you challenging the Chair?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I'm asking the Chair.

**The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Marilyn Brick):** Thank you very much for your comment and I'd just like to remind all members that as the Chair I do have to rule on points of order, so it just is common courtesy so that I would be able to hear. Thank you.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** To the Member for Ste. Rose, he raises an important point because I have heard it as well. I have asked staff to review what is being done different or if there is any way that the process can be speeded up because he's right, these are important issues. When people are using that land for their business, it's important that we do it in the most expedited way that we can.

**Mr. Eichler:** Madam Acting Chair, I notice the minister was concerned about the Member for

Minnedosa. She neglected the fact that the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) was the one making most of the noise. He's not quite as considerate, as well, when it comes to hearing his own minister's answers.

With respect to the BSE loans, I know the minister didn't respond much to it yesterday in regard to alleviating some of the interest costs for those producers on those loans that were put out in 2003. BSE is far from over, as we all know it today, and the minister referred to it earlier, the 30-months-and-over stock that's not been allowed to go south. A lot of those producers still holding on to that stock hope that they will be able to hopefully regain some of their market share and repay some of that loan.

But the interest on that loan is substantial. I mean, the amount of money that's left out there for the producer at the end of the day is definitely not enough. We would encourage the minister to come up with a plan whereby our ranchers would be more conducive to a repayment schedule without the fact of the interest charges, if the minister would care to comment on that.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I thank the member for that question and I can say to the member that that is exactly what's happening through MASC. There is no blanket policy that everybody's loan is going to be renegotiated, but as MASC has operated in the past, when individuals want to renegotiate their loan, they are able to do that. I can say to the member that there are many who have renegotiated their loans with MASC.

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Acting Chairperson, well, maybe I'll just give the First Minister (Mr. Doer) just a second. I know we're not supposed to comment whether members are in their seats, so I'll not comment on that but simply ask my question very, very slowly. *[interjection]*

You don't drink that on the docks in Laclu, I'm sure.

In any event, thank you, Madam Acting Chairperson, and I want to just start out on some of the economic and fiscal issues and policies of the government. We've seen throughout North America over the last nine years, nine straight years of robust growth for all economies in North America. In recent times I've started to see some indications that there could be some challenges on the horizon, especially for the Canadian economy and, in particular, the

Manitoba economy. We see the probability of interest rate increases, the Canadian dollar rising in relation to the American dollar, which is putting pressure on manufacturers here in Manitoba, and we saw for the 12 months ended in May of this year negative full-time job creation in Manitoba which was in stark contrast to the other western provinces in Canada which created thousands of full-time jobs. I just want to ask the Premier in this environment of a rising Canadian dollar, potentially rising interest rates and disappointing economic performance whether he has any concern at all that our tax position relative to other provinces is uncompetitive?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Yes, Madam Acting Chair.

**Mr. McFadyen:** I don't know if he's saying that our tax position is uncompetitive or if he's concerned that it's uncompetitive. But we see—

**An Honourable Member:** He's concerned.

**Mr. McFadyen:** He's concerned. Okay.

**An Honourable Member:** Yes, I think he's concerned.

**Mr. McFadyen:** He's concerned. All right. If he is concerned, then I wonder if the Premier can indicate why it is that he was so opposed through the election campaign to tax measures over a four-to-six-year period that would bring Manitoba from almost back of the country up to close to the middle of the pack, not quite middle of the country, but getting close in terms of reductions in personal income taxes, property taxes and other taxes, in particular payroll and general corporate income tax rates, that are important taxes when it comes to investment decisions and decisions on the part of individuals as to where they're going to invest, live and work?

**Mr. Doer:** First of all, I may not have heard your question. I thought my affirmation was that Manitoba is competitive, and so perhaps if you said something—anyways, I'll have to reread your question. The member opposite should be a little more forceful, a little less mumbling, and I could probably pick it up.

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

**Mr. Doer:** I'm just kidding. I digress. *[interjection]*

Oh, the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), we look forward to her first question on education in this House. I know members opposite feign interest on the teachers' pension fund, and retired teachers,

you know, like chickens voting for Colonel Sanders, if retired teachers voted for Conservatives—but, I'll get back to the fundamental question.

First of all—*[interjection]*

You know, the members opposite keep throwing out all these shots, and it's the most enjoyable part of our job. I was pleased yesterday that the governor of California endorsed our climate change policy and welcomed Manitoba's signature to the western states' and provinces' climate change strategy. I was pleased that Bill Richardson from New Mexico endorsed the plan, Janet Napolitano, and many, many others endorsed the plan.

*Madam Chairperson in the Chair*

So, just addressing the intervention made interfering with her leader's question. I'm shocked that she would be allowed to heckle, in essence, her leader, in a question that he has proposed to me. But, nonetheless, I must answer the heckle before I get to the question.

\* (16:10)

I would note, Madam Deputy Speaker, that—first of all, I want to congratulate you formally for this major position in our House. Congratulations. I—

**An Honourable Member:** You made the decision.

**Mr. Doer:** The House made the decision. If the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauruschou) would understand that all those motions are debatable, and all of us have a right to speak, and the whole House, it was unanimous. In fact, the Deputy Speaker position was unanimously decided by this Chamber, and I think it's a real testimony to her great work in this Chamber. *[interjection]*

I didn't hear the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and his question. I'm sure, being the most prominent Liberal in the Legislature, he will get lots of questions to me in the ensuing time.

Madam Chairperson, the issue of competitiveness—I note that the member opposite took a Xerox machine and took our budget promises that he condemned for weeks, and after he had given away \$200 million in tax reductions recklessly, on a 1 percent sales-tax reduction, and after he then made another triple-digit tax reduction that he couldn't cost, and after he made reckless promises on building a lake in Point Douglas. I wonder if the Tory, if that's a position. I'd love to know, the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), whether that is a Tory caucus

position. In fact, I believe the Member for Tuxedo was—I got a peanut in my mouth—the co-chair—

**An Honourable Member:** A little choked up?

**Mr. Doer:** Yes, I am. I'm just totally covered by emotion, but I'm not a very emotional person.

But the Member for Tuxedo, I wonder if she, the former broker at Wellington West, supported this lake in Point Douglas, this reckless promise. I think she's the co-chair of the election committee of the Conservative Party. I heard that she and the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) were the co-chairs of this committee. I wonder if the Jets promise was run by her. Did she endorse the Jets promise? Did she endorse the lake in Point Douglas and the demolition of 800 homes in Point Douglas? I wonder when she heckles next whether she can answer that question.

