

First Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 15, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 214—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Property Development)

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I move, seconded by the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 214, The Public Schools Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, this bill will make it very clear going forward what the roles and responsibilities are for school divisions in regard to property development, something that is not clear currently in legislation and again going forward will make it very clear that school divisions are not to be in the property development business.

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

PETITIONS

Provincial Nominee Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by D. Santos, R. Reyes and R. Deokno, and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Civil Legal Services Special Operating Agency 2006-2007 Annual Report.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the 2006-2007 Annual Report of Manitoba Water Stewardship.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2006-2007 Annual Report for the Manitoba Health Research Council.

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 the spouses of foreign military attachés representing more than 18 different countries here on official business with the Air Force.

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

They are the guests of the honourable Minister of Federal-Provincial Relations (Mr. Doer).

Also, in the public gallery, we have from the University of Winnipeg, we have 34 students under the direction of Laura Reimer, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Location of Hydro Power Line Reasons for West Side

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Since the announcement that Hydro had caved to the pressure from the Premier and the NDP government to run the newest high-voltage power line on the daffy detour as opposed to the direct route, Mr. Speaker, we've learned that the NDP are prepared to leave a legacy of half a billion in debt to future generations, to result in more coal being burned which will contribute to greenhouse gas emissions in our world.

One of the reasons the Premier gave for this decision was that he was concerned about power sales to Xcel Energy. On Friday, Xcel Energy confirmed that they are completely indifferent as to whether the power line runs down the east side or the west side, Mr. Speaker. They indicated that the deal is not contingent on that, and that they didn't see this as being an issue as they went through regulatory hearings in the United States.

So, I want to ask the Speaker: Given that it's not about UNESCO, it's not about Xcel Energy, is the Premier prepared to say that the real reason is that he's afraid to have a fight with Bobby Kennedy, Jr.?

* (13:40)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, we're not afraid to have a fight with the member opposite which we had a couple of months ago on this issue. We in Manitoba in the election campaign didn't know where the members were.

But, since 2004, we've been stating clearly to the public of Manitoba, based on opportunity and on the issue of achieving a transmission line, that we thought the east side was imprudent as a venue. We also said during the campaign that the Leader of the Opposition said he would go the east-side route. He would roll the dice with future sales of hydro; he would roll the dice with the opportunity of a UNESCO World Heritage site. We said, yes, the capital cost of \$300 million because a converter station is a constant from both sides, Mr. Speaker. We said the capital cost would be higher. Of course, the transmission line is amortized over a period of 30 to 50 years. We also said—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: —over a period of time. We also said that the sales to Minnesota—which, by the way, were not negotiated by Conservative governments. All they did was mothball every hydro-electric proposal ever proposed. So now we're getting the hindsight wisdom of members opposite who have mothballed every hydro-electric project and have not taken advantage of the export sales that we took advantage of.

Mr. Speaker, the sales to the United States two years ago were close to \$800 million. There was also a sale to Ontario which, again, was negotiated by an NDP government in 1987. If you look at, in the next 10 years, the export sales will be close to 40 percent of the revenue of Manitoba Hydro, and we are not going to roll the dice with that proposal.

Mr. McFadyen: What the Premier is saying is that, in effect, he's concerned that phantom opposition may arise at some point in the future, and for that reason, he is going to leave half a billion dollars in debt to the next generation, Mr. Speaker. Never mind rolling the dice. He's rolling the debt to the next generation without any willingness to stand up to a rational opposition wherever it comes up.

Now, he has said previously that he didn't want to have a fight with Bobby Kennedy, Jr., over the boreal forest, so let's just take a look at Bobby Kennedy, Jr.'s, position on Manitoba Hydro. He comes out, in his paper a couple of years ago, saying that he is opposed to all new hydro-electric construction in Manitoba. He's opposed to new dams. He's opposed to new transmission lines, and he says, and I quote, this is Robert Kennedy, Jr.: "Manitoba Hydro has been selling its projects as the answer to combat climate change due to the low greenhouse gas emissions of hydro-electricity, but hydro development not only harms the land and the people who live there, it may worsen global warming." He says, "it may worsen global warming."

In response to that, Mr. Speaker, Bob Brennan, on behalf of Manitoba Hydro wrote, in response to Bobby Kennedy, Jr.: The three new Hydro facilities and associated transmission currently being discussed in our province would impact 0.04 percent of Manitoba's 65 million acres of forest. He goes on to say, and I quote: To characterize this impact as a threat to Manitoba's boreal forest is an irresponsible exaggeration.

Given that the president and CEO of Manitoba Hydro characterizes these comments as an irresponsible exaggeration, I want to ask the Premier who's side he's on, Bob Brennan's or Bob Kennedy's.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the Kennedys' position is the same as the Conservatives' position.

When we proposed to build Limestone, the Conservatives came in office, what did they do? They mothballed it. When we negotiated Conawapa, they mothballed it after they came into office. When we negotiated building a new dam at Wuskwatim—I don't know whether you've noticed but north of this Legislative Building, we're building a dam on the Burntwood River. We're building it right now.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're not on the side of the mothballers across the way, but we are on the side of the future development in Manitoba. We're also on the side of smart future development. Smart future development looks at opportunity, which we believe is most positive for the people of Manitoba with the UNESCO World Heritage site, and it also looks at liability.

Mr. Speaker, in the next 10 years—it'll take at least 10 years to build a transmission line because it will have to go to the Clean Environment Commission. It will have to have public reviews, and to do nothing is the easiest political option for anybody to take. That would be their option. They had a recommendation to build it down the east side 20 years ago; they did nothing. That's their option; that's their position.

In the next 10 years alone, the hydro-electric sales to United States and partially to Ontario will be \$5.5 billion; again, negotiated not by members opposite, negotiated by governments that we were part of, Mr. Speaker. That is a liability because to create—*[interjection]*

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I want to remind members we have a lot of guests in the gallery that came all the way down here to hear the questions and the answers, and I also need to be able to hear the questions and the answers in case there is a breach of a rule. I am asking the co-operation of members.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me look at the numbers: \$300-million transmission line—not the converter station which would be needed for both options—is the capital cost which we have been up

front with the public on from 2004. Members opposite have taken a different view. The \$5.5 billion, at 10 years alone, for export sales to United States and other provinces—We believe that you have to look at the issue of whether this, in fact, will become an international cause célèbre. It is very important we do this in the smartest way possible, all transmission lines—*[interjection]* Well, I know members opposite—*[interjection]*

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: You know, with their childish heckling and their childish laughing, Mr. Speaker, they don't understand that a \$300-million capital cost is a large number, but amortized over a 30- to 40-year period is a financial cost that has to be put against a \$5.5-billion revenue over the next 10 years alone; \$600 million in revenue alone is an extremely important factor to consider, and obviously we believe there is opportunity for the UNESCO World Heritage Site for people in Manitoba, people in Poplar River, and also economic reliability for revenues that we negotiated, and we're not going to roll the dice like members opposite.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, what the Premier has effectively said is that because he's making deals, you know, what is \$500 million? What's half a billion dollars in debt? What's 25 hospitals? What's half a billion dollars to an NDP government? They feel they can throw away half a billion dollars, waste precious clean energy, and that is why every time the NDP come to power, they get thrown out because Manitobans know that they can't afford a wasteful, reckless, irresponsible NDP government.

So I want to ask the Premier: Given that he is saying that he can afford to throw away half a billion dollars because he's afraid of international pressure, Mr. Speaker—*[interjection]*

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has even flip-flopped since the election. He said during the election campaign he wasn't going to run a west-side route; he was going to run it through the north. Now he's changed his position on the location of the line since the election. So he thinks that he's got an election mandate to throw away half a billion dollars, and I beg to differ. I have spoken to many Manitobans over the past two weeks, and they

don't remember voting to make themselves \$4,000 poorer because of the reckless decisions of this NDP government.

So I want to ask the Premier: Given that he is talking about international pressure, which means that he is concerned about Bobby Kennedy Jr. mounting a protest; given that Danny Williams was prepared to stand up to international celebrities for the people of Newfoundland, why, when it comes to the people of Manitoba, won't he stand up to Bobby Kennedy Jr.? Why is he limper than a dead codfish when it comes to standing up to Bobby Kennedy Jr.?

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: That's probably the lamest question I've ever had in Question Period in the eight years we've been in office.

You know, Mr. Speaker, first of all, to talk about being thrown out of office four months after we've had the privilege of being re-elected, I don't know what planet the members opposite are on.

Secondly, Sophia from Poplar River is a Manitoban. She has vowed to fight any proposal to put a transmission line down the east side. We listen to people like that, that have international credibility. Manitobans, I know they live a little further north than the Legislative Building. The member opposite may not have met Sophia in Poplar River, but we have, and we respect her view.

Mr. Speaker, the tourism industry is growing three times greater than other tourism and ecotourism. We believe the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: You know, if they don't have anything intelligent to say, can they stop heckling?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

We're trying to get as many questions and answers in. The clock is ticking. I remind members of that. We're trying to get as many questions in. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, again, when they talk about being thrown out of office, we built both the major hydro proposals that are contributing

to the revenue. We built a system that was put in place that allows for the lowest hydro-electric rates in North America.

The member opposite worked for Mike Harris and Ernie Eves which has had almost the highest rates in Canada. That's his track record.

Mr. Speaker, let me explain some of the economics.

First of all, it's opportunity on the east side: \$5.5 billion in the next 10 years are export sales. All sales in United States go to a regulatory body. A regulatory body in Minnesota includes representatives from the State House of Representatives and the Senate that are Democrats. It also includes the governor that's a Republican. If anybody on that side of the House wants to roll the dice on an international cause célèbre, which the east side and the boreal forest would be, versus the predictability of \$5.5 billion in sales, that's the reason why they oppose Limestone. They said it would cost future generations X number of millions of dollars.

Well, you know what it's done? It's saved people money because we got the export revenues and we got elected to build and keep the export revenues, to keep hydro-electric rates the lowest in North America. That's our pledge and that's what we'll do with this proposal.

Economy—Manitoba Provincial Debt

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, this week is Small Business Week.

Small business, in order to be successful, must control their debt, unlike this government that is busy building the debt that Manitobans and small business will have to bear. Already Manitobans' per capita spending on debt is the highest in the west. With interest rates on the rise, the cost to service that debt is sure to increase.

Mr. Speaker, I don't need any smoke and mirrors from the Minister of Finance. What I would like is a straight answer.

When is the Minister of Finance going to address our spiralling debt and the burden that is being borne by small business?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, if the member would have read the Public Accounts, he would have noted that the debt went down \$117 million last year.

If the member would take a look at the budget, he would know that the small business tax rate in this province is the lowest in Canada.

If the member would, again, look at the budget, he would note that when they were in office, the debt-to-GDP ratio was 32 percent. Under us, it's under 24 percent. We've taken the debt-to-GDP ratio down by 25 percent. Members opposite never even got close on that kind of an achievement.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, let's talk per capita debt. Every child born in the province of Manitoba is born with a debt of \$15,400. This figure is going to continue to grow. The NDP spending frenzy is continuing, over \$300 million for a Hydro tower. The cost overruns of the Red River Floodway will be financed by debt; a mountain of debt will be placed on the taxpayers' shoulders. This government is throwing away an extra half a billion dollars, a half a billion dollars for Hydro debt on the west-side transmission line. Not only is it poor management, it is irresponsible management.

Mr. Speaker, when is the minister going to start working towards a better future for our children, rather than a legacy of debt?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, all I can say is the member did pretty well for one breath reading that script across the way.

There is no overrun on the floodway project. The member should be supporting. That project has been extremely well implemented inside the province of Manitoba. It has not only brought numerous benefits for business in Manitoba, including small business; there have been set-asides that have allowed Aboriginal small businesses to compete for contracts, develop jobs, do economic development, and there will be a legacy of prevention of flooding in this city which will avoid \$10 billion of disaster costs. The member opposite should have never voted against it.

Hollow Water Cottage Barricade Government's Negotiations

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, negotiating with Hollow Water at a time when the illegal barricades remain sets a very dangerous precedent and it's a reward for criminal behaviour. Negotiating while the illegal barricades remain was something that the Minister of Conservation said he would not do time and time again.

So I ask the Minister of Conservation: Why would he negotiate when illegal barricades are still there? Isn't he rewarding criminal behaviour?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Well, for crying out loud, Mr. Speaker, for two weeks this member has been telling me to do just that. Where does he stand? Where has he been on this?

We're working very hard day after day to make sure that we do the right things to get the chief to bring his blockades down. We have said very clearly that we will do what it takes to work with the chief to accomplish that so that normal commerce can get back on track in that part of our great province, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to work hard. We continue to be committed to getting those barricades down.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, according to the Minister of Conservation, he indicated that talks to end the Hollow Water blockade made progress.

Obviously, the minister offered something to Hollow Water, something to end the blockade. So I ask the Minister of Conservation: What did he offer Hollow Water? What kind of veto did he give them?

Mr. Struthers: I—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Struthers: I'd suggest that the Member for Lac du Bonnet get some kind of professional help to get him off his obsession with vetoes. There's no veto here.

Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, I think the member should attempt to think a little deeper on this problem. What the Minister of Culture (Mr. Robinson) and I did was we attended a sweat lodge. We attended a sacred ceremony. Members opposite can belittle that sacred ceremony if they like, but this was a good opportunity for us to start a better relationship, a deeper relationship, to open up lines of communications and do what we can to make sure that the rights of First Nations are respected, consultation takes place, economic development opportunities are pursued and bring the barricades down.

Health Care Retention of Doctors

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, since 1999, 1,240 doctors have left Manitoba to practise in other jurisdictions. That's 1,240 doctors who are not available to provide care to Manitobans when they need the care. In fact, two of the leading pediatrics specialists in Manitoba will be leaving for Iowa, leaving behind worried parents whose children need a cardiologist or a neurologist.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health indicate why she was unable to keep the two critical specialists and why they've joined the other 1,240 doctors on the caravan outside of Manitoba.

* (14:00)

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I believe, according to the College of Physicians and Surgeons registry, we do indeed have 54 more doctors in Manitoba today than we did last year. That's a record-breaking year. Indeed, that's a record-breaking year for increase in doctors.

