

Second 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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 22, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 26—The Legal Profession Amendment Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 26, The Legal Profession Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la profession d'avocat, be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 228—The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reporting Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 228, The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reporting Act; Loi sur l'obligation de faire rapport des émissions de gaz à effet de serre, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, in contrast to the government which only requires very infrequent reporting of greenhouse gas emissions, this bill would require reporting of greenhouse gas emissions every three months, so the people in Manitoba can really know what's going on.

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

PETITIONS

Lake Dauphin Fishery

Ms. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Fishing is an important industry on Lake Dauphin.

To help ensure the sustainability of the Lake Dauphin fishery, it is essential that spawning fish in the lake and its tributaries are not disturbed during the critical reproductive cycle.

A seasonal moratorium on the harvesting of fish in Lake Dauphin and its tributaries may help create an environment that will produce a natural cycle of fish for Lake Dauphin, therefore ensuring a balanced stock of fish for all groups who harvest fish on the lake.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) to consider placing a moratorium on the harvesting of any species of fish on Lake Dauphin and its tributaries for the period April 1 to May 15 annually.

To request the Minister of Water Stewardship to consider doing regular studies of fish stocks on Lake Dauphin to help gauge the health of the fishery and to consider determining any steps needed to protect or enhance those stocks.

This petition is signed by Tony Urbanovitch, Peter Podworny, Garry Livingston and many, many others.

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

Dividing of Trans-Canada Highway

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The seven-kilometre stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway passing through Headingley is an extremely busy stretch of road, averaging 18,000 vehicles daily.

This section of the Trans-Canada Highway is one of the few remaining stretches of undivided highway in Manitoba, and it has seen more than 100 accidents in the last two years, some of them fatal.

Manitoba's Assistant Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation told a Winnipeg radio station on October 16, 2007, that when it comes to highways projects, the provincial government has a flexible response program and we have a couple of opportunities to advance these projects in our five-year plan.

In the interests of protecting motorist safety, it is critical that the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is completed as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider making the completion of the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley in 2008 an urgent provincial government priority.

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider evaluating whether any other steps can be taken to improve motorist safety while the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is being completed.

This is signed by Lisa Sykes, Stephen Sykes, Jackie Newton and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Personal Care Homes–Virden

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial government has a responsibility to provide quality long-term care for qualifying Manitobans.

Personal care homes in the town of Virden currently have a significant number of empty beds that cannot be filled because of a critical nursing shortage in these facilities.

In 2006, a municipally formed retention committee was promised that the Virden nursing shortage would be resolved by the fall of 2006.

Virtually all personal care homes in southwestern Manitoba are full, yet as of early October 2007, the nursing shortage in Virden is so severe that more than one-quarter of all the beds at Westman Nursing Home are sitting empty.

Seniors, many of whom are war veterans, are therefore being transported to other communities for care. These communities are often a long distance from Virden and family members are forced to travel for more than two hours round-trip to visit their loved ones, creating significant financial and emotional hardship for these families.

Those seniors that have been moved out of Virden have not received assurance that they will be

moved back to Virden when these beds become available.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider taking serious action to fill the nursing vacancies at personal care homes in the town of Virden and to consider reopening the beds that have been closed as the result of this nursing shortage.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider prioritizing the needs of those seniors that have been moved out of their community by committing to move those individuals back into Virden as soon as the beds become available.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by Evan Clark, Doris Forster, Dick Noble and many, many others.

Long-Term Care Facility–Morden

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by Irene Hildebrand, Irma Klassen, Ken Hildebrand, Ruth Pauls and many, many others.

Provincial Nominee Program–Applications

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

Lengthy processing times for PNP applications causes additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families here in Manitoba.

The government needs to recognize the unfairness in its current policy on who qualifies to be an applicant.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider establishing a 90-day guarantee for processing an application for a minimum of 80 percent of applicants that have family living in Manitoba.

To urge the provincial government to consider removing the use of the restrictive job list when dealing with the family sponsor stream.

This is signed by A. Castro, D. Abarrientos, A. Kalaw and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Child-Care Centres

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

There is an ongoing critical shortage of child-care spaces throughout Manitoba, particularly in fast-growing regions such as south Winnipeg.

The provincial government has not adequately planned for the child-care needs of growing communities like Waverley West where the construction of thousands of homes will place immense pressure on an already overburdened child-care system.

The severe shortage of early childhood educators compounds the difficulty parents have finding licensed child care and has forced numerous centres to operate with licensing exemptions due to a lack of qualified staff.

Child-care centres are finding it increasingly difficult to operate within the funding constraints set by the provincial government to the point that they are unable to provide wages and benefits sufficient to retain child-care workers.

As a result of these deficiencies in Manitoba's child-care system, many families and parents are growing increasingly frustrated and desperate, fearing that they will be unable to find licensed child care and may be forced to stop working as a result. In an economy where labour shortages are common, the provision of sustainable and accessible child care is critical.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) to consider addressing the shortage of early childhood educators by enabling child-care centres to provide competitive wages and benefits.

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider adequately planning for the future child-care needs of growing communities and to consider making the development of a sustainable and accessible child-care system a priority.

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider the development of a governance body that would provide direction and support to the volunteer boards of child-care centres and to consider the development of regionalized central wait lists for child care.

To encourage all members of the Legislative Assembly to consider becoming more closely involved with the operations of the licensed day-care facilities in their constituencies.

Signed by Lorraine Manson, Sylvie Charney, Lisa Rumak and many, many others.

* (13:40)

Crosswalk at Highway 206 and Centre Avenue

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I wish to present the following petition:

These are the reasons for this petition:

The safety of children crossing Provincial Highway 206 in Landmark has been a local concern for a number of years.

Provincial Highway 206 through Landmark is a busy route serviced only by pedestrian crossing signs where it intersects with Centre Avenue.

Safety at this pedestrian crossing needs to be improved before an accident results in major injury or fatality.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider approving the installation of an illuminated crosswalk sign at the intersection of Provincial Highway 206 and Centre Avenue.

This is signed by Doris Young, Tim Rogalsky, Alta Henry and many, many other fine residents of Landmark.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Sisler High School 30 grade 9 students under the direction of Orysyia Petryshyn. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Power Line Location

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, today is Earth Day and thousands of Manitobans are doing their part today to demonstrate their commitment to leaving a better planet to their children and grandchildren. We see individuals making the decision to walk or ride their bikes or car pool to work. We see farmers across Manitoba taking steps to improve practices to protect the environment. We see businesses throughout the province supporting Earth Day in a variety of ways, and through the cumulative impact of thousands of actions taken by individual Manitobans, we know we can look forward with optimism to a better environment and a better future.

Unfortunately, this NDP government is moving in the opposite direction of the people of Manitoba when it comes to protecting the environment and, in particular, its decision to waste 40 megawatts of green energy. The decision by this government to contribute 350,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions to the environment at a time when others in Manitoba are working hard to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions is shameful.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have a document signed by over a thousand Manitobans, and I'll table a copy,

a document addressed to the Premier, signed by over a thousand Manitobans, calling on the government to reverse this decision and to support the faster, shorter, cleaner, greener, cheaper route down the east side of Manitoba.

Now, I know that this government takes its direction from radical American wealthy environmental groups, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask the Premier: Why won't he stand up for Manitobans instead of standing up for radical American organizations?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I don't know why the member opposite doesn't stand up for the earth every day of the year and support the decision to protect the boreal forest, the undisturbed boreal forest right here in Manitoba. I actually believe that every day is Earth Day and all of us can do better. All of us can improve every day.

I want to quote that radical American, Dr. David Schindler, professor of biology at the University of Alberta: If the area, i.e., the east side, remains relatively intact, it will almost certainly be declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, because it's one of the few areas of the southern boreal forest where fauna and flora remain relatively unravaged by logging, mineral or petroleum exploration, encroachment of agriculture and other activities. The Manitoba government has made a wise decision, rare in this age when everything is for sale and most of our politicians seem to be drawn from among the invertebrates, from among the invertebrates, from among the vertebrates. Stand by the government's decision, Manitobans, and see that this priceless area remains intact for future generations to enjoy. Your children and your grandchildren will thank you.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, in addition to his support from Americans, I'm pleased to see he's got an Albertan on board, but I would rather see him listening to the advice of Manitobans, the engineers, the people who live in the boreal forest on the east side of the lake and those people like Jim Collinson, another Manitoban, not an Albertan, who says that we can have a UNESCO site and we can run a transmission line on the east side.

I wish he would listen to organizations like Forest Watch, which talk about the fact that the western boreal forest is in greater need of protection than the eastern boreal forest. I wish he'd listen to the CEO of Hydro, who says they're going to cut 60 kilometres more trees on the west side than they will on the east side.

So he can quote Albertans all he likes, Mr. Speaker, but we're going to take our advice from the people of Manitoba, the people who live here, the people who care about our province. I wonder if Dr. Schindler is aware of the highway that he's building through the eastern boreal forest while he's at it. I'm sure he may change his view of the wisdom of this government once he catches wind of that.

But, setting that aside, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier: Given that his decision is going to add 350,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases south of the border—we know that greenhouse gases don't respect national boundaries—given his decision to add 350,000 tonnes, will he amend Bill 15 to ensure that decisions by the NDP government that add to greenhouse gas emissions will be reviewed and included in the calculation, because he's in the process of moving us 10 percent away from the target when Manitobans want us moving toward the target?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, part of the—a thousand names that are coming back is part of the factually incorrect material that was handed out by the Conservatives and paid for by mailing by the taxpayers. We have a letter to the editor in the *Brandon Sun*—I'm sure it went to other papers; I haven't seen it published—from Mr. Bob Brennan: The \$1.5-billion figure for bipole being used is not accurate.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the member opposite, along with his inaccurate comments—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I'd like the member to now stand up on the record and use the same numbers as Mr. Brennan did in committee. There were four hours of committee. After four other hours of committee the material was presented; the chart was presented. I regret that hundreds of Manitobans, literally thousands of Manitobans received a mailing from the members opposite claiming \$1.5 billion. The CEO has said the number is inaccurate.

Who are you going to believe, the Leader of the Opposition or Mr. Brennan? I believe Mr. Brennan, Mr. Speaker, on this issue.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, if he was honest enough to read the whole letter and if he was honest enough to go back and actually be honest about what

was said in committee, he will know that in a best-case scenario the numbers that have been put out don't include the discount on reliability. They don't include maintenance costs. They don't include a whole variety of other costs which have yet to be calculated.

So in a best-case scenario—in a worst-case scenario it's \$2 billion more expensive; best-case is \$800 million more expensive. From the same Premier who said that Wuskwatim was going to cost \$800 million, it's now at \$1.6 billion, the same Premier who said the \$300-million hydro tower was going to cost \$75 million, Mr. Speaker.

Every number he puts out you have to multiply by four just to get in the ballpark, Mr. Speaker, so he's the one who should apologize to Manitobans, and I want to ask him now if he'll answer the question. He's about to move us 10 percent in the wrong direction of greenhouse gas emissions. Will that be included in the calculations so that Manitobans have a true read on what's happening and it's not just another case of him repeating his other famous promise, hallway medicine, where he makes the promise and then fudges the numbers.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, all the numbers are available on a daily basis. The member opposite was the chief of staff with Minister Stefanson. The same methodology is used. The only difference is they now have the light on them, low-impact lighting, to make sure that all the public can see it.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed transmission line will produce a 75% advantage over the existing, the megawatts with the transmission in terms of net reductions.

Mr. Speaker, we will be accountable. We have committed to being zero or less in our first 10 years in office. Now we have a bigger challenge—you're absolutely right—dealing with the 10 years members opposite were in office, dealing with the over two and a half megatonnes that went up in the 1990s.

We have a plan to not only deal with the modest amount that's gone up since we've been elected, but the two and a half megatonnes, it's mostly in the livestock area. I know that'll be tomorrow's question, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to today's question, but I would point out that the Boreal Forest Network of Manitoba applauds the government of Manitoba and the Minister responsible for Hydro for stating publicly the government has ruled out supporting a push for the east side.

Manitoba Wildlands: Congratulations on protecting the boreal forest. Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Manitoba branch, applaud the determination to ensure that Manitoba's largest southernmost intact boreal forest remains protected on Earth Day. Those are good endorsements for this government's action, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Bill 15 Ministerial Responsibilities

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wonder what those organizations would have to say about the highway that his Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) is building through the eastern boreal forest.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the Premier is proud of the support he's getting from the Pew Charitable Trusts, and it will certainly I think make for some interesting debate on whose side he's on as this issue evolves.

I want to ask the Premier, on a new question, about Bill 15 which has recently been introduced. It's a very, very interesting piece of legislation. I would encourage all Manitobans to take the time to read it because with all of the hype that came out from this government, Manitobans who are doing their own part will be profoundly disappointed with this piece of climate-change legislation, Bill 15. We would have been better off not killing the trees that were mowed down in order to make the paper that it's printed on.

I would say to the Premier that one of the most interesting provisions of Bill 15, introduced by the NDP, is that it's the Minister of Energy who is the judge of whether targets are reached and who's put in charge of making the calculations that will go into whether the targets have been met or not. Now, Mr. Speaker, assuming the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) continues to be the Minister of Energy, we know him to be an objective expert on these matters, an independent objective expert on these matters, but I think Manitobans would have a lot more comfort if an objective outside party was put in charge. But he's put the Member for Assiniboia in charge of grading

him going into the next election as to whether or not he's met his targets.

I want to ask the Premier: Isn't that a little bit like asking one of the elves to judge Santa?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Your researchers must have worked a long time for that one.

Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, there's no question that Stats Canada provides information every year on the issue of emissions. It has reported a modest increase particularly in agriculture in Manitoba in the last period of time. We've also had reductions. We have closed down the coal plant in Selkirk, which I actually believe was operating in a questionable way when members opposite were in office, spewing out materials of coal and particulates in northeast Winnipeg and northeastern Manitoba. We closed it down. We have a plan to phase down the coal plant in Brandon.

We are committed to—and I mentioned this at the press conference, the media conference. We want to go to the western climate change registry and common way of measuring. That is not completed yet. I do agree that there should be beyond Stats Canada a third party to verify the results. Provinces are now working with other provinces: Manitoba, Québec, British Columbia and Ontario have got a cap-and-trade system. To have a cap system, you have to have a common measurement. We're working with, as I say, the other 33 states. I expect the bill will be amended when we get an agreement to have that third party. Right now we have Stats Canada, but we're working with multilayer or multijurisdictional groups, and it is appropriate to have a third-party verifier in terms of keeping score.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to members opposite that, you know, the megatonnes went up, two and a half megatonnes in the '90s. It's over about 200,000 to 300,000 right now and heading down. We have a plan to go after the seven largest emitters in Manitoba. We have a carbon tax on coal. Members opposite in the past, in their Conservative way, said that we didn't have to deal with climate change.

Kyoto, we didn't have to deal with Kyoto. We didn't have to have a climate change strategy. They were part of the Flat Earth Society, and I'm glad we're moving ahead with a comprehensive approach.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, there were so many inaccuracies in that rant that it's hard to know where to begin. He got it wrong in terms of the megatonnes in the 1990s, and if he looks at his own data he'll know that he was wrong. He's exaggerated by 65 percent which isn't bad for him, actually. Normally it's times four. He's wrong in terms of what's happened since he's been in government. Emissions have gone up; they haven't gone down as he just said. We have, with the introduction of this bill, lots of hype, much like the new Coke, and once people try the product, it's not to their liking.

* (14:00)

I want to ask the Premier to come back just to the question, and the question related to Bill 15. Section 3(3) says the minister may determine the method of calculating emission. Section 5(2) says the minister will report on emissions reductions that have been achieved in Manitoba and other jurisdictions. So all of that ramble about other parties is directly at odds with his own minister's bill.

I want to ask the Premier now whether he will amend the bill so that we don't have a situation of having one of his minions be the judge of whether or not he met his objectives going into the next election campaign.

Mr. Doer: First of all, Mr. Speaker, as I said at the press conference, we will be accountable for Stats Canada third-party numbers at minimum. We prefer to have a further agreement with other western states and provinces. This weekend Québec signed on to the western climate change exchange group, including cap and trade. We believe that that, again, gives us more comfort in Canada in the absence of other action. We also know the 31 states in the United States, and we're meeting with some governors recently.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that when we came into office, Manitoba's energy efficiency—not the coal plants that members opposite left unfettered in our environment—Manitoba's energy efficiency was ranked by the third-party independent energy efficiency body in Canada to be in ninth place. We're not perfect, but now Manitoba is rated No. 1 in Canada in terms of energy efficiency.

Any economist or environmentalist would tell you the first and most appropriate way to go in terms of reducing emissions and obtaining results is to improve energy efficiency, and the results we've had, I want to thank the thousands of Manitoba businesses and people who have participated in this program. The results we've had so far are over 300 megawatts of power saved here in Manitoba. Some of it is electrical, some of it's natural gas which is fossil fuels, obviously electrical doesn't produce the GHGs that fossil fuels produces.

I am proud that we've gone from No. 9 to No. 1. We're not perfect like the nitpicker opposite. Oh, I'm sorry, the honourable Member for Fort Whyte, but we are moving ahead in a very positive direction.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier is, I think, being overly sensitive on this point. If he's got something to be proud of, he doesn't need to take personal pot shots. Why doesn't he just stand up and point to what he's actually doing? He wants to have debates about the 1990s. I'm sure that the University of Winnipeg will sponsor a debate between him and Gary Filmon if he wants to go back and have a debate about the 1990s. It would be fun for all of us to go and attend and watch him get his clock cleaned by the former Premier the way he used to back in the 1990s. It will be a lot of fun, Mr. Speaker, but if we could maybe we could move to 2008, 2010, 2012 and beyond.

I just want to put my question to the Minister of Energy (Mr. Rondeau), save everybody a lot of time and trouble. I wonder if the Minister of Energy can indicate to the House today whether he plans on giving his party an A-plus or an A-plus plus going into the next election.

Mr. Doer: I want to quote another third party. I know third-party people don't mean much to the member opposite. We saw his reaction to Dr. Schindler. I congratulate Manitoba for taking a leadership role on climate change. Not only will Manitoba's efforts help reduce harmful emissions but sets a positive example for other provinces and territories to follow—David Suzuki. Introducing legislation on climate targets sends a strong signal of Manitoba's commitment to addressing climate change. Mr. Speaker, I think the government should be commended for taking this action. This plan makes important strides in addressing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture transportation which represents almost two-thirds of Manitoba's emissions—the International Institute for Sustainable

Development's CEO and president, David Runnels, who I believe resides in Manitoba.

I could go on with other third-party verifiers, but let me go back, Mr. Speaker: No. 9 when we came into office on energy efficiency; No. 1 today, and we're going to keep moving forward.

Manitoba Hydro Power Line Location

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): The Premier's inside man at Manitoba Hydro, a board chair and former NDP Cabinet minister, that's Vic Schroeder, seems to consider his job to be the daffy detour defender at all costs. Now, we know that Manitoba Hydro and CEO Bob Brennan have been working on the east-side route for decades now, while Mr. Schroeder tried to tell Manitobans recently that the west-side route was Hydro's preferred option all along.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister responsible for Hydro: Why is the Premier's inside man so obviously off base with the wishes of the non-political staff of Hydro, and why is he misleading Manitobans about what this utility really wants to have?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): I think the member is being fast and loose with his interpretations of what occurred at the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations when we dealt with Manitoba Hydro. He was there. He was in attendance. It was very clear that part of the process was that Manitoba Hydro conducted their own due diligence report called the Farlinger report.

The Farlinger report made a number of comments on the alternative routes and the risks attendant to the various choices that could be made. They looked at the risks of an east-side route. They looked at the risks of a west-side route. One of the conclusions and probably the most important conclusion that the Farlinger report came to was that this issue was larger than Manitoba Hydro and that they should seek input and advice from the provincial government as to the best alternative they should choose.

They went ahead and did that, and subsequent to seeking—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it also appears that the former NDP Cabinet minister, Vic Schroeder, has also been misleading Manitobans in regard to

Hydro's export customers. Mr. Schroeder told CBC that our export customers won't buy power from us if we build on the east side.

Tom Hoen of Xcel Energy told us this is simply not true. In addition, Janet Gonzalez of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission has told us that security and capacity are their main concerns, not where the bipole line is located.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister responsible for Hydro: Why is the Premier's inside man at Hydro trying to mislead us, telling us that export customers won't buy from us when clearly this is not the case?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite has the courage of his convictions, he can put those questions directly to the chair of Manitoba Hydro face to face.

What he should be doing today is asking us why we have done what we have done. It's very clear that there is a reputational and market risk to rolling the dice and jamming the transmission line down the east side when it could put at risk not only a UNESCO World Heritage designation but the reputation of Manitoba Hydro as a clean, renewable source of hydro power which enhances its value to its customers in the United States and elsewhere across the country.

The members opposite want to roll the dice with that. They want to put Manitoba Hydro at risk, and that is a minimum of \$5.5 billion of revenue over the next 10 years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House look forward to having another committee meeting with Manitoba Hydro anytime.

We have been presenting petitions in this House every day regarding the daffy detour. Today, 1,000 more Manitobans expressed their support of the east-side line, and still this Premier (Mr. Doer) refuses to listen. Manitobans are wise to the agenda of the politically appointed board of Hydro. These views are clearly different than the non-political staff and the word of our Hydro export customers.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier talked about courage this morning in his address to the Chamber. Does this government have the courage to stand with other Manitobans, build the shorter, the faster, the cheaper, the more environmentally friendly east-side line?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the government had the courage to put out their view on which side the hydro transmission line should go as early as 2005. They

had the courage to then run on it in the last election. They had the courage, once again, to state their views very clearly to Manitoba Hydro through a ministerial letter, a best practice very rarely undertaken inside of this province.

Members opposite, let's compare their behaviour. They dangled the potential of ownership to the people of eastern and northern Manitoba, northeastern Manitoba, before the election. They snatched that opportunity away right after the election and said they would never own it. They pretended they were on the side of First Nations people before the election, and then they abandoned that support for them after the election.

Is that courage, is that hypocrisy, or is that two-faced, what we've seen from the opposition?

* (14:10)

City of Winnipeg Waste-Water Treatment Plant Funding

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, five years ago the Province's Clean Environment Commission came out with a report mandating the City of Winnipeg to upgrade its waste-water treatment facilities.

Under the financial supports section of the report it states, and I quote: The funding formula of one-third municipal, one-third provincial and one-third federal should be used.

Mr. Speaker, this report came out in August of 2003, almost five years ago. Why did it take the government so long to announce their funding, and will they admit that the amount falls well short of the one-third mandated by its own provincial government?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it's actually a pleasure to get any question from members opposite involving the City of Winnipeg and, in particular, in an area where we committed back in the last budget to fund the provincial share of the waste-water upgrades.

By the way, let's put on the record that the Conservatives ignored this when they were in government. It was supposed to go to the Clean Environment Commission in 1993. It took an NDP government to take it to the Clean Environment Commission.

Our money is there. In fact, we're working with the City to try and get the federal government to come on board. I hope members opposite will perhaps consider asking their political cousins in Ottawa to do what the provincial government is doing, which is committing to the upgrades to the waste-water systems. That never happened in 1993. It's going to happen now with an NDP government in power.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the project is expected to cost upwards of \$1.8 billion, yet the government has announced only \$235 million which is clearly well short, and the Premier (Mr. Doer) may want to listen to this. It's well short because we know he doesn't maybe always get math, but it falls well short of the one-third mandated by his own government department.

Will they agree to live up to their own mandate to fund one-third of the project or is this just another empty promise by the NDP?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, it used to be in Canadian political history, what's a million? Now, what's \$232 million? I'll tell you what it is. It is the provincial share to live up to cost-sharing of licensing for the waste-water facilities.

That didn't happen in the 1990s. It's going to happen, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP government. We're partnering with the City of Winnipeg. We're going to improve the waste-water treatment plant, to license it for the first time, and we look forward to the federal government joining us.

Our one-third is there. That is the cost that is committed for the licensing of the various waste-water treatment facilities.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, again we see a prime example of NDP math. They think that \$235 million represents one-third of \$1.8 billion. I'm not sure what school they went to, but members on this side of the House know that that does not represent the one-third that was mandated by their own provincial government department.

Mr. Speaker, will the government admit that they have dropped the ball forcing our children to continue to swim in raw sewage at our beaches this summer?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, by the way, I went to R.D. Parker Collegiate in Thompson, the University of Manitoba and Lakehead University. That's where I went to school.

Where I went to school, a government that stands up and commits \$232 million, a provincial cost share, for the first time to have licensing of our waste-water facilities that is going to keep, by the way, both nitrogen and phosphorus out of the Red River system, what that adds up to is we're committed to waste-water quality; we're committed to working with our City.

In the 1990s, nothing happened. Under the NDP, we're protecting Manitoba's water.

Violent Crime Reduction Strategy

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the double execution-style murder of the Labossière family terrified all Manitobans. The criminals broke into their home; they pulled them out of bed and they executed them in front of their one-year-old child. Criminals have clearly decided that this Justice Minister is no obstacle and they're thumbing their noses at the minister.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: As Winnipeg is becoming more and more dangerous, why is he becoming less and less effective?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the member will know that I cannot comment on any particular issue that is being investigated for very good reason, but one thing that I think is really important is that under the previous minister and following my becoming minister, we put in place a gang strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to report that phase 1 of the gang strategy which would entail first-degree murder for gang-related homicides, a new drive-by shooting offence, amend section 8(10) of the gang recognition act, gang-free zones and gang recruitment be phase 1 of Criminal Code amendments that are presently being reviewed by the federal government and a committee of the provincial government to change the Canadian Criminal Code to deal with gang offences.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, tragically, five members of the Labossière family have now been murdered execution style all within a three-year period. While the Minister of Justice buries his head firmly in the sand and pretends nothing is wrong, the cries of the Labossière's one-year-old child ring throughout Manitoba.

Five members of one family murdered and other members of the same family now fear for their own

existence. They could be next, Mr. Speaker. I ask the Minister of Justice: Why has he failed to protect the Labossière family?

Mr. Chomiak: I think one of the ineffectivenesses of the members opposite's strategy is the over-the-top scenario, Mr. Speaker, where everything is over the top, overstated and personally—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: An example of that, Mr. Speaker, is a year and a half ago, when we put \$400,000 into the gang intelligence unit which resulted in 12 Hells Angels being put in jail, the then-opposition critic said we are wasting our money; we should be putting it elsewhere.

That \$400,000 helped lock up Hells Angels in the jail system who are off the street today. Unfortunately, the laws aren't strong enough to keep a lot of them in jail, and that's one of the things we're looking for the federal government to do.

Domestic Violence Reduction Strategy

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): A 2006 Stats Canada study found that Manitoba women are at higher risk of being killed by their male partners than women in any other province in Canada. In fact, it's a 50 percent higher than Canadian average.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) if he can tell us what he did to follow up on that particular study, and, hopefully, he took it seriously enough that he didn't just shelve it to gather dust.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): There is absolutely no question that domestic violence is a very important issue for our government. It is also a very complex issue and a very private issue. What we have done since we got into government, Mr. Speaker, is we have put together a legislative framework and a regulatory framework to help us deal with this very, very difficult issue.

In 2005, we made amendments to The Domestic Violence and Stalking Act making more victims of domestic violence eligible to access protection orders, including people that are dating but not living together.

We've also passed The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Act making it easier to enforce court orders from other jurisdictions.

This is a very complex issue, Mr. Speaker, and one we have taken very seriously.

Mrs. Driedger: I hope that the minister also looked at the 2006 Stats Canada study because she was talking about information of what she did before 2006, and these statistics are pretty alarming.

In Manitoba, there are approximately 3,000 domestic violence assault cases per year where charges are laid. Nobody knows when any of these cases can escalate to something worse. Jane Ursel, an expert on domestic violence, has made a suggestion that Manitoba develop a process to review domestic homicides.

I'd like to ask this government if they have any plans to heed her suggestions.

Ms. Allan: Obviously, we have been in contact with Dr. Jane Ursel who works with RESOLVE at the University of Manitoba. On Monday, we contacted her office and we have set up a meeting. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) and the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) have a meeting with Dr. Ursel on Friday afternoon. That meeting has been scheduled because that is the meeting that she was available for.

So it is happening at the earliest possible time and this is a very, very serious issue for our government, and we look forward to that meeting to review what has happened in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:20)

Bill 228 Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, time and time again, when it comes to the environment the government has failed to adequately get the job done. Instead of doing what's needed, the government ends up doing a small part of what's needed.