But back to the promises we made on business taxes, the member opposite—*[interjection]* Well, you know, you've got to be patient, very patient, very, very patient, in fact, very, very, very patient. You know, five years from now, you'll have another shot at it. Maybe they'll let you co-chair the committee again. Maybe they won't. Maybe they'll bring in other co-chairs. Who knows what the future will bring.

Madam Chairperson, we made commitments in our budget. We made a commitment in our budget to reduce the business tax to 3 percent and then down to 2 percent in 2008. Then, in the Brandon debate, that non-partisan debate that we took part in, in Brandon, the debate that didn't exist, the live televised debate—

**An Honourable Member:** You wouldn't debate. It was a forum, a gerrymandered performance.

**Mr. Doer:** You know we actually had more time in debates and better forums than we had in '99 when the member opposite was the chief of staff holding his leader under a mushroom in the '99 election campaign. Same format on CBC television, I might add. But why should facts get in the way of his rhetoric?

We went down to eliminating the small business tax in 2011. We then committed ourselves to reducing the corporate tax, which we started at 17, going down to 11, or 12 percent rather, Madam Chairperson. We promised to reduce the manufacturing tax burden by increasing the manufacturing credit to 50 percent. We also promised to raise the threshold in 2008 for the payroll tax, and, lo and behold, the Johnny-come-

lately, the Leader of the Opposition, what did he do? The honourable Johnny-come-lately, I'm sorry.

The member, what did he do in the election campaign? He wants to talk about the election campaign. What was his small business tax? Oh, I'm going to follow the NDP and go from 3 to 2 to 1 to zero in the same time that they have appropriated it. Then he promised to follow our corporate tax reduction. He then promised to go and follow our tax reduction for manufacturing, and the only thing he did differently was raise the threshold of the payroll tax in years two, three, and four, which we might actually—he should wait for future budgets. He might see what we will do.

You know, the hotshot from Lac du Bonnet, the Beausejour member, the member opposite is talking from his seat. You know again, he runs around with his legal briefs and his budgets. He's elected, so anybody elected does a good job in my view because the people have decided he's done a good job. I wouldn't have voted for you, but the people—you walk around with that leather jacket in the Lakeside and get elected, that's good.

**An Honourable Member:** We support rural Manitobans.

**Mr. Doer:** Darn tootin'. I just want to say to the member opposite that the promises we made for the '08 year are the same ones that he made on business taxes, the exact same ones.

**An Honourable Member:** Not true.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, I said that the only difference was years two, three and four on the payroll tax deduction. But we still have three more budgets ahead of us, four more budgets actually, because we have five more years, and I want to say to the member opposite that we may exceed his commitments. I'm pleased because they say that imitation is the finest form of flattery. I'd like to thank him for flattering us with repeating our corporate tax reduction.

**An Honourable Member:** Thank you. Madam Chairperson, I can see this is going to be very productive. I have a good feeling—

**Madam Chairperson:** Order. One moment, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Again, I want to just add my voice to the words of congratulations to you on your unanimous appointment to the position that you're occupying.

I want to just say that the Premier has referred to a couple of taxes. He hasn't talked about property taxes where he has decided to go ahead with what he's been doing for the last eight years, which is the revolving door policy of tax credits going in one pocket while the property taxes go out the other, offsetting the credits that they've introduced as assessments rise and mill rates increase.

He hasn't shown any indication that he's concerned about the payroll tax and, most importantly, doesn't seem to be concerned about the fact that we lost 300 full-time jobs in Manitoba between last year and this year. We saw in the budget a ratio of spending to tax reductions of about 9 to 1, \$9 in spending for \$1 in tax reductions. We see the Fiscal Stabilization Fund getting lower, not higher, in spite of record revenues.

I want to just ask the Premier what are his plans with respect to balanced budget legislation and any changes he may have in the works in that regard.

**Mr. Doer:** Of course, the member opposite on the one hand talks about education taxes, and anytime we increase funding to education and decrease taxes, they then count that as a spending increase. Then, because he will be experienced in doing that, because when the Tories got rid of the education tax credit or reduced the education tax credit by some \$75, they actually, in kind of an Orwellian way, called that a spending decrease.

Yes, it was a spending decrease all right on the backs of every education taxpayer in Manitoba. In fact, in the riding of St. James, that represented a 5 percent tax increase, but they used a kind of Tory talk to call that a spending tax reduction. So, yes, when you increase funding to education and decrease taxes, that in fact shows up as a spending increase.

\* (16:20)

But, if you look at the FRAME document and look at 1999, the amount of money was down for funding to education, and it's now up. If you look at the education tax credit, it's now at \$525. Even in a home in Tuxedo, a \$525 reduction. When we came into office, it was \$250. We know the member opposite knows that people in her riding now are concerned about it. We also know that we phased out one of the two taxes on property. The member opposite did not touch in numbers of years, they did not touch the ESL. We have eliminated that tax, Madam Chairperson.

On the issue of the FSF, the '99-2000 budget, I'm just going by memory, had \$280 million that was going to be in the FSF, and we now have something over \$400 million in the FSF.

We have balanced the budget under the Filmon balanced-budget legislation every year. There's no qualifier made by the Auditor General in that regard. We have presented budgets that are balanced under the balanced-budget legislation. We are further presenting budgets under GAAP, that are fully compliant with GAAP. We showed a surplus last year, again under GAAP, the year before, under GAAP. We'll be showing a surplus next year, this current year, under GAAP. So we're meeting the requirements, the legal requirements, of two tests: one is the balanced budget legislation and two is the issue of GAAP accounting.

Lastly, Madam Chairperson, we certainly look forward to the debate on GAAP. I think there's a schizophrenic position of the members opposite on that position, or not a schizophrenic, but rather a conflicting position on GAAP. We said we'd report under both entities, and that's what we've done in this budget, and that's what he will see here.

I noted that on Thursday they voted for the budget because I think the motion went through without any debate.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Madam Chairperson, his government characterizes tax credits as spending, and so I'm not sure what he's talking about when he refers to an Orwellian approach to the way they're characterized, but that series of irrelevant, evasive non sequiturs is not very persuasive when we're looking at potentially serious economic issues down the road.