Ten years ago, there was another record-breaking year. That was the year when 74 doctors net left Manitoba. So I think that the member opposite needs to pay close attention to that fact. When it comes to the reference to the pediatric cardiologist, we are aware that this individual will be leaving Manitoba. We are in very active recruitment of two more pediatric cardiologists, and we are very optimistic that we'll secure that employment.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is spending too much time talking to NDP spin doctors and not talking to medical doctors in the province of Manitoba. Manitoba has now trained 1,240 doctors for other jurisdictions in Canada. We're training other doctors for the rest of the world while our patients are waiting for care. The Canadian Institute for Health again shows that Manitoba is well behind the national average for doctors per residents. The NDP offers less care further from home.

Since the minister can't seem to achieve excellence when it comes to doctors for Manitobans, can she at least tell us when she's hoping to achieve average?

Ms. Oswald: I recognize that he's new, but using the member opposite's statistics of migration, under the members opposite government, over 2,000 doctors left Manitoba. When we talk about the net gain of

doctors, we are ahead here in Manitoba. Since 1999, 235 more.

Here's an interesting point. You would think that during an election period, when the opposition would likely be putting their best foot forward for Manitobans on their health platform, how many doctors did they promise, Mr. Speaker? Zero.

Who was the chief engineer of campaign strategy for that, Mr. Speaker? Why, it was the Member for Steinbach.

Health Care Nurse Practitioner Job Opportunities

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I wish the Minister of Health would pay attention to this fact. Judy Marvin, one of my constituents, passed her nurse practitioner exam almost two years ago, but despite the minister's promise to hire more nurse practitioners, Judy can't find a job. If she's not hired within the next year, she will lose her RN(EP) status.

Just last week the College of Family Physicians of Canada said that nurse practitioners could be a big part of the solution to the doctor shortage, yet here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, fully qualified professionals can't get jobs. Has the minister actually made funding available to the RHAs for more practitioners? Or is this just another empty promise by this NDP government to end hallway medicine, just like ending hallway medicine.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I can inform the member opposite that indeed we have 37 extended practice—or nurse practitioners, on the registry in Manitoba, indeed, with the broadest scope of practice in the country. We know that we have committed, in conjunction with our health care professionals, with doctors and with nurses, to hire 700 more nurses over our mandate.

I bring us back again to that election period when, presumably, the members opposite would be putting their best foot forward for all Manitobans. What did they promise? What did they promise? Not to train one single nurse, once again, in Manitoba.

Mrs. Rowat: End hallway medicine in six months, Mr. Speaker. That's their record. When it comes to nurse practitioners, this NDP government is all press releases and empty promises and no action. Time and time again, they have promised to hire more nurse

practitioners; yet fully qualified individuals, professionals, cannot get jobs.

Apparently, RHAs must hire nurse practitioners out of the same funding that is intended for doctors. This is pitting one profession against another. She has failed patients who would benefit from access to nurse practitioners. She has failed 13 rural communities who have no acute-care emergency care services available, Mr. Speaker.

So, seriously, I ask the Minister of Health why she continues to make false promises that she cannot keep. More nurse practitioners where, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question, and I can let the member opposite know that, in addition to our commitment to hire 700 more nurses here in Manitoba, we've also hired a co-ordinator for nurse practitioners in May of '07 to assist rural RHAs in the acquisition and the hiring and the placement of nurse practitioners.

And it must be said, once again, members opposite during the election campaign made it out of Winnipeg once for a rural health-care announcement. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said that health care would not be their priority during the election, and they certainly proved that to be true.

CAIS Program Delays

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I've spoken to yet another producer who is facing long delays in having his CAIS application processed. In March he applied, and he's still waiting for answers half a year later. These types of unaccepted delays make it financially challenging for our producers. We keep raising the issue, but it's not getting fixed.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture explain what steps she is taking to ensure these problems are dealt with, that Manitoba producers can access the program when they need it?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, when CAIS was introduced across the country, here in this province it was administered by the federal government. Producers spelled out very clearly that there were challenges in the application process. We have been working as we negotiate the next round of the Agriculture Policy Framework Agreement to look at how those steps can be streamlined. We are working on that, and I would say to the member: If he has specific cases of individuals who are having

difficulty with their CAIS, I would ask him, if the individual is willing to share their information with my office, we will work with them to try to expedite that process as quickly as possible.

Mr. Eichler: It is clear the CAIS program has serious problems. There are long delays in processing applications. Some producers find themselves underpaid, then overpaid within just a few weeks. When producers call the administrators they can't get the answers they need. This is causing real economic hardship for our producers. These problems simply can't be repeated.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture explain if she has given any consideration in the next farm program being administered by the provincial government, or is she satisfied with the current delivery system?

Ms. Wowchuk: And indeed this is a very important issue. That's why we've consulted. That's why we've been holding meetings across the province with producers to look at how the CAIS program can be changed, and I can assure the member that the program is being changed so that money can flow more quickly to producers, Mr. Speaker, in various aspects of the program.

With regard to the delays, again, I would say to the member opposite, if he has specific cases, and there are many cases where individuals need some help in expediting their application form, please let me know who they are, and my staff will work with them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Flin Flon Contaminated Soils

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, all Manitobans have great concern for the children of Flin Flon who may be playing in public spaces, in parks or schoolyards or around their homes in areas where there is significant contamination with mercury or arsenic or lead.

I ask the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) what action she has taken to date to address these serious concerns, and, if the minister could tell us when the actions have been taken, that would certainly be helpful. In particular, I would like to know if any of the contaminated areas which were identified have been cleaned up.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberal leader would have been listening last week to some of the questions and

answers that were given, he would know that we've begun addressing this particular problem.

We've been working with the citizens of Flin Flon to identify the areas that need to be cleaned up, and we have been moving on that through the Sustainable Development Fund itself through my department. We have identified \$60,000 that we have been spending to make sure that we clean up areas such as playgrounds and other parts of the community that citizens believe their children are at risk at. So we have been moving forward on that. We have been proactive with it and will continue to do so.

*(14:10)

Mr. Gerrard: I gather that not one single playground has been fully cleaned up. Last week the Minister of Health said in Estimates that it would be best not to warn people if their individual child's playground had higher than acceptable levels of lead, mercury or arsenic.

She said, and I quote: One would not want to tell somebody in one schoolyard that they should protect themselves. Well, I beg to differ. Children need to be protected and have safe places to play. Schoolyards and playgrounds with higher than acceptable levels of mercury should either be cleaned up or closed down until they are cleaned up.

I ask the Minister of Health: When will she act to ensure that the Flin Flon children have safe places to play?

Mr. Struthers: I gather the Liberal leader has problems in understanding the written word. I mean, this study was put together by the Department of Conservation. We worked in co-ordination with the Department of Health. We work in co-ordination with the citizens—*[interjection]* I don't think he wants to hear the truth.

Mr. Speaker, we did this study so that we could help the people of Flin Flon. I'm assuming that that's what the Liberal leader wants too. We are and we will continue to be identifying those places within the city of—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Struthers: Despite all the noise from the Liberal leader across the way, we will continue working with the people of Flin Flon to identify

those areas that need to be cleaned up and we'll continue that work which has already begun.

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations Frequency of Sitings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, The Forks North Portage Partnership is a group that should be reporting to the Manitoba Legislature. In fact we've had the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) make the commitment that it would be reporting through one of our standing committees and, as the minister was right, it should be.

We find out the last time it actually reported to the Manitoba Legislature was in November of 2001 which is in keeping with the Doer government and the NDP being in contempt with accountability with this Legislature.

My question for the Premier is very simple. Does the Premier not see any value of having a standing committee hold Crown corporations or companies like The Forks North Portage Partnership to account by having them come before standing committees?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we've had a track record in this province going back 25 years in which we, the Province led by NDP governments, has partnered for urban development, and nothing is a greater success story than The Forks North Portage.

Now, just in case the Liberal member hasn't noticed, the regular shareholders' meetings—in fact, I recently met with the Honourable Vic Toews and Sam Katz, and there's also an AGM coming up with The Forks North Portage. He has every ability to go to The Forks North Portage, which is a tripartite body, and put forward his ideas.

So I would suggest that the member opposite should perhaps leave the building, come down with me to the AGM at The Forks, and he'll find out what a great job The Forks North Portage is doing for Manitoba.

Parks and Wildlife Society Tembec Forestry Association Deal

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and Tembec forestry corporation recently negotiated an important deal on the east side of the province which significantly affects critical wildlife habitat and

bolsters Manitoba's bid for gaining UNESCO World Heritage status for this region of the province.

Can the Minister of Conservation inform the House of the details of this deal?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, in April 2006 we released our recovery strategy for the boreal woodland caribou. In June of '06 we listed the caribou as threatened under our Endangered Species Act. In the '07 budget we provided for two more caribou biologists.

I congratulate Tembec and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society for moving forward in a progressive way, I believe, in deferring logging operations for 50 years on an area of 26,000 hectares which is the winter core zone for the Owl Lake woodland caribou herd. This is a very good step forward. It shows that co-operation works, and it shows that with leadership we can protect the signal species on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Falcon Lake Ambulance Service Suspension of Service

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, earlier today I received a phone call from a constituent in Falcon Lake indicating that they received a letter today telling them that their ambulance service had been suspended yesterday and wouldn't be available till tomorrow.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux) indicate what he is doing to ensure that that ambulance service remains open in Falcon Lake and residents get timely notice when that ambulance service is going to be disrupted?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): As the member knows well, as we discussed during Estimates, we work very diligently with the community of Falcon Lake to ensure that any suspensions in service are very short and are covered by the surrounding area.

Certainly we know that historically our investments in emergency medical services are very clear. We have worked very diligently to ensure that we increase response times through the investment in the Medical Transportation Co-ordination Centre in Brandon. We have invested several millions of dollars in replacing the entire fleet. We know that, just recently, we announced the primary care paramedics course so that we can increase that complement of paramedics.

School Divisions Property Developments

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): In the aftermath of the Seven Oaks School Division land development fiasco engineered by the Premier's former campaign manager, we have great concern about the ability of this government to manage new property developments. They've decided to get into the development business once again with the Waverley West subdivision, Mr. Speaker. We have great concern about their ability to manage, on behalf of Manitoba taxpayers, this subdivision.

Now they've introduced a bill, Bill 21, that's going to divert any profits from the subdivision, and we don't know yet whether there will be profits, but if there are, they'll be diverted from that into a political slush fund which we are concerned will be used to meet unfunded liabilities and deficits that they've run up in other areas of the Housing Department.

I've spoken to the families in St. Norbert and Fort Garry, in Seine River, in Southdale, and, of course, in Fort Whyte, Mr. Speaker, who are concerned about the pressures on their neighbourhoods created by new development. These families in St. Norbert, Fort Garry, Seine River, Southdale and Fort Whyte are concerned that money is being taken out of their communities and put to some unspecified need. Of course, in Fort Whyte we have the need for a high school. We've got transportation problems and other issues facing the south end of the city.

Will the minister agree to withdraw Bill 21, use any profits that they get from development for local needs so that local residents can deal with the pressures being created by those developments on their communities?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): All revenues, Mr. Speaker, are covered under the summary financial budget. Instead of having two sets of books, as we had with the Conservatives, we now have one set of books for all of Manitobans.

Point No. 2, we believe that sitting on a land bank inside the city of Winnipeg was not the wisest use of land and availability for citizens of Winnipeg. We had a recommendation from former mayor, Murray, which we agreed to. We also had a concurrence from the existing mayor, Mayor Sam Katz, and we are proposing in the legislation—it

hasn't been passed by the Legislature—that all funds from, if there are profits, be redirected to affordable housing, particularly in the inner city. We think that's a good balance to develop the density of housing and the affordability of housing in Winnipeg.

I would also point out that when we came into office there were no housing projects outside of the Perimeter Highway. When the former mayor was in office, there were no housing projects in Brandon. I'm pleased that we've introduced that as well in terms of a vision for affordable housing all across Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Gio's 25th Anniversary

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, I rise before the House today to recognize the 25th anniversary of Gio's, which is being celebrated this week.

As the clubhouse of the non-profit organization, the Oscar Wilde Memorial Society, Gio's has been a cornerstone in Winnipeg's gay and lesbian community. It has existed in many locations over the years. Its current home at 155 Smith Street is within my constituency.

The Gio's board and volunteers are dedicated to improving the quality of life for gay and lesbian people and their supporters throughout the province. They've fulfilled this objective by encouraging and supporting community development through cultural and sporting events, as well as supporting other non-profit organizations. Mr. Speaker, 25 years ago Gio's founders envisioned a community centre in which members would be welcomed into a safe and supportive space. In its early years, Gio's merged existing educational and social service organizations such as a lending library, resource centre and telephone line with its licensed clubhouse so that it could serve as much more than a meeting place.

The board and members of Gio's have always been faithful to the original vision of an organization that gives back to the community. To this end they created a registered charity called Gio's Cares that has raised thousands of dollars to support people living with HIV and AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Gio's and their board of directors for the role they've played in

supporting the gay and lesbian community in this city for nearly three decades. I especially want to pay tribute to the founders of Gio's who, in an age when coming out could mean the loss of a job, a home or a family, bravely worked to create a gathering place for an entire community. Thank you.

*(14:20)

Hazel M. Kellington School, Neepawa

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, as a parent with children who attended Hazel M. Kellington School in Neepawa, I was not surprised to find this wonderful school had been honoured nationally for its excellence in education.

I would like to congratulate the teachers, staff, students and parents of HMK school for being featured in *Today's Parent* magazine. The talented and dedicated teaching staff work as a team to provide quality education to our students. Each of them deserves our appreciation and, as a community, we were proud to see one of their own honoured in this capacity. Their colleague, Heather Douglas, was named in the magazine as one of Canada's terrific teachers.

Heather is a middle years teacher specializing in physical education. She was praised in the popular publication for her inventive approaches to improving accessibility and enjoying of physical education. Her progressive and innovative teaching methods have made gym class a rewarding experience for her students, motivating them to improve their health and personal goals. Heather designed a movement spectacular which combines a dance performance and exercise. Her love of both children and music is inspiring.