When it comes to climate change, the government will report on Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions once in 2010, once in 2012 and then once in 2016 and then every fourth year after that. That's not often enough. Indeed, it's laughable. If Manitobans are going to be involved in a reduction

strategy we need to know at least every three months what's going on with greenhouse gases.

Will the Premier support our Bill 228, which we've tabled, to make sure that Manitobans are fully aware of what's happening with greenhouse gas production in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, Environment Canada reports every year on an annual basis on the greenhouse gases, and we accept that.

We certainly are working with other provinces on some of the issues dealing with agriculture. There is some methodology issues dealing with some of the reporting, but we're working together with Environment Canada and other provinces dealing with that category. Certainly there is accountability with Environment Canada and we accept that accountability.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the latest report is three years old, not good enough. The Premier needs to take charge and make sure we've got the information we need here in Manitoba.

Yesterday the Premier admitted he got egg on his face because the members he appointed to the Manitoba Hydro board didn't ensure that they had taken a proper look at the underwater line under Lake Winnipeg.

I asked the Premier, pushed the Premier many years ago, about looking at agricultural emissions. He didn't pay attention then, or we could be doing a lot better with our greenhouse gas reduction strategy.

I ask the Premier: When will he give us regular, frequent, up-to-date reporting of greenhouse gases?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the holier-than-thou member would note that we have—I stated yesterday in the House that we asked the question on Dr. Ryan's report four years ago, as one would expect. So let not the member reinterpret, in his revisionist way, how we answered just 24 hours ago. One would think the member opposite would remember.

Speaking of the environment, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has said to us that we should only remove phosphorus from the waste-water system in Manitoba. I'd ask him to look at the most recent decision in Regina, where they're spending over a hundred million dollars to get it right the first time with nitrogen and phosphorus. In terms of Lake Winnipeg clean-up, they have quotes saying the nitrogen from urban waste waters was effective to

transport it to downstream lakes where it resulted in a 300 percent increase in algae production.

The member opposite only wanted to take out one element polluting our lakes. We're proposing both elements, Mr. Speaker. History will prove us to be correct.

**Manitoba Hydro
Underwater Power Line**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, if I can quote the Premier and suggest, let's try to get this thing right the first time.

To what degree will we allow the Premier's pride and political or party politics to stand in the way of doing what's right, Mr. Speaker? Hundreds of millions of dollars is what we're talking about when this Premier and this government wants to go full-steam ahead on the west-side development. Professor Ryan has come up with a viable alternative, building underneath the lake: more cost-efficient, better for the environment. There are far more benefits.

This government has been unable to clearly demonstrate that Professor Ryan's project under Lake Winnipeg would not work. I ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger): Can he stand in the Chamber today and say Professor Ryan's project or proposal does not hold any water and is not worth Manitoba looking at?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Yes, I'd like to thank the member who is so non-partisan in this House on every issue. He's truly the most non-partisan person in here, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* It used to be a character builder, but not necessarily always.

Mr. Speaker, I would strongly suggest that the members opposite pay attention to the answer we gave. The material was produced publicly. Dr. Ryan is a person who I quoted before, actually in opposition, on water issues. We asked the question to Hydro four years ago, three years ago, two years ago. We do rely on the management to give us appropriate answers.

Hydro said they'll review Dr. Ryan's research with an independent body. The Farlinger report has been produced in the Legislature. I'd suggest the member opposite read it and that—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Earth Day

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, Earth Day is the perfect opportunity to recognize the tremendous efforts of Manitobans who are making a difference. From small changes in our homes to large-scale efforts, impressive strides are being made for the better of our environment. I am impressed by the passion and knowledge of our young people. In classrooms across our province, students are learning about the environment. They have become the best ambassadors for change and engage teachers, families and their communities in making a difference. The enthusiasm of this generation is an inspiration. I can only imagine what they will accomplish in the future.

Earth Day and every day, local organizations and groups promote education and awareness about our environment. I would like to recognize and thank the wonderful people at the Fort Whyte Centre, Living Prairie Museum, Riverbank Discovery Centre, Delta Marsh, Oak Hammock Marsh and many others for the important work they do. This weekend at Fort Whyte Centre over 300 participants walked, ran, biked, rollerbladed or kayaked 42 kilometres in the ninth annual EcoAdventure. This is only one example of the numerous events and initiatives across Manitoba marking Earth Day.

I would also like to applaud the efforts of many members of the business community who have embraced innovative measures such as biodegradable and earth-friendly products and packaging. Recycling and green office practices have also become common in many workplaces. The message behind Earth Day is being lived every day in rural Manitoba. Our farm families and agricultural businesses rely on the land for their livelihood. Environmentally sustainable agriculture practices are being adopted. It is a proud way of life that is adapting and changing for future generations.

For every Manitoban who has made a change for the better, I thank you and encourage you to keep up the spirit of Earth Day throughout the year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Jennifer Jones Curling Team

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise before the House to recognize the accomplishment of the Jennifer Jones team, this year's Ford World Women's Curling champions.

Manitoba is known for having outstanding curlers, and the Jones rink has once again proved this to be true. I am especially proud of the Jones team since their home club is the St. Vital Curling Club, an important landmark in my constituency. I know that the St. Vital Curling Club's board of directors and all their members are very proud to be the home club of the 2008 World Women's Curling Championship team. The team showed incredible tenacity, composure and skill at the competition in B.C. as they represented Canada and Manitoba.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing the achievements of Jennifer Jones, Cathy Overton-Clapham, Jill Officer, Dawn Askin, Jennifer Clark-Rouire and Coach Janet Arnott for our 2008 World Women's Curling champions and in extending well-deserved congratulations. I'd also like to wish them all the best in their future competitions. I know they've made Manitobans proud and, having earned a berth in the Olympic trials, are hopefully on their way to Whistler in 2010. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CFB Shilo War in Afghanistan Exhibit

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, Canadian soldiers have bravely served throughout the proud history of our country and many have lost their lives. We remember and honour the sacrifices and bravery of all of our soldiers, but understanding what they experienced can be hard for those who have never experienced conflict first-hand.

In support of those serving overseas, I had the privilege of attending the opening of an important exhibit called The War in Afghanistan hosted at the Central Museum of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery at CFB Shilo. This exhibit gives visitors a chance to glimpse the daily routine and lives of Canadian soldiers on tour of Afghanistan. Moving photo murals, equipment displays and vehicles such as the LAV-3 and the G Wagon serve as stark reminders. Combat videos recorded by the soldiers on the ground give them a voice and deeply moved visitors.

Leaders from CFB Shilo spoke with genuine appreciation at this event. I would like to thank them and all of the soldiers from CFB Shilo.

* (14:30)

Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Bishop is the commanding officer of the 1st Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery and has completed tours in Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Bosnia and Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, Major Chris Lunney has an extensive military career throughout the country and is currently the officer commanding A Company with the 2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

It is soldiers such as these men who have experienced in real life what this exhibit is teaching.

Our Canadian soldiers protect our freedom and the lives of many across the globe. Approximately 2,250 military personnel currently are serving in Afghanistan on six-month tours. This includes 650 soldiers from 2PPCLI, 1RCHA and stationed at CFB Shilo. Everyone's goal is to rebuild a functioning nation and a secure environment for the benefit of all Afghan citizens. Canada's role includes carrying out military operations, mentoring and training the Afghanistan National Army, and assisting in the stabilization and development of the Kandahar province. Tragically, CFB Shilo has personnel amongst those lost in this war. They will not be forgotten by their loved ones, fellow soldiers and our community as a whole.

The War in Afghanistan exhibition allows the public a glimpse into the environment many brave Canadian soldiers see every day during their time in Afghanistan. I would like to thank Marc George and the staff of the RCA Museum and the organizers for providing this opportunity of understanding and a source of knowledge of the important role Canadians take on in this war.

My personal appreciation and admiration of our soldiers increased after my time at this exhibit. I encourage everyone to experience this exhibit and support our soldiers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Streamers Hardware Store

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, in May 1928, a Cranberry Portage institution was born. The Streamer family opened Cranberry Hardware, which is now known as Streamers True Value Hardware.

Mr. Speaker, this May the Streamers will be celebrating a landmark 80 years in Cranberry Portage; 80 years of history have created deep roots in the neighbourhood. Streamers' store is a household name in Cranberry Portage, and the store provides an essential service for the region.

In May 1928, Ernest Albert Streamer left his job as a captain with the Winnipeg Fire Department and moved to Cranberry Portage to build Streamers

hardware store. Ernest was also a former secretary of the school board and an all-round active member of the community.

After the unfortunate fire of 1929, which razed virtually all of Cranberry Portage, Ernest built a new store uptown and away from the lake. In 1956, after a second fire, the Streamer family rebuilt the store at its present location.

Ernest's son, Fergus Streamer, married Isobel, and they became the next generation of owners. Fergus was a three-time world champion junior dog musher. His three plaques marking this outstanding achievement are on display in the Flin Flon Museum.

Fergus and Isobel's two sons continue to operate the hardware store. Dale and Wayne Streamer are third generation owners of this local success story. In fact, Wayne's son, Scott Streamer, works at the store which makes this a fourth generation family business, and, who knows, Scott and his wife Jaymie have a daughter, Madison, who could potentially be a fifth generation owner.

Mr. Speaker, the Streamer family keeps the store well-stocked with modern merchandise as well as those hard-to-get items from yesteryear. People from miles around come to visit and to purchase hardware from this truly remarkable family business.

I would ask all members to join with me in celebrating 80 years for Streamers hardware, and we all wish the store another 80 years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

55 Plus Job Bank

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take this opportunity just to comment on the 55 Plus Job Bank, a job bank that was in operation for just under 30 years and, unfortunately and somewhat sadly, came to an end last year because the government had made the decision not to get involved in terms of ensuring that the job bank would continue on.

Mr. Speaker, over the years, the 55 Plus Job Bank provided a lot of wonderful opportunities for seniors looking to be able to use the skills that they have and assist individuals within or throughout our communities in getting work tasks done, providing consumer-friendly, if I can put it that way, work. This job bank, I believe, could have continued on.

I understand now that the government is looking at having a bit of a name change and trying to change and put a new face on the old job bank, but,

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we recognize that for many, many years the 55 Plus Job Bank served so many people.

The government that likes to say that they are there for our seniors obviously was not there for our seniors when the job bank ultimately shut its doors. I think it is a sad, sad thing when we talk about \$150,000 and the thousands of people that it has helped throughout the years. I think it was one of those programs that had so much potential, and it was somewhat sad to see it go, especially under an NDP administration that likes to claim itself as being progressive. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Firstly, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to rule 31(9), I am announcing that the private resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one put forward by the honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard). The title of the resolution is Condemnation of Holocaust Denial.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced, pursuant to rule 31(8), that the private members' resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable Member for Fort Rouge. The title of the resolution is Condemnation of Holocaust Denial. That's for the information of the House.

The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

House Business

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business. In the Chamber, I wonder if you could call the following bills after which I will then give a subsequent list: Bill 3, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Bill 4, The Provincial Court Amendment Act; Bill 5, The Witness Security Act; Bill 7, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Bill 8, The Phosphorus Reduction Act; Bill 10, The Legislative Library Act; Bill 12, The Securities Transfer Act, and then on second reading; Bill 20, The Gunshot and Stab Wounds Mandatory Reporting Act.

Mr. Speaker: In the Chamber for government business, we will be dealing with Bills 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12 and 20. As previously agreed, we will consider bills this afternoon that I just listed off. Then we will have two sections of Supply; one will

be meeting in room 255 dealing with Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. Also, in room 254, we will be dealing with Infrastructure and Transportation.

Agreement is that there will be no recorded votes or quorum calls to be held. Okay.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 3—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on second reading of Bill 3, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

What is the will of the House?

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

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) wishes to speak to the bill. [interjection]

You have spoken, okay.

So is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 3, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

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

Bill 4—The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Family Mediators and Evaluators)

Mr. Speaker: Bill 4, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Family Mediators and Evaluators), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck). What is the will of the House?

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

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Does any member wish to speak? No.

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 4. [interjection]

Order.

* (14:40)

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to say a few words about Bill 4, The Provincial Court Amendment Act. The bill was introduced by the minister on November 26 last year, and had some opportunity to canvass with a number of groups within the province who would have some interest in this particular bill to determine whether or not they would support it. The answer that came back was that they are in support of the bill. The bill is a necessary bill because it harmonizes the provisions in The Court of Queen's Bench Act with the provincial judges' court act. It is a bill that we would support and move to second reading and, hopefully, hear from some presenters when it comes time for committee. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I, too, just want to put a few words on the record before this bill passes off into committee. I think it behooves us to look at legislation that would assist in the whole issues of custodies and child custody. We all know that, when you go through break-ups in family, there is a great deal of emotion from all the stakeholders that are in the process, in particular, our children and parents, and, if there are things that we can do to assist in lowering the stress and anxiety and the costs, we should move towards doing that.

I believe that this is one of those bills that, in fact, would go a long way in terms of ensuring that there is mediation as opposed to, in some cases, courts and in that sense, even though it's not as formal, not as costly, it's not as public, it ultimately will, I believe, allow for a great deal less stress, and the family unit, even though it's breaking up, would be the biggest benefactor of it.

Like the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) has said, I will wait and see when it goes to committee to see what type of presentations might be there; but, having had the opportunity just to have a quick glance at the legislation, I haven't heard any negative comments of it to this date and would support it passing to the committee at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 4, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Family Mediators and Evaluators).

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

Bill 5—The Witness Security Act

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on second reading on Bill 5, The Witness Security Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity again to put a few words on the record on this particular piece of legislation. I'll certainly look forward to committee once again and determine whether or not there are going to be any presenters.

I can say offhand at this point that I will be making an amendment to the bill and giving the minister ample opportunity now, ample notice of that because I think it's important that he recognizes the kind of amendment that I'll likely be making to the bill itself.

I'm particularly concerned when it comes time to one of the provisions in The Witness Security Act. I don't have the bill in front of me, so I can't quote the particular provision, but it isn't a very long piece of legislation in any event. I'm particularly concerned about the criterion that is expressed in the act when determining whether or not to protect the witness. That's of particular concern because one particular provision says that the committee has to consider the importance of the witness to the prosecution as a factor to be considered before providing protection to a witness.

My thoughts and my feelings are that anyone who is a witness and will be called by the prosecution, all should be considered important. I don't think it should be up to a committee to determine whether the witness is important enough to protect. Everyone should, in fact, receive that protection. I would say my intent at this point mentioning it in second reading debate is just to provide notice to the minister that that's something he may want to consider before committee. I would welcome it if he agrees that perhaps a friendly amendment could be made at that point, because I don't think we should be picking and choosing whether a witness is important or not. The prosecution, in fact, chooses to subpoena a particular

witness to a trial. Obviously, they deserve protection as anyone else would, particularly when we're dealing with organized crime issues, when we're dealing with organized crime trials, I think every witness is important and should be considered for protection under the piece of legislation.

So that's just my only comment, at this point, with respect to this particular bill. Again, I look forward to any comments that may come forward on presentations to committee. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I, too, want to put a few comments on the record. In fact, what I'd like to do, Mr. Speaker, is in understanding and getting appreciation of why programs of this nature do need to be established, supported and adequately resourced, I'd like to give a couple of examples.

Probably a couple of months back, I had somebody come to my office, and this is an individual that was quite nervous. What happened is that they had recently immigrated to Canada, chose Manitoba to live in, and they were living on Sargent Avenue. What happened is that they had heard, or the husband had heard, some screaming outside the apartment unit, and when he went out there, he could see two people taking off from the scene. What he witnessed was two people leaving the scene of a murder where, I believe, it was a relatively young lady was murdered. There was concern on his part that, by him being asked to go before the courts, he was putting into jeopardy the safety not only of himself but also his family. You know, you could see the fear in the eyes, and you try to provide the best type of advice that you can give.

I also had, a few years ago, actually the son of a very good friend of mine, who was beaten to death in a hotel on Main Street. Again, there was a witness, and this particular witness had taken it upon himself to relocate out to another province.

I was amazed, Mr. Speaker, as to how the individual approached my office. I have two large windows, glass windows and a glass door—it's a typical commercial building. I'm sitting at a desk, and I see this person just kind of pacing back and forth in front of my office and wondering well, what's this guy doing? About three or four minutes later, he comes rushing into the office, and he wants to go into the back part of my office where people can't see on the inside. So I went to the back of the office with this gentleman, and he, in essence, broke down. He talked about his parents. He talked about how this incident where his friend was beaten to

death, and now he doesn't know what to do because he'd like to see justice given to the culprits that beat his friend to death, but he was literally scared for his life. I had asked him, why were you walking around in the front of the office? He believes that he is being followed, and he's constantly having to look out to make sure that an environment is safe that he's going into because he doesn't know if there's a way in order to get out.

* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker, so when I see and hear of stories of this nature, I think it gives you a better sense of what it is that witnesses that see or have some knowledge that needs to be known to the court in order to ensure that there's some justice delivered for those that broke the law are in many cases putting their lives at risk, and if not real, it's definitely perceived by many individuals. This is one of the reasons why I think, as legislators, that we need to look at how we can provide that sense of security and assurances to members of the public that the government, or our courts, our police are there to protect the witnesses. We don't want to live in a society where a nasty crime is committed and someone that witnessed that particular crime refuses or doesn't report to the police that he or she has seen that crime. The reason why they might not do that is because they feel that by reporting it or by consulting with the police, that they are putting their own lives or family's in jeopardy.

I understand that the purpose of Bill 5 is to establish the program where we talk about things like relocation in some cases might be warranted, in other areas it could just be that of change of identity. It really varies and you need to have that committee there or that grouping there to ensure that it's done in the interest of our whole judicial system. With those few words, Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to see Bill 5 go to committee stage. Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading, Bill 5, The Witness Security Act.

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

Bill 7—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Child Pornography Reporting)

Mr. Speaker: Bill 7, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Child Pornography Reporting),

standing in the name of the honourable Member for Ste. Rose.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 7, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act. First, let me say that I believe that the principle of the legislation is fairly sound. That being said, I would note that the devil is in the detail, and I think there will be some real problems with enforcement. In fact, I question whether this legislation will ever be enforced.

I remind the House that legislation was passed and highly promoted related to gang activities and there has never been an enforcement or prosecution under that legislation. I believe Bill 7 will be very difficult to enforce. With that being said, if the legislation results in one conviction or one child saved from a dangerous abusive situation, it is worth passing the legislation.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Child pornography can only exist if children are in abusive situations. It is the duty and responsibility of all members of this House and all Manitobans to take whatever measures are necessary to prevent those situations from ever happening. The advent of the Internet and instant communication has dramatically increased access to child pornography. The Internet may or may not play a role in increased activity in the development of child pornography, but it certainly has made child pornography more available and probably made the production more lucrative for the perverts that produce it.

As I said, I will support this legislation in principle, but there are major weaknesses. Bill 7 does very little to address the issue of child pornography; instead, this bill makes every Manitoban potentially guilty by association. Instead of penalizing the criminal, it has the potential to criminalize the general public. The NDP continues to work under the assumption that the general public is not caring enough to report incidents of child pornography. That assumption is a long way from reality. Any thinking, caring Manitoban would automatically report instances of child porn without this legislation; we don't have to legislate common sense in this province. Bill 7 may get some headlines, but it is doubtful that it will get any results.

Another area of concern with Bill 7 is in enforcement. If there is to be enforcement, then resources need to be in place to proceed. Our law

enforcement is already overwhelmed in this province. Madam Deputy Speaker, Manitoba's Crown attorneys are struggling to deal with 200-plus caseloads at any one time. In fact, in 2006, we were informed that one Crown had well over 300 cases on the go at once. Although they do their best to cope with these caseloads, they were simply overwhelmed.

Our police forces are in similar situations. We're adding one more thing to the plate that they may possibly have to do prosecutions on with the limited resources they have. Once again, I'll just state that any legislation that makes every Manitoban a potential criminal is wrong.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Where we have to place our resources is in the areas of making the criminals pay for the crimes that they commit. All of our resources have to go to them—*[interjection]* How long? Okay.

Any legislation that causes every Manitoban to be liable, the Internet pornography or any kind of child pornography has to be punished at the source. We have a lack of resources to deal with the situations. It's somewhat similar to saying, if you don't report somebody speeding then you'll get a ticket for not reporting them. Pornography can show up on your Internet, on your electronic devices accidentally. When you get pulled in on an accidental situation—somebody has reported it—it becomes very difficult for you to defend yourself on it—*[interjection]* Yes, there are always other people using your computers. There are other people in your families. There's opportunity for many—are we done? There's opportunity for many accesses to your computer and that can make you a criminal without even knowing you are.

With those few words, I'm pleased to have put those words on the record to Bill 7. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 7, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Child Pornography Reporting).

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

Bill 8—The Phosphorus Reduction Act (Water Protection Act Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Bill 8, The Phosphorus Reduction Act (Water Protection Act Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet? No? It's been denied?

Are there any speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 8, The Phosphorus Reduction Act (Water Protection Act Amended).

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

Bill 10—The Legislative Library Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 10, The Legislative Library Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet?

No? It's been denied.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put some words on the record regarding Bill 10, The Legislative Library Act. This side of the House will be supporting the intent of this act; however, I'd like to put on the record some points of clarification and also share some points to consider by this government with regard to Bill 10.

This bill replaces The Legislative Library Act, which provides for a library to be used by members of the Legislative Assembly and others. The bill requires departments and other governmental bodies to give copies of their publications including electronic publications to the library without charge. As well, at the request of the legislative librarian, nongovernmental publications that are published in Manitoba must be given to the library without charge.

* (15:00)

Bill 10 modernizes the practices of the Legislative Library by establishing guidelines for collection of electronic publications. The current

legislation did not specify documents published for distribution on the Internet as the publications that should be collected. I think we are all aware of the plethora of information that is sometimes only accessible on-line. In addition, the information can often be put on the Internet for only a brief period of time before it is removed. Therefore, it is necessary to have the Legislative Library continuously monitor the information a department or other governmental bodies put on-line and ensuring a copy of this information is kept on record and remains accessible.

Similarly, Bill 10 formally extends the purpose of the Legislative Library to include the preservation of government and legislative documents but also the published heritage of the province. While in practice this may have already been common, the addition of preserving documents as a purpose of the library guarantees that the recorded history of this province is maintained and accessible throughout the years.

Bill 10 also moves in the direction of diminishing the role of the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Robinson) in administration of the Legislative Library. The minister will take a more advisory role versus an authoritative one, and this allows a library more autonomy to run on its own. Individuals who work in the Legislative Library are most familiar with its operation and therefore have the best understanding of which programs and policies best meet the purposes of the library.

Before I conclude, I would just like to mention the importance of the Legislative Library. It is a crucial source of information for us, the members of the Legislative Assembly, and our staff and researchers. Even with increased dependence on the Internet as a means to access information, it is often necessary to utilize the resource the Legislative Library can provide and the knowledgeable staff members who are always ready to provide assistance no matter what we're trying to find.

It is good to see the Legislative Library evolving with the developing role of the Legislative Library when it comes to collecting electronic publications and ensuring a collection of this province's published records are maintained.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, Bill 10 is an interesting bill in the sense that—I guess it would be back in 1981-82 is when I really came to the Legislative Building on my own, and the only

room that really stood out, because I wasn't allowed to come into the Chamber—there was no tour at the time, I guess—was the Legislative Library.

It is a very impressive library just to kind of walk in, and you see the rails and so forth. One of the consistent things that I recall right offhand back in 1981 or '82, whenever it was, to today, is the people that operate and staff the library and their attitudes just towards wanting to help and to assist. Even back then, Mr. Speaker, it was nice to be able to be in the library and to get the type of a response and, you know, it was only a couple of weeks ago where I had brought in someone that's just started to work with me and, again, the librarian provided wonderful introductions, made sure that my assistant knew what sort of services are there.

First and foremost, in addressing this bill, I really want just to pay tribute to those individuals that are in the library because, even though they provide a wonderful service to us as MLAs and our staff, I know for a fact that there are people that visit our beautiful building and they end up in the Legislative Library. It's one of the people that they meet and they leave a very positive impression. I compliment them on that.

In terms of the legislation and what the legislation is wanting to do, I think, in essence, is fairly straightforward. I agree with the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) in terms of the role of the minister will not be as strong because it's going to be passed on more of an advisory role is what I understand she was saying. I think that's a positive thing.

The idea of government agencies, whether it's a Crown corporation, a department, information is gold. We've all heard that in the past, Mr. Speaker. It's very important that we have access to the types of documents that provide us the ability to be able to hold a government accountable and also other organizations that go through our government agencies, Mr. Speaker. It's a very quick walk from any MLA office to the Legislative Library, where we can pull the type of information that can be of great value.

One of the things that I've always found of benefit is their gathering of the different newspapers from across the province, the newspaper clippings that they maintain. This has proven, I believe, to be a very valuable resource.

I know back in '88, when we first were elected as a rather larger group of Liberal MLAs, we had set up our own system. When we reflect on it now, there was a little bit of duplication when, in fact, the Legislative Library provided that same sort of a service. I think that MLAs, for those that might not be using the library, should. It's a trip well worth it in terms of just trying to get a better understanding of exactly what is there. I have found that the different annual reports, being able to get past copies of budgets, the level of expertise in terms of the computers and the knowledge that the staff, the librarians, have is exceptional. They are very helpful.

When I look at this bill, I see legislation that further enhances our library. I don't see it as an additional cost per se. I think I see it more so as instruction to our government entities that they need to get their publications of whatever form they might be in to the Legislative Library. I don't know to what degree non-profit groups that receive money are obligated. Maybe the minister might be able to provide some sort of comment on that. I don't believe that there is any obligation at this point to submit to the library, but I do understand that a part of the legislation allows for the library to put in specific requests of different organizations that might be out there. Wherever I believe there's a public dollar, a provincial public dollar in particular that's flowing, we should be able to have some sort of an accounting of it through having access through our library which has proven to be a very valuable resource. I think this bill will even make it that much more valuable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading, Bill 10, The Legislative Library Act?

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

Bill 12—The Securities Transfer Act

Mr. Speaker: We will move now to Bill 12, The Securities Transfer Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

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

No? It's been denied.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a few brief comments on the record with respect to Bill 12. We are in support of moving this forward to committee, see who comes to committee to determine whether or not they are in support of it or not. Securities legislation is, in fact, very complex in many ways and it's something that is not well understood by the general public in particular.

I think it's important that we solicit the input from all Manitobans at committee to ensure that as many groups who are interested or individuals who are interested in having some input in this bill come forward. As I understand it, this particular piece of legislation simply offers a modernization of the system in terms of transferring of securities between individuals and corporations. It provides that transfers can be done electronically.

I know in my practice in practising law in Manitoba that lawyers are quite frequently asked to deal with securities transfers on behalf of estates and other individuals who come to lawyers to try to deal with those particular issues. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that probably 50 to 60 percent of clients who come forward have, in fact, lost share certificates before they come to you, or they have misplaced them, or accidentally destroyed them.

* (15:10)

As a result of that, there is a great deal of documentation that is normally produced in order to deal with the replacement of that particular security. This particular piece of legislation, I believe, modernizes that particular aspect of it, that it will not be necessary to have a paper trail of the security, of the share certificate itself, that, in fact, those kinds of transfers and proof of ownership can be done electronically.

With that, Mr. Speaker, certainly that represents a modernization of the system, and I would certainly support that in terms of the system becoming more efficient and less costly to consumers. Thank you.

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in second reading of Bill 2, The Securities Transfer Act. It is, indeed, as my honourable colleague from Lac du Bonnet has stated, a long-awaited updating of legislation here in the province of Manitoba that reflects what is in current practice in the trading of securities, not only in our province but across North America. This particular

document, I would like to recognize, has taken a lot of time and effort and has really been a culmination of a great deal of work over a course of a number of years, and I do want to recognize Eleanor Andres, from the Province of Manitoba Crown Counsel, who was part of the Canadian Securities Administrators' Uniform Securities Transfer Act Task Force. I know that's a mouthful, but it made it very explicit as to what this legislation is all about. And it was thrust upon this organization to take forward the mandate coming out of the Uniform Law Conference of Canada, which recognized the absolute paramount need to make sure that all jurisdictions that effectively had the occasion to trade securities and those within their jurisdiction to be a recipient of such securities.

The legislation, as we understand from our briefing and speaking to stakeholders is that this legislation now will bring Manitoba in line with already previously passed legislation in other jurisdictions here in Canada, those being British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador. As well, I believe, Québec parliament now is, as we are, deliberating the passage of similar legislation.