One of those issues that's important is Crocus and the cloud that continues to exist over our capital markets. One of the investigations that the Premier and the Minister of Crocus, the Member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), refer to as the Manitoba Securities Commission, as part of their reply to not wanting to have an inquiry into Crocus. The Securities Commission investigation, as you know, has been halted and delayed indefinitely pending the lawsuit, and it happened as a result of a motion brought by the lawyers for the Crocus shareholders.

What we've learned is that the lawyers for the Securities Commission showed up at the hearing on the issue of whether the investigation should go ahead and didn't contest it. In other words, they allowed the Crocus lawyers to take the position that

the Securities Commission should be delayed. The Securities Commission didn't fight that position. They didn't contest the motion. As a result, the court went along with the submission, where if they had contested it, then the investigation would have gone ahead even with the lawsuit under way.

I'm wondering, where did the Securities Commission get the direction to roll over and play dead?

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Chairperson, the Securities Commission is a quasi-judicial body, and it basically makes its own decisions. It's accountable for its own decisions, and, of course, it was accountable in a separate way in the Auditor General's report. Obviously, we believe, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) believes, that it is a quasi-judicial body.

He would find a similar answer in *Hansard*, when Wellington West was being investigated by the Securities Commission, when former Premier Filmon was asked the question about the fact that an independent citizen named Cubby Barrett bought shares illegally through the non-political office of Wellington West. That, in fact, was not in compliance with the law.

The Securities Commission reviewed all of those issues separate and apart from the former premier, obviously, and he said in the House, and I believe him to be correct, that the Securities Commission is an independent body.

Madam Chairperson, obviously, the former Conservative government—and the member opposite has bragged in his Web site that he was involved in the issuing of shares, in the sale of shares. I notice he took it off the Web site after he was elected Conservative leader, but he had, we actually did print it, he was a critical and crucial member of the strategy group to sell those shares, and ultimately—

**An Honourable Member:** It was the right thing to do.

**Mr. Doer:** Yes, as the member opposite has said before, it's the right thing to do.

You know, I'm sure all those senior citizens in Winnipeg that are getting double their cost of using pay phones in the inner city are really pleased that he lined the pockets of brokers and didn't take care of the consumers in Manitoba. So he can maintain that position all he wants, and we'll be willing to debate that issue five years from now, 10 years from now, 15 years from now, Madam Chair. We are willing to



debate that, and that separates who this member speaks for. He does not speak for all the Manitobans and the average Manitoban. He speaks for—

**An Honourable Member:** The taxpayers.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, the taxpayer, yes; the taxpayers, right, Madam Chair.

The ratepayers in Saskatchewan are paying less than the ratepayers in Manitoba and, you know, the brokers. You know, the Member for Tuxedo's (Mrs. Stefanson) company—some of their people were saying, it's a great day—were out there buying. The Jaguar sales people were having a great day, but the bottom line is, Premier Filmon said that the Securities Commission is a quasi-judicial body and they will remain independent from government direction. I agree with Premier Filmon on that narrow point.

**Mr. McFadyen:** As I recall, you voted for Premier Filmon's budget in 1999 after that sale which contained a healthy amount of money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which they've done a reasonably good job of spending over the last eight years, none of it directed toward repurchasing the Manitoba Telephone System, interestingly enough. So, for all of their phony indignation, they've had eight years to nationalize the company and have chosen to leave it exactly where it is.

Madam Chair, I just want to ask. I wrote to the chair of the Manitoba Securities Commission many weeks ago on the issue of the decision on several issues, and I've yet to receive a reply with respect to the reference of the Cabinet document of the Securities Commission and a variety of other questions related to communications between the minister's office and the Securities Commission. I've been met with dead silence in response to those questions.

I wonder if the Premier approves of and believes that that demonstrates a high level of diligence in policing our securities markets when the Securities Commission takes the position that they're not going to contest a motion to block them from investigating a serious issue like the collapse of Crocus.

I also want to ask him, when the investigation resumes, will the Securities Commission be looking into whether anybody with inside information had dealt in Crocus shares on the basis of that information?

**Mr. Doer:** Again, I would repeat the answer Premier Filmon provided in this House. I can provide the exact answer to the member opposite. In fact, we respected his views when we came into government on the separation of the Securities Commission from government, that even though we had a totally different view philosophically and policy-wise with the former government on selling the telephone system without consent of the citizens, a promise was made in '95 to not sell the cell phone system. The decision was made in '95 to sell it, '96, rather. Without the consent of the public, we moved an amendment of that sale of the phone system to let the people vote. That was voted down by every Conservative in a shameful way. The Liberals had three votes in that decision: one voted yes; one voted no; and one abstained in that vote.

But, when we came into office, we definitely respected the quasi-judicial role of the Securities Commission. We did not come in and say, oh, we were opposed to the sale of the phone system. We did not like the relationship between the government and some people that purchased shares; like, one of the persons named in the findings by the Securities Commission was, you know, a lifelong awarded Tory named Mr. Barrett. We did not interfere with that, and that's because we respect the separation between the Securities Commission and the government of the day, whether it was the former Filmon government or whether it's our government.

\* (16:30)

On the issue of the rainy day fund, the member opposite puts—I think he will find, and I want him to go back and read the budget of 1999; he was chief of staff—he put wrong information on the table here again. The fiscal stabilization draw in the '99-2000 budget presented by the Conservative government was \$187 million; the debt payment was \$75 million. The media properly reported this, and Mr. Cameron who, at the time, was on the Conservative so-called fair tax commission, reported this as a deficit. The Tories were running a deficit in the 1999 fiscal budget year.

Mind you, some of that money they were finally trying to put into health care after they had just completely eviscerated the whole health-care department in a kind of conversion on the road to Damascus just before the election was called. They saw the light, and, unfortunately, because they had systemically destroyed health care, they had to put in this massive spending amount of \$187 million. They

then approved, without the budget authority, another \$70 million for the excessive moisture a day before the election was called in August of 1999, bringing the fiscal stabilization draw in that fiscal year up over \$250 million.