Heather was also awarded the Manitoba Physical Education Teachers' Association Middle Years Award for 2005-06. The creative and energetic approach to education can be found in all aspects of HMK school. The school has adopted the practice of identifying and working with the individual needs of students. They tailor learning to provide for the best educational experience possible.

The accolades bestowed on both the school and Heather Douglas are well deserved. Their contributions and imagination exceed everyday expectations, serving to enrich the quality of education in Neepawa and in our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, the rededication of the former Sturgeon Creek and Collège Silver Heights collegiates was an emotional and inspiring ceremony. The spirit of both institutions is alive and well in the new Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate.

It was a touching experience for me as the MLA representing the former Collège Silver Heights Collegiate to pass the honour on to my colleague the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau). I was also pleased that the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) was able to attend, as well as the members for Minto and Kirkfield Park. It was a pleasure to hear both the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) and the Member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) speak as former Huskies on their fond memories of Collège Silver Heights Collegiate.

I was so proud and impressed that all students embraced the rededication with such maturity and optimism for the future. The rededication was able to bring together two distinct communities that will now be able to go forward united.

The school board also handled the very challenging change with sensitivity and dignity. The public consultations were essential for parents and residents to have their concerns heard and to allow the community to transition to the new school. Doing the right thing is not always the easiest or the most popular option. The board of trustees are to be commended for their foresight.

Students at the new Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate will have increased access to a variety of programs. One parent I spoke with was delighted that her daughter would be able to take vocational courses that the former school was not staffed to offer. All students will benefit from increased course offerings and the ability to become well-rounded students with developed skills in both the academic and vocational streams.

I wish to extend special congratulations to the members of the band and their director Blaine Workman. Their steadfast commitment to improving their community has made the transition to the new entity of Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate easier for staff, students and parents.

I would ask that all members join with me in congratulating the staff, students and community for the successful rededication of Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate. It is exciting to see two great

academic traditions unite together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

James Ehnes

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize one of the finest jewels in Manitoba's musical crown. The talents of Mr. James Ehnes, a concert violinist, are truly extraordinary. Mr. Ehnes, who was recognized in his youth as a musical prodigy, has parlayed his expansive broad talent into a blossoming career that has already elicited international critical acclaim. *The Daily Telegraph* of London referred to Mr. Ehnes as "one of the most gifted and sincerely expressive artists to have emerged in recent times."

In the past three years, he has received the prestigious Amy Fisher Career Grant, won a Juno Award, received an honorary doctorate from Brandon University, and was made a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Mr. Ehnes has become one of the world's most foremost concert violinists. A recent *Free Press* headline read, "Manitoba's own James Ehnes."

However, I must object to our province's hasty appropriation of the dazzling violinist. Mr. Ehnes is indeed a product of Brandon, Manitoba. Of course, the city of Brandon is proud to share his music with the rest of the province, Canada and the world. We only ask that the community in which he cultivated his musical talents is able to retain our own special ownership of the rising star.

Mr. Ehnes was born and raised in Brandon and the prodigy received musical training from a Brandon University professor at an early age. While his talents have carried him far from the Wheat City, his parents, Barbara and Allan, still call Brandon home. Despite all of the success, James' persona remains consistent with his humble prairie origins which makes him an excellent ambassador for the city of Brandon and the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, I would like to thank Mr. Ehnes for his exemplary representation of our province and wish him luck in his future musical endeavours.

United Way 2007 Fundraising Campaign

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the good work of the United Way here in Winnipeg and to commend them for the successful kick-off of their 2007 fundraising campaign. I had

the pleasure of attending this event and witnessing the impressive sight of 40 teams from media outlets, local businesses and the government competing with one another to pull a Boeing 727 and a McDonnell Douglas DC-9 airplane.

After raising \$15.5 million last year, the goal of the 2007 campaign is to raise \$16.5 million. All the money raised is then distributed among the over 60 local organizations which received financial support from the United Way. The United Way is an organization that works to improve life and to strengthen society by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action to address the needs and concerns of our community. Especially, the United Way of Winnipeg works with the local organizations to reduce poverty, engage youth and build neighbourhoods. The example set by the United Way demonstrates that much can be done when we work together towards a common goal.

As I spoke at the event, Mr. Speaker, it is a co-operative, collaborative, collective way, the United Way and the only way to pull forward. I am pleased to be able to congratulate the organizers on the success of their kick-off and thank them on behalf of members for their continued work in building a stronger community right here in Winnipeg. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: On a grievance?

Mr. Schuler: On a grievance, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to raise an issue of great concern to all Manitobans and it has to do with the Seven Oaks School Division, the Swinford Park debacle that took place. Over the last week, I've had the opportunity to spend some time with the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson). I know that, after having spent some time with him and laying out the difficulties of the entire fiasco, he now has a greater understanding of what took place.

* (14:30)

It stems from a not-approved subdivision. A school division decided to proceed with a housing development, something clearly not within its mandate, something that it was not supposed to be participating in, and then spiralled downward.

What concerns us, and I laid it out in great detail for the minister, was that there were certain areas of complication.

First of all was that on a Friday, or pardon me, on a Monday, May 3, there was a transfer of documents. It actually goes before that, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize, this is very convoluted, and that has to do on May the 1, when a letter, a complaint, was received by the City of Winnipeg, by the minister's office, by various individuals, from someone complaining about this development being put on by the Seven Oaks School Division. Interestingly enough, the following Friday, all of a sudden there was a flurry of activity, even though the complaint hadn't been received until the Monday, asking for approval for this subdivision.

I've asked the minister now on numerous occasions for the letter that was written by the Seven Oaks School Division staff and their solicitor, asking or requesting the Public Schools Finance Board to confirm, in writing, that Swinford Park had been approved, and we are still waiting for that letter. But it's interesting how on Friday, April 29, all of this information is requested, although the complaint doesn't come in until the following Monday. That was a definite area of concern.

We know that the former campaign manager, the Premier's (Mr. Doer) campaign manager, one Brian O'Leary, the disgraced campaign manager, was involved with this, and what became very worrisome and of some great concern to those who've read the Auditor General's report, a fantastic document, though she's made it very clear, very clear, that she is not a watchdog, that that's in fact the role of the opposition and the Legislature.

But she lays out the time line very, very clearly. What is odd about this is that, when that request that evidently was made on April 29, although the complaint first came to light on the following Monday, when it actually went in front of the board, there seemed to have been mass amnesia to whether it was there or how it got there, what it read and so on and so forth. In fact, if you look on page 25 of the Auditor's report, you will find in the third bullet that: "the May 5 Motion Record noted above, normally completed at the meeting, did not identify the presenter, mover and seconder."

The whole situation keeps getting more and more convoluted. We find out, then, that not just were two books being run simultaneously, and one was on the residential development, one was on the

school side, there's actually two audited statements, which is strange by half. It is something that is normally never done. Two books are usually not run. It is not something that we want to see. We don't want to see it in private business; we don't accept it in non-profit organizations. But somehow the Minister of Education has convinced himself that this is normal practice to be running one project on two sets of books.

Here are the financial statements. I've listed them in *Hansard* as of last week. Clearly, a great concern. What we find is that there was supposedly, on the residential development, a surplus, but if you look at the other set of books, that there was a substantial loss.

So, again, it's the same project, two sets of books. One side shows \$500,000 surplus. The other side shows \$800,000 loss, which shows a substantial loss in all of this, and we've laid this out for the minister and indicated to him that there were other areas.

I would refer this House to page 22 of the Auditor General's report in which it made it very clear that, first of all, the school division went out and asked for tenders for purchasing of property. They then found out that there was a lot of money to be made. The planner comes to the board and says, reject it, we can make a lot of money, and really it brings into question the ethics of the entire project.

That's why I ask the minister, who will be held to account? Is it going to be the superintendent, the former disgraced campaign manager of the Premier (Mr. Doer)? Is it going to be the school board?

We find out that there was this mass amnesia that took place. I asked the minister, for instance, was school trustee, Ross Eadie, was he one of those who could actually remember what took place at that board meeting, or was he one of those who forgot? Which one is he? What this does, if the minister and his government aren't more forthcoming, is it really casts a doubt on a lot of individuals because names are not forthcoming. The Auditor made it very clear that it was not her responsibility to do that. That is now a public forum. I think it's very important for all taxpayers to know who could remember what came in front of a board meeting and who didn't. What we asked the minister was to hold someone accountable. Someone was to be held to account. His answer was, well, I appreciate that the barn door was left open, the horses have all fled, and now we've slammed the

door shut. We've put new locks on, we fixed the fence, and that's it.

That's not good enough for this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. We believe that there must be some oversight over this entire fiasco and that those who are responsible should at least receive some kind of admonishment. They should receive at least some kind of discipline. But what the minister wants to do is walk away from this because it is chock-full of NDP supporters. That's the problem with this entire fiasco, that the minister and his government are washing themselves of this. They want to see nobody held to account because every time they hold someone accountable, it means it's going to reflect on them and their government. That's unfortunate for the taxpayers, not just of the Seven Oaks School Division, but of all taxpayers because, as I laid out in *Hansard* very clearly, in the end, somebody is going to have to pay for this debacle. It's either going to be the taxpayers of the school division or the taxpayers of Manitoba. But somewhere there's going to have to be someone who pays.

Mr. Speaker, that is why today Bill 214 was introduced; that's why I introduced it, The Public Schools Amendment Act, which deals with what school divisions can and can't do, what they should or shouldn't do. I would ask members of this Chamber: Look at that legislation. It now makes it very clear, not just what they may or may not do, but what they shouldn't be doing, and that is being developers with the public's money, with money that should be going to students, to teachers, to education.

Mr. Speaker, I leave the House with this troubling matter and look forward to hearing other comments in the near future.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Ste. Rose, on a grievance?

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Yes. I think there are quite a number of things that I could bring a grievance forward on, but I'm choosing to bring it forward on the proposed bipole line with the route that this government has chosen.

I heard the First Minister (Mr. Doer) on several occasions in his responses today talk about wise choices and wisely-thought-out and things like that. I may not be one of the three wise men, but I certainly have gained some country smarts over the course of my life, so I'll try to approach this issue.

When we're doing a project of this size and this scope, we need to make sure that we have made the

right decisions. They have to be responsible economically, and there has to be a payback on what we're doing. This whole issue seems to me to be driven by some reasons that aren't even admitted. We hear a different excuse every day that it's brought up in the House, and we find an answer for that excuse. So another excuse comes up the next day.

There are economic benefits to the line, I presume, almost anywhere it goes, except that, in one case, it costs a half a billion dollars more than the other case. A straight-line route down the east side of Lake Winnipeg obviously makes the most sense for a line. We know that there are some environmental concerns and securities concerns, but those concerns were overcome when we ran the two bipole lines down between the lakes, and they would be here too. There's certainly a lot of room there for that line to come down the other side and allow the UNESCO biosphere project.

* (14:40)

I see great returns in the area if the bipole line goes down the east side where it should go for the economic benefit of the Aboriginals of the area. The reserves would have some employment out of clearing for the line and helping to build the line. I would see a road tied into the whole process, and we would get an east-side road. We're talking about two separate projects here and adding more to the cost. It would certainly, I think, tie in as a good project and provide an all-weather road to those remote communities.

I think one of the major considerations, and it's been brought up in the House, is the line loss when you go an extra 300 to 400 kilometres. That line loss is supposed to be projected in the neighbourhood of about 100 megawatts, which is the equivalent to the whole wind farm that's at St. Leon. Why build the wind farm and then lose that amount of power by going the longer route with a line? I've toured the Kettle generating station on several occasions, and each of the turbines in that station produces about roughly 100 megawatts. That's like turning off one of those generators strictly on the line loss.

We're here to do the best thing for Manitobans. I realize, occasionally, there are outside influences that do have a bearing, but we're here to make the best decisions for the people of Manitoba. The best decision is obviously the east-side route for that bipole line. The costs are less, the impacts on the environment are less, because, if we come down on

the west side of Lake Winnipegosis, we're going to cut just as many trees to put the line in because of the extra 400 kilometres it has to travel. That's just not acceptable.

I don't think anyone has paid any attention to any forward planning on the west-side route. The east-side route, I believe, probably has some studies. I haven't seen them, but there would have to be because it's been talked about for 20 years. So I expect there are some studies on it.

Coming down the west side, you talk about impacts, and who's going to be supportive, who's going to be holding community meetings and having their say on the whole process. The west side, there are First Nations, quite a number of them, that will be somewhat impacted, and besides that, on the west side it will come through a lot more farmland to get to its destination. That will result in a lot of anxiety there. That's privately held land that agreements and purchases and all the other things that go with it, easements, will have to be made on.

I believe that this government has failed to even consider the implications of coming down the route they've chosen. I know that an environmental study will have to be done, but usually that is a long drawn-out process, and I wonder if this is the only route they're going to consider or whether they will consider environmental studies on both sides. There's obviously room on the east side for both the UNESCO biosphere development and the new bipole line.

It seems to me that the sale of this power is going to be to the east and to the south. Once again that adds to the point that it should come down the east side. It's closer to the markets that are there. I understand that there's a necessity to develop an east-west grid at some point and I know that some money has been allocated to the studies for that, but you might as well take—once again line loss and cost of building the line, follow the shortest route, save the people of this province money.

When they talk about a \$500-million extra cost amortized over 40 or 50 years the interest will add up to another half a million dollars or more and then it becomes a billion-dollar extra cost to build that line where they're proposing.

Right at the present time we're seeing Manitoba Hydro suggesting approaching the Public Utilities Board or maybe already approaching them to

increase rates, and it would certainly appear to me that if they proceed with this line where it's proposed, we'll see the rates continue to rise over and over and over again.