I might also note that this legislation has also been passed by all 50 states of the United States of America which is now making it much easier for the trading of securities and to recognize those trades electronically, rather than having to issue a share certificate in the amount of securities traded and purchased and this way then hopefully lessening the impact on our force of the world because paper will not have to be issued in the form of a share certificate. One can then recognize that they do have a position in the marketplace with a share entitlement by simply viewing electronically the acquisition of such shares. So, as an individual that does do trading from time to time, I personally welcome this legislation to the Chamber this afternoon.

I will, though, at this juncture and time, put forward a question to the government, which, I hope, the sponsoring minister, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), will effectively answer in committee, and that is the final clause of Bill 12, clause 139, which determines when this legislation comes into effect, and I shall quote:

"Coming into force
139 This Act comes into force on a day to be fixed by proclamation."

I look to the government side of the House for the answer to the question as to why there is need to delay the enactment of this legislation, when in fact it is legislation that has been reviewed, virtually coast to coast here in Canada and throughout 50 states of the United States. Why is this government delaying its enactment when all it is recognizing the current-day practices of industry today?

Is it an opportunity? I, being in opposition, am always leery of government motive and intent as to why there is a delay in enactment of this legislation. Is it giving opportunity for government to introduce, perhaps, regulation that might deviate from the unanimity, uniformity of the legislation that has been tabled and passed in other jurisdictions here in Canada and in the United States?

So one just wonders why this government will not bring this legislation into play by modifying clause 139 to effectively state that this act will come into force on the day to which it receives Royal Assent rather than to be a date fixed by proclamation.

So I trust that the Government House Leader will relay this information onto the powers that be because I hope that this question will be answered in committee as I believe industry is anxiously awaiting this legislation to be put in place so that we can indeed have the law of the province of Manitoba catch up with current-day practices. Thank you very much.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I'll be somewhat brief and just indicate the support for Bill 12. We recognize that, through technology, things change and through time, there's a need for ensuring that there's uniformity across Canada when it comes to investments or transferring of investments.

My basic understanding of the legislation is that the government is bringing this forward. It's fairly status quo in the sense of what other provincial jurisdictions are doing, with one goal in mind, that being ensuring that there is a uniform law that assists throughout the country.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to see the bill go through.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 12, The Securities Transfer Act.

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

SECOND READINGS

Bill 20—The Gunshot and Stab Wounds Mandatory Reporting Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan), that Bill 20, The Gunshot and Stab Wounds Mandatory Reporting Act; Loi sur la déclaration obligatoire des blessures par balle et par arme blanche, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I thank members for the opportunity to speak in this Chamber about this particular piece of legislation.

I've certainly had the opportunity of viewing it, both from the perspective as my role previously as the Minister of Health, and now as the Minister responsible for Justice in this province, in terms of the necessary nature of this bill and the implications that it could have. I look forward to an opportunity to discuss the bill.

* (15:20)

As I said at introduction time, a bill such as this covers a spectrum of criteria, be it total non-reporting or total reporting, and somehow in the balance, Mr. Speaker, we want to get the balance correct. We think that we've achieved that balance in terms of this piece of legislation, although we are open to discussions and comments and advice insofar as we approach it.

This is a stand-alone act which creates a mandatory requirement on Manitoba health-care facilities to report to the local police service when treating persons with gunshot wounds, irrespective of cause, or stab wounds that appear to have been inflicted by another person. The reporting obligation would be on the health-care facility, not the treating physician or health-care providers.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The bill would require reporting the fact that an individual with a designated injury is being treated,

the individual's name if known, and the name and location of the treating facility so as not to interfere with a person's treatment or disrupt the regular activities of the health-care facility.

Oral reporting will be the permitted reporting method, and, where necessary, another means of expedient and efficient reporting may also be permissible.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's particularly drafted in this way to cover instances that are very clearly ones where there ought to be intervention. The oral reporting takes the burden off of the direct health-care providers. It allows them to do their duty. At the same time, in terms of the public interest, it's provided by virtue of a designated individual or the institution itself making the report.

I should indicate that, if memory serves me correctly, the majority of United States' states—keeping in mind United States' states have a jurisdiction over criminal law—and three other Canadian provinces have reporting regimes. The most recent reporting regime that was put in place is Saskatchewan, who also has got stab wounds as a reporting criteria. Both Ontario and Nova Scotia who have reporting, you have only gunshot wounds.

The bill is a dual purpose. It enhances public safety and clarifies the obligations for health-care facilities. It's intended to improve public safety by requiring all wounds, irrespective of cause, and stab wounds that appear to have been inflicted by another person to be reported, and I want to repeat that—that appear to be inflicted by another person be reported—thereby enabling police to take immediate steps to prevent further violence, injury or death.

Health-care facilities would report to the local police service which would then investigate the incident, determine the risk to the public and intervene to prevent future violence if necessary.

Now, of course, the individual involved, there's no obligation that's imposed upon the individual whose being treated. They have the same rights as they had in any other instance and under any other circumstance.

The other provision that I noted and I repeated twice in my introduction was the fact that stab wounds that appear to have been inflicted by a third party deals with other issues that have been brought

to our attention by people in the health-care community.

Madam Deputy Speaker, under the present Personal Health Information Act, personal health information may be disclosed without a patient's consent if the trustee of the health information is of the opinion that the disclosure of information is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and immediate threat to the health or safety of an individual or the public at large. The determination of risk in such discretionary reporting and the subsequent decision to report it is further complicated by the possible risk of liability for reporting information that should not have been reported.

In other words, Madam Deputy Speaker, our present reporting regime, when we went to PHIA, limits to very narrow circumstances when an incident can be reported. That puts a burden, a liability burden, on a health-care provider. I dare say probably most Manitobans believe that if you attend to a health-care facility with a gunshot wound, it is a reportable offence. In fact, it is not, and this clarifies that, takes the burden off the health-care provider, adds the additional provision of the stab wound that, unfortunately, from the stats that I have had a chance to review, more individuals were killed from a wound inflicted by a sharp instrument than from a gunshot. I don't know whether to weep or cry at that statistic, but that's, unfortunately, the reality of circumstances.

The bill would clarify reporting responsibilities for health-care facilities and avoid the need for individual health-care providers to decide when and what information to report while providing protection from liability for good-faith reporting of authorized information or good-faith omissions to report to police. These changes are intended to eliminate confusion about when to report and to facilitate consistent reporting to police by health-care facilities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the bill doesn't have onerous provisions that provide a liability or a penalty on a health-care provider for a failure to report.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We felt, I think, quite rightly, that the health-care providers in this jurisdiction who provide the care and attend to these needs are responsible individuals, and we did not need to burden them with a penalty

provision or any kind of a sanction on a failure to report. These people, just by having the clarification of what the reporting provisions are, and having identification of the risk potential, and having identification of the duty, will perform that accordingly.

Obviously, this bill will be discussed in more detail at the committee stage. As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, the bill is on a continuum. Much time and effort were spent looking at case examples, individual circumstances, different circumstances as they arise in different parts of the province. Whenever you put in any kind of a provision dealing with a, quote, mandatory or compulsory reporting regime, one wants to be very careful, particularly when it deals with health-care information.

I think that this bill effectively balances the benefits, and does more and does greater for the public good than any other type of similar bill that I've seen. I think it effectively balances the equation in Manitoba that allows the police or a third party to intervene. Let's face it, when an individual is injured to the extent that they have a gunshot or a serious stab wound, there needs to be intervention. I know that there are circumstances and scenarios that can be cited, and have been cited, that this might, for example, prevent someone from seeking treatment. That has been thought through.

Firstly, again, I add that most individuals probably believe it's mandatory presently. Secondly, we offer the argument that if an individual is at the state where they're not prepared to seek treatment because they're, quote, afraid of being reported, that some other individual had harmed them in such a way, they are at a state where they need some form of intervention, be it police, or be it social worker, or be it some other form of intervention.

So, Mr. Speaker, this bill is put forward in the best of intentions in order to deal with a situation that probably surprises most individuals in the province. There are some individuals and groups that would like more stringent reporting regimes. There are some individuals who would like lesser reporting regimes. We think this achieves a balance. It is, in the Manitoba context, a first step. It is open to discussion, clarification and revision, but we think, on the whole, this bill appropriately achieves the balance that is required in a matter of this kind.

So, with those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the comments by the other members of this Chamber. Thank you.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I welcome the opportunity to put some brief comments on the record, and to indicate that, in fact, we support Bill 20. Why wouldn't we support it, Mr. Speaker? It was part of our election campaign, one of our planks in our election campaign. The idea originated from the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), originally. Certainly, we would support any idea that's given to us by the Member for Steinbach. He very frequently brings great ideas to caucus, and we would, in fact, support the bill.

* (15:30)

We recognize that it's a good idea. We're glad that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), in fact, recognized that it was a good idea, as well. We're happy that he has brought this bill forward. Our only regret, of course, is that the minister really should be giving accolades and applause to the Member for Steinbach for introducing it in the first place.

In any event, we look forward to the comments at committee and from Manitobans. I know there are a number of concerns that have been expressed at various times with regard to this bill. The minister indicated that, in fact, the bill is somewhat of a double-edged sword. There is an argument to be made, Mr. Speaker, that this particular bill will prevent people from seeking medical treatment, but the reality is that I don't believe that would happen, simply because the bill itself puts the onus not on the individual who stabbed or shot to report the incident but it's the health facility itself that will do that. So there will be no blame put on the particular victim. I don't believe that someone won't seek treatment simply because the bill is in place.

I think it's important to have the bill there because there are instances of abuse, whether it be spousal abuse or elder abuse, which do not get reported because of the concern with other family members and putting them in jeopardy. I think it's in the best interests of society, the best interests of Manitobans to ensure that these kinds of incidents are reported because a gunshot wound or obviously a stab wound, anyone creating that kind of wound may have breached the Criminal Code. It may have been an accident too but it may have been a breach of the Criminal Code. I think it's in the best interests of society to ensure that those kinds of wounds are reported to the police, and those people who are responsible for those kinds of wounds do, in fact, receive some punishment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I think the critical point that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) makes reference to is that most Manitobans believe today that, if there is a wound, a gunshot or a knife wound, it's automatically reported. Of course, we all know that that's not the case, and that is one of the reasons why I suspect the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) first brought the matter in a very formal way to the Legislature, and now we see Bill 20 before us today.

Ultimately, there is now going to be a responsibility of reporting. That's something which we do support, and we look forward to the bill going to committee. Thank you.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House, second reading of Bill 20, The Gunshot and Stab Wounds Mandatory Reporting Act.

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

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): I want to thank all members of the House for their assistance in moving these matters along.

I'd like to call debate on second reading of Bill 9, The Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act; Bill 11, The Optometry Amendment Act; and then second reading on Bill 18, The Testing of Bodily Fluids and Disclosure Act.

Mr. Speaker: We'll deal with bills in the order 9, 11 and 18.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 9—The Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: I'm going to call Bill 9, The Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

What is the will of the House?

Is the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet?

No, it's been denied.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise to put a few brief comments on the record regarding Bill 9, The Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act. I did have the opportunity to meet with the minister for a briefing last fall, I believe, on this bill—some time ago—but I don't believe that there's anything of substance that has changed in regard to the legislation.

Let me first say that, when it comes to any allegations of someone being abused in a care home or any other sort of situation of care, it is very serious. It's not only incumbent upon the government or any other sort of regulatory or government agency that is responsible for that particular person who is in care to ensure that they aren't subject to abuse of any sort.

But it's also important that we ensure that those who might have special knowledge about the abuse have the ability to come forward and to give details regarding those allegations. That's particularly true because there are, for whatever reason, a variety of reasons I'm sure, reasons why somebody might be concerned of coming forward if they thought their identity might be exposed. This legislation, I understand, will give a discretionary power to an investigator to not allow the identity of, I'll use the term, whistle-blower, for lack of a better term, would allow that whistle-blower to come forward on the alleged abuse.

Mr. Speaker, it also allows for the Minister of Health to appoint an investigator to ensure that the investigation takes place into the alleged abuse and puts in, vests in that individual the discretionary power to not reveal the name of anybody who's come forward with the details of the abuse.

I do think that that is important. I think it is a step forward in ensuring that we get as much information as possible when it comes to the alleged abuse of somebody in care and really open as many doors and all avenues to get the full information you need in terms of the investigation. I know that there will be some, as is always the case when you allow the name of somebody, because, generally, in the principle of laws, you have the right to face an accuser.

Whether that's somebody who comes forward with information in one form or the other, generally, the right is that you have the ability to find out who it is who has made that accusation. That isn't always the case, of course. There are many situations where the law says that it's not necessary or, in some ways,

not desirable to have the name of that individual to come forward, whether it's secret tip lines or other things.

But in the general principle, we like to ensure that somebody who's coming forward with an accusation has their name revealed for a lot of different reasons. I think in this situation it strikes a proper balance between ensuring that we get as much information as possible for the protection of those who are in care versus that fundamental right in justice to know the person who has made an accusation or provided information in certain situations. So I think that the bill does provide a fair balance.

In terms of the appointment of an investigator, where I might have some concerns, and I'm sure that it can be alleviated in some fashion, is the fact that the person, the minister has sort of carte blanche right to appoint an investigator in these situations, but there are no specific requirements or qualifications for that investigator to have. The bill just says the minister can appoint from a class of people or from within government somebody to do an investigation without any real prescriptive or even a hint of any sort of regulatory rules in terms of what skills that person will have as an investigator.

Where it becomes important, Mr. Speaker is because the individual will have discretionary power. When you look at legislation, generally, the more discretionary power a person's given, whether it's a judge or whether it's some other form of judicial proceeding, the more discretionary power a person has, the more need there is to have certain qualifications. Even in very serious matters where there is very little discretionary power and somebody is operating under a legislative framework where they're very limited in terms of what they can do, there's less need for some of those skills because they have less discretionary power. In this situation, the investigator has the discretion whether or not to reveal the name of the individual who's brought forward the allegation or not to. So, because of the, I would say, significant amount of discretionary power they're provided, I also think there should be some set out qualifications for the individual.

I recognize that, probably, the legislation itself and generally legislative frameworks wouldn't be the place for those sorts of qualifications to take place and it would be a more regulatory matter, but the bill doesn't suggest or doesn't move toward the idea that there will be regulations in terms of the sorts of skills

that an investigator will have. So I know that that can be dealt with, and we might have the opportunity in committee to discuss it. It, certainly, could be placed in there at a later time.

Certainly, the principle of the act is one that we support and one that we look forward moving forward into legislation for the betterment of all those whom we have legislative responsibility for and who are in care because we want to ensure that anybody who is in care and who might not have the ability, physical or otherwise, to protect themselves is protected inasmuch as we can do for them.

So with those comments, I look forward to hearing any comments my colleagues in this House might have. Thank you.

* (15:40)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few words before the bill goes to committee by commenting to the degree in terms of the necessity of protecting the identity which ultimately would, I believe, serve those individuals who are in vulnerable positions well.

All we have to do is reflect on some of the things that have happened over the last few years. In particular, stories that come to mind are some of the things that have occurred in the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario, in care facilities where well-documented abuse has taken place, and the whole need for legislation of this type is warranted to be able to protect our vulnerable people.

Quite often, you'll find, when someone will witness something occurring, they're a little bit reluctant in terms of bringing it forward, for a risk of possibly losing their job, or maybe some other sort of repercussion against them. As a result, at least in part, of this legislation, that individual's identity would be protected. This wouldn't be the first time legislation is actually passed where we protect the identity of someone who is reporting something. You see other examples of this in the Department of Family Services.

Mr. Speaker, to that extent, we see the principle of the legislation as positive and wouldn't have a problem in terms of it going to committee at this time. Thank you.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 9, The Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act.

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

Bill 11—The Optometry Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate, second reading, Bill 11, The Optometry Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

What is the will of the House?

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. It has been denied.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure, then, to put some words on the record regarding Bill 11, The Optometry Amendment Act.

There seems to be something of a theme happening with some of the bills today in that we give credit to former or current members who aren't necessarily the minister responsible for the bill for bringing forward the idea regarding it. Just to continue on in that theme, not to belabour the point, but certainly to continue on and to give credit where credit is due, I believe that this particular piece of legislation, the genesis of the idea was with the former Member for Ste. Rose, the country gentleman, Glen Cummings, who now I may be able to put his name into the record, that he brought forward this idea to ensure that we give what some would consider to be, not a minor power, to those who are acting as optometrists, but certainly one that's well within their qualifications, whether it's the ability to do minor procedures, to remove things from individuals' eyes, or to have prescriptions, so that they don't necessarily have to go to a medical doctor, because we know how busy doctors are in the province. This allows this to be streamlined and, probably, to give the right to individuals who are most qualified to actually make those decisions.

I believe that this was brought forward in the spring of 2007, and that the Manitoba Association of Optometrists had indicated their support for these legislative changes, as a result, also, of the discussions that we had prior with them, and the idea that came forward from a member of this caucus.

Certainly, one of the reasons that this bill is important is to ensure that we're not putting a burden that is an unnecessary burden on our medical profession in the province of Manitoba. There are no end of stories that we have or that we've heard in the House, that each of us, I'm sure, as MLAs, has heard from our constituents about the overburdened work of our doctors in our clinics and in our hospitals. Anybody who has attended an ER lately, or whether or not somebody's tried to get an appointment, or even tried to find a family physician, would know that it is very, very difficult in the province of Manitoba to access medical care for your family, whether it's an emergency situation, or whether somebody's just trying to get an appointment as a checkup.

This is, I would assume, partly the reason that this legislation was brought forward, and partly the reason that the former member for Ste. Rose had the idea and brought it forward to this House. Certainly, I would bring to the attention of the minister, while I'm on the topic, the difficult need that the residents in the Steinbach community, and certainly all the area in southeastern Manitoba, have with finding a doctor. My understanding is that, in June or early July, there will be two more doctors who will be leaving the city of Steinbach and be going to practise in Ontario. That will leave 4,000 to 5,000 people in that region without a family doctor. There is no replacement on the horizon, so you can imagine the stress that puts on families. Many of them have young families and large families who can't find a family doctor, and they are being told now that if they have as one of their current doctors, one of these two who are leaving, they are being told come June or July, I won't be able to help. They ask, of course, the logical question. Can you refer me to a doctor whom I then could go to? They are being told that there are no doctors in the city of Steinbach who are taking any referrals.

If that continues to be the case going forward into July, that means that 4,000 or 5,000 people, many children, won't have a family doctor. So this, of course, won't alleviate that situation, but I think it speaks to the problem that we have in the province of Manitoba. I would encourage the minister to look at more ideas in terms of how to alleviate the pressure off of our medical system and those doctors who are dealing with a high number of caseloads, and really more patients than many of them feel safe to do so.

There are different ideas. I know the minister made an announcement recently about residency

positions in the province of Manitoba that followed some discussion, both by members of this caucus and in the media, about the lack of ability for medical students who are coming out of the stream here in Manitoba to get residency positions in the province that they actually wanted to practise in. I recognize that there are challenges with the match process and a lot of other jurisdictional issues. But I do think that where there is a will there is way generally. Certainly, there is a need and the minister showed it through our announcement. There is actually a way to ensure that there are residency positions for those Manitoba graduates who have shown an interest in practising in Manitoba after their residency, to get those positions here.

We recognize that if they go off to Toronto for two years, or Vancouver for two years, or Montreal for two years to have that residency filled, that it's difficult to get them back for a lot of different reasons. Some of it might be lifestyle reasons. Often these young people just meet a new network of friends or other relationships that prevents them from coming back to Manitoba. So there was some small steps made in that regard from the minister's announcement which relates to this bill in terms of trying to get the pressure off of the doctors. The minister made an announcement and it dealt somewhat with residency in northern Manitoba. Certainly that's positive and I've spoken positively about that, but throughout rural Manitoba and the southern parts of Manitoba which members often don't like to pay attention to, there's a need there as well. I think the same sort of program that the minister's put in place in northern Manitoba should also be looked at in constituencies south of the Trans-Canada Highway, because there is a significant population there that doesn't have access to doctors.

That's certainly something that I will continue to speak with the minister about on behalf of all the residents of southeastern Manitoba, and indeed, all southern Manitoba generally across the province. We recognize there is a shortage of medical professionals in the northern part of our province, but that is not limited to that area of the province. In fact, it is right across Manitoba. So the same sort of idea should be placed in those regions.

So, with that, we look forward to this bill going to committee. I'm sure there will be some presenters, particularly on behalf of the association, who will want to speak to it. We look forward to their input

when it comes to this legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I don't have any speaking notes per se on Bill 11. Having said that, I would have one question that I would appreciate if the minister could provide, that is in regard to, when you are dealing with the scope of practice, whether it's optometrist or any other profession, quite often it's beneficial to be able look at what your neighbouring province might be doing, would this, in fact, be in keeping with what Ontario or Saskatchewan is doing? I would be interested in just getting a response, maybe not inside the Chamber, through letter or ideally prior to committee, definitely before third reading if, in fact, that's doable. Otherwise, we don't see a problem in terms of it going to committee at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is second reading, Bill 11, The Optometry Amendment Act.

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

* (15:50)

SECOND READINGS

Bill 18—The Testing of Bodily Fluids and Disclosure Act

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan), that Bill 18, The Testing of Bodily Fluids and Disclosure Act; Loi sur l'analyse de fluids corporels et la communication des résultats d'analyse, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand in the House today to put some information on the record concerning Bill 18, The Testing of Bodily Fluids and Disclosure Act.

We know that this bill is going to provide an applicant who has been exposed to the bodily fluids of another person with the fastest access in Canada to apply to the court for an order to have a source person undergo a test for communicable diseases such as HIV, hepatitis B or C.

There are two kinds of orders available under the bill. One is the expedited testing order, incidentally an order that is unique to this kind of legislation in Canada, and this expedited testing order can be issued by a judicial justice of the peace or JJP, as I shall say hereafter, at the Provincial Court office.

An application could be made either in person or by telephone or fax, which we know is going to improve the access for individuals seeking this order. This process is modelled after that in The Domestic Violence and Stalking Act and The Youth Drug Stabilization (Support For Parents) Act, which have been proven to be accessible and timely. The other is a standard testing order that can be issued by a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench following a hearing.

This bill makes an effort to balance the needs of the applicant with the rights of the source person which, of course, is the point, Mr. Speaker. We have an obligation in this House to not only work diligently to protect people of Manitoba but to also protect their human rights. Although the expedited testing order can be issued by the JJP without notice to the source person, once he or she has been served with the order, the source person can object to it by visiting or phoning the Provincial Court to register an objection, but if he or she does so within 24 hours of being served with the testing order, then the order, of course, becomes null and void.

The applicant would then have to reapply to the Court of Queen's Bench for a standard order, the kind of order that exists in legislation of this kind in other jurisdictions in Canada. The process before the Court of Queen's Bench requires that, unless the judge provides otherwise, the source person must be notified of the application and of the date and time of the hearing so that he or she can appear to make representations before a decision is made.

Because the bill allows victims of crime and Good Samaritans to apply for a testing order following an exposure, there is no legislative requirement to ask the source person to voluntarily undergo the testing, although it has been suggested by some folks that it be entrenched in legislation, that a voluntary ask be made.

We recognize, of course, that this would be wholly inappropriate for the victim of a crime to have to be asked to make that order. An elderly person, for example, being asked to solicit the mugger for a sample of their fluid just is not in keeping with what this legislation purports to do. So we will not be entrenching that in legislation, but we

do know that we will be encouraging all of those who can, and that would likely exclude victims of crime, to ask for voluntary testing before applying to the court.

Information in literature indicates that in more than 90 percent of cases a source person asked to submit voluntarily will indeed do that with no difficulty. So, in fact, it's only in those cases, those rare cases, Mr. Speaker, where a request is denied, will an exposed person have to use the court process at all.

Also, in collaboration with our colleagues in Workplace Safety and Health, we will be undertaking a very aggressive education program to remind workers of the preventative measures that can be taken to prevent exposure as well as the proper process to follow should they be exposed.

We will be stressing that the best protection, of course, is prevention, Mr. Speaker, and that, if exposed, the individual needs to obtain medical care immediately. The process provided for in Bill 18 is not a substitute for proper medical care following a significant exposure. We know that no amount of delay is appropriate in endeavouring to take the post-exposure prophylaxis that, indeed, can help an individual who has had that significant exposure. So we encourage all individuals in those situations to take that medication as appropriate.

We'll be rolling out a public education program to inform people who may be exposed to someone's bodily fluids as a victim of crime or as a Good Samaritan what the risk of acquiring a communicable disease might actually be, as best we can, and the proper procedure to follow if they do experience a significant exposure.

Our consultations have stressed the need for a court process that's as fast as possible so as to reduce the exposed person's anxiety about whether or not he or she may have acquired an infection from an exposure. At the same time, we have recognized the rights of the source person and incorporated the applicable principles of fundamental justice into our process. We are accompanying the bill with this robust education program in hopes that the need for the use of this legislation will be minimized.

There has been some discussion by members opposite about credit where credit is due—in the last 20 minutes—and, indeed, it's my goal, of course, to do just that. We know that the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and other members from the

opposition have asked, in principle, for this kind of legislation to be brought forward. We have signalled, of course, to them that we respect, in principle, the concepts. We know, of course, that a very important balance needed to be struck for an individual's human rights and for this bill to be crafted in a way that would be functional. We know that other jurisdictions have seen their bills die a quick and painful death because of their processes, and we needed to take the time to ensure that that doesn't happen here in Manitoba.

It's also appropriate to acknowledge that much work has been done by our now-Attorney General to ensure that this process and this bill is, indeed, the best jurisdiction in Canada. I can also acknowledge that the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), who has had an active interest on behalf of his constituents, has worked diligently behind the scenes with very little credit ever being given. So in combination, the Attorney General, the Member for Steinbach, the Member for Transcona and, really, all members of this House that have lent their voices to this debate ought to be given credit, in addition to the front-line workers, firefighters, paramedics, police and individuals who have offered their good counsel. Credit is, indeed, due to a number of people, and I offer that credit today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if I might have leave. Traditionally, after a minister presents a second reading, quite often they'll afford an opportunity to ask a straightforward question of the minister, if I could have that leave?

Mr. Speaker: The proper process for that is that there would have to be unanimous leave of the House, and the minister would have to agree to that.

So the honourable member is asking for leave.

Does the honourable member have leave?
[Agreed]

Is the honourable minister willing to answer a question from the honourable Member for Inkster?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, certainly, without prejudice, given the current climate in here today, I would be pleased to do that, not in a precedent-setting way, of course. Once again, I would suggest that the member opposite is welcome at any time to come for a briefing.

But in the spirit of co-operation for this occasion, I'd be happy to answer a question as best I can without my legal advisers with me to assist me in

that. But in future, if the member could just, maybe, check his calendar and drop us a line, we'd be happy to do a briefing with him.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the minister has agreed.

So the honourable Member for Inkster, to pose his question.

* (16:00)

Mr. Lamoureux: Thank you, and thank you, too, Madam Minister. The question that I have—and the only reason why I ask it now is because I was hoping to be able to speak to the bill. We didn't anticipate that this bill was going to be passing at this point in time. So I want to be able to accommodate that, but I appreciate being able to pose a very simple question.

It's a hypothetical situation. If Johnny is robbing a store and, in the midst of the robbery, the cashier was to get stabbed, does Johnny then have the right through the legislation to demand a blood sample then from the source? If she doesn't know the answer right now, she can get it back to me, but that's the question.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I'm not really wishing to expand in any great detail concerning hypothetical situations, but I can say that within the context of this bill there are processes in place where if anyone has been exposed, a significant exposure, and has in consult with a doctor advice that they do have a significant exposure, there are processes in place with a Judicial Justice of the Peace and/or the Court of Queen's Bench that would make a ruling concerning the appropriateness of that information being sought.

That would be the answer that I would want to provide for the individual at this time. We can have a further briefing and discussion but there would be checks and balances in place. If the member opposite is insinuating that criminals would have carte blanche to seek information concerning their victims, there are checks and balances in place for that.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I won't ask the minister a question. I just have some comments to put on the record. I wouldn't want her to have to invoke the without-prejudice cover again. She might want to speak to you—*[interjection]*—or the notwithstanding clause in the constitution to invoke section 33. She may want to speak with my colleague for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) on the legal definition of without prejudice. I can assure her that I believe that she already has protection in this

House from legal prosecution, and many times she might need it, but I do think that issuing without-prejudice clause is probably redundant. I understand why she wants to be careful, just in the assurance of that she doesn't fall into any sort of legal malfeasance. Now, I'll stop using the legal words and move on to the issue of this bill in particular.