Madam Chair, the budget itself documents reported the \$187-million draw. The member opposite would know that because he was chief of staff at the time. That represented a reduction in the rainy day fund to \$280 million and, if the opposite is true, we have since put more money into the rainy day fund and have had a higher debt payment. The debt payment is \$110 million a year, and so he's wrong on four factual points. I'd ask him to go back and look at the '99 budget, and I'd ask him to come back in the House and apologize tomorrow because I think he will find that he was wrong. I would look forward to that apology, and I look forward to the apology coming forthwith.

**Mr. McFadyen:** We still haven't had any direct responses whatsoever on the issue of the Crocus questions, and I just want to ask the Premier whether he owns or has any direct or indirect interest in Crocus shares, either now or at any time previously.

**Mr. Doer:** I've always followed the conflict-of-interest guidelines, and the member opposite will know I did not purchase any shares.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Madam Chair, and so while his government was allowing Crocus, through their board appointments, to promote this great investment to unsuspecting Manitobans, the Premier is saying that he was too smart to buy in. It was okay for everybody else but not for him?

**Mr. Doer:** My investments are in Investors Syndicate. The member opposite would know that; it's fully disclosed.

I think that the member opposite will know that there were promotions going on at Crocus when we came into office. I would point out to members opposite that are a little smug on this point the legislation and the lawsuit that is being dealt with goes back to 1992. It goes back to the original legislation with the lack of clarity between rate of return and social objectives. It goes back to 1993 on the original members appointed to the board of directors by one Eric Stefanson, were members in law that were the Federation of Labour. Clayton Manness at that time said clearly: The government is not going to direct the community decisions that have to be made at Crocus.

The Crocus Fund obviously had successes. It had failures like any venture capital fund. We did not support the promotion. In fact, when we became aware that Crocus had access to civil servants' paycheques started in 1996 by the previous government to promote investments, we actually stopped it, and we also stopped the practice of allowing people to be on paid leave, again that practice started by the Conservative government, from selling shares in the public service.

Madam Chairperson, I think that the record is clear, and all those things are chronicled in the Auditor General's report. They're all documented clearly. The Auditor General says the legislation was ambiguous. The Auditor General said there was lack of clarity between the promotion of the fund in the Industry Department and the enforcement of the fund. The Auditor General also stated that the issue of a director was maintaining the fiduciary responsibility to the shareholders was maintained, but we did remove that perception issue that the Auditor General identified. We did change the legislation to make it rate-of-return. We did obviously have other provisions in Crocus that were recommended by the Auditor General. We've also accepted responsibility on May 25, I believe the date was. We accepted responsibility for the issues, even though they weren't related to performance and valuation, as the Auditor General said. We accepted issues that had been identified in the Auditor General's report under our responsibility. Actually, under responsibility that preceded us that we didn't correct post '99.

**Mr. Gerrard:** My question to the Premier (Mr. Doer) concerns the future of the Upper Fort Garry site. It's one of the most important historic sites in Manitoba. I know, from Monday, a response in Question Period that the government's official position is that the north wall and gate shall be protected and we've shown that by investing \$16,000 in 2003 and 2004. I think that was a quote.

So I'd like to ask the Premier: Given the importance of the Upper Fort Garry site, what is the Premier prepared to do to ensure that the site is protected so it can be, at some point in the future, fully presented and be a very important part of the historic presentation of the sites and can and will be visited well into the future by Manitobans, and by others who visit our province?

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Chairperson, I have had the privilege of visiting the gates before it became

involved in the controversy and the public dispute. I have not had an opportunity during the election or since the election to discuss the issue with the mayor of the City of Winnipeg. I would want to defer any comments till I have an opportunity to meet with him.

Obviously, the member opposite is aware that we did put money into the site itself. We obviously have a historic responsibility for that area, although I would note that, and the member opposite probably knows, that many of the artifacts are underneath Main Street from the original fort. Decisions that preceded myself and others when I was minister responsible for The Forks, dealing with former Minister Epp and former Mayor Norrie. We made sure there was a full archeological dig at the Forks site before any planning proceeded. We also made sure that all the historic buildings at that site, from the railway, the original building and all those buildings were retained and redeveloped. So I have a great deal of respect for the heritage sites and the historic sites.

On the issue of artifacts, there's issues dealing with the site on artifacts, although I would point out that this is only the north gate of the whole fort. But I do want to discuss this with the mayor. The council of the City of Winnipeg, one committee of the council of the City of Winnipeg, has made decisions and I want to—I haven't had the opportunity to discuss it with the mayor and I'll be doing that shortly.

\* (16:40)

#### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Chairperson:** Before I recognize the member, with us this afternoon in the loge we have Don Smith, former member from Inkster—Don Scott. I'm sorry. On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Of major concern with regard to the Upper Fort Garry site is the proposed 15-storey apartment block which would take up a significant portion of the block on which the Upper Fort Garry site is located.

Upper Fort Garry has been said to be the most magnificent fort in western Canada and indeed the most important fort because of its role in the birthplace of our province and its role in the history of western Canada. So what I would ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) is, No. 1, what is the Premier going to do

with regard to this proposal for a 15-storey high-rise apartment on this critical site of the Upper Fort Garry? Has the Premier met with members of the friends of the fort to understand fully what they are proposing to do on behalf of all Manitobans to ensure that this site would be well presented for future generations of Manitobans as well as for tourists?

**Mr. Doer:** I would suggest to the member opposite that actually the fort itself is not the birthplace of Manitoba for human inhabitation. That took place some 6,000 years ago at least with the first Aboriginal people that located here hundreds of years, thousands of years before the fur trade business and the explorers came to Manitoba. So I think that sometimes we neglect the Aboriginal people that were first here and the artifacts that should be respected and maintained.

That's why at The Forks site itself, which was closer to the river than the fort site, we had a whole archeological dig at that site. In fact, one of the people that advised us on that was not only is Aboriginal people that had a history background by one Jean Friesen before she was elected, a very, very knowledgeable Canadian historian and Aboriginal historian. She provided a lot of advice in the planning process to Minister Epp, Mayor Norrie and myself. I really want to thank them publicly for doing that again. But it was really important to respect the beginning and the founding of Manitoba by human beings, which was 6,000 years ago.

That's why when the member opposite talks about building a transmission line down the east side of Lake Winnipeg and talks about not going right through Poplar River, and the people that have lived there for 3,000 years say to the member opposite, don't disregard my history and my heritage by those unilateral decisions of people that live in River Heights or Tuxedo or North Kildonan. We would ask the member opposite, instead of saying yes to the transmission line on the east side, be consistent with the Aboriginal people that lived there for 3,000 years about their historic site and their historic beauty and not just talk about the historic site at the gates, the remnants of the whole fort at the gates, the north gate that's located on Main Street and adjacent to the City of Winnipeg building and behind the gas station.