It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that the government of this province give some serious consideration to the choices they've made and does the right thing and switches to the other side with the eastern side line. Thank you very much.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed to, the Committee of Supply will move to room 255 to consider Committee of Supply. Would the Chair please proceed to room 255.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you canvass the House please to see if there's an agreement to move the following Estimates from the Chamber into room 255 for consideration after Enabling and Other Appropriations? The Estimates to be moved are the Estimates for the Civil Service Commission, for the Employee Pensions and Other Costs and for the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to move the following Estimates from the Chamber into room 255 for consideration after Enabling and Other Appropriations? The Estimates to be moved are the Estimates for the Civil Service Commission, for Employee Pensions and Other Costs and for the Legislative Assembly. Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, concurrent with the sitting of the Committee of Supply until its completion, I wonder if you would call bills in the following order: 16, 3, 18, 17, 13, 10, 8, and then revert to the order that bills appear.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we'll be doing second readings on the following bills: 16, 3, 18, 17, 13, 10, 8; and, if there's time, we will proceed with the rest in order as they're listed on the Order Paper.

Okay, I'm going to be calling second reading, Bill 16, The Statutory Holidays Act (Various Acts Amended).

SECOND READINGS

Bill 16-The Statutory Holidays Act (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 16, The Statutory Holidays Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill and I table the message.

* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration, seconded by the honourable Minister of Healthy Living, that Bill 16, The Statutory Holidays Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of this bill and the message has been tabled.

Ms. Allan: In the interest of expediency, I will refer the House to my second reading speech of April 18, 2007. I'd like to reference my remarks in this Chamber on April 18, 2007, regarding our new proposed holiday.

Since last spring, a contest was held among Manitoba schools to name the holiday, and we have announced that the new statutory holiday will be called Louis Riel Day. That name is the winner from the many entries we received from schools throughout the province as determined by the MB4Youth, a committee of the Department of Education, Citizenship, and Youth, made up of highly engaged and articulate young people. I would like to thank them for their participation and all of the schools who participated with their suggestions. With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend this bill to the House.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I'm pleased to be able to put a few words on the record today about Bill 16, The Statutory Holidays Act. Because of this act, we'll be having another holiday, next February 18, 2008, but, as my colleague reminds me, it won't be for everybody because some people will still have to work. That's the nature of what happens with

statutory holidays. People do need to work on those holidays because people still demand services on those days. Of course, that poses some problems for small businesses with very low margins, and it is an additional cost to them. Something that I would like to speak to as we go along.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, the way the holiday came about is somewhat interesting in that the first time the minister was asked about this bill, she had no intentions of bringing forward a holiday in February. Within a few weeks, just after that, after our leader of our party said that he would be in favour of a holiday, the government minister and government changed their mind and very quickly embraced the idea of a new holiday in February.

Of course, we know the reason for that is that, with the radio station involvement and the petition and the much-touted holiday, the wide support was out in the public. The NDP saw this and thought, well, we better get on board with that one. Subsequent to that, we had legislation brought in that would see a holiday coming in February.

The minister has said that the holiday is to be called Louis Riel Day. Certainly, we know that several schools participated in the choosing of that name, and we do want to congratulate and commend the school children who took some time to actually be involved in the process. We think that that was worthwhile.

When we had proposed that there be a holiday, we had taken it upon ourselves, too, to do a survey as to what the holiday should be named. Family Day came up as a possible name. I think the reason for Family Day is because, you know, we do have this holiday in other provinces in Canada. We have a holiday in Alberta, and we have the holiday in Saskatchewan. We know that the one in Alberta is called Family Day, and we know that it would be nice to go and have a Family Day here so we could go visit our family and our friends that are out in Alberta, and maybe we could have a holiday together.

I think that the idea of the holiday put forward initially, I believe, by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) has merit. It certainly is something that people will look forward to. The long stretch between New Year's Day and Easter is a long, cold stretch, and I know that many people would like to have a day to spend some time with relatives and friends and enjoy some outside activities.

But, having said that, I know that when we proposed the idea of this statutory holiday, we also recognized that there was going to be a significant burden for small businesses. We felt that this holiday, when announced and when it actually would come about, should be with some offsetting tax reliefs, Mr. Speaker. I think that anybody that's been in a small business, or worked in a small business, or owned a small business, or had anything to do with business, knows that the bottom lines, the margins, are not always there, and the fact is that this holiday is going to cost businesses a significant amount of money.

I think that we needed to look at—and I would encourage the government to do so—at the idea that we proposed which was reducing the payroll tax and reducing the PST, Mr. Speaker. I think that we need to recognize that there are a number of businesses in this province that this does impact on very significantly. We have to understand that small business is the backbone of our economy in this province. We cannot afford to drive small businesses out of Manitoba. We need to encourage small businesses to come here, to stay here, the owners and the people working in those businesses to stay here and raise their families here, and for them to do that, there has to be a competitive edge in terms of other provinces.

I just want to, also, say that supported by people like Dave Angus, the CEO of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, felt that it was necessary to do some consulting with the business community, and it is a cost to business. He recognizes that, as do his members. The same with the president of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce and, of course, Shannon Martin, from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, has pegged the amount that this is going to cost the economy and the cost to businesses in Manitoba at \$157 million. That is a significant blow to the economy.

So, while some of us may enjoy having another holiday in the middle of February—and I think a lot of people will enjoy that—there are a lot of people that it is going to impact on and significantly, and I think that that needs to be recognized. I think that the government did a poor job of mitigating the significant problems that it posed to some of the small businesses. Having been in business myself, an owner-operator of a small business and a small number of employees, I know that working on stat holidays, it was an additional cost, and certainly it is an impact. I think that we should encourage the

government to look very seriously at what offsetting proposals they may have for small business.

I also want to say the idea of this holiday, even though it came up just in the last year, the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou) has often spoken about his idea of having this holiday, and he's had this idea for some time. He got the idea from travelling to Alberta to visit his family and friends out there and recognizing that they called it Family Day, and he thought it was a good idea to have a day set aside for families. So there certainly has been talk of this bill for quite some time.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

It's just interesting that the government only jumped on board with this bill once they realized the Opposition Leader (Mr. McFadyen) had said that he thought it was a good idea. Mind you, a good idea with the appropriate tax reliefs in place to offset, but, certainly, the government thought, well, you know, the opposition likes this bill and it's very popular. An election's coming; we better get out there before they do on it. So we'll bring in a bill; we'll have a new holiday and, of course, we'll take credit for it, because that's exactly what the NDP have done many times. We've proposed some good pieces of legislation, and they just don't give credit where credit is due and decide that they deserve all of the credit.

* (15:00)

I asked the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) in Estimates about it, and she went on and on about, well, you know, we consulted, and that the Leader of the Opposition just said we didn't need consultation. So I said, well, you can't sort of have it both ways. I mean, if the opposition's idea is a good one and people support it, then you have to give credit where credit is due. If somebody says they don't like it, well, then, you can't just blame it on the opposition. I mean, you have to accept the blame for your own decisions.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's an interesting process that's occurred here with the flip-flop of the minister, originally saying, no, there'd be no new holiday and then within two weeks, yes, there would be a holiday. Very quickly a bill was prepared before an election because, of course, we do recognize that there are a lot of people that think that this is a very good plan. Certainly, there'll be people that will enjoy that day and others that will have to work

because, as we know—I think all of us know that a holiday is the time when we think, well, we will go and get things done that we need to do, but we need people working to have those things done for us.

Of course, if you're the one getting the holiday, you say, well, we have a new holiday and I don't want to work. I want to go out and do my shopping, and people in the shopping centre will say, but I don't want to work; I want to be at home so I can do something else. So, eventually, what happens is when people do need to work on the stat holidays, there is a cost involved. There is a cost. There is a cost to businesses for the overtime payment and for the time off that these people will need to have.

So that's significant and I don't know if the minister actually did any kind of consultation with the business community to find out how much it was going to cost them and what they would like to see as an offset to mitigate the hardships that would be caused to many businesses because of this bill.

As I said, Madam Deputy Speaker, we do have a new holiday, February 18, 2008, to be called Louis Riel Day, and I'm sure that many people in the province will be looking forward to celebrating that new day. I know many people will be saying, well, here I have to work on that very first holiday that I will not get because businesses, or some businesses at least, will still be open and be required to provide people in the workplace.

Madam Deputy Speaker, again, I want to congratulate the schoolchildren that participated. I'd also like to say that, again, we had to put out a survey ourselves, the opposition, to see what suggestions people would come up with in terms of naming the day. I certainly want to thank anybody that submitted the ideas that they did and participated in the process, which, I think, is important, to get participation from a variety of people in the province as to what they think the holiday should be named, when they think it should happen. Again, I can't say strongly enough about what impact it will have on them as a small business and what steps can be taken to mitigate the pressures that will be brought to bear because of that.

Certainly, we recognize that right off the bat because when we said yes we thought the stat holiday would be a good idea. Yes, but recognizing that there were certainly a number of businesses that would be impacted and the need to provide some forms of tax relief to the businesses so that they did not feel the impacts of this legislation the way they

will feel it under the way the bill is proposed by the NDP, Madam Deputy Speaker.

But we do look forward to hearing presenters in the committee to see what people will have to say. I know there are some people registered, and I certainly hope that there will be people there to speak about the bill and to see what they have to say, to see how they feel about the consultation process, and how they feel about any mitigation that was done to offset some of the definite hardships that will be enforced, forced on some small businesses in Manitoba.

So, with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would say that we support the idea of the new stat holiday, Louis Riel Day, in February, beginning in 2005, but we certainly would have liked to have seen this come forward with some meaningful tax relief, as we would have proposed. So, with that, I look forward to hearing what Manitobans have to say in committee and look forward to the holiday next year.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill 16 which is to provide for a new stat holiday for Manitobans. I believe I can fairly claim some credit for this initiative because I was the first leader to call for a new stat holiday, and I was quite pleased to see that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) came in board in support of this proposition. The NDP were clearly last this time. There's no debate on this one.

It's true that my initial call related to Manitoba Day to celebrate the history of the province, but clearly the final result which we have before us today, which puts it in February, is an excellent resolution of this issue, and I'm pleased that we're actually naming this after Louis Riel which, consistent with my initial suggestion, is a celebration of an important part of the history of our province.

I believe that, you know, this will be important day for Manitobans for a long, long time into the future. I think it is an important statement in terms of Métis people and the role of Louis Riel in our province. The commitments and the initiatives that Louis Riel took with regard to making sure that people in Manitoba were treated well, in setting up a provisional government and, indeed, as Louis Riel was in fact in charge of that government on the day that Manitoba became a province, Louis Riel can appropriately be considered, and was, the de facto first premier of the province.

So, certainly, this is a worthy initiative. It is a good initiative, because all of us feel the need in cold, Manitoba Februarys to have an opportunity to have a little bit of extra joy in celebration and be in a good mood. Certainly, the timing is a very good timing, also, from the respect to Festival de Voyageur. The Festival de Voyageur celebrates the contribution to Métis people in Manitoba, celebrates the culture, the traditions, the heritage that Métis people have contributed to our province. So the timing here will work very closely with the Festival du Voyageur and certainly provide, I believe, an extra reason for Manitobans to know about, to celebrate this particular area of our history.

*(15:10)

I think it is important to note that we have, of course, many different cultural and ethnic groups in our diverse population. Some might ask why should we celebrate one versus another perhaps. But, certainly, what we are doing in celebrating here is providing an example, a celebration of some of our particular backgrounds, and in celebrating this, in fact, we pay a tribute to all the cultural and ethnic groups which make up the mosaic which is Manitoba.

This kind of approach can certainly lay the groundwork for a global-based Manitoba which looks out at the world because of the wonderful array of different cultural groups and different backgrounds which make up our incredible province. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Deputy Speaker, I, too, just want to add a few words to Bill 16.

It is worthy of note in terms of the statutory holiday for February being widely accepted amongst the general population. I know it's very popular within my own constituency. I think that the overwhelming support for the statutory holiday is a good reason for us to move forward and to ultimately see this bill become law.

The name is something which I don't know if it would have been my first choice, but I respect in fact the process. There have been some other names that have been floated. My personal preference would have been that of Family Day because I do believe that we need to put more emphasis on our families.

It's one of the reasons why back in September I had written or e-mailed, I believe, and faxed the Premier (Mr. Doer) to acknowledge the importance

of our grandparents by proclaiming a Grandparents Day on the first Sunday after Labour Day. This is something that the United States has been doing since the late '70s. I know at times we've seen private members' bills dealing with grandparents inside the Legislature. I just don't think we do enough to appreciate the importance of families in the province of Manitoba, and that's the essence of why it is I thought it might have been kind of nice to have that as the day.

Most importantly, I do believe it's important that we have the statutory holiday. I listen to my leader talk about the origins of the idea. I remember very clearly the response from the government of the day when we suggested that there be some form of an additional statutory holiday, whether it's a half day, a full day, and so forth. The government, in essence, attempted to laugh the idea off completely. Now, here we are and the only thing we know for sure is that this is definitely not a New Democratic idea, but, true to form, as we have seen other members' bills and other ideas, whether it's the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party, where something is brought up and the NDP won't support it unless, of course, it's their bill or their idea. Who are we to deny Manitobans that statutory holiday because, true to form, as in the past, we recognize a good idea when we see a good idea and therefore we have no problems in terms of supporting the idea of having a statutory holiday in February and be very sensitive to the fact that I think that the Minister of Labour's feelings might have been a little bit hurt because she's not able to claim a full 100 percent credit? But maybe she can share some of that glory with other members of the Chamber because she can't really take credit for the idea. That's something that we all know, but we do acknowledge the importance of passing the bill. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill 16.

On September 25, when the Minister of Labour reintroduced this bill, it was a different situation from the time that I'd first seen it. When I'd first heard and seen of this, I was involved in a small business and probably had a little bit different perspective than I do today. However, I think the holiday would have been better named as a family day. I think that would have been appreciated by all in Manitoba. However, I also understand the process that was used and, certainly, I think that process

deserves accolades. I guess I can't argue with the Louis Riel Day as it was pointed out it does fall during the Festival du Voyageur.

However, while we support the proposed holiday, I'd like to also point out that it was the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) that first brought this forward, to my knowledge. Perhaps I can be corrected, but that's how I first became aware of this.