I do, first of all, want to thank the minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation. I do think that it is important. I credited her and thanked her on the day that the bill was introduced for bringing it forward here in the Legislature. I don't think that this is an issue about who deserves credit for what. I think all of us as legislators are elected here in the province of Manitoba to do what we think is best, not only for our individual constituents and constituencies but, indeed, for all Manitobans. Regardless of where an idea came from, because it's always difficult to know where an idea came from because there are many other people in a community who might be bringing forward suggestions, it's important that we recognize when good legislation comes forward.

I also don't think that it's any shame or discredit to a government that decides to change its mind on a piece of legislation. I've often heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) use the biblical phrase of conversion on the road to Damascus. While I'm not sure that that's an appropriate place for that sort of a phrase here in the Legislature, I do think that this government at some point did have a conversion when it comes to their view or their opinion on this kind of legislation in whatever form that it took, whether it was a private member's bill that had been introduced previously two other times or whether it was from some other impetus, Mr. Speaker.

Regardless of the fact that the government wasn't particularly supportive of the legislation when it was first brought forward, they ultimately did the right thing. I do think that it's important to recognize that, even if it was not a linear road to get to this point, whether it wasn't an easy road, it is important to know that the government finally saw fit to do what is right for all of those who will get protection from this legislation.

In that same vein, that is of getting credit where credit is due even though it's never been requested, I would say that I want to give credit to an individual by the name of Ray Rempel, who is a paramedic in the province of Manitoba who several years ago brought forward this suggestion to me and really

deserves the credit for the private member's bill that I brought forward. Certainly, he and other paramedics in the province of Manitoba are working hard each and every day for our protection.

So Mr. Rempel is really, from my perspective, the person whom I would like to thank for bringing forward this idea and for giving me the encouragement to bring it to the Legislature. I do thank the government for picking up the idea and deciding that it was worth bringing into the Legislature because it will, I think, serve many people in the province well for years to come. In particular, I think—and I do know that the minister alluded to it—we'd be remiss to not give credit to, really, the true heroes of this legislation and, really, in the province of Manitoba: the paramedics, the firefighters, the police officers who are going to be a significant beneficiary of this particular piece of legislation.

I know that, in particular, the paramedics have been very aggressive in asking for this piece of legislation because more and more they respond almost as police officers, not as though they are acting as police officers, but in many cases they're on the scene before police officers are and are providing care in a situation where there is not a specific danger posed to them in terms of the environment. Of course, often, they're put in a position where they do get blood and other bodily fluids put on them, and it was not fair to them to not always be able to have the assurance that they would be able to get those fluids tested to ensure they haven't come into contact.

In speaking with paramedics, in particular, across the province, they said it wasn't even so much for their own protection, although, that, of course, was a part of it, but it was often for their families because their families didn't have that peace of mind for many months, whether or not their loved one had come into contact with the disease. Of course, that would cause stress and other hardships on the family in the months to come. So, as is often the case with our emergency responders, our heroes in this community, they were thinking in some ways less of themselves and more of others, in this case, their families.

So now, when this bill is passed and when it's proclaimed into legislation, we will have that protection for those emergency responders who are out there each and every day ensuring that they are doing the best that they can to keep us safe as citizens, as a community. It's the least that we can do

for them, is to pass this legislation to ensure that they also have a sense of safety. But more than a sense of safety, I think, also, a sense of appreciation for the work that they do, that we know that they're putting themselves at risk, that we recognize that as legislators, and that we want to do something about it to try to help them in every way that we can.

The legislation also speaks to those who are victims of crime, as the minister responded to a question from the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) just previously. I think that's important because those who, through no fault of their own and not through any sort of voluntary action, have come into contact with the blood of somebody who is looking to cause them harm in whatever the situation may be, whether it's a robbery or a break-in. Certainly, they shouldn't be even further victimized. Of course, we know they're initially victimized because they have had their home broken into or whatever the particular crime is, but to be even further victimized for a year later or however long it would take to get a test back or to get the test back on themselves to see whether or not the perpetrator of that crime was carrying some disease and then they came into contact with bodily fluids from that individual. That simply wouldn't be fair. I think that any member of society who we made that case to, or most members of society, would say, you're right; we need to ensure that victims of crime aren't even further victimized as a result of the fact that they were on the wrong side of a bad occurrence.

The bill also would contemplate Good Samaritans. We know in Manitoba, as really across Canada, that there are many, many people who will selflessly stop at the scene of an accident and try to help somebody. That's particularly true in Manitoba where there aren't—there are many places where the ambulance, the response time is lagging.

Certainly, I brought to this House, and many other members of this Legislature have brought to the House, the fact that they can't often get ambulance service in certain areas for half an hour, an hour and sometimes two hours. The case of Falcon Lake was brought up many times in the last session about the fact that those living in the Falcon Lake area weren't able to get access to an ambulance. So, in the absence of being able to have a trained medical professional come to the aid of somebody who might be on a road, have an accident, often ordinary Manitobans will stop and lend assistance to an individual without any sort of thought of their

own safety. They'll simply stop and lend assistance, and we've heard some very high-profile cases.

In the case of Ms. Klassen, who went over a bridge not so long ago, and there were two rescuers who jumped in to try to help her. Now that wasn't a case where this legislation would have necessarily be put to work, but, certainly, it shows that there are people who, without any sort of thought of their own safety, will stop to help others. So this legislation will ensure that a Good Samaritan who stops to try to help an individual on the side of a road, if they come into contact with blood, that they will be able to have that blood tested.

* (16:10)

Now, in the vast majority of cases, as the minister mentions, that testing will come voluntarily. Most people would say, gladly; you can gladly test the blood just to give your own self assurance so you have peace of mind and peace of mind for your family. But, Mr. Speaker, we can certainly contemplate circumstances where that wouldn't be possible. This legislation, I think, will allow in those rare cases, those few cases where it isn't possible, or consent isn't given, to have the blood or bodily fluids tested. Then that individual won't have to spend the next year or so worrying about whether or not they've come into contact with something.

Now I recognize, Mr. Speaker, that there are those, there will be some organizations who won't like this legislation. I'm sure that we'll hear from them at committee. I've received and I think the minister has received correspondence from the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. I did read their correspondence in the package that they put forward, and it was very thoughtful. I'm glad that they brought forward the concerns that they did, because I think it allows us to have a fulsome debate about this particular piece of legislation, and, really, the context in which it will be passed and what it could do in terms of legal rights. There were a number of different issues that were raised by this organization. Of course, we appreciate the work that they do as advocates on behalf of HIV/AIDS and ensuring that there is knowledge and an understanding of that particular disease. They're doing a good job as an advocacy group, and we applaud them for that, and we thank them for the good services they bring to Canadians each and every day.

But the one concern that they raised regarding the legal, whether or not this bill would be challenged in a court of law, whether it would stand

up to a Charter of Rights and Freedoms challenge, is instructive, and I think it's worth putting some words on the record about that. Certainly, we know that any legislation that is passed here in Manitoba, and, really, any jurisdiction in Canada, can be subject to a court challenge. That is the right of any individual who doesn't believe that it stands up to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that you can bring a challenge against a particular piece of legislation.

I think that all of us, as legislators, whether we're in opposition or whether we're occupying the government benches, as ministers or otherwise, are mindful of that. We try to craft legislation that wouldn't interfere or be seen to be contradictory to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I don't think that there's anybody in this House who would bring forward legislation they would think, knowingly, would be in violation of that charter. Because all of us, I think, support the premise of the charter here in Canada. It has served Canadians well for more than two decades.

But there are many balances in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The right for privacy is often countered by the right for protection and for security. There are many competing interests, even within the charter, that often come to loggerheads, and it's left for higher courts to determine where the right and the proper balance is.

I know that the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network has suggested that individuals do have a carte blanche right to determine what sort of medical procedures are performed on themselves. I think, as a general principle of law, that's correct. We do know that most case law suggests that is the case. But it's usually in the specific case where an individual is being asked to agree to a medical treatment on themselves when there's no other party involved. It's simply to protect them as an individual, and there isn't a counterbalance interest in that situation.

Here there is another interest involved. Here we have a situation where somebody is being asked, perhaps, to provide a sample and to have blood tested, maybe against their will, which in and of itself would normally not be allowed, but there's a counterbalancing argument for somebody else for protection. That has to be weighed in any sort of situation where you're concerned about the legality of a bill.

Certainly, we know there are other pieces of legislation, when you look at the ability for police officers to ask for blood samples when they suspect

somebody's been driving under the influence, and whether or not they might be driving illegally because their blood level has more alcohol contained within it than it should be under the legal limit. Well, there is a right, and the Canadian courts have recognized that right to mandate that police officers be able to take a sample—and to do it very quickly—to ensure somebody isn't driving over the legal limit. So there is a situation where the courts have said, yes, *prima facie*, on its initial face, one might think it's an intrusion to force somebody to give a blood sample, but there's a counterbalance there. There's a general will of society to ensure it's better for society not to have people who are drunk driving on the roads. So there is that counterbalance.

I think that this bill, in many ways, has that counterbalance. Yes, they'll be asking people who may not want to, in very small cases, give that sample, but there's a broader aspect of societal good where the charter contemplates that you have to weigh the differences between privacy and the common good of society, generally.

I do think that the legislation, either the one that was brought forward in the House before as a private member's bill or the one that is being brought forward by the government, is worth supporting. I know there will be some who think it will be susceptible to a challenge. Certainly, anybody has the right to challenge legislation. I do think that this bill will stand the test of time and will pass any sort of challenge that comes forward.

We have seen different pieces of legislation in this House in the past, whether it's the ability for a provincial government to seize vehicles from those who are convicted of drinking and driving. We've seen those bills challenged in the court, the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court there declared that it was a constitutional right because it dealt with property, for the province to intercede. There was a balance there. They say that it did in fact not impose on Criminal Code legislation but that it was a property offence. So the Province had the jurisdiction. I think here, in the inevitable case that the legislation might be challenged, that the court would see this as a reasonable balance between the protection of privacy for an individual and ensuring that the security of an individual is also maintained.

I want to commend the government for bringing forward the legislation. We look forward to it being passed and to the credit, not of myself and not to the minister or any other member of this legislation, but

to the credit of our police officers, our paramedics, our firefighters, Good Samaritans and those who might be victims of crimes. That's who deserves credit for this bill, that's who we support.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): My comments will be somewhat brief. I do want to acknowledge and express appreciation for the minister in terms of answering the question, and I thank her for that.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the legislation in itself is very positive. As the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has talked about, the benefactors of having this legislation, and it even goes much, much beyond that in terms of the different stakeholders that are out there, the idea of being able to get a blood sample or a fluid sample would ensure that the family members and the individual that was the Good Samaritan or the firefighter or whatever it might be, whatever position, has more peace of mind. They put themselves in these compromising positions in order to ensure that we, as a whole, as a province, are that much safer.

We acknowledge that many of the situations that will arise, whether it's crimes on our streets, issues that arise in our emergencies throughout our hospitals in the province of Manitoba, to vehicle accidents that occur or even somewhat at times innocent things that might take place, that would cause the need to ensure that some sort of a sample is received from the source. The Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) made reference to whether it's the Good Samaritans, our police forces, our fire departments. There are other security type of agencies that are out there, individuals, for example, that break up bar fights. It's virtually endless in terms of the types of situations that are out there.

The principle of the legislation is, I think, worthy of support. Obviously, whenever you go into this area, there is always concern about individual rights and protecting those rights. We look forward to seeing what sort of comment and feedback we might see at the committee stage. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading, Bill 18, The Testing of Bodily Fluids and Disclosure Act.

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

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Is there leave to recess the Chamber until 5 o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to recess the Chamber until 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The House recessed at 4:20 p.m.

The House resumed at 5:00 p.m.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

**INFRASTRUCTURE AND
TRANSPORTATION**

* (14:40)

Madam Chairperson (Ms. Marilyn Brick): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Yes, thank you, Madam Chairperson, I do, just a brief statement. I know that my critic and members opposite would like to ask as many questions as possible, so I'll try to be able to provide that for them by keeping my remarks short.

One thing I want to do, first of all, is just to tell you that it is my pleasure to present for your consideration and approval the Estimates of the Expenditure for Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation (MIT) for the year '08-09, and I'd like to talk just briefly about the departmental staff. As you are aware, Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation was given an increased mandate about 18 months ago. The restructure of the department naturally necessitates many internal adjustments and changes for its staff. I am pleased to report that MIT staff has risen to the challenge, Madam Chairperson, and made the transition with good-natured professionalism. It takes really special people to be able to move with change and look at it as a real positive, and I wanted to say thank you to all staff within Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation for really taking a positive attitude with regard to the change in department.

The department is broken down into a number of different pieces. Highways is one. As people are aware, we have a \$4-billion, 10-year infrastructure renewal program, and we've concluded the first year of that. We've increased our funding by 55 percent over the previous year, a record \$400 million; in fact, over \$400 million. It's an unprecedented multiyear capital commitment to ensure Manitoba's provincial highway network will continue to foster economic and social prosperity across this province.

We increased our funding commitment by \$15 million to \$415 million in '08-09. This \$415-million capital commitment to see MIT continue with a wide variety of construction projects.

There are some smaller projects which are ongoing, but there're also some very large projects. I don't want to use the word "mega project" because when you talk about that, you're talking about large, you know, multi-billion or billion-dollar hydro dams or large floodway projects, et cetera. But we have had large projects within highways; for example, the Trans-Canada Highway, the Yellowhead Highway, Highway 6, Inkster Boulevard. There are many of these major projects that are going to be coming forward, new ones, with regard to the Asia-Pacific Gateway and Corridor initiative, which we've been working with the federal government on doing.

We will be proceeding on the next phase of the redevelopment of the Rice River Road, previously known as the Rice River Road—some would call it the east-side road, east-side highway—and the preparations for construction of the new bridge over the Bloodvein River to begin the upgrade of this road to meet all-weather-road standards.

Many bridges within the province are going to be receiving substantial dollars. Last fall we added \$125 million over a four-year period to our annual bridge program. The previous \$49 million allotted for bridge rehab, replacement and reconstruction will rise to \$61 million this year.

There's also water control structures, which we have to look at in this province. We've committed \$10.5 million, thereabouts, for our water control structure Capital renewal program, and to date 17 projects have been put out for tender.

Water and waste-water treatment projects are a high priority for this government. The current Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund is levering investments totalling \$130 million in 50 of these types of projects throughout the province, and the

current budget includes funding for projects such as the R.M. of Rosser, Rockwood lagoon, the town of Altona, the R.M. of Rhineland waste-water treatment, and also water treatment plants in northern communities like God's Lake Narrows and Sherridon.

In addition, we continue to invest in improvements of Winnipeg's waste-water treatment system through the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund.

Red River Floodway expansion: We're at about a one-in-300-year protection now. We're going to be, hopefully, getting closer and closer to the one-in-700-year flood protection. Last spring the project, as I mentioned, achieved a one-in-300-year flood protection, which was the equivalent of the largest flood in Manitoba's recorded history.

While several project components are already completed, the Trans-Canada Highway No. 1 East Bridge, the PTH 59 South Bridge, CN's Sprague Railway Bridge and relocation of the city of Winnipeg Aqueduct, this year we're continuing to work on many other pieces.

Madam Chairperson, just wanting to talk briefly about two pieces of highway or infrastructure that are very important to us, the east side of Lake Winnipeg. MIT is in the process of retaining a qualified multi-disciplinary consulting team to undertake the east-side Lake Winnipeg large area transportation network study. Completion of the consultant selection process and contract award is targeted for this month, possibly early summer. Manitoba's pressing the federal government to collaborate and cost-share the study and future costs of the development of an all-weather road system on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

We are very confident that Minister Strahl, Minister Toews and others, Minister Cannon in the federal government, would look favourably upon linking up communities that are isolated and remote in the province of Manitoba. They need an all-weather road. This government's committed to it and we've started the first steps in that process.

* (1450)

Manitoba-Nunavut Road Selection Study is something that was funded between the Kivalliq region of Nunavut, Manitoba, and the feds. This study was completed, and Manitoba contributed about 25 percent of the total cost of this study. The next step for this Nunavut road initiative is to

develop a business case for moving forward with phased road development.

Manitoba is strategically positioned geographically, as well as having a history of transportation and being a transportation hub. Our dream, our vision, quite frankly, in Manitoba is to ensure that Manitoba takes its rightful place as a leader in transportation. My vision, my department's vision, this government's vision is to have an inland port in Winnipeg. The definition of that varies depending on who you talk to, but the idea is to have a rail, a multi-modal system where you have rail, air, and road, meaning trucking, working together to be able to supply Canada, as well as the United States and all the world, quite frankly, with goods coming from North America. We, currently, are working on a strategy that deals with the, we call it the Arctic Bridge, dealing with the Russians, for example, and the port of Churchill. We call it the Arctic Bridge from Murmansk to Churchill, and using Churchill as a port. Also, Krasnogorsk, a city in Russia, to fly goods into Winnipeg and vice versa, fly from Winnipeg back to Krasnogorsk, shipping goods out of North America and bringing goods into North America.

Manitoba was always known in our history as the gateway to Western Canada, and we are wanting to be known as the gateway to the world or the gateway to North America with the advantages that we have. It takes a lot of work. This is not going to work by government, whether it's the federal government, provincial government, and the City of Winnipeg or the town of Churchill just working together. It's going to take the private sector to be supportive of this initiative. With the Manitoba International Gateway Council that we have, you have Art DeFehr and Arthur Mauro as the two co-chairs of this body and many, many other business people that are on this council that will be giving guidance and advice to the provincial government on which direction to go, I believe is a great start. You have Chris Lorenc, who's been a strong advocate for an inland port and improving transportation in the province of Manitoba. Chris Lorenc is on the Mayor's Trade Council and he was a chair—pardon me, now he is on our Manitoba International Gateway Council.

So I just want to touch on a couple of those things because this department of Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation is not just about building roads, improving roads, and fixing bridges. There are many other pieces to this department that

have a direct correlation with the economic well-being of this province and transportation is an economic enabler. By the different aspects that I pointed out, coming together into one department has huge advantages. There are many other avenues that I could talk about or other issues I could talk about with regard to greening government buildings or greening government fleet, but I just want to conclude by saying that, in addition to the initiatives I've just mentioned, MIT will continue with our delivery of services such as fleet vehicles, administration, Crown land management, air ambulance, northern airport marine services, and many, many, many other areas that are very important to people in Manitoba. Thank you

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have an opening statement?

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Yes, thanks, Madam Chair. It's my privilege and opportunity to take part in these Estimates again. I appreciate the minister taking time to provide us with the opening statement. There is a lot happening in Manitoba and I believe there will continue to be.

I must emphasize, again, the significant importance of the last point that the minister made, and that is the whole Asia-Pacific Gateway program and the coming together of rail, road and air in that whole process and package. I know I spoke to the minister and many of the staff on a few occasions with the opportunity of expanding that in Manitoba. From our side of the House, we certainly agree that there is great potential there that we need to do more with some of those areas. I would encourage the minister to do more in some of those areas, you know, where possible.

We all know that there are limited budgets, and I'm sure as my colleagues come forward and perhaps some of them might take the opportunity to come forward during these Estimates because transportation, roads and bridges are a big part of what those in the city as well as the rest of Manitoba deal with on a daily basis, travel on, look at for our business opportunities in the province as well. It's an opportunity for them to come forward and clarify to the minister any specific concerns that they may have from citizens in their respective constituencies as well as other areas of the province. With his indulgence, I would request that they have that

opportunity as well, and I'm sure that some will come forward to do that.

I appreciate the minister in handling those situations as he has in the past, being able to answer questions from my colleagues directly, but I also want to emphasize the importance of things like infrastructure projects like the floodway. We've had differences in regard to some of the tactics used in regard to the contracts around some of that area with the forced unionization of some of those projects but, nevertheless, there is an opportunity there that is going on, that has been undertaken by the government to protect the citizens of Winnipeg and, indeed, Manitoba's economy in regard to the building of the floodway project, and we certainly have no hesitancy in saying that we look forward to the completion of such projects from our side of the House as well.

There is a plethora of areas, I think, of concern in the province, and we'll share ideas with the minister on some of those as we move forward. Certainly infrastructure projects with the work that the minister is doing with the federal government needs to be discussed. There'll be some questions that I'll have in regard to those areas, areas of rail line. We feel that there are some opportunities in Manitoba to utilize some of those areas somewhat better.

There are opportunities in maintaining traffic flow in many areas. I commend the minister for work that's been done. Albeit, while we criticized some of the ways that they were being done from our side of the House, when you have a disaster and a bridge collapsing or something to that effect and a major infrastructure collapse, if you will, we all know that those have to be fixed. We encourage those to be fixed as quickly as possible. I think that the public expects that as well. It's only good to make sure that it's clear in regard to the contractual nature of the types of projects that are ongoing.

I believe as well that there are a host of areas within the province in regard to—and I'll just mention another one—one of them would be the completion of some of our major roads, highways, the expansion of some of those, the types of contracting being done in those areas. I'll be asking the minister for some clarification on some of those issues as we move forward. I would request as well that we move forward on a global nature with some of the discussions, and I'll try to be as accurate as we can be in regard to dealing with his staff's time and those

kinds of areas. I certainly appreciate that as well indulgence there.

Churchill is a port as well, I think, that needs to be looked at, and we've got this inland seaport. I guess if you want to combine it with being in the centre of the hub—to use the minister's word—the hub of transportation in North America and in other sectors, particularly air, with the type of movement that we can have in Manitoba, I look forward to the expansion of the Winnipeg airport and the completion of that project at its earliest opportunity and the role of the provincial government in that as well.

* (15:00)

We have many citizens in Manitoba that I believe have taken the lead in regard to transportation sectors. The minister has mentioned only a few—Mr. Mauro and Mr. DeFehr on the Asia Pacific Gateway program and the corridors. There are the north-south corridors as well through the U.S. to Mexico and the trade opportunities.

I know the minister isn't in charge of trade, but I'm sure that he is very well aware, from discussions with him in other venues, that the very importance of transportation is, I guess, to my way of thinking, the next best thing to the manufacturing of the widgets that we're exporting or importing into the province as well, because, without that sound infrastructure, we—well, I was going to say, we can't manufacture those products here, but those who are manufacturing them will continue to manufacture. It just won't be here, that's all. So the significant importance of transportation in the daily lives of hundreds of thousands of Manitobans can never be underestimated.

Certainly, in regard to the gross domestic product of the province, it's one of the backbones that we have, in regard that the type of small business we have in Manitoba makes for over 50 percent of the backbone of the GDP of this province. I know the minister is familiar with those numbers as well.

Madam Chair, I guess, from our perspective, we're quite prepared to move forward with the Estimates process. I know there will be other individuals coming in, as I said, from time to time. We will be looking at specific issues around some of the larger infrastructure projects that perhaps the minister can answer some questions on, as well as individual areas of importance in some of the sectors

of Manitoba that maybe don't have as many choices in regard to the type of transportation that many of us take for granted, having road, rail, city buses, air. There are still many areas of Manitoba that don't have that daily access to those types of infrastructure, and it does impact on their ability to have the same quality of life, if you will, as many other regions of the province. I look forward to the minister's comments in regard to some of those issues as well.

I would only say that, in regard to the Building Canada Fund and the questions that we'll have around that, I know the minister has been dealing with the federal government on a number of those areas. So I look forward to the importance of those.

With that, Madam Chair, we would begin the process of the Estimates.

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

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of item 15.1.(a) contained in Resolution 15.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce the staff in attendance.

Mr. Lemieux: Just a quick comment with regard to going global, I don't have a problem with that. The only challenge, of course, that we have is that, because—and I'll give an example to my critic, and he's been very, very accommodating. I know I have to thank the opposition for this. They have been accommodating, because we do have, for example, Mr. Dick Menon from Water Services. He's from Brandon. So, you know, there are people from all over the province that will be here. I guess all I'm looking for is some kind of an idea of—it doesn't have to be a specific question, but just an idea of what might be covered, so we can deal with that.

Mr. Menon is here today, and he deals with the water services issues. I would just ask if the opposition have any questions along that area, I would appreciate if they'd be asked today, because he is here. He was here for other meetings today, so it would be very helpful if that would be possible. Other than that, most of the staff are located here in Winnipeg, so we don't mind going global and to whatever question arises.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable minister, to introduce his staff.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, sitting beside me—and I thank my staff very much, because, as everyone knows, dealing with different government departments, the deputy minister and assistant deputy ministers and other managers within the department have a huge task in ensuring that government policy and the monies that are allocated are spent wisely, and, also, using their expertise to give guidance to government on the challenges that governments have.

Beside me is my deputy minister, Andy Horosko, and I think Andy Horosko has been the deputy minister of Highways, of Transportation, of Transportation and Government Services, of Infrastructure and Transportation for 14 years, I think. So he, certainly, is very knowledgeable about this area. We're very grateful to have him. Also, Paul Rochon is the assistant deputy minister of government services, I believe, or associate deputy minister, sorry.

I would just probably like to have a few people up beside me right now, but I don't know—at least we'll start off with Paul and Andy to start off. Thank you.

The other staff that are here is: Gerry Bosma and Dick Menon. Gerry Bosma is with the Financial Services and also Dick Menon is with Water Services and John Spacek is assistant deputy minister. Ron Weatherburn is with our Bridges branch in our department.

Oh. Now, what a test. Also we have Director of Finance and her name is Lynn Zapshala-Kelln. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department chronologically or have a global discussion?

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chairperson, as I mentioned in my opening statement we could proceed globally. I'll try to take into consideration the minister's comments in regard to Mr. Menon's availability today from Water Services. Some of my colleagues may have other questions that we may have to defer answers and get back to them on if they come in later on that particular issue. I could arrange to do all of that today and tomorrow, but I don't suppose he can stay over, but we'll look at that. But anyway, we'll try to proceed in that vein today and I certainly

appreciate the minister's looking at moving forward in that manner.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I thank my critic. Mr. Menon can certainly stay over if this is going to help the opposition in any way. I know that people are asking questions in different areas right now, so we're certainly willing to accommodate. That'll work out fine.

Madam Chairperson: So, from what I hear it is agreed that we will follow in a global manner with all resolutions to be passed once the questioning has been completed. *[Agreed]*

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chairperson, a little method in my madness with Mr. Menon being here today of course, with Water Services. If the rest of my colleagues are asking questions somewhere else as the minister inferred, maybe I can coerce them into providing most of those water services in southwestern Manitoba, Arthur-Virden and the area that I'm responsible for. But I am the critic for the whole province of Manitoba and so I appreciate this opportunity to discuss these issues today as well.

Madam Chairperson, I want to first just ask some broad questions of the minister in regard to staffing as I've done in the past, if I could. I just wanted—I know the minister has given an indication of the department staff that are working with them and that's those areas. I wonder though, if he could give me a listing of the political staff that he has in his office at this time as well.

Mr. Lemieux: I'd be pleased to. I have a gentleman by the name of Eric Plamondon. Eric Plamondon is my special assistant, works in my office. Political staff in my constituency is Matthew McRae. Also, I have a constituency assistant and his name is Justin Morant. Those are the three political staff I have. Thank you.

* (15:10)

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me if they're on a full-time basis with him or part-time and how long each might have been with him?

Mr. Lemieux: As the Member for Arthur-Virden would know, political staff move and look for other opportunities all the time. It can be a very stressful position.

I have Eric Plamondon just recently joined my staff, as of just a couple months ago, and also

Matthew McRae is just a new executive assistant out in my constituency of LaVerendrye, and Justin Morant has been with me, I think, I believe for about six months. So they're all relatively new staff.

Mr. Maguire: I thank the minister for that. I recognize some of the names but I wonder if the minister could indicate to me where they came from, what is the work they've done, if they'd worked for the government before and where he's hired them from.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Plamondon was my executive assistant before being my special assistant. My special assistant has moved on to bigger and better things. Matthew McRae is a person who just recently I interviewed and applied for the position, and I just hired him.

Justin Morant is a local young man from my constituency that I hired at the constituency level. They're all full-time. The three positions are full-time and CAs. I'm sure the MLA for Arthur-Virden has a constituency person that comes out of his allowance, and that's what Justin's dollars come out of. Matthew and Eric are more direct political staff.

Mr. Maguire: Yes. So the political staff that the member is referring to, the minister is referring to with Mr. Plamondon and Mr. McRae, they come out of his ministerial salary, or are they out of the constituency allowance as well?

Mr. Lemieux: They come out of my appropriation. They're ministerial staff as opposed to being constituency staff. Mr. Morant is the CA that comes out of the MLA's account.

Mr. Maguire: The minister indicated that he had a special assistant previous to Mr. Plamondon. Can he give me that individual's name just to refresh my memory?