The issue of preservation of the gates is not the issue. Obviously, the issue in disagreement is on the presentation of that historic site. I believe, and you can see our action in Brandon with the nurses'

residence now being preserved and reused, and you can see our action with the Parklands building in Brandon being preserved and reused, that you'll find the Princess Red River College campus site being preserved and reused, that you'll see our history is pretty good.

I am going to meet shortly with the mayor and I will—I think with any municipal-approved project my first job as Premier is to get a handle on the elected governance system, in this case the City of Winnipeg. I will be meeting with the mayor shortly, and I certainly have not had a chance to discuss this with him. I look forward to doing that. I think it's important for me to hear from him—he, or any other mayor in Manitoba, about a decision before—I'm going to meet with him but I think that's very important.

I would say that we authorized money, \$16,000 to that site, because we did care about the character of the site and some of the damage which time has taken on the site. I also would say that some of the issues of Manitoba's birthplace—Manitoba's birthplace took place with the Aboriginal people 6,000 years ago, and as I say I'd like the same—I would like the member opposite to come up maybe sometime to Poplar River and respect the elders there on their preservation of their community and their beauty as much as we're talking about a place in downtown Winnipeg.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Chairperson, what of course I'm referring to is the birthplace of Manitoba as a province. The province of Manitoba began as a provincial designation with the events which happened at the Upper Fort Garry site. Clearly, I recognize, as does the Premier, the importance of the history of the area covered by Manitoba and, indeed, the word "Manitoba" going back long before the designation or the consideration of Manitoba as a province.

But, indeed, it seems to me that it is precisely because of the important role of Aboriginal people, First Nations and Métis people that the area where the apartment block is proposed is so important, that it is important to include in the preservation of the site the area not only within the fort, but the area where many First Nations and Métis people camped and visited and traded immediately outside the fort, which is the site where this is proposed for this high-rise apartment block. Clearly, if the site, as a whole of Upper Fort Garry, is to be presented in proper context, representing the history of the participation

of First Nations and Métis people in relation to the Upper Fort Garry, it would seem to me that it would be very important to ensure that the area which is being proposed for a high-rise apartment building be included in the historic site and the presentation of the historic site.

I would ask the Premier whether he has met with the Friends of Upper Fort Garry to ensure that he listens and is well aware of what they are proposing in terms of that site and how it can be incorporated into other activities and developments along the Assiniboine and at The Forks site. As an important fort indeed, one can make the argument that it should be incorporated into The Forks site because of its historical importance. So I would ask once more: Is the Premier going to be meeting with the Friends of Upper Fort Garry and going to listen very carefully to what they have proposed?

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Chair, I am aware, before the proposed changes to the site, some members of the friends of the Fort Garry had proposed a \$12-million connection with the Bonnycastle Park to the gates. I have bumped into people, and again, that we've only been a few weeks since the election, I haven't had a formal meeting with them. I've been reading all the debate and, you know, I've certainly read everything that has been in the media that I can, and I certainly have respect for some of the work from Gordon Sinclair, but I again have a responsibility to meet with the mayor of the City of Winnipeg.

\* (16:50)

I have no difficulty, the Minister of Culture (Mr. Robinson) and I meeting with anybody. I've bumped into people. I was at the Arnold Frieman event yesterday, and I discussed lots of issues, including people talked to me about this issue yesterday. Some of them were, quote, members of the friends of the fort. I certainly will respect their views, and I'll respect the views, as the minister has indicated, from the mayor of the City of Winnipeg.

Let's just take this event: if it was in Brandon or Minnedosa or other communities, any other community. We also know that the first level of decision making is actually the elected representatives in the city. The committee in the city of Winnipeg has dealt with this issue. I don't know, quite frankly, what the plans of the City are, and I feel I have an obligation to discuss this with the mayor, which I'm going to do shortly.

So, will I meet with the friends? Yes. Will I listen to the mayor? Yes. Have we cared about the site? The Minister of Culture has put in money to the site before it ever got into the newspaper. Before somebody was raising it, the Minister of Culture was putting money in before it became a cause célèbre for some people. So it's not as if we've just come upon this issue. We didn't invest in that site because we were, you know, not aware of the historical value of the remnants of the fort called the north gate.

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** Madam Chairperson, I understand now, because of the agreed-upon time schedule, we're moving to Infrastructure.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Infrastructure and highways and government services the actual time frame of the reopening of the Trans-Canada Highway as the overpass just to the east side of Portage la Prairie is under construction. I'm wondering if that project is on schedule.

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Madam Chairperson, I thank the member for the question. I've been advised that everything's in schedule and we're certainly pleased to have worked with the City of Portage la Prairie with regard to this project.

We've met on a number of occasions to discuss Angle Road and the bypass going around Portage la Prairie. This was an inconvenience to some people for a short time. We ensured that we worked with the City to ensure that the bypass would be reopened, including people who own the hotel that were on the original bypass going around Portage. But once again when you have one of these occasions occur, the Kentucky chicken and Subway were very happy to have all the traffic going through Portage la Prairie because they were doing a great business there. I know there's a Chinese food restaurant and many others who really were pleased with all the traffic going through the community.

But, having said that, I would just say that I've been advised that the project looks like it's on time and certainly on budget, and we're pleased to work with the community of Portage la Prairie to ensure that we get that bypass completed and have the traffic flow continue as it should be.

**Mr. Faurshou:** I understand by the minister's response then, November is still the date looked at as reopening the Trans-Canada Highway bypass around Portage.

The other question that I have is the accommodation of traffic underneath the new or under-construction overpass, the need to see, for safety reasons, agricultural equipment staying on the service road. The old structure which was condemned and demolished did not allow for the width and height to accommodate current-day agricultural machinery.

I wonder, in the design feature of the new overpass, was the minister able to accommodate the height and width concerns as brought to his attention for the service road that passes underneath the bridge structure?