Also, with moving forward with a bill of this nature, there are certainly some impacts, and the impacts on essential services definitely need to be addressed and they raise challenges. They raise scheduling challenges and especially with small businesses. Perhaps these businesses just close; however, in the agricultural communities, we have essential businesses that have to be there and the cost of those businesses as we go forward, the cost of doing business then on statutory holidays becomes an economic burden to many of the operations.

When you're looking at paying one and a half or twice the normal wages or going rates for a service in our industry with small margins, Mr. Speaker, it really is a hardship in many cases. When I first heard this and during the election campaign, I asked then what our platform would be on this. There was definitely a move to bring in a tax system much similar to that in Saskatchewan or perhaps looking at a reduction in the payroll tax to offset the type of hardship that would be brought forward with this type of a bill.

I'm just wondering, the minister did a fine job of soliciting for a name for the day. I'm wondering, however, if she did as good a job at soliciting in how she plans on financing that type of a day for the individual businesses, all the businesses in Manitoba. I think of the postal service where those individuals don't get to enjoy that holiday at the same time that I do, or the bus drivers, for instance, in the city of Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba that won't get the opportunity to enjoy that holiday at the same time that I do, or perhaps the school boards that need to finance those type of holidays that really is a direct taxation to people in Manitoba.

* (15:20)

So I'm wondering if the minister has given some thought to whether a meaningful tax break could be brought forward to help offset these costs. It has been pointed out by a number of people, or at least some people today that the cost to local businesses—

and when they say local businesses, I assume that that means within the city of Winnipeg—but the local businesses in all of Manitoba that there would be a cost to local business of \$157 million. That's a considerable amount of change, Mr. Speaker. So I would challenge the minister responsible for the bill today that I am willing to support the bill, but I'm challenging that minister to come forward with a meaningful reduction in tax to offset the cost to the businesses.

The businesses with one staff or two staff definitely have a serious challenge and a serious issue. The scheduling of shift work with large companies and even with small companies or delivering the services is definitely an issue, Mr. Speaker. So, again, the challenge is out there. I hope that the minister responsible for this bill has given it some thought and will speak to her colleagues about a meaningful reduction in taxes. 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 of Bill 16, The Statutory Holidays Act (Various Acts Amended).

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

Bill 3—The Healthy Child Manitoba Act

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 3, The Healthy Child Manitoba Act; Loi sur la stratégie « Enfants en santé Manitoba », be now read a second time and be referred to the committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of this bill and I table his message.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Health, seconded by the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth, that Bill 3, The Healthy Child Manitoba Act, be now read a second time and be referred to the committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of this bill and the message has been tabled.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, in the interests of expediency, I will refer the House to my second reading speech

of November 27, 2006, and recommend this bill to the House. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I won't defer to expediency. I do want to put a couple of comments on the record regarding this particular piece of legislation. I know my colleagues are urging me on to expound on this particular bill. Certainly, when you look at the program, the Healthy Child program, I can say, you know, as a new parent, relatively new, not so new anymore. I feel like, you know, Canada's new government. I guess after a year, you can stop referring to yourself as new, I suppose.

But, having a son who's one year old, I did learn quite a lot about the need to have an education in terms of what young children need. There isn't really a manual that you take home from the hospital. When you leave the hospital you go home with the skills that you've either intuitively learned or that perhaps your family has passed on. I recognize that my wife and I certainly came from a very fortunate situation. We had all the support of family, of a large, extended family and we were in a privileged, I would say, position, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to coming home with a new child, but also recognizing that many others in Manitoba and, indeed, right across our country aren't from that same privileged situation and don't have the same sort of support system that my wife and I were blessed and happy to have around us.

So there is a need for government, and I certainly don't always stand up and advocate for government being involved in everybody's life. I do believe, both as a small "c" and a large "C" Conservative, that there are times that government shouldn't be involved in an individual's life, but, of course, there are also times when there is a need for it, particularly when we look at the protection of children.

There is a need for government to have some involvement to ensure that those who don't have the same sort of a start or the same sort of understanding or the same sort of extended support system around them can get the information they need and that help extended then to those children who also need it. As I think many members in this House have said, I don't think this is a political issue. Many members of this House have said that the best thing we could do for children is to ensure that they have a good start, a healthy start, and to get them into a proper environment.

Certainly, we've seen too many tragic examples in Manitoba in recent years about situations where children aren't in the proper caring and loving environment. Certainly, we want to ensure that we do all that we can to prevent those tragic situations from happening.

I'm clearly in support of the Healthy Child Program. I know that members of the previous government, the Conservative government, were also in support of the program. I really haven't heard anybody in Manitoba who's opposed to the program. I don't know that there was ever a concern that it was in jeopardy, or that somehow it was under threat. The Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) can correct me. Perhaps she's been hearing others out there who wanted to dismantle the program or do something other than continue to support the program.

But I believe, not to put words in the mouth of the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), but I believe the Independent member, the Leader of the Liberal Party, would also say that he supports this particular program. He'll correct me if I'm wrong, I'm sure, but I do believe that he would support it.

So, when you look around this Chamber, you know, the New Democrats support the program, the Conservatives historically, and have shown they'd support it, when they were in government, and the Liberals, I'm supposing, are also in favour of the program. Yet the minister, I guess, felt the need to enshrine this into legislation for some particular reason and to add another level of bureaucracy to it, even though it didn't seem to be in peril.

It makes one wonder what the genesis or the origin of this particular legislation was. I think there's some suspicion around this Chamber. Maybe it's not a topic of coffee shop conversation around Manitoba, but I do believe that there are many who wondered whether or not the government, prior to the election, a few months prior to the election, were sort of sitting around and saying, well, what pieces of legislation can we bring forward to the Legislature in advance of the election that will sound very positive and that certainly nobody could oppose to both (a) it would look like we're doing something and that we have some sort of a robust agenda, and (b) that there wouldn't be strong opposition either from the political opposition or from Manitobans at large.

This is probably why this bill came forward because entrenching a program into legislation that really isn't under threat, really hasn't been considered

for anything other than support, seems a little strange, and then adding that extra level of bureaucracy to it. I'm not sure that it will necessarily enhance the program, and I don't think that there was necessarily need for protection of the program because it didn't seem to be under threat.

This isn't the first time, unfortunately, that we've seen the government look for pieces of legislation that did very little or didn't change substantially the current situation in Manitoba, bring them to the Legislature just to try to get some sort of a positive feedback, some sort of a positive response from it.

You know, you can look at a number of different analogies, I suppose. The Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), I believe, raised an issue regarding beaver protection in the Legislature last week, the Beaver Deceiver program. One wonders if the government is going to be bringing forward a bill, the Beaver Deceiver act, to enshrine that program into legislation to make sure that it doesn't get trampled upon or doesn't get changed in any way even though I don't think there are many people looking to change that program.

We've seen it from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), from the Government House Leader, who brings forward legislation on Public Accounts. It's already in our rules, Mr. Speaker, that you need to have six meetings of Public Accounts a year, and yet the government now decides, oh, well, let's put that into legislation because it might look like we're actually doing something more than what's happening currently today. Well, that seems to have backfired on them as I know that there are editorialists and others who are interested in this issue, and there are probably more people interested in the issue of Public Accounts than the members opposite would believe.

*(15:30)

But, certainly, they've come forward and said, well, this doesn't seem to be a robust piece of legislation. It doesn't really change the current situation which isn't working well. So, somewhere, prior to the election, there was clearly a meeting of NDP minds, not that that's an oxymoron or a contradiction, but there would have been a meeting of NDP minds somewhere to discuss what kind of legislation we need to bring forward prior to election, and I think that is where this piece of legislation was born, Mr. Speaker. It was hatched, it was conceived from the notion that we need to bring forward legislation that sounds good and that doesn't have

any controversy to it as we roll forward to an election.

So, here we are, looking at this particular piece of legislation. I know that there's been editorial comment in one of the daily newspapers here in Winnipeg suggesting that this is just simply going to add a level of bureaucracy to a program that's already working fine. It wasn't necessarily being looked for changes; it might just simply grow and grow and grow, and we might have a lot more people being paid more money to do what was already existing in the program and already existing without any sort of controversy or any sort of threat that it was not going to be continued on with.

So, I mean, I would encourage members opposite, as we look forward to the next four years, to start to look at different pieces of legislation that actually do something different than what's being done here in Manitoba today, and then move Manitoba forward instead of simply putting forward pieces of legislation that are designed to have us look as though something is going on here in Manitoba.

I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) was in Steinbach last week giving a pre-budget consultation meeting, and certainly I know he heard clearly from residents about the many challenges that we have in that community and the lack of attention that he and his government have paid to the Steinbach constituency. In fact, and I'll tie this back in, Mr. Speaker, because I know you'll be looking for a tie-in, but in fact I thought it was interesting that when the Minister of Finance posted on his overhead display the highway construction that had happened in the riding for the last seven years, the only thing he had up there was the redoing of an intersection on Highway 311. That's all he can come up with was the repaving of an intersection in seven years on Highway 311. Isn't that shameful that he could only find that one small example of what happened in the constituency?

But, going back to this bill, Mr. Speaker, how this relates to the topic at hand is, you know, one can imagine maybe the Minister of Finance—and I don't want to give him any ideas because he probably already has ideas—but maybe he's looking at legislation and saying, well, we should bring in legislation that mandates the pre-budget consultation meetings, the pre-budget consultation act, even though nobody is saying that the pre-budget consultations shouldn't be there. Nobody is saying that they should be taken away, but let's bring in

another piece of legislation so that they can put it on the Order Paper. I've probably got the attention of the Government House Leader now, thinking, this is a great idea. You know, we're going to put it on the Order Paper; we're going to have the pre-budget consultation act. Everybody's going to think we're doing something when, really, nothing more is being done than was being done before.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's where I think the concern is for Manitobans, you know, when there's a lot of other ways that the government could be expending their time and their energy, and in some extent their resources, on things that are important. I raised in Question Period just earlier today the issue of two pediatric doctors who are leaving the province. You know, there's some irony, some disappointing irony, to the fact that the same day the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) reintroduces the Healthy Child Manitoba Act, we're losing two pediatric doctors here in Manitoba. What better way to keep children healthy than to ensure that these pediatric doctors would be here?

I'm not going to estimate, Mr. Speaker, how much time or energy a department has spent on putting together a bill, but, clearly, there's some time and energy that it takes to put forward a bill to ensure that the minister is briefed and understands all the different issues that are going forward there. Instead of putting forward a bill that enshrines something that's already happening, what if that time and energy had been put in place to keep those two pediatric doctors in Manitoba to work to ensure that the health system for young children was a strength and that we weren't losing those doctors?

So there's a sad irony, I think, that on this same day that we're debating this particular bill, we also know that children's health isn't improving in Manitoba; it's actually worsening because we're losing some of these medical specialists that we need to keep here in the province of Manitoba. There are parents, I think, who would either be concerned that their children might develop some sort of a disease or need these sorts of professionals, or that already have this particular affliction and they want to ensure that these doctors stay.

So I would encourage on a go-forward basis, looking forward, not back. Some might say, Mr. Speaker, on a go-forward basis that the minister looks toward bills and ideas that are actually improving Manitoba, changing something of substance that we don't have here today, whether that

would be addiction treatment, for example. I've talked to the minister about this, or other particular issues that fall under her narrow, but in some ways, certainly, important ministry that she focusses on those so that Manitobans can see the benefit of the work that she's putting forward.

So, clearly, Mr. Speaker, we will not be opposing this particular piece of legislation. We've always, as Conservatives, stood for ensuring that children get the best start that they possibly can in life whether that's a political statement, whether that's a personal statement, and I know looking at the full benches here on our side of the House that there are many, many members who have children, who raise their children, and they know the importance of ensuring that those young people get the best start that they can.

So we will always continue with our support in ensuring that those young children get a good start. Perhaps in some ways one wonders if the government isn't protecting themselves from themselves. Maybe they're bringing in this legislation because we know that there was no opposition on this side of the House and I doubt that the Liberal Leader had opposition, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]*

I look forward for the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) assuming his rightful Cabinet position, and we can have this debate in Estimates. I know it's been a long summer of lobbying for the Member for Brandon East with letters and articles in trying to ensure he secured his seat. So, when he reaches that, we can have the discussion about this particular act, and I can ask him, maybe he's bringing forward the opposition to the Healthy Child program. Maybe it was that member. Maybe it was the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) who was concerned about the Healthy Child act, and so the minister said, well, we have to protect ourselves from our own caucus members; let's bring in this legislation and entrench it so that no New Democratic member can pull out this important program ever again no matter how long they're in government.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, not only will we not oppose this particular bill, but when we're back in government we'll ensure that not only does the Healthy Child act remain in place, but that the program get stronger each and every year we're in government.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on Bill 3, The Healthy Child Manitoba

Act, and I recognize that the Conservatives are saying that they're not the opposition. Well, we are the opposition here, and we recognize that we have to do a job, and we have some major changes that we're going to suggest to this act because, quite frankly, it needs a bit of an overhaul.

I would say that—let me start by talking about what we suspect are the two reasons for this bill. First of all, the Doer NDP government has a less than stellar record when it comes to child health. That has been well documented in a report titled *Six Lost Years*, an assessment of the record of the NDP in their first six years with regard to child health. I don't need to go further than that. The NDP needed, therefore, a public relations statement suggesting at least that they were doing something to improve the health of children, because their record was so terrible that they recognized that they needed to do something that would give them some positive public relations in this area.

* (15:40)

Second, I believe that the NDP recognized that they had done a very poor job in their first eight years, and, clearly, that there was a need to make some internal changes which reflected the fact that they'd been so unsuccessful when it comes to improving the health of children and, therefore, that they'd better do something. Yes, they have got a Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, and they've decided now that they're going to be handing out some grants to try and get some support and some changes in terms of child health in Manitoba.

Well, the problem, however, is that when we look at the record—and let's look at this—the NDP's record when it comes to the health of children has been somewhat dismal. When we held the hearings about the health of children, I remember hearing the incredible story about children who were born under the government of the NDP who had tremendous problems with dental caries, not just one child, but whole communities of children born under the stewardship of the NDP who, by age two, were having such severe dental caries that they needed to have surgical procedures in order to help them out. They had to fly many hundreds of miles, some of these children, from their home communities to get surgical procedures to correct the problem which should have been prevented by good stewardship and good government before it ever developed to such a shocking extent.