Mr. Lemieux: It was Maureen Osland, and she was with me as a special assistant for a couple of years and now has gone on to other things.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate where Mr. Plamondon came from as well as Mr. McRae?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, they're Manitobans, and they applied for the job. I've interviewed many, many people for different positions throughout my eight and a half, nine years, I guess, as a minister. They're

Manitobans and I interviewed them, and they were the best candidates. I'm lucky to have them.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate that. Can the minister tell me what they might have worked at previous, just previous to him hiring them?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I'm sure anyone who has a young child or family member would appreciate these young people don't have a lot of experience in the sense of jobs listed on their resumes, but I thought that they would be satisfactory for the jobs that need to be done.

They're very articulate. They're very knowledgeable with regard to our political system. They're knowledgeable with regard to the issues of the day. They are bilingual, and I thought that was important to ensure that I have bilingual staff being able to speak French and English, which, I think, is important in this portfolio. As I mentioned, I'm lucky to have them. They are both bright young people, and, when I interviewed them amongst five or six others, I thought that they would do the best job with regard to working with me and this particular department, and indeed, any department, quite frankly, because they're, as I mentioned, very, very intelligent and able to catch on to a lot of issues and a lot of things that I have to deal with on a daily basis.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate that. I appreciate the fact that there's an opportunity to involve younger people in these types of roles. I was just curious as to what some of the job functions that they might have had previous, and I understand those coming out of university or some other area may not have that kind of experience, but I appreciate the minister's answer.

Can he finish or maybe there are no others, but can he indicate to me if there are any other staff in the minister's office or the deputy's office that he can provide me with a specific list of persons that would work for yourself or the deputy as well?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, essentially that's basically it. Those are my direct political staff, and I know that the MLA for Arthur-Virden, I hope, will have the opportunity in 12 years to be able to pick his own staff.

Mr. Maguire: That's interesting that it'll be 12 years next year, Madam Chair, so we'll—or in a couple of years, we'll see how that goes. The minister may get what he's wishing for sooner than he thought, but, anyway, I look forward to that opportunity.

Can the minister indicate to me the number of staff that are presently employed in the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, I have the number for my critic. It's 2,602 and also a part time 0.15.

Mr. Maguire: I didn't catch the part-time number.

Mr. Lemieux: It's 0.15.

Mr. Maguire: I'd say that's about as part time as you can get.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

I guess I'm looking at—that's the full-time equivalence that the minister has given me, the 2,602. Are there any vacancies in his department at the present time?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, as of the end of March, it was just over 200, 200 vacancies.

Mr. Maguire: Yes. How does that compare with a year ago? I guess I'm looking at the number of full-time equivalence in this department and wondering if the minister can give me a benchmark as to whether that's up or down from a year ago.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes. The staff complement has been increased by about just under 30 percent. *[interjection]* Up by 30 FTs, staff people, sorry, 30 percent.

* (15:20)

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chair, for a minute there, I thought I was going to give me a heart attack. Increased by 30 percent is quite something. But anyway, can the minister give me an indication of what sector those mainly came in, the new full-time equivalents?

Mr. Lemieux: I can go through the list of the additions. It's 29.25 in total, and the staffing resources increases are as follows: Human Resources Services is 0.25; Water Control and Structures is 6; Motor Carrier Safety and Regulation, 4; Northern Airports, 5; Marine Services, 5; Operations, 8; and Security Services is 1 person. That's a total of 29.25, and that new 29.25 FT's for '08-09.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I'm just looking at those numbers. I see the largest ones, of course, are in Operations and Structure. Can the minister indicate to me what the role would be of a number of those individuals and their main responsibility, particularly in Structure? Perhaps he can tell me whether it's people that are in construction in that department or

whether it's people that are inspecting facilities, bridges and roads. Maybe he can just elaborate on the roles of some of those major ones.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I'm sure the member can understand and realizes that the specifics with regard to job allocation, and so on, that I'm not familiar with that. So I'm going to take a minute just to look through this. He asked the question with regard to Operations. What does the eight staff, for example, in Operations mean?

These staff people, I've been advised by my staff that are beside me, that you're talking about building maintenance people, for example, in different buildings. You have maintenance assistants, maintenance tradespersons, trade helpers, facility manager. Those really make up the staff. It's people who maintain our government buildings and work in our government buildings to ensure that they're kept up to as good a possible condition. Thank you.

Mr. Maguire: Just for the record, the 2,602 people, full-time equivalents, includes the 29.25 new staffpersons?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, and that's the new 29.25 over and above last year.

Mr. Lemieux: These were numbers as of March 31. Does the minister expect that to increase relevant to this year's budget, and will it stay fairly stable, or has that number been increasing that—sort of a one percent increase a year, or each year? Can he provide me with a flow on that?

Mr. Lemieux: That's the budgeted increase for this year, thus far.

Mr. Maguire: Those numbers that he's just given me in regard to staff are for Infrastructure, Transportation and Government Services?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, that's for the department. That's for the whole department.

Mr. Maguire: I just wanted that for the record because sometimes we refer to this as more Infrastructure and Transportation. I don't want to forget the Government Services side, as well. Can the minister give me a breakdown of where those new persons would be? Are they more in the Transportation or more of them in Government Services?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, thank you for the question. Nine out of the 29.25 are with the Government Services portion of the department.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chairperson, I wonder if the minister can provide with the names of those individuals that are sort of the ones that they have hired in the 29.25.

Mr. Lemieux: Madam Chairperson, we haven't hired the people yet. Those are positions that we are going to be filling. Those are over and above positions. They haven't been filled yet, to the best of my knowledge, but they will be.

Mr. Maguire: So the 29.25 new positions that are there are part of—the minister indicated that there are just over 200 vacancies in the departments. They would be part of that.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes.

Mr. Maguire: Then to go back just for a second. Is the 200 vacancies an average number that the minister sees in his department, or is that up or down from previous years?

Mr. Lemieux: Madam Chairperson, it is up slightly, but it's a much larger department as my critic can appreciate. The employees, as I mentioned before, this is a very large department as far as persons go, and it is up slightly with regard to the amount of vacancies that are there.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate when they will be advertising, or have they already advertised for these positions, and, if not all 29.25 of them, how many and just when they might be?

Mr. Lemieux: Some have already been advertised. I believe some engineer positions, but they will be rolling out as quickly as possible. I am sure the member can appreciate we want them. They have been allocated; they're in place. We want them filled, and, so, as soon as humanly possible the human resources and other people in our department will be bulletining them and advertising them.

Mr. Maguire: I wonder if I can get a reading on the number of new staff members that the minister had in '07-08. What was just indicated was that there was just over 200 vacancies in the '08-09 year, that there's 29.25 new staff members coming in in '08-09. I wonder if he can provide me with the number of vacancies that were there in '07-08.

Mr. Lemieux: I would have to check on that exactly to see how many new people we had in '07-08 compared to how many new people we have now. But I can find that. Thank you.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chair, the minister is doing that and I appreciate that. Can he provide me with the names of those individuals and the sector of the department that they're in while he's doing it? I appreciate he can't do it today, but can they make that available to me before the end of the week in regard to the names of the individuals that were hired last year?

* (15:30)

Mr. Lemieux: Well, they are on the public record, and people have been hired. I don't see that being a problem. We don't have it right now at our fingertips, obviously, but I can certainly look into that.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate that the minister—as I said, I didn't expect him to have that at his fingertips right now, but if he could provide me with the names of the individuals that were hired last year, probably only 25 to 30 people, by the looks, if it's an ongoing similar increase to this year as well. So I appreciate that. I wonder if the minister could give me the names of any new staff that have been hired since the March 31 number that he gave me, if there are any to-date who have been hired in the month of April.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, first of all, we're pleased to have an additional number of people onboard. We're going to bulletin—there's a regular process that they go through, a regular hiring process, interview process, bulletined, interviewed, and so on. It's a process that has been followed. As far as I know, I can release those names. I don't think there's anything restricting me from releasing their names as far as positions that they have.

Mr. Maguire: Well, as the minister may say it may be a matter of public record. Certainly, if it is, then there will be no difficulty in that. I appreciate that. I appreciate the opportunity of him providing me with that.

I would just ask, too, then, in regard to the positions that are coming up for hire—I'm assuming he's indicated they're posted—are they hired through a competitive process, or are they appointments? Can he provide me with the information on that, as to whether they're competitive positions, or if any of them are appointments?

Mr. Lemieux: I understand these are all competitive. We would be pleased to take, you know, having those people coming back from Alberta, or having them come back from Saskatchewan, or having them come from Ontario. Manitoba is open for business, and we're looking for people to fill many, many of

the positions we have. It's a booming economy in Manitoba, many positions to fill. So we'd be pleased to have people applying for these jobs from all over.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the minister's candidness in regard to his view of the world being open for business. He may want to speak to some of his other Cabinet colleagues in regard to the driving of business out of Manitoba. I know that he feels, as he opened up in his comments, the importance of infrastructure and transportation in trying to attract business to Manitoba. I'll take him at his word on that.

The situation with new hires, with new persons coming in, can the minister indicate to me if in the past—I know that may not be a judge of what will happen in this particular budget, but can he give me any indication, seeing as how he brought it up, as to what percentage of individuals they have hired in the past who might have come from out-of-province? I, too, would welcome any of those people back from any other province or sector in not only Canada but North America.

I think a Conservative brought in the Nominee Program. It has worked very well over the years in many areas as well, and I look forward to people coming in through that means as well, because we know we need more trained people in areas of apprenticeship who will help us develop and build Manitoba further.

Can the minister give me any indication of the percentage of sort of vacancies that have been filled in his department from outside the province in the past?

Mr. Lemieux: That would be very difficult. It's almost minuscule. It's very difficult. I think it would be so small, if the member is asking how many people have come in from other provinces to fill specific positions. I think, in our department, it would be very small. I believe a lot of people are hired locally.

I think everyone is trying to get more engineers. We're trying to get engineers from all over, and they're hard to come by, but I would say that the positions that have been filled new from last year or new this year, in our department anyway, would probably be very, very, very small. I don't have the number, but I would say, you know, it would be very small.

Mr. Maguire: That's unfortunate. I thought he was going to tell me that there were a lot of people

coming back to the province from other areas, but I can assure him that there are some. They don't all get this far east in the province. Some of them are actually taking up positions in the western part of Manitoba, and the constituency that I'm in as well, a few, but I still am very cognizant of the fact that there are a number of vehicles still travelling past Virden, past Elkhorn and past the Saskatchewan border going out and that it still seems to be higher than the number that are coming back. So the numbers that the minister's statement would confirm that.

I wonder if the minister can indicate to me just how many more expansions of inspectors and that sort of thing he might have in some of his departments, whether it's in bridges or is it road inspection, and whether a number of these 29 and a quarter new persons will be in the inspection departments.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes. There's a difference in, well, in the question. Some are regulatory inspectors for weights and measures, for example, and then others are inspectors for structures. So there's a slight difference with regard to who we've hired or how many we've hired within the department. I'm not sure if my critic is asking, you know, for regulatory inspectors; the people who check the trucks on the road, for example, or check vehicles on the road for weights and measures during times of restrictions, or I'm not sure if he's asking about inspectors on bridges or structures.

Mr. Maguire: No. I was looking at the number of inspectors that perhaps might be for major infrastructure projects, like bridges.

Mr. Lemieux: Taking a look at the list that I have, under construction engineers, we have two; and the structure's project engineers, there are another two; and we have a senior bridge construction technician, what's an additional one; and those are the ones that we have with regard to inspectors or structural inspectors.

* (15:40)

Mr. Maguire: Can I just get from the minister the number of relocated positions that he might have had in '07-08, if there were any within the province? I mean, you've got a great many staffpersons and I wonder if any of the heads of the various sectors that he's got, without names on that, but can he give me any indication of the number of relocations that would have taken place in that staff in '07-08?

Mr. Lemieux: The answer is no under the Transportation-Infrastructure side. No.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the consistency, then, the minister has indicated to me, that sort of none of these positions that he's had, virtually all the 2,600 are in the positions that they were in. Well, I guess there's a couple of hundred short, but anyway, the numbers there, the consistency of staff in the different regions of Manitoba, and not that many have moved from urban to rural to northern.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I can say, yes, overall, the answer is, thank goodness, that staff have been relatively stable. We haven't had a lot of people leaving or going to work for the federal government or the City of Winnipeg or the City of Brandon and so on. We've been very fortunate to have our staff being able to retain our staff.

I know there's always movement in every organization, especially a large one like Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation. When you have 2,600 people, that's a lot of people. So we're very fortunate to be able to keep our staff. I guess there is no other to phrase it.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me what trips he might have taken in the last year in his ministerial position? I don't mean to Arthur-Virden or to Brandon, but, perhaps, out of province and out of country.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question. I'm sure he can appreciate that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure spends a lot of time on the roads in Manitoba. That's primarily my travel, but there are occasions where I had the chance to go outside of the province to represent the province. The recent one was in Ottawa. There was a federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting of Infrastructure and Transportation with Minister Cannon. That was the most recent one.

Then there were one, two, three, four other trips that I can remember outside of the province, again dealing with transportation and, to a lesser degree, trade. As the member mentioned, there is a trade component dealing with, for example, Kansas City to the south of us and Fort Worth are two places I went to, dealing with NASCO, which he's familiar with.

Again, that's promoting that north-south trade corridor. That is something that we are very proud, the fact that we are working with the private sector, trying to, and I know the member opposite is very supportive of this; it's not a point of debate. I'm just

pointing out the fact that this north-south corridor has to be worked on, otherwise it's not going to come to fruition, and those are the kind of trips I've made.

Mr. Maguire: That would be, I'm assuming that that's travel that would come out of the minister's department as opposed to anything personal in that regard.

Mr. Lemieux: Oh, sorry. Yes, I should mention that. I'm trying to think back whether or not it was the previous year. It was right at year-end. There was also a Canada-Russia Business Summit in Ottawa that I attended where I had the opportunity to meet the Minister of Transportation from the Russian Federation, Minister Levitin, and, again, to promote the Port of Churchill, and also promoting the Arctic Bridge concept from Murmansk to the Port of Churchill.

I'm not sure exactly when that fit, but it was close to the previous year-end, so I'm not sure if it was in the previous year or this year. But having said that, most of the trips outside of our province on business have been paid through my department, that's correct.

Mr. Maguire: Thanks, I assumed that, Madam Chairperson, and I appreciate the fact that there is work that has to be done by ministers that take them out of province.

Can the minister indicate to me if the Premier (Mr. Doer) accompanied him on any of those or if he accompanied the Premier on any of those trips?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I can speak for myself and what has been paid from my budget with regard to trips. As I mentioned to the member last year with a very similar question—I'll repeat it. That the business, of course, of ministers and the No. 1 priority is in Manitoba to deal with the issues in Manitoba, whether that's roads or bridges or water structures, et cetera, in the province, but on occasion you get an opportunity to travel outside the province. You have an opportunity to promote what's going on in Manitoba and let people know outside of our country what is going on in this province and what makes Manitoba a great place to invest and a great place to partner with.

I always have a firm belief that you have relationships, and working with your neighbours whether it be to the south or west or east of you, or north of you, quite frankly, that you have to work on those relationships with people that you've met. You can develop friendships and, hopefully, in the end,

will develop partnerships, will create jobs and a better economy overall for the province of Manitoba.

So, we will continue doing the work on behalf of the people of Manitoba and hopefully this corridor we talk about will be something special in the very near future.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate, I know there are a number of corridors that he's working on, that the department is working on, north-south, Asia-Pacific Gateway, other areas as well. Can he indicate to me if he's had any involvement in the Atlantic corridor, Atlantic Gateway project?

Mr. Lemieux: My only involvement with the Atlantic corridor is to say that Manitoba's corridor is better than theirs but I have a biased approach, of course.

In Canada, I think this is something that we faced, and I'd like to take the opportunity, actually, to thank the federal government. The federal government, we had been working closely with, with regard to gateways and corridors. It seems like every province or every region has a gateway or corridor. You've got the Atlantic one, they are promoting their corridor; Montréal's promoting its corridor; the Ambassador Bridge or Windsor-Detroit corridor. You've got, of course, Pembina-Emerson corridor, and you also have the corridor in British Columbia. So the many people that are vying for that Asia-Pacific or corridor's money and right now what we're trying to do, as a province, is trying to impress upon the federal government how important our corridor is.

* (15:50)

So, for the first time in our history, I think, Manitoba and the goods, the value of the goods shipped across from Pembina or from Emerson to Pembina or to the United States, we are now the leader in western Canada for the first time and it's really something. The reason why I stress this is that it's showing the importance of our particular gateway, and we're trying to impress upon the federal government to recognize this gateway. Everyone is out to get a piece of the pie or certain portions of the fund that's available, and we're trying to impress upon the federal government how important our gateway or corridor is. So we're very proud of the fact for the first time we have overtaken Vancouver, for example, or the British Columbia-Washington port as the No. 1 port in value of goods shipped across the border, and the companies in Manitoba

should be thanked for that because they're doing such a good job.

Mr. Maguire: Certainly, the Emerson crossing is the busiest one in western Canada now, and I appreciate the good work being done by companies in Manitoba. It comes the other way as well.

Can the minister indicate to me what initiatives—I'm just saying that the Emerson crossing being No. 1, it's a two-way street. We've got a lot of good products here in Manitoba going south. Can he elaborate on initiatives that his department's taking in regard to trying to attract more of those American goods to come through our hub city here in Winnipeg, whether it's meant to be distributed across western Canada, to be done on container vessel movement or by air?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you for the question. Well, there lies the challenge. Maybe those questions are better directed to the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, Minister Swan, rather than me. But there is the overlap between the Trade and the Transportation portfolios. We try to promote the province as much as we can even though we're dealing with, for example, states like Missouri or dealing with the state of Texas or other states below us, whether it's North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota. We're always promoting the province even though we're dealing with the infrastructure side, whether that's dealing on the security side or other aspects related to transportation.

I have to say with regard to the federal initiative, the Asia-Pacific Gateway initiative, Minister Emerson should be congratulated because he has shown great leadership with regard to this portfolio. Manitoba was invited when Prime Minister Harper, Minister Cannon and Minister Emerson made the announcement in Vancouver. We were pleased to do so because we believe what is good for Vancouver or British Columbia or Prince Rupert is good for Manitoba and vice versa. We believe that working with our colleagues and counterparts in provinces to the west of us, Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C., will be better for us and vice versa. What we do will also enhance them and help them. So, with regard to specifics, specific initiatives, for example, from, say, Minnesota or from Missouri, there are none at this time that I can mention to my colleague that we have in our hand at this moment.

Mr. Maguire: I was just asking the question mainly from the perspective of—I know that the minister's

been very active in the Asia-Pacific Gateway forum I attended at a conference last November in Vancouver myself, and from my previous life before politics, elected here in Manitoba, I guess as a farm leader in western Canada dealing with mainly grain transportation, mainly by rail, not as much air—just beginning in those years to see the increases in container vessels coming in from offshore and moving across Canada into the U.S. as well. I know that there are great initiatives being taken there. It's sort of like the pipeline in bridges and Trans-Canada in the oil movement. You've got to draw an analogy.

There are huge initiatives under way across our country to be competitive virtually with some of our American neighbours in the ports that they have offshore in bringing goods and services into North America and particularly central North America. We have tremendous opportunities in the rail lines that we have in this area, and I only asked the question in regard to the Atlantic program because, of course, I believe that each one of the sectors the minister's looked at need to be looked at individually for their merit and for the opportunity to see if we have other businesses in Manitoba that would look at wanting to ship through there. I mean, if you talk to the people in the Atlantic region, then they believe they're the shortest route to India, and if you go through the Mediterranean in that way, they may be. That's how they try to sell it as being 1,000 miles closer to that area than any other port in North America. The same thing with Prince Rupert being a day closer to China and Japan than Vancouver, even, by boat, by ocean-going vessel. So, I think that we need to capitalize on those where we can. From a Manitoba perspective, the sooner we can get those goods and services onto land and into Manitoba to be distributed, the better off we will be from an opportunity to expand our entrepreneurs and our business opportunities here in Manitoba.

I take great comfort in the fact that we have leaders like Mr. DeFehr and Arthur Mauro, who know clearly what needs to be done in regard to the undertakings of reducing interprovincial trade barriers. I know that that's not the minister's responsibility in that area, but there are some that overlap in the area of transportation, and that is in weights and measures, I'm sure he's aware, by truck. You know, different weights and measures between provinces, restriction times in a number of those areas.

I wonder if the minister can give me any indication as to, first of all, the issue of the Atlantic

and, whether or not, it may be minuscule, but if there are any goods going out through that Atlantic corridor from Manitoba and what those might be, or the volumes, from a transportation perspective, not actually what they might be. And then, also—well, first of all, I guess, those volumes that might be going through there, and then, of course, the reverse of that and what might be coming back into Manitoba, if anything, from that area, knowing full well that the biggest majority is going in other directions.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for his comments, actually. It's, I think, just a conversation we're having. The questions that have been asked, and the answers, are really showing the importance of transportation. It's taken a number of years to ensure that transportation is on the radar screen, not only of politicians, but of the public.

People often think of their road or their bridge in their particular neighbourhood or in their area that needs to be addressed. But transportation plays a huge role in the economic well-being of the province. I think we're all agreed and I think—not think, I know—that the vision, and I'm sure the member opposite supports this vision, it's not that it's something brand new that Manitoba didn't necessarily come up with. But I can tell you what is brand new with regard to trade is our MIGS strategy, our Manitoba International Gateway Strategy that encompasses inland ports, Churchill, and many other different aspects with regard to, also, our gateway.

We're in a tough fight, right now, quite frankly, with regard to gateways, because every region of our country wants to promote their particular gateway. What we've been able to do as a department is—for example, there's a North America Works conference that's held every year in Kansas City, Missouri. You have business leaders throughout the United States, politicians from Canada, as well as the United States and Mexico, all gathered there. We're able to promote the province of Manitoba to everyone we speak to and everyone we see.

Also, NASCO, we've talked about the North America's SuperCorridor organization that we belong to with Mexico and the United States and Manitoba. Also we have staff meeting on a regular basis with North Dakota, Minnesota and, also, the Canadian border security agency that deals with the security issues. Also, we have CANAMBTA, which is a Canada, Manitoba border trade alliance that deals, again, with trade, cross-border trade, security and all

those issues. I've also mentioned about promoting a Russia connection.

The member did make a comment with regard to distance. This is why I believe, I hope it's within our lifetime, it will be, my vision—our vision, I shouldn't say just mine—our government's vision is that the Port of Churchill become a key port; a key north, deep-sea-Arctic port. We know that it's a number of days quicker to get from Murmansk, Russia, to Churchill, compared to, for example, Thunder Bay or even to Vancouver. The shortest route is over the Pole, using the Northwest Passage. If we could ever be ice-free, if we could ever use either ice-breakers or develop the Port of Churchill, we have the perfect entrance to the continent of North America through Churchill.

You know, I have to tell you that, again, maybe we're focusing maybe too much, quite frankly, on initiatives outside of our borders, because there are a lot of challenges that we have within the province of Manitoba. I'm not going to get political and start looking in the rearview mirror and saying you left us with a bloody mess from the '90s because I know the member opposite is very passionate about transportation and he wasn't part of that government then, so I'm not going to go there. But I have to say that as a government we've been able to work with our federal counterparts on harmonization, and I think the key point with regard to agriculture—and he knows agriculture well—is that if you can deal with the harmonization of weights and measures, for example, on the amount that trucks haul, or the size of trucks, those kinds of things make a big difference to industry. We were able to do that, actually, a couple weeks ago when the federal Minister of Transportation met with the ministers from the territories as well as the provinces of Canada, were able to come to an agreement and sign an agreement to be able to do that.

So those are things that don't look very sexy to a lot of people, but when you're a trucking company across Canada and you're trying to ship your goods from one province to another, it's really important that you're able to go move back and forth east and west with some assuredness that you're not breaking some law the moment you cross a border.

Harmonization in totality will never happen. Why? We argue this often, but if you're driving huge trucks through B.C. and through the mountains of British Columbia, those kinds of trucks and the kinds of trucks you're able to haul will never—you're not

able to haul the same weights and have the same dimensions of truck as you are on a flat prairie like Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

So, without being too long-winded, I just want to say that the department really needs to be thanked because they've done so much, a great deal of hard work, and they really have been acknowledged as being leaders with regard to looking at harmonizing what we do with regard to the trucking industry, for example. I mean, often credit is not given. Often ministers will cut a ribbon on a bridge when the bridge is constructed and the bridge is done, but often it's not the people like the engineers and the department, in this particular case, the harmonization of weights and measures—people don't get credit. But I know John Spacek and others in our department have worked extremely hard with the federal government and other provinces trying to do whatever they can to harmonize our regulations on trucking. I think we're really going to pay big dividends for doing things like that in the future.

Mr. Maguire: There are a number of areas that the minister's discussed that I'd like to refer to. I think harmonization and weights and measures in trucks is a very good initiative; it's an opportunity to move forward. There are some things that I would bring up in my own local area that I know the minister's concerned about as well.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

But I know that a number of these areas haven't been looked at, or if there are a number of initiatives that we could continue to look at and develop further even, and I'm just wondering if the minister can indicate to me—he indicated that earlier we were discussing the importance of Emerson as a border crossing and the amount of traffic that's moving back and forth across that particular border crossing some 75 miles south of where we're sitting, and it just happens to be 75 highway. So I'm wondering, given the importance of it, exceeding that of any other port in western Canada, can the minister—and I was at the conference in Detroit with one of his colleagues back in early March to look at—it wasn't particularly traffic across the border; it was enhanced driver's licences versus passports and that sort of thing on ground control. Certainly, that is the major port in Canada, the Ambassador Bridge that he's referred to and being replaced. These are huge infrastructure projects that will be done between the two nations basically, Canada, the U.S., the types of initiative that are being done there between Michigan and

Ontario. You know that there's devastation in the auto industry, but there's still a tremendous amount of traffic and goods and services being moved back and forth across that border.

We have a similar impact on our economy from the Emerson crossing, and we have seen at times four-, five-hour waits, sometimes longer at that particular border, sometimes even higher for truck traffic if we get into certain circumstances.

I believe that the minister's sincere when he says that he's very, very concerned about the future of the Emerson crossing. I would also mention the crossing on the western side of the province which isn't nearly as large at this point, but the one on No. 10 highway, south of Boisbriand, the Dunseith crossing on the U.S. side referred to, which runs right past the International Peace Gardens, has been a growing port for the volume of goods going through that port as well.

The one that I would go back to is the Emerson crossing. I believe strongly that there needs to be work done in that area and I wonder if the minister could indicate to me just exactly what the Province has in mind for the Emerson border crossing?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Acting Chairperson, it's a pleasure to have you sitting as Chair. As a former critic of Transportation, you're familiar with a lot of the issues, and I do appreciate you having the opportunity to be here as well.

Let me just say that, with regard to cross-border trade, whether it's Highway 10 which we're going to be spending roughly over the next number of years \$60 million on improving, a lot of that money will be spent going south of Brandon. We believe that No. 10 highway is an important route to the United States. Emerson has been designated, not just by us but by our friends and neighbours to the south of us, as the major port and major route.

We have 17 border crossings between Manitoba, Minnesota, North Dakota. A couple of them, of course, depending on who you speak to, they think theirs should be the number one crossing, whether it's Highway 5, whether it's 10, 83, 59, 12. Everyone thinks that their border crossing should be the number one. The reality is that our trading partners also have a say in this. The United States, for us anyway, whether it's Minnesota or North Dakota, have deemed that Emerson crossing is going to be the one, the Pembina or Pem-bee-na as my friends call it, that should be the No. 1 crossing for trade.

Having said that, we have certainly worked with our colleagues and our friends to the south of us. I know Manitoba's working with North Dakota on an RFP right now to take a look at what needs to be done over the next 25 years. You have to plan that far in advance. As I previously mentioned, that's when the member will have a chance to choose his staff; that's when they'll become government. So they'll have an opportunity—we'll have everything set and ready for you by then.

Having said that, without making too much light of this, this is extremely important. I'll expand a little bit by saying this, and it sounds repetitive but, when we say we want to work with the federal government or we need the federal government to partner with us, we do. We really do, because there are other provinces in this country that are getting federal funds to assist their border crossing. We're not wanting anything more than anybody else; we're just wanting our fair share, and we're willing to make the case why the border crossing is important. We're working with North Dakota, and we're working with our friends to the south of us to show why this border crossing is important.