**Mr. Lemieux:** Is the MLA referring to the road that goes to the industrial park?

**Mr. Faurshou:** There was consideration to include the service road as an access road to the industrial park, but I'm confining my question actually to the current service road as it exists today and the necessity of agricultural machinery to now go actually onto the Trans-Canada Highway because the service road, as it was previously designed under the now-demolished structure, there was not enough height or width for most present-day agricultural equipment.

**Mr. Lemieux:** Well, I've been advised certainly that our engineers took a look at all the different aspects with regard to different vehicles, including even containers being hauled by CN to ensure that the extra height on containers, for example, that are being used nowadays and into the future are going to be higher. They've taken a lot of these into consideration.

I find it really passing strange as well, the Member for Portage la Prairie is one who has taken cheap shots at this government saying that we should be delaying projects. In fact, I think the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) even commented, maybe we should delay it; let's delay the project, take a longer look at it. Let's wait a year or two until we can get it right. So I just want to make sure I put that on the record too, Madam Chairperson, is that this government is doing it. We're going to do it as expediently as possible, but I'll also say, as safely as possible. Our engineers, we depend on their advice with regard to projects like that. So I also want to make sure on the record that the opposition are the ones that say delay it, slow it down. We're the ones that are moving ahead and ensuring that it's done properly.

**Mr. Faursehou:** Now, now, I was not going to have any further follow-up questions here, but cheap shots? Never. I am always straight-up and aboveboard in very comprehensive, cost-effective questions from my perspective because taxpayers work long and hard for their dollars to which they're entrusted to government to spend wisely. The only commentary about that was that one has to look at the future of Manitoba as far as infrastructure is concerned and to plan accordingly so it is in fact addressed in a cost-effective manner for the interest of all Manitobans.

That leads me to Provincial Road 227 which has been rebuilt all the way from Highway 6, going across to Highway 16, and there are only six kilometres left. Why can't we finish the last six kilometres, seeing that the balance of the road has already been rebuilt?

**Mr. Lemieux:** Madam Chairperson, you know, we're really fortunate, quite frankly, that in many ways we have a large budget now to be able to work with. There are a lot of projects that have to be prioritized with regard to the province when we take a look at not only the bridge and the bypass that goes around Portage la Prairie. We're fortunate to have that budget, but the Member for Portage la Prairie, including the rest of his caucus, rural caucus, voted against budgets that we have brought forward with regard to increasing the amount of money in the Transportation and Infrastructure budget.

Now we have them on record voting against those budgets. Now we hear them on many occasions saying, well, I want my road done; I want my bridge done. You know, as a government, we have represented, I believe, the province of Manitoba in totality where we're taking care of not only winter roads and roads in Cross Lake and Norway House and Flin Flon and The Pas, Thompson, but also in the southwest, also in the southeast, and certainly around Winnipeg.

We're certainly working very, very diligently to ensure we address all the priorities with regard to Transportation and Infrastructure in the province. On that note, I just want to say to the member opposite that the staff in Portage la Prairie certainly have had their input into our five-year capital plan. For the first time in Manitoba's history, there is a five-year capital plan coming forward. This is something that the Heavy Construction Association have commented on, on numerous occasions. For the first time in Manitoba's history, not only are we tendering

early, which they asked for. Secondly, they're asking for more increased dollars in budget with regard to transportation. We deserve it on that. Also a five-year plan which, for the first time in Manitoba's history, we've addressed all of those—

\* (17:00)

**Madam Chairperson:** The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

### IN SESSION

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour being 5 p.m.—

### House Business

**An Honourable Member:** Government House Business.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader has House business?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you'd canvass the House, if you could ask members if there's leave not to see the clock until—and we can reassess at 5:30.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there willing of the House for the Speaker not to see the clock and reassess it at 5:30? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if, in the interim period, you could call for a Committee of Supply until 5:25.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, we'll proceed today with the Interim Supply.

**An Honourable Member:** By leave.

**Mr. Speaker:** By leave. Is there leave?

**An Honourable Member:** Leave.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, leave has been granted, so we'll have Interim Supply.

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

#### Interim Supply

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa):** Madam Chairperson, I was pleased to hear that the minister has indicated that there are more dollars in the budget, and they're looking at prioritizing projects throughout the province.

My constituency of Minnedosa has, at this present time, two bridges that are restricting access,

full access for people to travel, and I'm just wanting to get some clarification, I guess, an update on the status of these two bridges in my constituency.

The closures have created serious traffic disruptions and obvious frustration for the local residents and, obviously, this being June, there will be tourists and businesses that will be wanting to ensure that that travel can be restored to normal as quickly as possible.

So what I'd like to ask the minister: The status of Highway 2 bridge and Highway 10 bridge, if he can share the status of that and when those roads will be back to normal in the sense of full traffic flow.

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chairperson. You know these are occasions when in Transportation no one likes to see a bridge close or a road close, but, due to safety and other factors, we certainly have to do that. Our engineers are the ones who make the call on such projects.

I would just like to comment as well that, with regard to the bridges the member refers to, the engineers are certainly still looking at those projects to ensure that—to determine essentially what needs to be done to ensure that they're taken care of, not just for a short period of time, but for many, many years to come. So it's not a quick fix that they're looking at. So, at this point, I certainly can't put a date on exactly when those bridges will be at the state that we would all like to see them.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Madam Chairperson, the communities that are affected by Highway 2 bridge have expressed frustration for the months that they've had to detour around Highway 2 bridge. It appears that there have been some methods used to try to detour traffic north of Wawanesa.

Presently, there's a gravel road that has been used to detour traffic. I believe its purpose is to detour all traffic around the community of Wawanesa. This road, I've been told, is very narrow, this gravel road, and this gravel road is in great need of repair or maintenance. That is the responsibility of the department that he is responsible for.

My concern that I am raising today is based on concerns that I've been hearing and receiving from heavy truck drivers as well as passenger vehicles that such a narrow road creates a serious safety concern and is the responsibility of this minister. If he could indicate to me whether he will have his staff have a

better look at this situation before an accident or other safety infractions occur on this road.

**Mr. Lemieux:** Well, let me just say that the department has looked at alternative routes for trucking as well as regular transportation. At one time, we had people detouring and going up to No. 1 highway from No. 2 to bypass the area. There was a restricted piece of highway on Highway 3, which we allowed trucks and traffic to go on, even though we knew there would be some hardship on No. 3. But we're prepared to do some rehabilitation on Highway 3, even though it was going to receive some damage from trucks, but we didn't want them to be going many, many kilometres out of their way when it wasn't necessary. So I'm trying to raise this point just to show that we have taken into consideration the truck drivers, and we have taken into consideration the fact that we don't want people having to take large detours when and if possible.