I remember hearing and seeing the problem demonstrated in photos, demonstrated in children, who had such a severe problem with dental caries, again under the watch of the NDP, that they were literally crying when they tried to eat because they were so badly off. This shouldn't be happening in the province of Manitoba, but, sadly, it is happening and continues to happen in the province of Manitoba in the year 2007. It is a tragedy of enormous proportions, a tragedy on which we are spending a lot of money having surgical procedures for very young children which are totally unnecessary because the prevention, the adequate support for the health of children, has not been there in the way that it should be there.

Mr. Speaker, I can give another example. This is in terms of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. All of us in this Chamber, I believe, want to see the incidence of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders reduced dramatically from what it is. All of us in this Chamber, I believe, want to see children identified as early as possible so they can be helped and that families can be helped, instead of the tragedies which occur in our province on a daily basis because children are not identified early and families are not being helped adequately when they have a child with FASD.

But, as the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) described just the other day, she doesn't yet have reliable numbers for the incidence of FASD in Manitoba. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's sort of extraordinary when the federal government can have a study and get the work done to have the incidence determined for FASD in Stony Mountain Penitentiary, but this government can't even do the work to give us clear numbers, accurate numbers, solid numbers, for the incidence of FASD in the children in Manitoba. We need to be doing the work to identify and to help these children. We need to make sure that no child falls through the cracks. Sadly, under the system at the moment, we are having lots of children fall through the cracks.

So I believe that one of the things that needs to be done is to make sure that we have these solid, accurate measures of incidence of problems like FASD. There was, at one point, a registry, but the funding for that was cancelled under the previous government and has never been reinstated. Sadly, the movement in this direction has been very slow, so that there hasn't been a lot moved forward in terms of determining even the incidence of FASD among children in Manitoba so we could start to address this

issue and know whether measures that are being taken actually have an impact on the incidence.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of elements of this bill which as they are put now are highly unsatisfactory. Let me give you an example. It's totally wrong and inappropriate to have an annual report every five years. They won't have a report until they're out of government. They don't want to be accountable. We need a report annually, every year, outcome data with good solid information, not just some PR document five years from now. This is a disgrace to have this set up without a proper annual report and without clear indications of the important things which are going to be in the annual report.

Second, one would expect that the Manitoba Institute of Child Health, a very important organization in our province, would be mentioned here and that they would at least have a representative on the committee the government is setting up. Certainly this is something which one would expect would be a basic ingredient, that the provincial Healthy Child Advisory Committee would have a representative from the Manitoba Institute of Child Health with some assurance of solid scientific background and understanding of child health represented on this committee.

I believe we have already seen, Mr. Speaker, that time and time again, we need to ensure—and we've talked about this with regard to Manitoba Hydro and other committees with appointments, that they need to be done in a way that is appropriate, but they also need to be done in a way that is going to provide a report to the legislative committee. This is so important, that that report and the advisory committee should report directly to a committee of the Manitoba Legislature, not just to the minister. We certainly should have the provincial Healthy Child Advisory Committee reporting to a committee of the Legislature, so that the members and the chair of the committee can be asked questions directly.

This problem, under this government, of a lack of accountability, a terrible lack of accountability has to be changed. We need to have accountability in this province. We are not getting now. We need to have it. Things must change.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, as we have talked about on numerous occasions, that one of the fundamentals in this whole area, as we've talked about earlier as Liberals, is to set up a specialist network dealing with maternal and child health, just like there is CancerCare Manitoba, that there needs to be a formal

provincially reporting province-wide maternal and child health specialist network set up to help co-ordinate activities to make sure that the integration of education, research and care is ongoing. It is sad the NDP government has not recognized and incorporated in this document some of the essential changes that are needed if this is going to work in a better way than it has worked in the last eight years.

The health of our children is very, very important to all of us. It's important to us as citizens. It is important to us as parents and grandparents and other family members. It is important to us as members of our community. It is important, not only for children in one part of the province, but for children in all parts of the province, irrespective of where they are born or live or reside in Manitoba.

* (15:50)

The health of our children is very, very important. That, Mr. Speaker, is why it's so important to do a good job on this bill, and that's why it's so important to make some changes that will improve the bill and improve the work of Manitoba and Manitobans in improving the health of children in our province.

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 3, The Healthy Child Manitoba Act.

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

Bill 18—The Forest Health Protection Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 18, The Forest Health Protection Act; Loi sur la protection de la santé des forêts, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of this bill and I table the message.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Attorney General, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance, that Bill 18, The Forest Health Protection Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of this bill and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that the protection of forests and the ability to be flexible in terms of those responses apply to not just Manitoba but to all jurisdictions in western Canada.

We've seen the infestation of numerous forms of disease and pesticide into our forest systems that, in other times and in other places, have not existed in Canada. The ability of the province to function effectively and to function expeditiously with respect to these infestations is tantamount to the protection of our forest, both the economic and the health and well-being of our forests.

This bill, together with other actions of our government, has moved towards promoting and improving that response in both an expeditious and economic fashion. One needs only to look at the devastation that's occurred in British Columbia and Alberta with respect to spruce budworm to recognize the significance of what we have to do. With those few words, I commend this bill and its passage to members of this House.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to be here on behalf of our side of the House to put a few words on the record with respect to The Forest Health Protection Act, and I'm sure the minister will at some point be willing to put his words on the record with respect to this bill. I would hope he would, anyway.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree with the intent of any bill that helps to reduce any potential health threat to our beautiful Manitoba forests. Certainly we see the purpose of this bill is to protect Manitoba's trees and forests from existing health threats such as Dutch elm disease, as well as invasive threats that have not yet reached Manitoba, such as the mountain pine beetle and the emerald ash borer.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The bill prohibits people from bringing invasive forest threats into Manitoba, and allows the minister to prohibit or regulate the entry of certain forest products that might carry those threats.

I know that the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) was speaking earlier about—and perhaps a precedent was set with respect to legislation in this Chamber when, on almost the same day as pediatricians leaving our province, a bill called The

Healthy Child Manitoba Act was introduced, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This is a similar precedent here; here we see on the same day as a bill being introduced, The Forest Health Protection Act, that the Manitoba government is proposing a hydro line down the west side of Lake Winnipeg, Madam Deputy Speaker, that will go right through Riding Mountain National Park and cut down all the trees or many of the trees in there to allow for a power line right through our national park, which includes many forests. I think I find it passing strange that they would introduce such legislation at the same time as talking about cutting down many of our trees in one of our national parks. Riding Mountain National Park puts us on the map here in Manitoba. I find it unfortunate that at the same time with their introducing something called The Forest Health Protection Act that they would be looking at cutting down trees in one of our national parks, Riding Mountain National Park.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we all agree that the threat of invasive species cannot be taken lightly. One can only look at the devastating effects in both British Columbia and Alberta and other areas of many of these outbreaks of invasive species such as the mountain pine beetle. In Manitoba there are already a number of insects and diseases that affect the health of our forests. These include spruce budworm, spruce beetles, dwarf mistletoe and western gall rust, to name just a few of these. Manitobans have seen first-hand the devastating damage that Dutch elm disease is taking, and we support, on this side of the House, ongoing efforts to deal with this very serious problem.

As our climate changes, the increasing migratory nature of some invasive species represents a real threat to Manitoba's forest resources. However, enforcement of government legislation will depend on the number of officers employed by Manitoba Conservation. There have been questions in the past about staffing issues and financing for this department for a number of years. I hope as they bring forward this legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker, that they will have the proper enforcement in place to ensure that our trees are truly protected. While it's important that infested trees be removed as quickly as possible, it's impossible that this legislation not lead to conditions in which individuals and companies can take advantage of the opportunity to clear-cut sections of forest without restraint. This would be to no one's benefit, obviously.

Regarding compensation, this legislation says a person is not entitled to it, but the provincial government may consider it if it is, quote, fair and reasonable in the circumstances. Madam Deputy Speaker, I think when governments use those types of terms like fair and reasonable, we know in many different occasions where things that are quite clearly fair and reasonable or unfair and unreasonable, they haven't taken action on it. So I think this needs to be clarified to define what these fair and reasonable circumstances might be and what type of financial limitations may be placed on compensation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, protecting the long-term health of our provincial forest resources must remain a priority of this provincial government. Manitoba's forests are a valuable resource from an environmental, a recreational and an economic perspective. We would also encourage ongoing discussions between the federal and provincial levels of government when it comes to the development of strategies aimed at protecting the ongoing health of Canada's forests. It is also important to recognize the work being undertaken by groups such as the Manitoba Forestry Association, which operates many programs aimed at increasing public awareness of our forest resources. Their efforts are to be commended.

* (16:00)

So I think, with those few words I will leave it at that. We look forward to moving this through to committee, at which point in time we look forward to hearing from any presentations from the public out there, from various organizations, whether the Manitoba Forestry Association or other associations that will be affected by this bill will have the opportunity to come forward and put their words on the record with their concerns. I hope that the minister will maybe now take the opportunity to say a few words about his bill and, you know, maybe look at moving this forward. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to this important bill, Bill 18, The Forest Health Protection Act.

I'm very pleased to see the presence, both now and when this bill was read at second reading, of the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers). I know it's unusual when a minister has somebody else stand up when he's in the Chamber, but that's fine if the minister would like to do that.

But, certainly, this is a very important bill. It is timely. Here we are in Manitoba, the have-not province under the Doer NDP government, and we are faced with a situation where, from the west we have this incredible invasion of the mountain pine beetle and, of course, its primary target is the lodgepole pine, and it's having a huge impact in British Columbia. We have heard so much about the problems in British Columbia as a result of the mountain pine beetle, and the concern is that it might get into the jack pine. If it were to get into the jack pine, then there is a potential problem that it can spread across from British Columbia to Alberta to Saskatchewan and then to Manitoba. Certainly, we would like to make sure that that doesn't happen. We should have the tools to make sure that from a Manitoba perspective, we are ready to protect our forests from an invasion from the West.

At the same time, Madam Deputy Speaker, as we have this invasion from the west, we have another invasion, the emerald ash borer, coming from Ontario, from the east. This is a problem for the ash trees and we have some wonderful ash trees in Winnipeg along the rivers. We were living for quite a number of years along the Assiniboine River and the beauty of these incredible ash trees that we have here, it is something to behold as all Manitobans know, that the ash tree is really one of the wonderful trees. It's beautiful wood and having been in a situation where from time to time we had to cut up ash trees which had fallen down, just to be able to work with the ash wood and to see it, it is a beautiful wood to work with.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, here we are, poor, have-not province Manitoba, facing this huge invasion from the west and another huge invasion from the east, and the minister got up and let somebody else speak for him. Well, that's fine. I want to acknowledge his important presence earlier on and to make sure that all in this Chamber recognize the good job that the minister is doing in bringing forward this bill, which is timely and which is needed.

I would suggest, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this bill, a lot of good work has been done by people who are very knowledgeable in the forest area, but I think there are opportunities here to look at this bill carefully, clause by clause, to hear from people in committee.

I am a little concerned that there should be a little bit more attention with respect to this, to the

area of research as it applies to pests like the ones we're dealing with, that the conditions that we are faced with in Manitoba are not identical to the conditions which are present in other jurisdictions, whether it's Ontario or British Columbia. Our winters are colder. This may, in fact, help to protect Manitoba, but it's a reason why we need to have a significant investment in research here so that we are well able to deal with this species and so that we are well able to make sure that our trees and our forests are well looked after in our province.

We have had, I must acknowledge, the Model Forest Program which was largely a federal program, but which the Province has made some contributions to, but the provincial government has not paid sufficient attention to the development of forestry research and wood products research in our province. I would suggest to the minister that this is an area where, in eight years, you know, the NDP have kind of fallen down.

An Honourable Member: That's putting it nicely, Jon.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, that is putting it nicely. They've sort of fallen on their face, you know, in the forest, in a bed of leaves or in the mud or somewhere. But what is clear, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that there's room for improvement in this legislation and in the government's approach. With those few comments—I know the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) would like to make a few comments on this legislation—I will end. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair.

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 18, The Forest Health Protection Act.

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

Bill 17—The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) that Bill 17, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act; Loi sur les fondations à la mémoire des pompiers, des agents de la paix et des travailleurs, now be read

a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, in the interests of expediency, I will refer the House to my second readings speech of April 19, 2007. I look forward to the support of this House in having this bill passed. Thank you very much.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 17, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act. Of course, this bill was first brought in last spring just before the election, a few days or about a week before the election, and it's been reintroduced this fall as well.

We've had the opportunity, when this bill was previously before the House as Bill 22 to speak to it as well, and I want to put some of those words on the record just for clarification to make sure that there's no ambiguity in regard to the positions taken in regard to this bill, Mr. Speaker.

I, of course, speak to the fact that this bill establishes a foundation to honour firefighters, peace officers and other workers in the province of Manitoba. It establishes the three foundations. It would be the foundations of the Firefighters Memorial Foundation, the Peace Officers Memorial Foundation and the Workers Memorial Foundation. We've many, many persons in these lines of work and others that have put their lives on the line in Manitoba for the citizens of this province, and this bill aptly recognizes their contribution to our efforts to have a safer society in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

*(16:10)

I want to refer as well to the fact that this bill honours those who have died in the workplace in these lines of work. The Workers Memorial Foundation would include virtually all levels of the working public in Manitoba in regard to many other workplace environments that are there, many other careers, I should say, that would be in place with this bill. The foundations are also used to educate the public about the contributions made by these people in our society and their efforts to represent and protect us in Manitoba as well, Mr. Speaker.

This bill, Bill 17, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act, also gives the authority to these groups to raise funds to design, erect, and maintain monuments on or near

the Manitoba Legislative Building grounds, Mr. Speaker. Our party supports the fact that these people should be recognized in regard to their contributions to work for the fact that they are putting themselves at risk for the safety of society.