In my zeal to talk about how much trade and the value of goods, maybe I stand to be corrected, but the last information that I was advised was that we are a leader in western Canada now. It's something to pat ourselves and the businesses of Manitoba on the back for doing such a good job, but we do get a lot of trade from Alberta and Saskatchewan coming through Manitoba and using this port into the United States. This gateway is hugely important. It ties into our MIT strategy. Our business community leaders understand it, whether it's the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Manitoba business association, we have many organizations that are working with us to ensure that this port, this gateway, is a real key to entering the United States or entering into Canada.

* (16:10)

This RFP we're looking at entering into an agreement with the United States, will take a look at the fluidity of traffic. Right now, I understand, I've been advised, that the wait times are less than 10 minutes at Emerson for trucks, and so that's not bad. I mean, you know, they would like to be able to just drive straight through. If they were able to be secure and the loads were secure, the containers they pick up would be able to be scanned and wrapped and to be able to say to someone in Chicago that this

crossed straight through without being touched or tampered or entered into in any way, would be a huge plus. We're looking at aspects like that.

There are terminologies now being used called geofencing. Geofencing, essentially, is when you use the technology that's available today in a truck, in a container. If that—going down I-29 you go through Emerson, go through Pembina, you go down I-29 and you're heading down to Sioux Falls and that truck goes one block off of I-29, the alarm bells sound.

So the security side—we're able to tell our trading partners that we have not only the best trucking companies in the world but we also have the most secure companies in the world, and we are the most reliable companies in the world. There are a lot of pluses on our side of why people should do business with us.

So our goal is to really make sure that Manitoba is the hub for transportation in this country. We believe we have an opportunity here that we can't miss, but we have to work with the federal government. They are responsible for customs and they're responsible for cross-border and we need to work with them closely.

As I said, we're not asking for more than what anyone else has. We're asking for our fair share to help us develop our main port to the United States, and I hope I've answered the question that the member asked.

Mr. Maguire: The minister, I guess I could be direct, what kind of expansion of the port of Emerson—is it more lanes, is it more buildings—is he dealing with right now?

Mr. Lemieux: All of the above. That's what part of that RFP and that study is about, and I have to tell you that—I should say thank you very much to Minister Emerson, by the way. He understands that we just want a fair share of what the Asia-Pacific gateway fund is all about.

Right now, we have two projects. One is Inkster Boulevard, which is a multi-million dollar project. Also, we have the Highway 16-No. 1, I call it a cloverleaf, interchange, that's being put into place, and, even though we're putting the majority of the money into that particular project, and also the overpass at the CP main lines is also an important piece.

So it's not that Manitoba hasn't done anything with regard to the Asia-Pacific gateway. We do have contributions from the feds and the federal government, Minister Cannon and Minister Emerson specifically, so we thank them very much for the partnership they've entered into with us. And, you know what? Sorry. I would be remiss, actually, in not thanking Minister Toews.

Minister Vic Toews has been very, very helpful on these files. He's a lead minister for the federal government. I know we are different political stripes. He is my member of Parliament, and I should thank him. Not often I get the opportunity to do that, but he has been working hard on that Asia-Pacific file. Now we just need him to work just a little bit harder on the monies for the floodway and the Building Canada Fund and then I'll really thank him. I'll stand on top of the Golden Boy, well, maybe I won't, but anyway—no, I won't do that.

But I think the Member for Arthur-Virden understands that, you know, people—it's an adversarial system we're in and that's politics, but there are opportunities. Sometimes you can thank people for working in co-operation, partnership, with you. So I just want to make sure that's on the record.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me why his government hasn't signed the Building Canada Fund? I understand that there are issues, for sure, around the floodway. I also understand that there's \$75 million on the table for the Emerson crossing, and I guess I'm wondering, if these are this important to this government—certainly, the floodway is, and also the issue of the Emerson—in fact, can he confirm that there's \$75 million of Building Canada funds in the Building Canada Fund for the Emerson crossing, and why the province hasn't signed on to that?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, No. 1, as a good steward of this department, I would not sign any piece of paper that's put under my nose without having looked at it carefully, which we have, nor would any member or minister or any MLA on our side of the House agree to any kind of terms that would have us lessen the amount of money, and we believe, that was committed to us with regard to gas tax or the Building Canada Fund, as the feds call it.

Number 1, I should say it's great to have this pot or fund of money. I hate to use that word "pot," but it's a fund that's put together by the federal government, which I've been maybe one of their worst critics, quite frankly, over the years.

They take about \$160 million out of gas tax out of Manitoba every year and give us back about \$10 million. It's not fair. So they realized this and said: You know, we're going to change that. We're going to give you some of that gas tax money back. Well, thank you very much, but the intention is not to have some of that money used for the floodway and some of that money used for recreation centres, sewer and water, roads, bridges, gateways or ports. The intention was that all of the above should be addressed through the Building Canada Fund. Now, not taking a portion of it to be used toward the floodway, to the best of my recollection, that was never a part of any agreement that we entered into, but, you know, we are working closely with the federal government to try to resolve this issue about where the money is going to come from and where it should go. The amount that the member is talking about, \$75 million for the port of Emerson, that, you know, maybe he's received that. Maybe that's over and above what we're talking about, but I can tell the member, I have never received that. I have never seen anything like that with regard to monies for a specific port.

You know, I've seen the money. I know the agreement we've entered into, the one at 16 and No. 1, the interchange by Portage la Prairie, and I know about Inkster, but I'm not aware of this amount of money the member refers to for the port of Emerson or the gateway of Emerson, Pembina-Emerson crossing.

So, you know, the feds need to be congratulated for that money, putting that money forward. The public, they're our taxpayers, feel that money should be coming back to Manitoba for infrastructure projects, whether it's a new arena or a recreation centre in Portage la Prairie, whether it's a sewer and water project in Brandon. There are many projects that need to be done and we agree with that, but we're having a disagreement with regard to what monies go where and when, and when that is resolved I'd be pleased. I'd be the first to let the member know when that happens.

But I know that he has a role to play, as well, as a Manitoban and as a Manitoba politician with regard to the federal government. We all believe that the commitment was made. When the announcement was made about the floodway sharing, the terminology that was used by our federal counterparts, they said it was a project of national significance, a project of national significance that would not impact on a Building Canada Fund, and

there we are at odds, and there lies the dilemma. How are we going to fund the floodway, from the federal government? The federal government has never said they're not supportive of the floodway. They are. They understand that there's a \$12 billion to \$14 billion of damage if we get a huge flood that the city of Winnipeg is overtaken.

So I'm not saying that they're not supportive of the floodway; they are. Minister Toews and others are. It's the payment of that particular project, and we're at odds right now. We have a differing view with regard to the funding, and we'll get it resolved because we're willing to work together, and we're willing to put our heads together to see how we can resolve it.

* (16:20)

Mr. Maguire: I'm assuming that the member's federal member that he just indicated, Mr. Toews, was his federal member. I'm assuming from the discussion that neither one of them are voting for each other.

Can the minister indicate to me the number of dollars that they're looking at that are in dispute in this regard then, in regard to the Building Canada Fund?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you, I thank the member for the question. It's a legitimate question, and I'll try to give you a legitimate answer is that I don't know as of today the exact dollars on what we're talking about, specifically. It varies. But I can tell you that \$1 to come out of the Building Canada Fund—well, maybe I won't say that. But whatever monies they're planning on taking out of the Building Canada Fund and applying to the floodway is not correct. It was never meant to be that way. The previous Liberal government said it shouldn't be that way. This current government said it shouldn't be taking monies out of that Building Canada Fund for the floodway work. All we're saying is that put some money back into Manitoba for infrastructure. That's what it was meant to be, not the floodway.

The floodway is, to use their language, a project of national significance. We've taken them for their word, and we believe that we will get this resolved and the monies will go towards the floodway to pay their half and we'll also have equal amounts of money for infrastructure projects. Some may be, of course, in the MLA for Arthur-Virden's even in his own backyard, for example, a sewage treatment plant in Brandon and so on.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, there are a number of areas here, and I may come back to this later, but just given the time for today just in regard to an issue of weights and measures and harmonization in that area, I have to remind the minister again—and we've done this before, I've raised it in the House a few years ago in regard to the impact on the oil industry in western Manitoba and the fact that restrictions here end at the end of May. There in Saskatchewan they're the end of April. I know the answers I've received in the past is we have better roads than they do, that we don't want to deteriorate our roads any more than they do. I respect that, but I also respect the fact that small businesses in rural Manitoba in that oil area have made investments in decisions to, in respect to servicing the rates, in respect to setting up after the holes are drilled, after the wells have been drilled by the drilling companies and that many of these vehicles are extremely heavy vehicles.

Most of the work that we've done with the staff of the department in the past was very well received by the industry out there. I have to say in the meetings that we had over the previous few years, very well received and moving along what we thought was fairly smoothly. Individuals were complying with the new bill that the members had brought in to look at damage to roads being paid for by the persons moving in each of those areas. After seeing it implemented and working, they felt that that was workable.

However, there's two things, I guess. One is to make sure that anyone coming into Manitoba complies, that it may be more of a trades circumstance than a highways to work with the same kind of permitting and that sort of thing that would be done in Saskatchewan is done in Manitoba. One more directly impacting these service personnel which directly impacts the people in some of the smaller communities that have smaller companies that sublet work and that sort of thing for some of the service rigs was to deal directly with the impact of watching all of the service companies and drilling rigs leave Manitoba in early to mid March so that they can escape Manitoba and work longer in Saskatchewan.

I know I raised the fact that it's about a quarter of a million dollars of lost revenue a day in the province of Manitoba in the House a number of years ago. We did receive a good response from the Department of Transportation at that time to deal with it.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

I just want to remind the minister that we're running into the same kinds of issues still. I know one of the requests from people in the industry at that time was to look at the old area of a separate transportation map in that area for a separate weight restriction zone. That might be more than the minister wants to go to. The issue of special permits, which no one really wanted to go through that process, if they could have had it simpler, but once put in place was well received by the industry. It worked well the last couple of years.

I guess the one thing I want to ask the minister now is why was the annual permit process cancelled for service rigs and heavy movement in the oil industry in Manitoba?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I thank the member and I know he raised 452 and 256 and 345 last year in the corner talking about some of the restrictions that were on some of those roads. The fact of the matter is there was no way to properly detect or know where these blanket permits and where these trucks were going. In other words, in order to protect the infrastructure of the province, we had to ensure that we changed the system.

Now, I'm not sure how many vehicles we are talking about. It could be 15, 20. I don't know how many vehicles are actually impacted. It wasn't very many before. I'm not sure if that's grown and, I'm not sure if the MLA has that answer for us. But it's to protect the infrastructure overall, quite frankly. We do give blanket permits to less weights, 37,000 kg I guess. But for the larger carriers, it was hard to know where they were going. It was hard to track exactly where they were. So the integrity of our infrastructure needs to be protected, that's the reason why we changed the system.

Mr. Maguire: Notwithstanding that, these people know that their weights are such that they needed the annual permit to move even without restrictions because their weights are over the regular standard for our RTAC roads anyway. They need to have that special permit to move, and they were granted that. It's very much an inconvenience to the industry to have to get a daily permit. I wonder if the minister can confirm that these people now have to have a permit for each move that they make, and that they have to apply for a special permit every time they move their rig in Manitoba.

Mr. Lemieux: I didn't catch the end of the question for the member. If I could ask him just to repeat the end of the question.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, thanks, Madam Chairperson. Just to repeat, I'm wondering if the minister can tell me why service rigs in the oil industry in Manitoba need to have a permit for every move they make now. It seems like quite a bit of overkill to come from an annual permit to one for every time you have to move.

Mr. Lemieux: Number 1, one of our top jobs in the department is to ensure that our infrastructure is protected, and the integrity of our system is protected. There were about 68 permits issued in '07, and 15 issued to six companies that allowed for weights in excess of 37,960 kg, the high-end weight for this type of vehicle. Some operators have invested in equipment that will not be able to freely operate. So now they require every single trip permit, which the member knows.

* (16:30)

Now, the dilemma again is that, my understanding is that, it's not a lot of vehicles that are being impacted by this. Again, the infrastructure of the province and the integrity of the roads have to be protected. Now that is not to take away from the fact that the oil industry and what is happening with regard to the southwest is very important to the economy of Manitoba. That's not a point of argument. It's the infrastructure itself of our roads that have taken a beating, and that's why the system was changed, to address that.

Mr. Maguire: Was it the roads itself, Madam Chair, or through the minister, or was it the bridge structures on those roads that they're most concerned about?

Mr. Lemieux: The member raises a good point. Again, in some cases, and probably in the majority of cases, where it's the bridge or the infrastructure that goes over creeks or rivers and so on that is impacted, and the distribution on those trucks and how it varies going over those structures is possibly the key issue as to why the system was changed.

I thank the member for the question. I know that this is in his back yard. He has to deal with companies that are impacted by what my department is doing, and I appreciate him raising the question. We're still in dialogue with many trucking companies in Manitoba and will continue to do so. We have never closed the door; but, when push comes to shove, our job is to protect our bridges, our infrastructure and the integrity of our roads. That's why, for example, even whether we're talking about

restricting our roads, for example, in zone one from March 18 to about May 26, of which this is part, we have to do it because we have to protect our roads, and that's part of it. But, in this particular case, I believe the member is right. That is, it's the structures and bridges that cross our creeks and rivers that may be impacted more so than the roads. Thank you.

Mr. Maguire: I just want to outline to the minister the impossibility of this situation. That is, when a service rig goes onto a site, they can finish the job in a day to two days; most of them are done by two days. To apply for a permit every two days, if you've got five or six service rigs, you're going to have to bring a couple of people on staff at least just to deal with applying for permits to the provincial government. That's why at least look at something in the neighbourhood of a three-month permit. If you're not going to go to an annual permit, the recommendation would be to look at something longer than being able to move on every move. If you're applying on a Friday for a permit, and it takes, they're told, three to five days to get a permit, you can do three jobs before you get the permit back for the first one. They're not going to sit there. They're not going to sit on a site and wait for that permit and watch hundreds of thousands of dollars go by in regard to being able to do the work. I guess we could lock them all up, but that's not very attainable in regard to attracting industry and business to Manitoba as well.

I understand the need to be absolutely secure in protecting the infrastructure that we have in the province of Manitoba, but I want to outline to the minister the untenable situation that it's put these industries in, these businesses in. That's why they scamper out of Manitoba and go to Saskatchewan. They don't come back until late June. It's the fact that they're delayed in coming back until there is enough work for them to come back, because they can get all the work they need right now in Saskatchewan as well. They don't come back unless they have enough lined up that they can go right through to freeze up again or, in fact, right through the winter as well with a drilling program that continues.

That's what impacts a lot of the small businesses that need to go out and train people to work on the local situations, whether it's in Melita or Pearson or Waskada or Virden or any of those communities that are impacted—Souris—in southwest Manitoba where these small businesses exist. It's because they go to the trouble and expense, the time and the expense, to actually train the individuals and then watch them

leave their businesses to go to Saskatchewan to work for someone else. They may not come back to that company at all.

So we're forcing the Manitoba companies to do an annual training process so that somebody else can get the benefit of the trained worker. Quite often, those trained workers will still live in some of the communities in Manitoba and drive across the border to work every day or else they'll move their families to Saskatchewan, as I know of in a number of cases.

Right now, with this untenable situation, we're being—I want to put on the record for the minister to think about, and at least try to do what we can. We may be facing one of the largest service companies in Manitoba leaving the province and moving to Saskatchewan. I would not urge that at all. There are ways of dealing with this and getting around it. I just want to put on the record that we need to look at that seriously and quickly. I don't think anybody expects anything to be put in place before the end of the restriction program at the end of May, here, coming up for this year. I think there's a compliance.

All of these service companies also do need some downtime—they tell me three to six weeks is enough—for the service that they need to do annually on their rigs. They certainly use this time of year to do that work, but they need to be able to move rigs in and out of their home places, home locations. I'm not saying that what's going on that in Saskatchewan is where we need to be either, but if you're a company in some of those communities, you can move, even in the restricted time, to get your rig to your home base to do work on it, if it's broken down, in the height of restriction time. I'm not saying we need to go there, but there needs to be some kind of a permit process to, I think, allow these people to continue to do work.

We're liable to see between three and five hundred wells drilled in Manitoba again. It'll be a fairly large exploration effort in Manitoba this year, by the looks of it. I don't know if we'll get to the record numbers that we've seen in the past, but there will be an exceptionally good drilling program in southwest Manitoba.

I would hope that by the time we roll around to 2009 we can have some of these issues resolved with the industry there, and come up with a process that will allow them to move without having to put them off base, and without having to apply for absolutely every move they make, because those moves—if they're on the same section of land, of course, they're

all right. They can move, I'm assuming, within, you know, across fields and that sort of thing, to do each 40-acre plot, but if they have to move across a road, even, from one side of the road to the other, it's very detrimental to have to phone Winnipeg to get a permit for each one of those circumstances, particularly if you've already got a permit to move across that road. Going down the road and over a bridge is another issue that needs to be dealt with as well.

I just wonder if the minister can indicate to me what he feels they can do to enhance attracting and keeping these businesses here in Manitoba.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I think the businesses want to stay in Manitoba because there is business here to be done. I think it can be quite lucrative for them. You're correct. I understand it as well that there's going to be a lot of drilling happening within this year, and has been actually. So it looks like it's going to be another great year.

The department's No. 1 job is, as I mentioned before, and I'm repeating myself, but it's to protect the infrastructure of the province. Whether it's the bridge or a road, they want to do that. But, as minister, I will ensure, and I'll tell my critic, the MLA for Arthur-Virden, that the department will keep an open mind and try to see if there is a solution here to protect our bridges, which we want to make sure that nothing happens to those structures as a result of traffic or damaging our roads, but we'll have to look at what options are there, if any, and see if we can work with these companies.

I think, in both of our opening statements, we talked about how infrastructure or transportation is an economic enabler. We believe that, and the department believes it. Yet, we hear, there lies the challenge of protecting our infrastructure and yet doing whatever we can to enhance business and making sure it happens, to everyone's satisfaction, quite frankly.

So, I guess, the best I can say to my critic is that the department will keep an open mind with regard to looking for a solution. He is correct. I mean, there is not long before our restrictions are over in May, for this year. It's a great drying year, actually. This year is a great year, as I understand it.

* (16:40)

I'll have to leave it at that. You know, we're certainly prepared to look at every option to see if there's a way to make this work, even though I

understand that it is not that many companies that it has impacted, necessarily, but what the member is saying is, a few is too many to have their business hindered. We're trying to work with them and they understand our point of view too, but we'll keep an open mind to see if there's a way to make this work for everyone.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the small numbers but, just to put it in magnitude, one company leaving Manitoba could be a hundred jobs in this particular circumstance that I'm referring to. I know that the minister would be concerned about that.

I wanted the two questions on this, and the first one is exactly to do with the fact that each year is different. I'm not suggesting that we don't need to look at each year on an individual basis. When you've got a year like 1999 and there was 50 inches of rain from July to July, everybody understands the roads are softer, the bases are poorer and, absolutely not notwithstanding the fact that we need to be putting an effort into upgrading some of those roads, there's no doubt about it, but this is the driest. I was in Pierson on Friday night; farmers are telling me they've got dugouts with no water in them. There was no run-off this spring; there's virtually no snow in that whole region. To not look at that as a specific circumstance and I know even as the frost comes out, no matter how dry it is, there can be impacts on roads.

I think we need to look at a circumstance and that's where a permitting process comes in, that you can apply for the special permits to move during those restricted times. That process that I just want to confirm for the industry. The feedback I've received from them is they were satisfied that the process was working over the last three years. They were pleased with the government's initiative on that. They were complying with it. I hope I'm not saying something that the department hasn't. I'm sure you've received calls from somebody that wasn't happy, that's probably already there as well, but the group that we've had the opportunity to meet with in the past was very happy with the permitting process that was in place. I know from speaking to them that the department is looking at the opportunity of whether we can come in with a three-month permit or something in that area. I just want to emphasize that, if we're going to continue down the road of a particular permit for every move that these companies have to make, it's not a very attractive way to do business in Manitoba, and we need to do what we can to attract and keep them here.

Can the minister indicate to me whether they will look at other options or go back to the drawing board, if you will, and look at other options besides a permit for each move?

Mr. Lemieux: At this point I wish I could say yes, but I can't. I'm not an engineer and I'm certainly not privy to what our people in the department in Brandon have to go through with regard to ensuring the safety and the integrity of our structures, our bridges primarily, but our roads.

I can't today say that we're going to change but I can tell the member that, and I will tell the member today, we'll keep an open mind to see if there's a way that we can make this work. I'm not sure what the solution is to that but, as the member pointed out, the department and officials out of Brandon are very good at trying to work with companies to see if they can accommodate them somehow.

Some of the points that the member makes are valid points. It's not a case of arguing about it but it's, again, a challenge that we have with regard to our infrastructure. Some cases, some of these bridges are reaching their time where they need some work, and that is going to have a huge impact on this kind of a decision.

That's the extent of my comments with regard to this issue. I don't want to repeat myself, and that's the reason I'm saying that we'll do what we can, but I can't today say that we're going to change the structure or change the system.

I appreciate the member's comments on this item.

Mr. Maguire: Just to look at another circumstance and that's in regard to the infrastructure of Highway 256. I know I was called on this one a little while ago to do an interview on it, and someone had used the word "hypocritical" to me in regard to 80 kilometres of extra travel by semis hauling oil to get from down No. 2 highway out of the Sinclair field all the way around to get back to the station at Cromer.

I want to raise it with the minister that they're very concerned, the people in that area, that these trucks are having to go past the corner of 256 on No. 2 highway, west of Reston just east of Sinclair, all the way past Reston to Pipestone corner at 83 and No. 2, up 83, which are both RTAC roads to get to No. 255, and then all the way back, about 20 miles back, west on 255 to get back to 256. So, they're

going about 80 kilometres to get 10, and it's not a good situation.

I understand, and I appreciate, that there was work done back after the '99 flood on soft roads in that area. Some of those potholes were dug out and a base was put into some of them, and I would certainly urge the minister to continue to look at the upgrading of that section of road just to help. Of course, you know there are dust conditions and everything else. We went through this last year as well, and I would urge him to help with whatever needs to be done to those roads to protect the farmyards along that road from dirt as they helped the Municipality of Pipestone with last year, I believe, from his department. I appreciate that. I would first recommend that he look at that again with the R.M. of Pipestone to help them out there, also though, further, to look at the upgrade of that road so that we don't have to go through this every year, I guess.

All I know that the minister can tell me, as he has many times, and I'm fully aware that there's only so many dollars to go around. But this is not just about the service rigs in this particular case. I have travelled back and forth. I was in Reston a week ago Sunday and through that road again on Saturday afternoon, I guess it was, this week, down 83 highway from Virden to that corner. There's a truck every five minutes it seems virtually in that area. I'd have to get my numbers right. I'm not spreading that out because sometimes there are two or three of them following one another and they're all within half a mile. So it's the circumstances of safety as well. Believe me, your inspectors have done a good job because these trucks are religiously following the other route that they've been designated to follow this and get to where they need to be. But I want to say that the continuous pounding on the gravel-based 255 road is certainly a detriment to the safety, and I guess cleanliness, of the homes along that particular road as well.

But it will be needed to be done at some point because that oil industry is not going away out there. Those wells are drilling in spite of the pipeline from the Cromer area, or the Sinclair area, pardon me. Some of this is oil that would be coming from the west side of that. Some of it probably comes in from Saskatchewan as well and makes its way all the way around. So I'm only impressing upon the minister the importance of the industry and what we need to do with short chunks of road, as I've asked him in other industries, in other sectors, in both Estimates and I

believe question period, in the past in regard to helping sustain and develop some of the industries that we have in the province, and I believe it's the role of government to try and do that.

We're not asking for a complete road to be done from the U.S. border to Swan River or something in that nature. I think we need to look at targeting where that particular industry is going, and, of course, we can't change the fact that the Enbridge pipelines run through Cromer and that that's where the drop-off point is for much of this oil. That's a given; we can't change that. All we can do is help those industries by enhancing the infrastructure, and I would encourage him to do that.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I thank the MLA for Arthur-Virden for those comments, and, as was pointed out, the Sinclair field is very important to us. The whole industry's important to us, and there's more and more happening every year, which is very encouraging. It's great for the economy of Manitoba.

* (16:50)

We know the challenges that are on some of the roads, and I know just looking at the provincial map now, taking a look at some of these roads and the connections of 83 and the crossover using No. 2, as well, to Reston and so on. It's a challenge we have in all parts of Manitoba with regard to our roads and our bridges.

But the point that the MLA has left with the minister is that the industry is important to the province and we need to look what we're doing with the infrastructure in that area, because the oil industry is not going away. It's only going to expand. With the kind of prices today, I don't know if it's \$1.17 a barrel, I'm not sure what it is. But it's continuing to climb. *[interjection]* Sorry, \$117. Right. It's not going to go away. In fact, more and more drilling is going to happen. So I thank the member for the comments.

Mr. Maguire: Perhaps I could encourage the minister just to set some time aside to have a meeting with some of the oil companies, service rig companies, because it's not just the service rigs. We've got some pretty major oil drilling companies. Tundra, of course, is the major player in this whole process of drilling oil in western Manitoba. They're the ones that founded some of these fields. Others have come in from other areas, and I was glad to see that some of the drilling is coming from companies

outside of Manitoba and bringing their investment dollars into this province.

But I think we've got some pretty major players that might want to have—if the minister could find a half an hour, an hour of time, at some point. I'd help him arrange a meeting with some of these folks himself, or we could do that in Virden, at his opportunity, to take them out and actually show them some of the fields himself. I'd be glad to do that, whether they need to come to Winnipeg or he has the time to come out. I would encourage that, as well.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, it's very difficult, of course, when we're in the Legislature. The MLA knows that. But I appreciate the offer. I've never had an opportunity, actually, to go to an oil field like that, like St. Clair. I know we've had other ministers who have had the opportunity to deal with industry, and so on. In that particular industry, the minister responsible for Mines, I know, has been all over the province and he is, certainly, very in tune with what's happening with this particular industry, because he's been there to see it first-hand.

I don't have a problem going to meet with the industry and having an opportunity to—I'd prefer to actually see the fields and be right there where they're working, as opposed to Virden. I don't have anything against Virden, but I think I'd like to be able to see the site itself. Hopefully, when we're out of the Legislature, I can't give the member a time right now, but that's something I'd like to do is, certainly, take a look at the area.

I'd appreciate it if the MLA for Arthur-Virden would accompany me when we meet them and have a chance to talk to them for an hour or so, and have a meeting and be able to listen to them first-hand.

Mr. Maguire: As I indicated, Madam Chair, I didn't mean we had to do it tomorrow, but I certainly appreciate that. I'll work with them and the minister to try and bring that forward.

I know I haven't had an opportunity, or I haven't had the time today to be able to ask questions in regard to the water services issues out in my area. I know there's a number of them going on. I appreciate Mr. Menon being able to be here tomorrow to answer questions from a number of my colleagues. We'll try and do that, trying to make sure that we get that on the table tomorrow and be able to get as many of those answered tomorrow as we can, and I look forward to that, and just to try to make the best use of everybody's time that we can.

I'll leave it for now because there isn't—well, there's a few minutes, I guess. We could, maybe, perhaps, look forward to a question in regard to some of the water projects that are ongoing and the waterfication in those areas, just in regard to Wallace municipality, the town of Melita, and if he could give me an update on those projects.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, Madam Chairperson, I just want to introduce Dick Menon. He is with our Water Services branch, and he is the head person there. So I thank the Member for Arthur-Virden for trying to get some questions in when Mr. Menon is here. I know there are going to be more tomorrow, but he has other meetings in Winnipeg, so that it actually works out that he's able to stay.

But I know the Member for Arthur-Virden asked about the Melita water treatment, but I would certainly ask him to repeat that now that Mr. Menon is sitting here beside me.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chair, if he has the time to just give me an update on the waterfication project for the town of Melita, as well as the Wallace Municipality, Pipestone Municipality. *[interjection]* Yes, Wallace-Pipestone. I know that there's a move afoot there to involve Pipestone and that, and be well received.

Mr. Lemieux: The Melita water-treatment plant itself is presently being awarded, so that project is a go. I don't have the specific dollars. Of course, we don't like to talk necessarily about dollars until the bids are in because you don't know what—you know, if you tell them it's going to be \$2 million, you can be guaranteed that it'll be more than that. Prices have been rising, and I know the MLA knows this. It's not only asphalt and steel and concrete, but also just water treatment in general has been very expensive for many communities. A lot of their budgets have not been able to be—well, have not been able to meet, quite frankly, the cost of their treatment plants, and this is just one. Just with regard to Melita water-treatment plant, the tender is presently being awarded, and that is good news for that community. I know they've been anticipating this, and we appreciate the co-operation we're getting working with them on this particular project.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, just in regard to the sourcing of—I believe it's Albert Municipality—for the source of water for the town of Melita, and the piping, I believe, is in from that area. It was perhaps finished last fall, and how soon—I mean, the new treatment plant will just connect to the present facilities that are

in Melita. I would encourage the government and the minister to move forward with that. I guess my point is, there'd be no snags in that one for this year as far as being able to finish that project.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, well, let me just say that with regard to Melita and others, but what we've been encouraging or trying to encourage as a department is trying to have the different rural municipalities working together, and I think that's been well received. I think people understand that by working together through one water system and by one source they're able to satisfy all their needs.