Yes, it's an inconvenience, but, as a result of the Transportation Department doing their job and being able to see bridges that are faulty and need some work, there is something to be said for that. The department is doing its due diligence, spotting structures that need some work, and, as a result, you are going to have some detours, regrettably. It's nothing that anyone wants, quite frankly, but it has to happen. Safety is a key component of the Transportation Department, or Infrastructure and Transportation, and we want to ensure that all that work is done and completed to everyone's satisfaction.

Some of the roads in the province, if you were to go out today after—and I would daresay in many rural constituencies there are municipal roads and provincial roads, 19,000 kilometres worth of roads that we have in Manitoba—I would venture to say some of those roads are not in great shape, but it's due to rain; it's due to the weather that we've had recently. Some of those roads are not in the shape that we would like them to be, but that's what our five-year capital plan and our vision is all about. We do have a plan and we have a goal in mind, and our vision is to ensure that we improve the infrastructure and transportation system in this province, and we're going to do that.

The road that the member refers to does need some work, granted, but the Brandon office and the Brandon region, the engineers there are the ones that are monitoring all the highways and detours that have been put in place. In fact, I spoke to the mayor

of Wawanesa not long after the bridge was closed. We talked about what will have to be done and what needed to be done. He agreed that the department was doing the best they could under the circumstances. It's not something that anyone would want to happen, but, since we had to close the bridge, he was satisfied, at least at that time, that we were doing everything humanly possible to ensure that disruption to traffic and to commerce and to the flow of vehicles overall wasn't going to be impeded too much.

\* (17:10)

**Mrs. Rowat:** It is my understanding that this road is scheduled to be completed by fall 2007, based on my conversations with somebody within town council of Wawanesa, so, if the minister does have further information to confirm that, I'd appreciate it.

Also, this is more than an inconvenience to the community and to the region. I want, you know, to raise that point with the minister because he did indicate it was an inconvenience. But it's more than an inconvenience. It's about vehicle safety, and it's about personal safety on the roads in my constituency. So I strongly encourage the minister to live up to what we understand is a fall 2007 repair on that bridge.

Highway 10 south is even more of an issue in some ways in that it's falling apart and forcing traffic into one lane. This is western Manitoba's key access to the U.S. border, and the first thing visitors see when they arrive is half of a bridge crossing a river. It's been said through numerous communications with individuals that it's a joke. Welcome to Manitoba, watch your step, is what people are saying. So I'd like to know if the minister can share his plan for the Highway 10 bridge and if he can give me a time line on that infrastructure issue as well.

**Mr. Lemieux:** Madam Chairperson, I've really restrained myself to be looking in the rearview mirror and taking a look at what happened in 1990. So I'm not going to go there because not a lot happened, quite frankly, but we've had to clean up the mess. Now, yes, there are going to be challenges in transportation, and we had Vision 2020, with the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), and the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) being part of that Vision 2020 committee that travelled around the province of Manitoba looking at what would need to be done in transportation overall and infrastructure. They came

back with a report that said that Manitobans wanted at least a \$3-billion budget, and that would be over 10 years to take a look at infrastructure needs.

What did we do? We put \$4 billion over 10 years into infrastructure. So, yes, there are going to be some challenges with regard to infrastructure; 19,000 kilometres worth of highways we are responsible for. I daresay, we can't address them all in one year. But Highway 10 is important. We are looking at the amount of dollars that will be going into Highway 10. We've produced a document, Manitoba's Highway Renewal Plan, 2007-2011, a five-year, \$2-billion plan that includes Highway 10 south of Brandon and north of Brandon, and we're talking about millions and millions and millions of dollars going into No. 10.

I know the member opposite raises and brings a petition to the Legislature saying, you know, that what is happening in the community called Forrest really needs to be addressed with regard to school on one side, community on the other. We have put roadside speed monitors there that would slow traffic down. In our budget, we are in the process of purchasing land—and also the railway is involved in this as well—from railway to ensure that there is a bypass going around the town of Forrest. We are looking also in the '08 budget of doing more work there.

So I appreciate the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) raising it and bringing a petition to the Legislature, but we've met with the public there. The Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) met with the stakeholders and parents and others from the community of Forrest, so that's just one example of the work that we're doing on No. 10. We are going to be addressing Highway 10, different parts of it over the next five years, certainly. It's the first part of our 10-year plan. But I have to tell the member, and the member—I don't want to second-guess why she brings petitions in and so on; I mean, that's her right, and that's a citizen's right to do that. But I'm just saying that it is going to happen. We've planned for it; the department's planned for it; we've budgeted for it. That's just one example of where the member should know, or if she doesn't know, I just wanted to tell her that we are working on Highway 10.

Now, the member also raises the fact that people coming from the United States travel on a beautiful highway. We often hear this about I-29. Travelling on I-29 coming into Manitoba, what do they find?



Highway 75 is broken down, or travelling on the highway south of Brandon they enter No. 10 into Manitoba and saying it needs more work.

We haven't denied the fact that, yes, it does need some work, but 90 percent of I-29 in North Dakota, to use one example, is paid by the federal government in Washington. I would certainly like to have that in Manitoba, to have our federal government paying for 90 percent of the road work taking place on 75, but, no, we're footing the bill. So we keep hearing from Ottawa that, yes, the Brinks truck is on its way; don't worry; there's going to be money for infrastructure and transportation.

So we are anticipating that some day that's going to happen. Now, when that happens, I would certainly like to see a couple of other things take place. Members opposite, certainly, I would hope they would contact Mr. Merv Tweed, who is a member of Parliament for the area, and ask Mr. Tweed to put Highway 10 on the national highway system. Once it's on the national highway system, the federal government would be in part responsible for funding some of it. I know members opposite, whether it's Highway 59, Highway 16, Highway 75, would also want to ensure that it's on the national highway system, to ensure it gets federal money.

So I am pleased that the member opposite raised the question about Highway 10, but there are things that she can do also to assist the province to ensure that we get more federal dollars to put into that highway. We are putting in millions upon millions of dollars, of Manitoba's taxpayers' dollars, into No. 10. We would see further work done if our federal government would do as is done in the United States, where more federal money in gas tax goes back to the states to ensure that their interstates are in good shape.