While the risk they take is never forgotten, it is brought to the forefront of our thoughts at times of tragedy. We need to recognise their efforts, not just at times of tragedy but all year long. These foundations would provide an opportunity to recognize these through memorials that could be built as monuments to the firefighters, peace officers, and other workers in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the law enforcement officers, whether they're members of a municipal, provincial, or national force are a unique family of individuals, and the loss of any officer, in any region, impacts police colleagues in every jurisdiction of Canada. The same is true for firefighters, both full-time and part-time and voluntary. We saw a moving display of this with the memorial service last February for Captain Harold Lessard and Captain Thomas Nichols, when many firefighters came to Winnipeg from all over North America.

As well, I had the opportunity of meeting these gentlemen at the 9/11 ceremony. I must put on the record that I had the wonderful opportunity of meeting both Captains Lessard and Nichols at the 9/11 ceremony in the Peace Gardens a year ago September 11, when they were there to represent the firefighters, Mr. Speaker, and had an opportunity. I did, as well as our leader, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), spoke with them at that time, and, of course, this kind of a tragedy brings it even more close to home when you have at least met them. I didn't know them that personally, but when you've met these individuals and had a chance to talk to them about their careers and the length of time that they had served in the public safety programs that they were involved in, it brings these kinds of tragedies home even more, and I think drives home the fact that we all need to make sure that the commemoration of these types of heroic displays, I could put forward, are recognized for the future citizens of this province.

As we've said for many, many years, as a result of the wars, Mr. Speaker, that lest we forget. We must never forget these individuals and the sacrifices that they've made.

At this time, we also should be extending our sympathies to the families who've lost loved ones at

work, didn't return home to their families. That's what these memorials would be as well, commemorations to their dedication. You know, each April 28, we observe the National Day of Mourning to honour those who have been killed or injured in the workplace and who suffer illnesses related to their occupation.

We've had recent examples of police officers and firefighters killed in the line of duty in Manitoba, being back in December 21, 2001, since I was elected, Mr. Speaker, in the name of Constable Dennis Strongquill with the RCMP, who was fatally shot following a routine traffic stop. He had over 20 years of service. Also, Peter Magdic, with the RCMP; Constable Magdic, as well, with November 18, 2001, died as a result of a tragic accident while returning to Portage la Prairie detachment, where he only had less than a year of service. The length of time a person serves is not what this is commemorating. It's the fact that they were in the line of looking after making Manitoba a safer place for our public.

I've referred to firefighters, Captain Lessard and Captain Nichols, as well killed in that flashover in St. Boniface earlier this year. Captain Lessard had 31 years of experience and Captain Nichols, 32. There were four other firefighters injured in that same incident—Lionel Crowther, Scott Atchison, Ed Wiebe and Darcy Funk, and to them and their families, we dedicate these kinds of memorials and the reason that we feel so strongly that a bill like this should go forward.

We also feel, Mr. Speaker, that I would just like to touch, because today is such an important day, October 15, here in Canada today. It's the national funeral in Ottawa of RCMP Constable Chris Worden who was shot at a suspected drug house in Hay River, Northwest Territories, just last week. He had only been in the force a little over four years, and I believe you know it's an awful tragedy for a young man, 30 years old, to have lost his life like this. He was married, with an infant daughter. Even though he wasn't from Manitoba, these kinds of memorials would commend the dedication of people in his area of work across Canada as well.

We've had Constable Daniel Tessier, an officer in Québec who lost his life as well, back in March, and two officers near Mildred, Saskatchewan, in July of '06, Robin Lynelle Cameron, Constable Cameron, as well as Constable Marc Joseph Bourdages as well, and four officers, of course, that we know of in the

Mayerthorpe, Alberta, area, that tragic catastrophe that took place on March 3, 2005, where Constable Brock Myrol, Constable Lionide "Leo" Johnston, Constable Peter Schiemann and Constable Anthony Gordon were shot and killed while serving a warrant on a farm near Mayerthorpe.

Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of tragedies that we have put forth as ones that could be remembered, and even though many of them happened outside of Manitoba, it's important, as I've said earlier, to repeat the fact that we believe very strongly in these types of situations going forward and being represented.

I want to say as well, Mr. Speaker, that it's been brought to our attention that other groups such as the Paramedic Association of Manitoba has made request that they be involved in this type of memorial as well. I know that they've been contacted by the minister's office to let them know that the government is considering moves in that area, and having them be a part of this. Of course, they would be recognized under other workers' memorial—under the workers' memorial fund at least anyway. But it would be a much clearer indication of the dedication and the acknowledgment of their work every time they go to an accident as well, if they were recognized as part of this bill as well. I leave that with the government to see if they could see fit to do that.

Mr. Speaker, also there's been loss of life from firefighters in Manitoba from illnesses resulting from the hazards that they've been exposed to in the course of their duties from some of the fires and the toxic substances that they have been exposed to over the years as well. I think that the presumptive coverage for firefighters for occupational-related illnesses is something that we have certainly been supportive of on our side of the House as well. We know firefighters that have been exposed to these hazards that have put them at greater risk for certain cancers and other illnesses such as brain cancers, bladder cancers, kidney cancers, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and leukemia, to name a few.

* (16:20)

So it's to them as well that we have put forth our support for Bill 17 as we, hopefully, can move forward with this. I know it only provides an opportunity for these organizations to go out and collect the funds that they need to build these monuments and make the dedications possible, whether these are on the grounds of the Legislative Assembly or in grounds surrounding it, as the bill

states. One suggestion I may make is because that these are the three foundations to be created are referred to as memorial foundations, perhaps a fitting place for the three memorial foundations would be on Memorial Boulevard. You can't get any closer to the Legislative Building than that as well. I would leave it to the powers to be at that time to make that decision as well, Mr. Speaker, but it's only a suggestion that I put forward.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that, with those few words, I would end my remarks on this bill, just to say that we will be supporting this bill at this point. It's a bill that does recognize the contributions made by all firefighters, peace officers, and workers through a memorial foundation and across the province of Manitoba, no matter how long they've been dedicated to their particular careers. I know that the trust companies that would be set up to deal with these, to manage and invest these funds, would be set up with the best interests of Manitobans in mind. Of course, the board of directors on these foundations would not be receiving any remuneration, as has been pointed out in the bill, and we would certainly believe that that's the proper way to go in regard to establishing a bill for this particular purpose.

So, with those few words, I will end my comments in regard to Bill 17 and look forward to the government being able to move this forward.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday, October 17, at 6 p.m., to deal with the following bills: Bill 3, The Healthy Child Manitoba Act; Bill 16, The Statutory Holidays Act (Various Acts Amended); and Bill 18, The Forest Health Protection Act.

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday, October 17, 2007, at 6 p.m., to deal with the following bills: Bill 3, The Healthy Child Manitoba Act; Bill 16, The Statutory Holidays Act (Various Acts Amended); Bill 18, The Forest Health Protection Act.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to put a few words on the record on Bill 17 before its passage from the Legislature going into committee stage, and in essence, be fairly clear on the issue in terms of the type of support that

this bill has, I believe, is one of a unanimous nature from the Legislature. I think it speaks well in terms of the idea of establishing these foundations and the overall benefit by attempting to act relatively quickly so that we could ultimately see the legislation receive Royal Assent by the end of the month.

Mr. Speaker, the level of public awareness in regard to those who respond, in particular to the 911 calls, was dramatically increased after the 9/11 incident. As a result, I think that we are seeing, no doubt not only in Manitoba, but in North America, a greater amount of attention being given to our peace officers and fire emergency personnel. It was interesting, and the speaker before me made reference to the paramedics, and I think the validity of their case that's being brought forward, government hasn't indicated to us to date as to what their intentions are in terms of a possible amendment or what it might be putting into consideration.

There are many different types of professions that people have lost their life and it's, in essence, for the better good. You know, at the turn of two millenniums ago, the building of infrastructures and the number of construction workers that built our bridges is an example that died in order to be able to have that infrastructure to the types of works that were being done in-between. There are many workers that work for the public good. In fact, there's a valid argument to be made that all work is important work. All work contributes to ultimately what it is that we have today. That's why I was glad to see that third part brought to it, Mr. Speaker, that goes beyond just the peace officers and firefighters, and that's why it's not much of a problem to be able to stand up in support of the bill and its passage.

The previous speaker made reference to the location and that's also what I want to just kind of add a comment to. He makes the suggestion as a memorial park, something that's in front of the Legislature. There is no doubt all sorts of possible locations that are out there, and it would be nice to come up with the same sort of unanimous support for where it is that we could actually see a park established or some worthy place where these foundations can erect the statues or whatever it is that's deemed that they want to put in place with these memorial funds.

I look at the success of The Forks as an example. The Forks itself is tied to the Legislative grounds through the walkway, and we get phenomenal numbers of tourists that walk along our rivers, not

only tourists but obviously local people also, Mr. Speaker. I think that there could be a number of locations that might be deemed an appropriate place, and what I hope is that we would see some leadership in terms of trying to have a discussion.

You know, earlier today in Question Period I brought up The Forks North Portage Corporation and why it's important to be coming to the Legislature and presenting annual reports. This is something which could be questioned of an organization of that nature. Maybe they can incorporate it into some sort of plans. Maybe there is a role for government services whether it's the Legislative grounds or Memorial Park, but it's taking it the next step. It's something which obviously we in the Liberal Party are very supportive of the legislation, but we would like to be able to participate or ensure that Manitobans as a whole have a mechanism to participate in the follow-up, as I'm sure Manitobans as a whole will be approached in different ways to be able to contribute to these foundations. So we should partner as much as possible so that at the end of the day everyone is feeling comfortable for such a worthy cause.

When you think of the loss of life and some that have advocated so admirably, I was really impressed upon by a fellow by the name of Jim Woodman who was a firefighter and can recall discussions that we had in regard to the fire department. I can recall discussions that I've had within my own constituency with constituents dealing with paramedics. People do have an interest and do have a passion and want to be able to pay tribute to those that lose their life on the job. It wasn't that long ago I was talking to my former colleague—and all of us know Gary Kowalski—talking about the issue of fallen officers.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think this is a good piece of legislation. We look forward to it ultimately receiving Royal Assent and the years ahead as we start to see what happens through these foundation funds. With those few words we're prepared to see it go to committee. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I just want to put a few words on the record regarding this particular piece of legislation. My colleague from Arthur-Virden mentioned the glaring absence of paramedics referenced in this particular piece of legislation, and I think it really is an absence.

* (16:30)

Of course, we all recognize and pay tribute to the fine work that our men and women in our fire departments do, whether it's the full-time firefighters here in the city of Winnipeg or Brandon or others around the province, or those who are working part time or on a volunteer basis in many of our rural communities who equally put their lives on the line every day responding to calls, in many cases, responding to as many calls as their full-time counterparts here in the city of Winnipeg.

But it seems that there has been an omission. The EMS workers and paramedics, who also respond to calls—and in many cases they're the first ones on the scenes when there is an emergency or even in a dangerous situation—I would say, Mr. Speaker, they show up first. So we know there have been incidents where paramedics are putting their lives on the line and we need to recognize that. I'm disappointed that no member of the Cabinet, when this piece of legislation was being debated in their Cabinet, raised that issue and didn't seem to want to advocate or didn't advocate—

An Honourable Member: How do you know? You weren't there.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I appreciate now the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) saying that maybe it was raised. So then, I guess if the Minister of Advanced Education is suggesting that it was raised then, perhaps, none of them had the fortitude or the strength or perhaps they decided to reject the paramedics' plea to have this. So I appreciate the clarification from the Minister of Advanced Education—[interjection]

That raises the point though, Mr. Speaker. I did actually have the chance during Estimates to put the question to the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald). I asked her: Did she raise the issue of paramedics? One would think, if anybody would stand up in that Cabinet and defend the work of EMS workers and paramedics, it would have been the Minister of Health. Apparently, she didn't come forward and say that the paramedics should be included.

What about the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak)? I read with interest an article over the weekend where the paramedics' union in Winnipeg was now asking that it be mandatory that they have bulletproof vests on as part of their job because it's such a dangerous job. The Minister of Justice should read that article. One of the quotes in that particular article was that they said that the nature of the work of paramedics had changed significantly over the last

few years because there are so many more shootings in Winnipeg than there had been before that. So now paramedics are going to be having to wear bulletproof vests, or the union would like them to wear bulletproof vests to protect themselves.

So maybe the Minister of Justice, in Cabinet, should have stood up and said: Well, this is fine to recognize the firefighters. It's a good thing we support it. But what about the paramedics who are equally out there saving lives on the one hand and putting their own lives at risk on the other hand? But I'm disappointed that either the Minister of Justice or the Minister of Health didn't raise this in Cabinet or, perhaps, as the Minister of Advanced Education suggests, it was raised in Cabinet but they declined to accept that recommendation and made these paramedics second-class lifesavers, second-class emergency workers, Mr. Speaker.

But, as is often the case in government or in life, there's a second chance, and that second chance will be at committee. While the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Health didn't have the pull, didn't have the wherewithal to get it through Cabinet, to get their paramedics included in this legislation, I would challenge them to right their wrong and ensure that they're included at committee with an amendment.

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 17, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act.

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

Bill 13—The Organic Agricultural Products Act

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford), that Bill 13, The Organic Agricultural Products Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor having been advised of the bill, and I table that message.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education, that Bill 13, The Organic Agricultural Products Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill and the message has been tabled.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I will only take a few minutes to say that the organic sector is a very important sector in the agriculture industry and one that is growing very quickly. In fact, annually there is a growth of about 15 percent to 20 percent.

There are federal regulations for organic food production. These federal regulations provide for assurances to national and international buyers, Mr. Speaker. Our amendment allows for regulation in intraprovincial trade of organic food, but, in the interest of expediency, I would refer the members of the House to my second reading speech on April 18, 2007. I look forward to the support of this House to have this bill moved forward.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, we would like to put a few things on the record in regard to Bill 13. It was first introduced on April 11, 2007, I believe, as Bill 18 which concerns the labelling and marketing of organic products in Manitoba and was reintroduced on October 2 of this year. It is to label and market organic products as agricultural products must be certified as being produced in accordance with the statutory established in the regulations.