I know that, with regard to the R.M. of Wallace, the Manitoba Water Services Board has completed the five phases. These are funded through—well, they're in partnership with the federal PFRA, and we need additional federal allocation for further phases in Wallace.

Now the PFRA program, that particular program is now finished, as I understand it. The federal government with regard to the Building Canada Fund, we're looking at either incorporating the PFRA program, and the waterfication programs into the Building Canada Fund. Of course, there's a challenge right now with regard to that particular program, and so, as I mentioned, we need additional federal allocation for further phases in Wallace. I'm not sure how many phases in Wallace. I know that we've said that five phases have been completed, and I understand there are two or three phases left to complete. That will not be done until we can work closely with the federal government to make sure that's done.

But, again, we're encouraging the municipalities to work together. They're working in partnership with us, and we appreciate it because more is getting done. It's always over-subscribed. This program is one that—this PFRA program between Saskatchewan and Manitoba, we're the ones who have taken the lion's share, I think, because we've really jumped onto those federal dollars to take advantage of it. So, as it stands right now, we're anticipating working with the feds to see what we can do. Melita itself will be the regional facility that will supply the water to areas in Brenda, Arthur, and so on.

So, again, I mention, we need further funds to start the projects in Pipestone, but it's something that we're aware of. The department knows about it and is certainly working with them. So we anticipate working co-operatively with each other.

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

AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL INITIATIVES

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I do indeed.

Mr. Chairperson: Excellent. Please proceed.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to present my department's physical outline for the upcoming year. It is a plan of action that will continue our work in strengthening Manitoba's agri-food industry and creating vibrancy in our rural communities. We will focus once again on farm profitability, rural economic development, value-added activities, environment sustainability and health and wellness because these are the areas that are important to the agriculture sector, to the communities, to consumers and those who live and work in rural Manitoba.

In the area of farm profitability, there is currently a very significant divide between the income generated by the grain sector and the returns experienced by the livestock sector. Grain producers are enjoying record high prices that are the result of a tight world supply. Although the costs of their inputs has greatly increased, they are in a better financial position than they have been for a number of years. Livestock producers, on the other hand, are experiencing the negative effects of high grain prices, a global feed cost rise. The U.S. feedlots and feed operators are cutting back on the number of animals they are buying.

There's already a serious situation that is caused by the country-of-origin labelling, better known as COOL in the United States. This uncertainty is impacting cross-border movement and prices of livestock, especially for weanlings. We have responded and we will continue to respond to support the livestock sector that has been such an integral part of Manitoba's economy. For the hog producers, we will continue to accelerate

AgriStability payments to the Targeted Advance program and will continue to deliver our announced \$60 million in loan assistance.

We will continue to work actively to counteract the effects of COOL through initiatives that include trade advocacy, legal work and new export development initiatives. Mr. Chairman, we also created a \$14.7-million Ruminant Assistance Program that will provide cattle and other ruminant producers with a direct payment of up to 3 percent of their historical net cattle sales. This has been further enhanced with funds that are provided to producers in the Riding Mountain Eradication Area with \$6 a head for their cattle tested for TB.

In addition, we are supporting a major research effort to develop improved production strategies that will assist the competitiveness of the cattle industry. Research and development are crucial to the future of the agri-food industry. We are providing a million dollars in addition to the \$1.5 million in federal dollars for the Agri-Food Research Development Initiative, better known as ARDI. These funds are for industry-led research and development projects that increase competitiveness and support diversity in the agri-food sector. We have budgeted \$51.5 million this physical year for AgriInvest and AgriStability. These are the programs that replaced the Canada Agriculture Income Stabilization program. A good portion of this will benefit our livestock producers.

The budget contains \$11 million in funds that will provide new programming and augment existing farm profitability initiatives. For example, we will continue to cut school tax on farm land by raising the rebate from 65 to 70 percent. We have allocated an additional \$8.8 million to production insurance, and this is in response to the rising crop values.

Young farmers will continue to receive special consideration to help them achieve profitability so that they can remain on the land, and this includes reduced interest, bridging generations loans, production insurance credits and special rates on loans that I have already referred to for pork producers. It also includes training for young farm women to help them increase their participation in their family farm business.

In the area of rural development, I will tell you that \$22.45 million has been allocated for our Rural Economic Development Initiative, better known as REDI, and this emphasizes the importance we place on making rural Manitoba a more desirable place to

live, a place where families can prosper and a place where business can succeed.

This allocation, which includes \$1.3 million in new expenditures, will fund community-based economic development, business projects and economic initiatives. It will also fund projects that will bring new capital investments and economic development to rural and northern Manitoba, and it will assist companies to commercialize new products and will enhance and grow our value added.

A further \$250,000 from REDI for the Rural Entrepreneur Assistance program will help those in rural Manitoba looking at starting and expanding or purchasing their businesses. REDI will also go towards the Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit, rural development corporations and Hometown Manitoba.

Youth initiatives will also be funded. We will be providing funds for Green Team, the Manitoba Youth in Action, Partners with Youth and the Young Entrepreneur program, which all help to build leadership capacity and create opportunities for our young people.

We continue to work in rural Manitoba with rural Manitobans, our Aboriginal population, immigrants and rural co-operatives to provide programs that will assist them to create new opportunities for themselves and those around them. The Growing Opportunities teams, with their energetic and committed staff who live and work in our rural communities, are an integral part of this program.

One of the keys in the future of rural Manitoba is value-added activities, and we are focussing on the growth and diversification of Manitoba's food processing industry and the creation of the bio-processing industry.

The \$1-million Food Industry Development fund will provide food processors with financial assistance at various stages of product development from feasibility assessments to commercialization, testing and marketing. The \$1.7-million value-added processing program will provide support for bio-processing with an emphasis on research and development of biofuels and fibres.

I want to emphasize that our Food Development Centre and its state-of-the-art equipment and its highly skilled staff continue to be the hub of food-processing development in this province. It provides value-added opportunities for small and large clients

that include farmers, entrepreneurs and food manufacturers. The Food Development Centre continues to partner with the Richardson Centre for Functional Foods and Nutraceuticals and the Canadian Centre for Agri-Food Research in health and medicine to explore new opportunities for locally produced commodities in the health product market. Through the Manitoba Agri-Health Research Network, these organizations work together to emphasize Manitoba's capacity to create agri-food answers to health and wellness.

From value-added activities, I will take you to our efforts for environmental sustainability and the \$4.5 million allocated towards the mitigation of climate change. One component, the new Manitoba Sustainable Agriculture Practices program, will provide \$3 million to pay farmers to adopt new management practices that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and restore wetlands. These funds are in addition to the \$2.3 million in the Nutrient Management Financial Assistance program which will help producers adapt to new environmental regulations.

* (14:50)

Another component of our climate change mitigation is our woodlot program, where we have allocated \$400,000. Tree stands, which are in the decline, absorb greenhouse gases, sequester carbon, absorb nutrients, and prevent erosion.

Another \$750,000 in climate change mitigation will go toward assisting farmers and rural businesses to convert to renewable biomass energy sources and to encourage farmers to use crop residue as a biomass source. Part of this equation is a mobile biomass densifier that will put straw on the field into material that can be cured, cubed and pelleted, and we will provide \$450,000 for this technology.

I have so much to say about this department, and I'm getting a signal. There are more issues, but I want to say that, in the area of food and wellness, there are several initiatives that we have put in for additional inspectors into tracking and tracing to ensure that we are able to trace the food components from the farm to slaughter, to processing, to retail.

Mr. Chairman, as well, I want to emphasize that we think food security is a very important issue. That's why we are allocating \$40,000 to the Northern Healthy Food Initiative, which will help northern communities grow and preserve fresh fruits and vegetables. I want to commend our extension

workers for the work that we do in this area. We will augment this initiative with a new \$100,000 program that will provide extension service, leadership, youth programming, community development and business development in northern Manitoba communities.

In conclusion, I want to say that I hope this brief overview will provide you with an idea of where our department is going. I believe we have found a balance that will support and sustain our agriculture industry, develop and grow our agri-food industry, and facilitate change in northern and rural Manitoba.

I must emphasize that a number of our programs will be augmented by federal dollars when we sign the new Growing Forward agreement, which replaces the agri-food framework agreement. The Growing Forward agreement, which is far-reaching, is being negotiated. Until the time that it is in place, we have leveraged \$11.3 million in federal funds for the industry through our transition agreement. This will ensure that programs such as skill training, food safety, environmental stewardship and farm planning, as well as research and development, will not be interrupted. Once implemented, the new program will cover a variety of business risk management, environmental, and other programs, and we look forward to seeing this program come to fruition.

With those few comments, Mr. Chairman, I am prepared to answer questions from my critic.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Lakeside, have any opening comments to make?

Honourable Member for Lakeside, you have up to 11 minutes, should you choose to use them.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have a few things I would like to put on the record.

First of all, I would like to thank the minister for working with us. We have a number of things going on in the House today, the Estimates both being carried on, plus bills in the House, so we're a bit short on members, but I do find asking questions rather than doing a lot of talking gets us a lot farther, so I'm going to keep my comments very brief.

I am very concerned about the AgriInvest and AgriStability programs that are being proposed and negotiated right now between the Province and the

federal government. We realize on this side of the House there are a number of issues still outstanding, and we will get into the meat and potatoes of those as we get into the questions and answers.

Also, I'm very concerned about more value-added within rural Manitoba. We've seen a big disconnect between rural and urban, and I am very concerned about how we bring those two together. We do have some proposals that we'd like to bring forward, and we will be bringing those forward.

I think the disconnect has gotten wider in the last three to four years, and it really concerns me, that we need to do more in order to bring those relationships together, especially when you look at the balance of the populace within the province of Manitoba. We see populations declining on the west side of the province, and on the east side and the southern part of Manitoba we've seen a large amount of growth. A lot of that is attributed to the number of hog barns that have been built within those areas, creating a large number of jobs. As well, the economic spinoff of that is also huge.

They talk about some 11,000 jobs that are a direct result of that industry. You multiple that by just four, that's 50,000 jobs directly or indirectly involved as a result of that. So we were very concerned about the moratorium that's been placed on that particular industry.

We look at the cattle industry in which they are also struggling at this point in time, and we know that there are times for these programs to kick into effect.

When I asked the minister today about what we'd be talking about, I asked that we go over AgriInvest and AgriStability and have the MESC staff on hold. We will try and get through as much as we possibly can because there are a number of MLAs that want to ask questions, not only in this department, but other departments, so we're really limited to our time.

Last year, I believe we had 12 or 13 hours which pleased me to be able to ask the minister questions of her staff. I do want to thank the staff for their co-operation that's been showed to me and my colleagues. It's very important to be able to get the answers that we ask in a timely manner, so I want to thank the minister and her staff at this point in time for their co-operation.

We look forward to going through the Estimate process which is a number of questions that, as we

bring forward, some of them of a political nature, some are just fact-finding and some are just trying to understand what the government's role is and how they see their various departments as they move forward on any of these issues, their position and how we may be able to, as opposition, make this legislation and budget process that much more effective in the days to come for the goals that are out there for our ag people.

I know that the livestock sector has had some challenges, a number of challenges, especially the BSE for the last five years, the hog sector for the last couple of years, but we have started to see a rebound in the grains and oil seeds which we're very thankful for. Certainly, they face some challenges as well with the high input cost and high fuel costs and that type of thing. That's definitely going to have an impact on their bottom line. We need to do our due diligence, and we would like to move forward and get into the questions at this point in time, Mr. Chairperson. That concludes my remarks.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the official opposition critic for those opening remarks. Now, under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is the last item considered for the department and the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 3.1.(a) contained in Resolution 3.1. At this time, we would invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and ask, when they get here, if the minister could introduce them.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, I am joined at the table by my Deputy Minister, Dr. Barry Todd; Dr. Allan Preston, who is Assistant Deputy Minister for Agri-Industry Development and Innovation division; Lorne Martin, who is Assistant Deputy Minister of Policy and Management Division; and Marvin Richter, who is Assistant Executive Financial Officer.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the committee wish to proceed through the estimates of this department chronologically or to have a global discussion?

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Chairperson, in the past we've had a global discussion, so we'd like to stay with that through planning as much as possible. In the time constraints, we will just be meeting, my understanding is, for the next two days and then we will have a short break of which the minister has other commitments outside the building. So global would be preferred, and I will do every bit I can to see that we give as much notice so we can utilize

staff time to the best of their ability as well, if that's okay, Mr. Chairperson?

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable minister, is global discussion okay? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Wowchuk: That's fine.

Mr. Chairperson: Excellent. Thank you. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Eichler: We might as well get this out of the way right off the bat. We need to go through this each year and update ourselves as far as positions, so we might as well do that. I guess the first question would be, are there any political staff changes from '07-08 from the previous year that the minister would like to declare at this time?

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe that we have had no changes in political staff since the last Estimates.

Mr. Eichler: Thank you. Also, if we could get a list of the staff. I know this is the first day of Estimates so it's something that will be asked of all ministers, so those at the table, I think they could get them ready for us as critics. The list of staff in the minister's and deputy minister's office, if that would be tabled to me, I would appreciate that. If not available today, a subsequent date would be fine.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In my office, the secretaries are Barb Burton, Elizabeth Babaian, Kristine McCallum; my special assistant is Kaila Mahoney; my executive assistant is Ken Monro; and intake co-ordinator is Matthew Grandel.

In the deputy's office, the deputy has three secretaries staff: Pam McCallum, Sharon Seddon, and Mandy Johnson.

Mr. Eichler: Could the minister outline the current staff that's employed in the department? The total number, I guess, is what we're asking for.

Ms. Wowchuk: The total number of staff for '08-09 is 609.

Mr. Eichler: We know that through attrition and through retirement and so on that we have positions that have been vacated, or peoples moved on to other employments. Has there been staff changeover, and if so, who? And were they hired through competition, or were they appointed?

Ms. Wowchuk: In the last physical year, there was a total of 102 appointments that were turnovers. There were nine managerial appointments, 70 professional-technical appointments and 23 support staff. Fifty-three of those were supported via competition and 49 were direct appointments. Those direct appointments mean that they might have been in a term position or in an acting status or they might have been a transfer. They may have been in that position up until that time, and then they just qualified for full-time status. There was no competition for those.

Mr. Eichler: The reclassifications then, is there a number of those that have been reclassified, and does that reflect in the total number of 609, or has it changed much from the previous year? So it's a two-part question.

Ms. Wowchuk: There is one additional person from the previous year to 608 to 609. We don't have the total number of reclassifications. It's an ongoing process with our reorganization and restructuring of growing opportunities. We will continue to reclassify people to meet the demands of the new jobs that they are taking on.

Mr. Eichler: Just further to that, is there an estimate that the minister could provide us with as a number of reclassifications from either term or part time to full time as a result of that transition?

Ms. Wowchuk: There are two positions that went from part time to full time. A number of the positions were administration moving to professional, so that's a reclassification, and then the balance of the changes were individuals moving to different jobs but not changing their classification.

Mr. Eichler: Just for clarification, were these positions within the city of Winnipeg or were they outside the Perimeter?

Ms. Wowchuk: There were 65 in rural Manitoba and 37 in Winnipeg. This department is going to great extents to hire and move as much responsibility as we can outside of the city of Winnipeg, and, of course, the GO centres, the reorganization took place in rural Manitoba so it would make sense that more of those changes happened in rural Manitoba than did in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Eichler: On the percentages that—with the 65 in rural and the 30-some in this city—those are based at the GO centres largely or would most of those be at the MASC office in Portage or Brandon or is it mostly just kind of a general turnover that's happened in rural Manitoba?

Ms. Wowchuk: It's really spread across all of the province where we have offices. There is some at MASC, there is some at our economic and rural development office in Brandon and throughout the agri-region of Manitoba.

* (15:10)

Mr. Eichler: With respect to rural development, my colleague from Russell couldn't be here today, but have there been many changes in rural development out of these numbers? I'm sure they're included in the numbers that you provided me with.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you. We've hired some people because we have put in place a business development specialist in each of the 11 regional groups, each of the GO teams. There have been some staff changes at the economic and rural development office in Brandon, and, I believe, there has been one change in the business development branch, in the Economic Development Initiatives Branch here in Winnipeg, one retirement and one replacement.

Mr. Eichler: On the business development side, could the minister and her staff outline the number of positions that are actually in the GO centres in rural Manitoba, and how many are in the city of Winnipeg or Brandon?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I would ask that I bring that information back tomorrow as the ADM that's responsible isn't here, and we've got total numbers for the region and not the breakdown that the member's asking for.

Mr. Eichler: Yes, that would be fine. The vacant positions within her department, would we also be able to get a list of the vacant positions that are available at this point in time? I guess the last time we had an update was when we went through this last fall in the Estimates process, since that point in time.

Ms. Wowchuk: Right now, as of March 31, we have had 47 vacancies. That is due partly to some people moving on to other retirements; there are some people moving on to other responsibilities. It's an ongoing process to continue to fill those positions.

Mr. Eichler: The percentage of retirement, what would that be out of the 47? It's a multiple choice test tomorrow.

Ms. Wowchuk: Of the 47, about 20 are retirements. A good portion of the rest of them are movement between positions, and then there are a couple of mat leaves.

Mr. Eichler: On these positions, just a matter of curiosity, are there any of these positions that have been transferred to other departments within the government, or have they just actually left the positions for other activities or jobs that they might be seeking?

Ms. Wowchuk: I'm not sure if the member is asking whether we're losing positions. The positions are within our department, all of them, but there are some people that have been seconded to do work in other departments.

Mr. Eichler: My concern or not really concern with the question was in regard to whether or not they're still working for the government but in another department, or they've actually gone on to other activities outside the provincial privy.

Ms. Wowchuk: Some have. The majority of them are within government and may have gone to, as I said, a secondment, to work in another area for a short period of time, but there are some people who have left the department and have gone to other places. An example of that is our oilseeds specialist who has moved on and is now working for the Canola Council. That happens from time to time where people might see another opportunity and move on, but there are people that have been seconded and a few that have chosen to look at other opportunities.

Mr. Eichler: I guess that brings us to the next question: Are the staff years currently filled within her department?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, 557 positions are currently filled.

* (15:20)

Mr. Eichler: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Contracts that have been awarded directly or indirectly through this department, and how many have gone to tender or how many have been awarded directly as a result of your department, Madam Minister?

Ms. Wowchuk: I believe, if I could clarify with the member, if he's looking for contracts over \$25,000, and if that's what he's looking for, we could come back with a number for him on that.

Mr. Eichler: Yes, I believe it's the minister's and each department's privy to award contracts up to \$25,000. If the minister or her staff could provide

those to us, and whether or not they were tendered, and in what process.

An Honourable Member: Under 25?

Mr. Eichler: Over 25. That would be fine. If not today, tomorrow would be fine.

Ms. Wowchuk: We will make our best effort to do that and provide it as quickly as we can.

Mr. Eichler: Could the minister outline for us how many positions have been relocated, since Estimates were done last fall, from rural or northern Manitoba to Winnipeg, or relocated around the province? I know last fall we had a number of colleagues that went from Ste. Rose, one from Minnedosa, was very concerned about the transfers within the department. If there's been anything new developed or plans that are going to be developed in relocation of staff throughout the province.

Ms. Wowchuk: As I said earlier, we make every effort that we possibly can to move people out and provide services outside of Winnipeg, not in Winnipeg. The only position that is coming into Winnipeg is an accountant position. It's a vacancy right now, and we will be hiring an accountant, but it is our hope that, as this individual becomes familiar with the job, we can move that position back out to rural Manitoba.

We have a director of knowledge management that has moved into Dauphin. There is another knowledge management specialist that will be going into Dauphin, and our plan is to also put an administrator there. There's a business development of internet that is going into rural Manitoba, and those are a few of the positions that we are moving and increasing employment in rural Manitoba, but, as I said, the one accountant is a vacancy position, and, in time, I hope to see that we can see that back in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Eichler: It rolls me into the last of the standard questions, and that has to do with initiatives that will be brought forward as a result of some of your announcements that you've put out.

Are there any new initiatives that you haven't announced that would be involving staff and relocation of staff throughout the province that's going to be coming up in the next few months type thing?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I forgot to mention to the member opposite that we've also put in place a

food policy analyst, and that position will be in Portage la Prairie.

With regard to new initiatives, yes, there are new initiatives and those are in development. My hope would be that we could put as many as possible in rural Manitoba where they would be providing services, but details on those aren't available yet.

Mr. Eichler: I take that as a stay tuned, Madam Minister, and I'm sure that you'll announce those in a timely manner whenever you see fit through your department. I look forward to those changes that come forward.

I know that the livestock sector is under a tremendous amount of stress. Are there any changes staff-wise in order to deal with the crisis that's out there in the livestock sector as far as position changes or are you going to be doing that through regular staff?

I know that there are a number of issues that have been brought forward with regard to euthanization of some of the weanlings and also the cull program that's been announced by the federal government. Of course, the loans are being distributed by your department. I know it's a heavy responsibility, plus you put that on top of the cattle programs that are out there that's been announced, also with the loan programs there.

Are there any major changes or changes in staffing that's going to result of the crisis that we see in the livestock sector?

* (15:30)

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to say that I appreciate the member's questions, and the fact that he recognizes how hard our staff works. I would say to him, I would hope he would raise in the House, with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that he thinks my staff is overworked, and, perhaps, he could lobby him so that I could get a few more staff in this department. It would be very helpful. So I would look forward to his raising that issue because I know all of my staff would be very, very happy.

I'm being a bit facetious. Although, I do say that I recognize how hard the staff works, and I want to say that our staff does cover a broad range of areas. When issues like these, whether it was BSE, whether it's the difficulties that the pork industries are facing, whether it be the loan program, our staff refocusses. When there are urgent issues like these, they work and adjust to the industry, and when the loan

programs come up, if there's a need for additional staff, they're very good at coming in and helping out. But I want to say that, as of March 18, our MASC staff have been assisted by approximately 30 MAFRI staff. MAFRI staff is helping with applications for the loans program. Our chief veterinarian, our livestock specialists, our farm management group are all also very involved in the whole issue of the pork industry and the challenges that they're facing with regard to weanlings, and the challenges that the livestock industry is facing. I want to give the staff a lot of credit for being flexible and picking up when there are serious challenges facing the industry.

Mr. Eichler: I, certainly, thank the minister for her comments. Yes; the staff does do a great job, but we do know that from time to time that they do need extra help. Anything we can do to assist in that we'd be happy to.

I guess my main concern here is that I know that looking at the numbers here—I'll have to go back and do some research. I don't know whether this a high turnover or not, but we certainly don't want staff burnout at any point in time. When you see crises like you're seeing right now in the livestock sector, it can take its toll, a significant toll on staff. I realize the job and commitments that they make and certainly thank them for that. But, also, we have a responsibility to look after those producers that are out there, to try and get to them in a timely manner, get to them in a way that we'd be able to give them faith in their industry, which, right now, is in a state of disrepair, so to speak, that they need to be able to get some money flowing to them in a timely way.

So whatever that is, if the minister is saying that MAFRI is, in fact, helping MASC at this point in time, trying to flow the money to the producers in a timely way, certainly is appreciated, I know that, by the producers and by the staff. My compliments to the staff on that.

Then, I guess the next question that I have in regard to the staff is that the MAFRI staff that's going to be going in to help MASC, does that come from around the province? Are they temporarily relocated to the MASC office? Are they taken away from their family environment? Is this something that has to be done just internally within the department or is it actually positions being vacated out from another department creating stress on those GO centres?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, we've had one staff who has moved into MASC to manage their

beef program, and that would be a temporary movement to be sure that it's co-ordinated properly, but the other staff are working in the GO centres. We want to have people out in the regions, people that the producers are familiar with, to come in and begin their application process. This is all part of our goal to have a one-window delivery service in each of those offices, and so, to answer the member's question, one individual has moved, the others are working in the various regions, but they are helping the MASC staff with the applications and dealing directly with the clients.

Mr. Eichler: I thank the minister for her response to that.

When we look at the cull program and the loan program that's been made available to the hog and cattle producers, could the minister or her staff outline the procedure that takes place in that and the approximate turnaround time in order to get those funds available to the producer that is making the application, and what resources are made available to them in order to see that they're filled out correctly?

We know in the past through the CAIS program we've had a lot of problems with administration, information that's not quite complete, so it gets sent back and we don't get payments flowing in a timely way that we feel that is actually necessary with the calculation process.

Ms. Wowchuk: That issue is a big part of why we are having the program delivered and applications taken out in the various GO centres because there is a more direct contact with the producer.

The people in the region take down the information and then the MASC staff do the assessment, and we believe through this process—and in fact, it's showing—that this is more efficient. It's very different than the application process that has been in place for CAIS. They can work this through rather quickly by comparison.

Mr. Eichler: So, then, just to follow up with the last part of my question, Madam Minister, if you could outline for us the typical turnaround time in order to flow money from the date that the producer walks into one of the GO centres. What's the actual turnaround time in order to get that money to them?

Ms. Wowchuk: I believe it's fairly quick, but I would ask the member, as well, if we might be able to wait with this till we have the MASC staff here and I could give a more accurate answer.

Mr. Eichler: That would be fine. We certainly can do that.

We will move into the AgriStability, as I asked the minister yesterday in the AgriInvest. We'd like an update. I know that the minister is negotiating with her counterparts in regard to the final draft that's going to be posed. In her opening comments she talked about accessing funds from the federal government on an interim basis, but where are we at as a province in regard to those negotiations? I know one or two of the areas of concern is the viability margins, also the net margins and also on the caps that have been placed, so there's a number of issues that are still outstanding and I would like to know the department's position on those as we try to move forward on the Growing Forward programs.

* (15:40)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, AgriStability and AgriInvest are in place. Those have been completely negotiated and those programs are being delivered. The AgriRecovery is the portion that is still not completed and that's why we have got the transition funding in place for a year to allow for more time to fully develop that program.

Mr. Eichler: Could the minister outline for the committee then, the items that seem to be outstanding as a result of the item recovery that we're having trouble with, in negotiating that program in order to get it back on the table and resolve at the ministerial meeting coming up in June, I believe, or July?

Ms. Wowchuk: As I said, the AgriStability and AgriInvest are in place. Producers are always asking for changes. It seems we've come to an agreement, but the issue that's outstanding is on the AgriRecovery, and that's the disaster assistance component that the federal government talked about. That is, what should the level of coverage be? What should be covered by a disaster? What is the proportion that should be federal, federal share versus provincial share? There are those of us that believe that it's a disaster that the federal government should pick up a larger portion of a disaster. Those are the issues that are still in discussion.

Staff continues to work on it, but details have not been finalized and I hope that—we have a fed-prov meeting coming up and hopefully we will be able to get a little more information at that time.

Mr. Eichler: With the AgriRecovery then, just so I'm clear, if we're looking at a disaster then. What

portion is covered by crop insurance and what would be the criteria which the negotiations would be taking place on? Would it be based after crop insurance or before crop insurance is actually paid out? Because that would make a significant difference on the total payout federally and provincially.

Ms. Wowchuk: Anything that is covered by insurance would not be covered by disaster assistance. If crops are covered by insurance, they can't be covered, just as with existing disaster assistance programs. If there is insurance available, the individual has the responsibility to take insurance.

There is also the issue of payment from CFIA. If there are payments available from CFIA, then that can't be covered. So those are the things that we are looking right now. So it's very similar to the Disaster Financial Assistance program, and things that are non-insurable losses and details are still being worked on.

Mr. Eichler: Is it the intention to have livestock involved in the AgriRecovery program as well, or is it mainly the cereals and other commodities rather than the livestock sector?

Ms. Wowchuk: With regard to crops, this is not intended to replace crop insurance but it would probably cover a very significant disaster. So, in all likelihood, if there was a disease outbreak and there was a loss of animals, loss of birds that couldn't be covered by insurance, that would be covered. But the types of events that would be covered include: Asset loss which Disaster Financial Assistance, where DFA coverage is not provided; production loss for non-insured losses including lost income during re-establishment; market loss for loss due to the disruption of a market caused by a disaster such as disposing of unmarketable products or delaying market in order to manage supply; extraordinary costs such as compensating for cleanup, disinfection, repackaging, quarantine, restoration or disposable cost; mitigation action taken to avoid asset losses or restoring market and consumer confidence.