So I would certainly ask the Member for Minnedosa to contact her members of Parliament that are in her area to ensure that they are getting the message to the federal minister of transportation, Minister Cannon, to ensure that this happens.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Chair, I just have one quick question for the minister. It's in regard to Inkster Boulevard, which is a very well-travelled piece of highway and city street as it connects into the city, in particular, from the Perimeter all the way up to Keewatin.

I am just asking if the minister can provide whatever update he can as to what's happening. If he

could put it in some sort of a time frame, that would be greatly appreciated.

**Mr. Lemieux:** Just wanting to comment with regard to Inkster, I was pleased the day after, or two days after the provincial election was completed, that I made an announcement with the lead federal minister for Manitoba, Minister Toews, with regard to Inkster.

This is a project that both the province and the federal government put in—I stand corrected, I think it's \$33.25 million each into Inkster Boulevard. I regret this answer has to be a little bit longer, maybe, than what the member wants, but it's just an update.

The question is: When is it going to take place? When is a shovel going to go into the ground? Well, right now my department and the engineers in my department are doing what they do best, and that's planning and designing that particular stretch of highway. There are utilities that have to be looked into. In fact, there are some environment issues that have to be looked into before construction can actually start.

Why are we addressing Inkster at present is because we have a vision in Manitoba, and the vision is called the Manitoba International Gateway Strategy. The Manitoba International Gateway Strategy talks about having an inland port, an inland terminal for cargo or containers coming into the province of Manitoba to alleviate the traffic and the backlog that's taking place in Vancouver and will take place in Prince Rupert.

Inkster Boulevard is going to be a key route in years to come with regard to our strategy, which takes a look at rail, trucking, as well as airport facilities that are located on the west side of our city. This is an important strategy, an important route, and it's all part of the Asia Pacific Gateway.

\* (17:20)

Prime Minister Harper, to his credit, continued what the Liberal government, Mr. Jean Lapierre, Minister of Transportation, Transport Canada started. The Asia Pacific Gateway, with Minister Emerson and also Minister Cannon, has continued with—I believe it's a billion dollar fund that has gone into the Asia Pacific Gateway. Each province plays an important piece of this strategy. The Inkster Boulevard portion is a piece that was agreed to by the federal government, that it would play an important role in the traffic that we're talking about coming from Asia.

So I regret my answer had to be a little bit longer than what, maybe, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) wanted, but I just wanted to let the member know that this is something where the federal government and the provincial government have worked hand in hand on. Manitoba is pleased to stand up and, with our partners in Ottawa, say the Asia Pacific Gateway strategy is very important to us.

We have our own Manitoba International Gateway Strategy that actually also includes Churchill. We view Churchill, as well as the city of Winnipeg, as being key to our gateway strategy. There is a term used; it's called the Arctic bridge. There's an Arctic bridge; there're two pieces to it. There's a marine portion that goes from Murmansk, Russia, to Churchill; there's also a portion that goes from Krasnoyarsk, Russia, by air to Winnipeg international airport, the Richardson airport now called. So the Inkster Boulevard portion is just a piece of this puzzle that is all coming together with regard to the International Gateway Strategy.

I have to tell you at this time, as well, I'm very pleased that Mr. Art Mauro and Mr. Art DeFehr are co-chairs of our international gateway—our big gateway council, sorry—which is responsible for giving advice to the Province of Manitoba with regard to trade and where our gateway initiative should be going. All of this may be more than what the member wanted to hear, but I believe it's important to put on the record that Manitoba has a vision with regard to where we are strategically located. At one time, Manitoba was looked upon as the gateway to the west; we want to be the gateway to the world or the gateway to North America. We're strategically, geographically located.

We think there's huge potential for Manitoba in years to come. What we're doing with regard to Inkster, that is just a piece of what is necessary to ensure that there's an east-west route coming from the airport. What's going to be taking place around the airport to the west perimeter that allows the trucks to get in and out of the airport area much quicker, and also allows us to go to the western side of the city to the Perimeter Highway and traffic that's heading either to Saskatchewan, heading west, or traffic that's going to go south down Highway 75, which we're putting millions upon million of dollars into to improve that infrastructure as well.

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** About three months ago, I was talking to the minister regarding the four-

laning of the stretch, 3.5 kilometres, through the city of Winkler, and he suggested that I talk to the mayor and council, and they meet with the department in Portage. That's been done. I'm just wondering if the minister would have an update on that.

**Mr. Lemieux:** I know Winkler is an important community in Manitoba, just like many others are. It's certainly growing as a result of our immigration strategy. Those projections look even better for Steinbach and Winkler with all new people coming to Manitoba. I know Winkler will continue to grow as a result. The Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) should be thanked for those policies that she has worked hard to put in place with her colleagues in Ottawa.

Highway 32 going through Winkler, initially, the city of Winkler wanted that highway four-laned. There're a lot of drainage issues related to that particular stretch of road and highway, and the community and the City of Winkler continue to discuss this particular roadway with the Province of Manitoba. We certainly welcome any advice, any counsel they wish to give to us with regard to the new information they may have. I know Portage la Prairie as a regional office worked closely with the City of Winkler as well.

I know we built a new school in Winkler not that long ago, and I know the Member for Pembina is one that was certainly singing the praises of our Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) for ensuring that that facility was open. So the Province of Manitoba is paving the way to a better future for the community of Winkler. I'm sure the member wouldn't mind taking the opportunity to thank the Minister of Education right now for that new school.

**Madam Chairperson:** The hour being 5:25 p.m., as previously agreed, committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

## IN SESSION

### House Business

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the support of all members of the House and the Speaker and the staff in being flexible, as they always are, with respect to proceedings in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we might have leave of the House to waive the sitting of the Chamber tomorrow morning from 10 till 12 to do Private Members' Business and Private Members' Resolution.

I wonder if there might be unanimous consent of the House to do that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House to waive tomorrow morning's sitting?  
*[Agreed]*

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, it's the intention of the government that we can proceed expeditiously to roll up the matters that are necessary tomorrow afternoon, during the course of the afternoon sitting of this session.

**Mr. Speaker:** That's the information for the House that the House will proceed very quickly tomorrow. That's my information I got.

But, anyway, the hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 13, 2007

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