It could also include transition to new production when the disaster is not expected to be temporary and the event must be related to disease and/or natural disasters. This could include border closures related to disease event but not trade injury or income loss to market problems not associated with disease or natural disaster.

Mr. Eichler: Certainly, a substantial number of issues there that would have to be discussed and positions being taken just by the number of issues that the minister had outlined.

What has been the input that the department has seeked out. Is it through KAP or through the various organizations such as Pork Council and Cattle Producers and that type of thing? Is this the consultation process that's being followed in order to get information that she needs in order to draft this proposal?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, we have consulted extensively and the commodity groups are all involved in this. The federal government holds consultation meetings and we have held consultation meetings with the provincial various groups and always if there are changes or a different plan coming about, we have consultations so that the producers and the farm organizations do have input.

Mr. Eichler: I know that we've seen through our own meetings that there are different levels of negotiations which is at a provincial level, and you say a national position that is somewhat different than the provincial position. We can understand the frustration that takes part there but, as we know, Manitoba is unique and Manitoba is a special province for our producers. We have to try and negotiate what is best for us and certainly would encourage the minister and her department to take those positions forward, but we do need to see resolve to this. I know that the minister and her staff are working diligently in order to get this program done.

* (15:50)

Just for clarification on the AgriRecovery, this is the final step as far as the Growing Forward programs. The rest have been negotiated and are finalized. Is that my understanding?

Ms. Wowchuk: The AgriRecovery is the only program left on the side of the programming suite. There are still details to be worked on, on that, but there is also work being done on the non-business risk pillar that there is still a lot of work to be done on.

Mr. Eichler: What is the time line of which is kind of the drop-dead date for these programs to be established? Is this something that is an ongoing process that we renegotiate each and every year? If not, when would the programs have a final date, of which the CAIS, for example, is this year? When's

the final date for the AgriRecovery programs, and AgriStability, and also the AgriInvest?

Ms. Wowchuk: Normally, these agreements are renegotiated every five years. We've already, in Manitoba, as have other provinces, signed a continuation agreement so that these agreements can continue on. Normally, we work toward having the agreement signed at the ministers' meeting, which this year will take place in July, but I will always work in the best interests of Manitoba producers. If there are issues that are not completed, that we need more work on, then we will work on them. My staff is working diligently to try to get the framework completed within the next short while.

Mr. Eichler: So there is no date which the agreement has to be reached by? Is that my understanding, because there was no reference made to that in my original question?

Ms. Wowchuk: On the business risk management side, there is no sunset clause, so they continue on as we work on them. On the non-business risk side, those negotiations have to be completed by March 31, '09, because we have signed a one-year extension agreement to work on those.

Mr. Eichler: I would like to ask some questions in regard to AgriStability. The first statement on page 54, we're talking about paying a fee and enroling in the program, and the margin, if it drops below 85 percent. Is the cap something that the department is looking at?

Also, what is the time line of which these payments will be made? I know that will still be done, at least I'm assuming that it'll be done, similar to that of what the CAIS program was, and paid out by the federal government, but based here in Winnipeg. Are those still the same guidelines that we're basing this on?

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, the federal government does deliver the program for us.

Mr. Eichler: With respect to caps, margins, is there any indication that the department may be looking at raising the caps or changing that position as far as the margins are concerned?

Ms. Wowchuk: It's true, we heard some discussion on the caps, and some people have asked for it to be raised. I want the member to know that when this process first started, when I was first minister of this department, the cap was \$975,000. The cap has now been raised to \$3 million per operation, and there are

very few, in fact, a very limited number of producers in Manitoba who would exceed that cap. I believe it is two that would exceed the cap, but that's the information I have.

So, at this time, I am not looking to request the cap to be raised because I think the way it works now you have a better distribution. If you raise the cap, all you're going to do is dilute the payment to the smaller operations. So, at this time, I think, at \$3 million, that's a fairly significant cap.

Mr. Eichler: As we know with the crisis, in particular with the livestock sector, a number of operations are going to be refinanced or new partnerships taken on. What will be the reference margin which is going to be used for these new companies that will have to be established? What will be used for those in terms of creating payout for those people, especially now with the downturn in the livestock sector?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, if a new business is established, a standard margin is established for them based on BPUs, which are business production units, and each type of agriculture has different BPUs. So, if a business was just getting started in their first year, their base line would be established. Then, each year after that, it would be modified according to their operations and their production. But, if they're just getting started, there is a model, the BPUs that are based on a model farm and that's how they get started.

* (16:00)

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Chairperson, I want to thank the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) for allowing me the opportunity to ask some questions, some questions certainly relevant to my constituency and I think there will be a number of issues that are certainly relevant to all of Manitoba.

I do want to thank the minister for allowing me the opportunity to meet with your deputy minister yesterday. We certainly had a good discussion about one issue in particular that's been dragging on within my constituency, and we're certainly hopeful that we can move that particular issue forward to the benefit of all. It certainly has been dragging on for some time and, for the sake of all involved, I hope that we can address that particular issue as well.

I do, first of all, want to talk a little bit about one of my old areas of, I wouldn't say expertise, but I had some involvement and that was in the weed control

business a number of years ago. At the time Dr. Todd was the chief of the weed section, so he certainly was familiar with some of the personalities involved in that business. I'd just like to get a bit of a sense in how things have evolved in the weed district program over the years. At one time a number of years ago, there was some fairly significant funding provided by the Province to the local weed control districts, and my understanding is that financial value hasn't been forthcoming for the Province for some time. I just want to get a sense, if I'm actually correct, in terms of where the Province is in funding weed control districts across the province.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, the funding for weed districts was reduced in 1993. It has not been reinstated since that time, but my departmental staff continue to provide technical support and offer training to the weed supervisors and they also offer support in the enforcement of the Noxious Weed Act. Currently there are 32 weed districts in Manitoba and, part of it as well, this involves the municipalities and many times these cover more than one municipality, but our department provides extension publications containing weed control recommendations for vegetation control on non-crop areas, right of ways, lakes, ponds, canals. We work with them but their funding has not been reinstated.

Mr. Cullen: I thank the minister for that. At one time we had a weed section, a stand-alone section responsible for the weed control and the weed control districts. Is there a section within your department that would operate similar to what we had at one time or are you more global in nature? In that regard, do you have a number, a certain number of individuals that specifically look at the weed side or is it more of a global look with your GO centres that you have now?

Ms. Wowchuk: Under the farm production extension we do have a weed specialist, and that individual's name is Bruce Murray. There is also a crop production specialist, and these deal with weeds, with diseases, with pests, and are located at the Crops Knowledge Centre in Carman.

There is the Crop Diagnostic lab here in Winnipeg that does the analysis of the different kind of weeds that could be brought in. The farm production advisors are the people that deal through the GO teams work with the individuals on local issues. There is also a manager at the Farm Production Extension. There is a weed production specialist and a crop diagnostic individual. There are

individuals that work with this at Carman but also the people at the local level, the farm production advisors play a role in it.

Mr. Cullen: At one time, and this goes back 20 years when I was involved, we had a good portion of the province covered by weed control districts. Most of the weed supervisors were fairly well-trained. Most of those individuals worked in a full-time capacity. I'm just trying to get a sense on how things have changed over the years in terms of where we are at in terms of weed districts relative to the size of the area of Manitoba. I understand that we may have just lost two or three over this past winter, that may cease to be in operation this spring, so it certainly raises some concern, from my perspective, in terms of weed management going forward across the province.

I guess I'm just kind of wondering where we're headed and if the government sees a role to play in this thing in trying to stop this trend, or if they're just going to allow private enterprise to take over some of those roles. Maybe I'll just leave it for there and I'll come back with the supplemental later.

* (16:10)

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, we see this as a very valuable program, and, as I had said earlier, there are 32 weed districts. I haven't been made aware of people leaving, and we don't know whether they're full-time or part-time because that's a municipal decision. They're paid for by the municipalities, and if municipalities are pulling away from this, I think that that's something that ratepayers should be raising with their councillors because those of us that live in rural Manitoba know that when some of those weeds get out of control it's very hard to get them back under control. So we see this as a valuable program, and we'll continue to provide technical support and staff training. We've worked with them on special projects when there have been particular types of weeds that have needed to be worked on. We've been able to help in those areas, but ultimately it's a decision that the municipalities have to make. I would be very disappointed if they are not seeing this as something that has to continue.

Mr. Cullen: I thank the minister for that and I think you're right. It is a very valuable program. In fact, The Noxious Weeds Act, if memory serves me correct, is one of the first acts established in the province of Manitoba, and I think it's a very

important piece of legislation. I'm not sure the last time that particular act was updated, and I'm just wondering if the minister is looking at any changes to that particular act.

Ms. Wowchuk: The member is right. The Noxious Weeds Act has been in place for a long time, and, in fact, the AMM has raised the issue with me about opening the act, reviewing the act. I'm open to doing that, but we would have to start with a consultation process. The weed supervisors and the municipalities would have to be involved in it as well before we could make some changes to it, but it is something that came out of our last meeting with AMM.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Minister, you raised an interesting point in terms of funding weed districts, and the onus now is, of course, on the local municipality to raise those funds or, of course, wherever weed districts might be able to generate some income through custom work and that sort of thing.

Some of the weed district people have approached me, saying, you know, we're providing funding to private individuals through various government programs for equipment through the Environmental Farm Program and, obviously, a lot of that—some of that money—is aimed at, you know, better application of herbicides, pesticides in general and fertilizers. So there's some thought here that maybe a similar program might be able to be put together for municipalities and some of the equipment that they have to put in place.

Ms. Wowchuk: The program that the member talks about is the environmental farm plans and comes under the APF. It has been targeted at producers, producer private land, and gives assistance for best management practices, but this program does not extend to municipalities, and the eligibility is very limited. In fact, that money, or that program does not even allow for any application on Crown lands. So it's very focussed on what can be delivered. The program that the member is referring to would not be able to extend to municipal or provincially owned land, and so, not allowed under the program.

Mr. Cullen: I thank the minister for that. I understand that particular program. I guess I was thinking more conceptually in terms of a program that the Province may want to have a look at. Obviously, it would be hard to—of course, one never knows. It might be hard to get federal money into some sort of a municipal-type program, but I just put the idea out there.

The intent is these particular municipalities and weed districts are looking at going green, just as other businesses are and individual farmers are. As you know, going green comes at a cost. Obviously, they're looking at any ways that they could ascertain to help put off some of those extra expenses that they're facing, and, at the same time, do what's environmentally correct.

Ms. Wowchuk: I thank the member for his suggestion, and I commend those municipalities that are looking at going green, because it would fit in with what this Province is committed to.

Specific programs, as I've mentioned, the Province can work on specific programs. We've put money into leafy surge to help with trying some new methods of controlling, mapping where it is. This comes under the ag sustainability program, but we cannot put money into the operating costs. This really does fall to the municipalities. I say that, you know, as a government, we do transfer a significant amount of money to municipalities, but there are also decisions that municipalities have to make as an elected body, and decisions for their municipality.

The idea is worthy of consideration, but, at this time, there isn't a pot of money that could be allocated to this. As I said, the municipalities, AMM has raised the issue. We will continue to have discussions on it and look at ways that the issue can be addressed, but, ultimately, weed supervisors and their operations have to come from the municipal government.

Mr. Cullen: I thank the minister for that response and for giving that consideration.

* (16:20)

I want to change gears a little bit here. It's an issue that's relevant to Turtle Mountain in that we have an individual here who is looking at, and, in fact, has purchased a building, an old school in Belmont. The intent is to turn that particular facility into an abattoir. The minister may be familiar with this particular situation that's developing. I guess my view is I certainly want to see that particular facility continue to develop.

Unfortunately, the individual is running into some roadblocks along the way here. One particular situation is in terms of the water and the waste-water treatment with the local municipality. It's certainly a big issue here. I think it's important that the municipality and the individual can understand

where they want to go at the end of the day. The big thing here is it's going to cost some money.

I am just trying to be clear in my mind what role the Province is going to play in trying to move this particular project forward.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, I would like to indicate that we have been joined at the table by Dori Gingera-Beauchemin, who is also an assistant deputy minister. Her responsibility is Agri-Food and Rural Development.

With regard to this particular issue, staff from my department have been working with them. There are issues with municipal infrastructure and, as you know, if there is municipal infrastructure, that's a cost share between the federal, provincial and municipal governments. There is always greater demand than dollars that are available.

The individual that the member is speaking about is just in the process of making application for money for a feasibility study. Of course, that feasibility has to be done before decisions can be made on infrastructure. If the feasibility study goes well, this individual would also be able to apply to the funds that are available through the livestock enhancement council, which is put in place to have additional funds to invest in these kinds of facilities.

Mr. Cullen: I guess my issue here is if we have the potential for economic development in rural Manitoba, that should be given a priority in terms of infrastructure development.

Now, we have seen the Province and the federal government put some money into Neepawa and to Brandon for processing facilities and, we would certainly like to see that continue in rural Manitoba. I am hoping this is an opportunity for us to move forward.

The other point I would like to make in terms of this project is that it's in regard to the REDI program. I know the REDI program, once BSE hit, the REDI funding was at a 90 percent level. Since that time, the REDI funding has been reduced to 50 percent. My view is that the livestock and the beef sector are still suffering from the BSE catastrophe, if you will. We're certainly a long ways from being out of the woodwork. If the Province is really willing to see slaughter capacity increased here in Manitoba, then maybe something they could look at in terms of the REDI program and reinstituting that particular program back to the 90 percent level, I'm just wondering if the minister has given that any thought.

Ms. Wowchuk: The member talked about investments in Neepawa and in Brandon and those are good examples of how you have to look at this on a project-to-project basis. It's also very important that the feasibility study be done before you can make those kinds of decisions on infrastructure.

The member talked about the REDI funding only being to 50 percent, but these people can also apply to the enhancement council for the other portion of that and the Province puts 50 percent of that money in as well. There is still a level of support that is there through the REDI process and also through the funds that are available through the enhancement council and, of course, the council would also do their due diligence and make a decision on whether to make funds available. The amount of money is still available there both through REDI and through the enhancement council.

Mr. Cullen: I want to make clear to the minister that this particular individual is looking at making this a federally inspected slaughter plant, so, you know, in my view, that certainly raises the profile. It's my hope that she would encourage her staff to pay close attention to this and hopefully keep a dialogue with both the individual and the municipality.

Obviously, the Province can do a lot to move this program forward. Now, obviously, the next issue, which is maybe out of your hands to a degree, is what the federal inspectors will have to say about it. I'm just kind of wondering if there's anything the Province can do to help facilitate—what role do you play in terms of getting a plant up and running to a federally inspected level?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, we're very committed to increasing slaughter capacity in this province and that's why we have—our front-line staff is involved with this project. The economic development people in the ready office are working closely with them with regard to our staff's role. Our role would be to help make—our business development specialists would help make contact, get them in touch with the right people in CFIA to have this moved smoothly because that is—if you're building a federally inspected plant, CFIA has to have a role in it to ensure that all of the requirements are being met. You don't want somebody not to be in full contact with CFIA and then have something built and then it doesn't meet standards. That just won't work. They're the ones that have to be right there and our staff's role is to link them up with the right people and, of course, work with them right along.

* (16:30)

Mr. Cullen: I appreciate the minister's comments there. We certainly look forward to moving this project forward in conjunction with her staff as well. Again, hopefully, we can improve our slaughter capacity here in Manitoba.

I want to turn the floor over to – [interjection]

Ms. Wowchuk: If I could just add a comment before we move off this topic. I'm reminded of one of the first issues that I took to the national table when I became minister, and that was to have a revised national meat standard that would allow for the interprovincial movement of meat, but no international movement, but have this movement of product between jurisdictions in Canada. There's now a review. We've raised it many times, but this is now being reviewed again. I'm hopeful that we might see some kind of decisions made that would see a standard that would be less prescriptive than the current standards are. So I just thought I should add that because sometimes you talk about a federally inspected plant, but if we could get this change made, then there would be—I believe that there are other people that just find going to a federal standard to be able to access international markets as a bit onerous when they have absolutely no intention of going into international markets.

Mr. Cullen: Well, the minister raises a very valid point, and it's certainly a good idea. It must have been a Conservative idea somewhere along the line.

Ms. Wowchuk: No, actually it was a New Democrat that brought the issue to the table but couldn't get the support of the Conservatives at the table.

Mr. Cullen: Well, we're going to get into a political dialogue here. But it's a very valid point and it makes so much sense. The frustration that I hear, and this is a rural development issue, not just the beef industry, but, you know, other people that want to move ahead in the biofuels, and it's just the onerous regulations and red tape that they encounter. Quite frankly, they just get to a point and they just throw their hands up and they say: You know, enough is enough; I can't take it anymore. That's it for me. I'm going to go back and try something else.

It's a frustrating process for these people, and that's where I think your staff and your department have to play a role, a very important role in this thing. You almost have to hold their hand sometimes to get through that process. I know, as the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) said, you certainly have a

lot of good people in that department, but, at the end of the day, we still have to make sure as a government that we're not putting too many roadblocks in these people's roads, so they get so frustrated that they won't move ahead with development in rural Manitoba. I've heard it time and time again and it's very frustrating.

So, with that, I'll turn the floor over to the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou).

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Member for Portage la Prairie—or honourable Minister.

Ms. Wowchuk: I just want to say to the member that he raises a very important issue. Our staff does work very closely with individuals who are trying to get into a new venture, but it's a tough business doing that. There are many challenges as you bring in new industry on-stream, but I just want to share with the member that under the GO team branch currently there are 37 business development specialist positions. These positions provide enhanced and specialized business development services to farm and rural clients. Staff are involved in over 340 community value-added and business development projects, projects such as biofuel and alternate energies—there are 48 of them; livestock and cropping, 39 projects; community economic development, 55; young entrepreneurs, 42; product marketing, 23; food and non-food processing, 60; immigration, 11—there are many communities that are looking to increase their population through immigration; and rural tourism, over 20 of them. Our staff has worked with young entrepreneurs and, to date, with these young entrepreneurs there have been 28 jobs created.

We continue to work with them, but I would agree with the member opposite wholeheartedly. It is not easy to start a new business, and, indeed, our staff does do a lot of handholding.

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Chairperson, my first question is a takeoff on the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) in regard to the issue of noxious weeds. I know how diligent and conscientious the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is in enforcement of an act of the Legislature, The Noxious Weeds Act, which is her responsibility. I'm just wondering whether or not she is pursuing, as I know the legislation reads, that there is no exemption for any person or government under that act of their responsibility not to take care of noxious weeds found on their properties.

The Department of Infrastructure and Transportation has growing on its properties a lot of noxious weeds. It has come to the chagrin of many landowners that farm with properties adjacent to the provincial property utilized through the Department of Transportation. It is of a grave concern. I am wondering whether or not she has, in her due diligence, informed her honourable Cabinet colleague of The Noxious Weeds Act, and that it is intended to make sure that these noxious weeds are taken out and the act is complied with.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, as I said to the previous member who raised this issue, this an issue that AMM raised with us. I reminded them that enforcement is not the Province's responsibility. Enforcement is the municipality's responsibility.

With regard to the spreading of weeds, there's been discussion about how we could reduce the spreading of weeds on contract equipment, and there has been discussion with weed supervisors and inspectors on how this can be handled. The role of the Province is to provide technical support, to do training, to put in place the weed manual and support the weed inspectors in that way. The hiring of the weed inspectors is the responsibility of the municipality, Mr. Chairperson, and the enforcement is the responsibility of the municipality.

Mr. Faurschou: I understand and listened quite intently to the response, but I don't believe the Province can give over its responsibility to maintain its own property. Enforcement may be delegated to the municipalities, but I would suggest that I, in consultation with the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie, do not believe that they are knowledgeable that they are responsible for the noxious weeds growing in highways, ditches, in which you are stating that it is their responsibility, too, to control them as well.

Ms. Wowchuk: I misunderstood his question to begin with. What I was talking about was the enforcement is the responsibility. But, of course, the government is responsible for their own programs, and government does do weed control programs on its properties. If the municipality feels that the government is not doing adequate weed control—in the program, they try to meet the standards of what the other weed control is in the municipality. If it's not being met, then the municipality through their weed supervisor should be in discussion with the Province.

* (16:40)

Mr. Faurschou: I thank the minister for her response, but I hope she can appreciate that their municipalities do work in co-operation with the government. It would be rather difficult for them to bring charges or pressure to bear on the Province because I know that one meeting might be taking place, but on the next meeting the same municipality might be asking the Province for support in another fashion. I believe it would be a rather uncomfortable position that municipalities are caught in in this regard, but I can attest to the situation even in close proximity to our own farm properties.

I would like to move on to ask a few questions in regard to areas which I highlighted in my budget address, and that being the consideration that there has been little additional support going towards what I believe is the future of agriculture.

The Agri-Food Research and Development Initiative remains on par with last year's funding without even any recognition of inflationary pressures and value-per-dollar. Because of that consideration, it has not been recognized.

I just want to ask the minister why this is so. Did they not make use of the additional resources that were made available?

Ms. Wowchuk: The member is accurate. It was a million dollars, and it continues to be a million dollars. This is matched by \$1.5 million, so there's a total of \$2.5 million that the council is responsible for. I think that's a fairly significant amount of money that can go to various research projects. I think the member's asking why there is no more money going into that program. There is a wide variety of programs, and, certainly, the safety net programs that are very important to our producers are the ones that we have focussed on.

The member knows that there's had to be an increase in the amount of money going into crop insurance. There's additional money needed for AgriStability, AgriInvest. We had to put additional money into the pork industry through the loans program. We had to put money into the beef industry to help them out, and those are the choices that we had to make.

Mr. Faurschou: I do appreciate the minister's response, but that would mean, then, that there has not been a full uptake of the available monies in the past years, or how many projects have been left on the table? Which one of the two is it?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, when it comes to research, there are always projects left on the table, always. There are always more ideas for research than can be funded, so there is \$2.5 million in this pot. We also fund the University of Manitoba with a grant of \$868.3 million, which is also-\$868, did I say? *[interjection]* Million. Oh, that would really blow the budget; \$868.3 thousand, but you know these—when you put this kind of money on the table, it allows the Manitoba research institutes to compete for other dollars that are available through many other pots of money. There's also money for research in STEM that the agriculture industry benefits from because there is research on biofuels; there's research on biomass, research on capturing of methane. All of those are of benefit to the industry.

I want to also say that the nutraceutical centre was awarded two of four national research projects on nutraceuticals and function of foods, and that brings a lot of money, but that speaks very highly to the level of research that's going on in this province.

Mr. Faurschou: Yes, thank you, and I concur with the minister. It is extremely prestigious to be recognized in that fashion. The minister raised the issue of the grant to the University of Manitoba, and she fully appreciates the Glenlea Research Station has been plagued by unpredictability of the river levels and has, at times, been inundated with water from the Red River that has caused significant concern and grief to those. I will attest to, I believe it was 2005 when the floodgates of the Red River Floodway were raised and flooded the river-flat properties at Glenlea Research Station. There has been considered effort to acquire and secure other lands so that ongoing research may not be plagued by this consideration.

Has the department made any effort to assist in this type of search and, perhaps, one-time consideration for funding of the capital acquisition of properties elsewhere?

* (16:50)

Ms. Wowchuk: I would have to say to the member that the university has not come to us with concerns about flooding of this facility. They have done some diking work around it, but they have come to us for research dollars. Last year we put in \$900,000 into the ag awareness centre, which, to them, was and, I believe, is a very important project for agriculture. But there is also research work being done in Carman, at the Dr. Ian Morrison centre, and they have acquired additional land. They acquired that

land through donations. Our staff worked very closely with the university at that site, but, specifically with regard to diking, that issue has not been raised with us. Additional land has been acquired to do research on Carman.

Mr. Faurschou: Mr. Chairperson. I do appreciate there is always consideration for research and the facility at Glenlea. My assessment is that, with this recent addition, it is second to none. It truly is worth visiting for anyone who has not yet.

In regard to the further research and continuing endeavour to provide for producers, the technology and understanding of innovation, we would like to ask the minister in regard to the department's continued funding of the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute. That, too, remains stagnant year over year, and I wondered, is the PAMI Station in Portage la Prairie, are they not meeting their objectives of the 70 percent of private funding? Is that the reason that this figure, which is contingent upon that facility acquiring that type of private resources—why has there not been an increase in this level of funding to PAMI?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, the member talked about the outstanding research that is being done at Glenlea, and that people should visit it. I want to tell him that our chairman, the last time I was out there, had the opportunity to visit it, and I would agree with him that this is an excellent education tool.

We have the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) at the table, and we should be encouraging the Minister of Education to make students and teachers aware about this facility because it is an excellent education tool for people to learn about livestock production and the ultimate methods of livestock production.

But, with regard to PAMI. I find it very interesting the member's talking about where we can spend more money. Anyway, the member should be aware that PAMI is governed by legislation. Under this legislation, it's a joint effort between Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and it lays out the amount, the grant they should be getting.

A few years ago, Saskatchewan reduced their grant, and Manitoba maintained their grant. So, in

actual fact, Manitoba is paying a greater share of what is required by the legislation. We see PAMI as doing very good work, and that's why we have put a staffperson there. Our fibre and composite specialist is co-located at PAMI in Portage la Prairie. We are facilitating projects at PAMI by pursuing in the areas of biofuels. The individual's name is Eric Liu, and, with him located at PAMI, business has increased dramatically. The Portage station is oversubscribed with projects, and they're showing a profit for the first time in several years. A new Westest facility is being built. Actually, there's a very good relationship and a very aggressive marketing strategy.

The member talks about the amount of money being maintained at the same level. I want to let the member know that the Province is purchasing an intensifier to deal with the biofuels, and we will be spending \$450,000 over and above what's outlined. So the grant in print remains the same, but there are other places by putting a staffperson there, by putting additional money into purchase equipment. We are indeed using the facility, and it is moving towards profitability.

Mr. Faurschou: I thank the minister for the response, and indeed I could not concur more with her about the value of the work ongoing at PAMI. I was there when the Minister Vic Toews was in attendance to announce the federal support for the expansion of a Westest for the diagnostic testing that machinery manufacturers in Manitoba are looking for.

Now, I would like to, though, move to the neighbour of PAMI, and that being the Manitoba Crop Diversification Centre. Now, I understand that there has been significant change in the operation of the Manitoba Crop Diversification Centre as it pertains to the federal-provincial as well as producer-supported research at that facility. I wonder if the minister could update the House as to that substantive change.

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

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: Order. The time being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 22, 2008

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		
Introduction of Bills		
Bill 26—The Legal Profession Amendment Act Chomiak	833	Domestic Violence Driedger; Allan
Bill 228—The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reporting Act Gerrard	833	Bill 228 Gerrard; Doer
Bill 228—The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reporting Act Gerrard	833	Manitoba Hydro Lamoureux; Doer
Petitions		
Lake Dauphin Fishery Stefanson	833	Earth Day Cullen
Dividing Trans-Canada Highway Taillieu	833	Jennifer Jones Curling Team Allan
Personal Care Homes—Virden Maguire	834	CFB Shilo War in Afghanistan Exhibit Rowat
Long-Term Care Facility—Morden Dyck	834	Streamers Hardware Store Jennissen
Provincial Nominee Program—Applications Lamoureux	834	55 Plus Job Bank Lamoureux
Child-Care Centres Driedger	835	
Crosswalk at Highway 206 and Centre Avenue Goertzen	835	
Oral Questions		
Manitoba Hydro Power Line McFadyen; Doer	836	Bill 4—The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Family Mediators and Evaluators)
Cullen; Selinger	840	Hawranik
Bill 15 McFadyen; Doer	838	Lamoureux
City of Winnipeg Stefanson; Ashton	841	Bill 5—The Witness Security Act
Violent Crime Hawranik; Chomiak	842	Hawranik
		Lamoureux
		Bill 7—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Child Pornography Reporting)
		Briese
		849

	Second Readings		
Bill 10—The Legislative Library Act			
Rowat	850		
Lamoureux	851		
Bill 12— The Securities Transfer Act			
Hawranik	852		
Faurschou	852		
Lamoureux	853		
Bill 9—The Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act			
Goertzen	857		
Lamoureux	858		
Bill 11—The Optometry Amendment Act			
Goertzen	858		
Lamoureux	860		
	Committee of Supply		
	(Concurrent Sections)		
		Infrastructure and Transportation	866
		Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives	888

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