The federal organic standards will become part of this act. When its regulations are developed, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency will undertake inspections, label the product and will be a Canadian organic product and label that does not include the application of made in Manitoba organic label as well. By agreement the minister has qualified persons and organizations that may be authorized to certify agricultural products as organic products.

According to the *Hansard* of April 18, the NDP had support for this bill from the following organizations: the Keystone Ag Producers, the Canadian Wheat Board, the Organic Food Council of Manitoba and the Organic Producers Association of Manitoba.

In recent weeks, we have taken the opportunity to canvass these various groups and we have received no feedback from this act as the effective stakeholders have been canvassed about the bill, and we were sure if there were concerns they would have gotten back to us in this regard.

This legislation is similar to that of the initiatives being taken by the federal government with respect to setting out some of the guidelines relating to organic agricultural production. There is growing

interest in organic agricultural production right across Canada. I know the various grocery stores, Wal-Mart and Safeway, Sobeys and many of the others have—in fact, the organic association itself has done a tremendous job in increasing awareness on eating healthy and healthy products. So we're certainly pleased to see the growth in this particular agricultural industry, as we know we need to have more value-added opportunities at the farm gate in particular.

Consumers have been seeking a better understanding of what actually constitutes a certified organic product versus a product that may be labelled and marketed as a natural product. Certified organic producers also want to ensure that there are consistent standards about whether a product can be labelled or sold as an organic product. It is believed that having some uniform standards with respect to labelling will assist the marketing of organic products in both Canada and into markets outside the country.

It is important to Canadian producers to achieve a competitive advantage wherever possible, and we think by Manitoba taking the lead this will certainly help the organic producers here in Manitoba. Under Manitoba's Bill 13, section 3(a) provides established regulations "designating as a certification body for any person or body the minister considered to be knowledgeable about the principles and practices of organic certification," which it is our understanding from a briefing from the minister that this will be done through CFIA.

We believe it is important that Manitoba legislation mirrors that of the federal standards as well. Again, this is what our briefing has outlined to us. We would encourage the government to ensure the provincial regulations will conform to the guidelines under CFIA. If they do not, it could be confusion in terms of what level of government the organic producers need to contact and what standards need to be adhered to.

There also were a couple of questions about the power to make regulations under this act, section 19(1): The minister may make regulations. The first one, regulating or prohibiting the marketing of any organic product and establishing terms and conditions governing that marketing, providing for the collection of market information and statistics and publication of studies dealing with the marketing of organic products and conduct surveys on matters related to this act. We hope it is not the government's

intention to use the regulations to create a marketing board for organic products.

* (16:40)

We also look forward to some clarification about any costs that may be associated with certifying or inspecting products to ensure they meet the organic standards. I know in the briefing we talked about this a number of times with the minister and she assured us that these costs are going to be going through the CFIA.

The organic production in Canada, there are more than 200 certified organic farms here in Manitoba, covering both crop and livestock production. According to the information from the federal government, in Canada, the organic industry has been growing at a rate of 15 to 20 percent annually for the past decade; approximately 3,670 certified organic farms in 2004 in producing products whose value is estimated at \$986 million. This industry represents a growing sector of the global food industry and is largely consumer driven. As I pointed out earlier, we can see this in the marketplace wherever we go.

Internationally, more than 40 other companies have their own organic regulations, including several Canada's trading partners. According to information the federal government, currently provinces of British Columbia, Québec, have regulations in place governing organic production systems; the remaining provinces, voluntary systems are relied upon.

Federal analysis of the mechanism proposed under the Organic Products Regulation found that growers and producers would benefit, no longer requiring multiple certifications, realizing cost savings, and we know in the agricultural sector, when we try to be as efficient as we possibly can.

Processors would also earn benefits because of increased domestic consumption. In addition, processors would see cost savings for our reduced need for multiple certifications.

With the introduction of organic product legend requirements, confidence in products marketed as organic would increase and organic products would also gain visibility, resulting in increased Canadian consumption.

As far as Bill 13 is concerned, I know Mary Anne Nylen from the head of the Organic Producers, is very pleased. This was in the October 11th *Manitoba Co-operator*, she said it gives us

credibility to use the term organic in our production and it protects us from competition, from people who aren't organic and like to use the word because it's a good marketing tool. You have to put your money where your mouth is and get yourself certified and grow according to the rules.

Another one from John Hollinger, who says we're basically taking the federal regulation that's coming into effect on that date of December 14, 2008, we're tying our provincial regulations to the federal one. He is the beef organic business specialist with MAFRI and that was in the October 11th issue of *Manitoba Co-operator* as well.

Also, under the federal regulations, the government intends to build the existing system of domestic accreditation and certification bodies to provide credibility basis for equivalation. The CFIA has established criteria modelled on international accepted guidelines which will be used for assessment and recognition of these organizations.

Under Bill 13, 3(a) provides for establishing of regulations "designating as a certification body any person or body the minister considers to be knowledgeable about the principles and practices of organic certification."

It remains to be seen if the provincial regulations will confirm to the guidelines under the CFIA. Despite assurances by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) on Bill 13 that we'll mirror that at the federal standards. If they do not, it could cause confusion in terms of what government level organic producers need to contact and what standards need to be gathered and adhered to.

If other concerns exist over the power to make regulations under this act, under section 19(1), the minister may make regulations regulating or prohibiting the market of organic product and establishing terms and conditions governing that marketing, providing for the collection and marketing information statistics, the publications of studies with the marketing organic products and conduct the surveys of any manner related to this act.

There are questions as to whether the provincial leader, the creation of marketing board for organic products.

During the bill briefing, the minister, Barry Todd, said the intention is to delegate the authority for inspection of organic products to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Rob Park of MAFRI said the Province is entering into discussions with CFIA

about enforcements. Fines can range in the range of \$20,000 to \$50,000 for offences underneath the act. Todd added that inspection details are being worked out, but suggested they could be along the lines of vegetable grading standards. Todd noted that the onus is on the distributor and the retail to meet the organic standards. For example, an importer would have to show the products being imported have met the organic standards required under the label.

So, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have done a fair amount of work on this. We've relied heavily on the minister's staff and the information being brought forward by them. We understand that this definitely does mirror that of the federal regulations to bring them in line with the Province of Manitoba.

With that, we'd like to see this move on to committee. I know there are a couple of other members that do want to put something on the record, so we'll deal with it in committee as it comes forward.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to comment briefly on this bill. It is about time, in fact some would say, past time, to have a bill which starts to set standards for organic production in Manitoba. Certainly, this is an initiative that will be, I believe, well received, and we're looking forward to this going to committee so that the details can be looked at and scrutinized carefully.

The products which are certified organic are receiving a premium on the market, and rightfully so. A significant number of producers have started moving into this market, and it's fundamental that there be clear standards in place and that those who are producing organic products are not faced with competition from people who are not doing things properly.

Certainly, we support this bill. We're looking forward to the discussion at the committee stage. I think that there may be room for some modifications here, but we're generally supportive from the Liberal Party perspective.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I, too, would like to put just a few comments on the record. Our critic has certainly identified some of the issues that are out there, and to get harmonization between federal and provincial government is important for those who are into the organic production.

Within the constituency and the area that I represent, we have a number of growers, whether

they are raspberry producers or potato producers or dairy farm, that are looking at doing exactly the same. In fact, some have been doing this for a number of years.

Just to be a little more specific, there's a young gentleman by the name of Conrad Zacharias who is looking at putting his dairy herd into this category. I know that he has been in discussions with the minister or department for quite some time, is concerned that the direction that he is going is going to be the right one in order that he can become a certified producer. I know that he has gone out of his way in order to make this happen. I know that it's not something that, especially in a dairy farm, or any other farm, you can get into overnight.

There are criteria that need to be followed. In his case I know that it needed to go back towards the product, the feed that he was giving his livestock. With that, a number of years were required to get the alfalfa that he was producing or the corn that he was growing for silage purposes would, in fact, qualify as organic, because this, of course, would be fed to the dairy cattle. Then it goes into the milk stream. So he was concerned that he was going to be following the right process, but on the other hand also wanted to know that there would be support for the industry that he is involved in.

I know that others are looking at it, but, at this point in time, of course, with the criteria that are needed in order to become certified organic producers, they are concerned that they don't go to a lot of expense and then at the final end be turned away or find out that they have not gone through the right procedures.

* (16:50)

I, too, am supportive of this. I believe that we need this, and, as has already been said, there is a growing market for this. There are many stores that are looking at bringing in organic foods. The market is growing; people are concerned and want to make sure that they know the type or the origin of the food that they are eating or the milk that they are drinking.

The other I want to talk about just briefly was the Kroeker Farms within our area, and I know that they have been doing the same in the area of potato production, and, of course, they are marketing this as well. There, too, it's over a period of years that they have been working on this, that they, too, needed to have the type of soil preparation and history that

would justify the fact that they would be able to use their product organically.

This is something that I have said for years, that as time goes on, I believe that even in the grain industry, and I know that our critic mentioned the amount of product, whether it's wheat or barley or any of the other commodities that are being used and grown organically, but I think that we're going to get to the point where probably the majority of our wheat will be shipped off the yards where they are produced and in fact will be sealed. They'll be put into containers and they will be shipped overseas or to other people who are going to be needing the product.

My honourable colleague from Virden indicated that I was an optimist. I think that this is something that is going to be—and I see—will be demanded as time goes on. I'm not necessarily an advocate of this. I would hope that for those of us who are producers that we would in fact be careful as to the product that we put into the market.

So I know that there are others who do want to speak to this bill as well. I want to encourage the minister that we proceed with this bill. Certainly, I believe it's something that it's time that we put in place; so, with that, I'll just turn it over to my colleague, please.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to put some words of recommendation in the House today in regard to Bill 13, The Organic Agricultural Products Act, as well, and to speak in support of this bill.

I must open by saying that it's a privilege to have the Organic Producers Association of Manitoba head office in Virden, in the community that I live in now, and a pleasure to pay tribute today to Alex Scott, who was the president of this association, and this association now has his daughter Lara leading the organization for some time now. I believe she's going to be moving into another field of endeavour, but the Scott family have been recognized across Manitoba as the strong organic producers and founders of this organization. It was a tragedy when Alex passed away about over a year ago now and is no longer farming, obviously, in Manitoba, but his wife Betty is still on the home farm and their family is still strong in the organic farm movement.

I also want to pay tribute to Gaston and Nicole Boulanger, who are the organic farmers of Manitoba recognized as the Red River Farmers of Manitoba

this year at the Red River Exhibition, who come from Grande Clairière. They and their family members are very well honoured with the recognition that they received for the fine work that they've done since changing their farming operation over in the year 2000 as well, Mr. Speaker, to become a fully organic farm in both grains and livestock.

Mr. Speaker, this bill certainly is concerned about the labelling and marketing of organic products in Manitoba. It was reintroduced by the government this fall after coming in some week or 10 days before the election was called last spring as well, and I want to say that, with no pun intended, there is a growing interest in organic agricultural products across Manitoba, because the amount of consumer acceptance and the consumer seeking out a better understanding for what actually constitutes certified organic product is part of the reason for bringing a bill like this forward. But the main reason is for the opportunity to clarify what certification really means by establishing a certification process that each individual producer will be able to comply with in order to provide the quality of product, ensure the quality of product that they are promoting to the consumers of Canada, not only Manitoba.

The reason that this bill is so important to come forward is because it mirrors the federal legislation that's already coming into place as well, but the federal regulations do not allow for the marketing of these Manitoba products to be certified within the province of Manitoba. In speaking to the OPAM organization myself, I was assured that they are in support of this bill coming forward, because they need to have the opportunity to have certification within the province of Manitoba even though their goods could be grown in Manitoba and are certified to be sold outside the province at this time. So they were very encouraged by both efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I also had some experience when I was on the Wheat Board Advisory Committee to deal with the organic wheat producers coming forward to deal with the product of wheat and their ability at that time to market their product in separate markets. Of course, they were seeking a separate pool for their product at that particular time as a designation from the rest of the classifications of wheat. The federal government of the day was not willing to look at providing that at that time through the board. I know there seemed to be some—it ended up getting into the minister's hands at that time, but

this clarifies the opportunity for those producers in Manitoba to clarify the product.

I note with interest that the bill—and I would bring a word of caution to the government as well—that they do not appear to be bringing this forward as a monopoly in regard to the sale of the product, Mr. Speaker, but it's certainly an opportunity to certify the quality of the product that they have. Then they have the ability, as an association and individuals, to move their product into whatever markets they have already developed and they have developed many good markets for their product.

There are over 200 certified organic farmers in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, it's a growing interest in Manitoba in regard to the number of persons who are remaining certified. I note with interest my colleague from Lakeside, when he mentioned that Mr. John Hollinger, the organic business specialist with MAFRI, today was quoted in the *Co-operator* in October here, earlier, just last week. I would just like to commend Mr. Hollinger's work that he's done as the organic business specialist in this area, because he certainly has—and of course, I've spent years knowing John as he was the agricultural representative in Souris where I farmed for many years as well.

So, with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I'd close my comments today. I think it's important that we recognize the growers, processors and all those who are going to benefit from these organic products regulations that have come forward. I also want to say that the Canadian Organic Regime, the COR, as it's referred to; one of the principles of establishing it was that it would be cost-recoverable as well.

The industry is already recovering a significant component of the costs associated with organic certification through fees and accreditation and certification bodies. Resources are required to manage the national program to interface with certification and accreditation bodies and to verify compliance and take enforcement action when necessary. So, Mr. Speaker, a key principle is broad consultation with the stakeholders and the provincial-territorial partners.

So, thank you very much. I look forward to the passage of this bill.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House, second reading of Bill 13, The Organic Agriculture Products Act.

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

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, in addition to the bill referred to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, for Wednesday, October 17, at 6 p.m., I also would like to refer Bill 13, The Organic Agricultural Products Act, to the same committee.

Mr. Speaker: In addition to the bills referred to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development for Wednesday, October 17, at 6 p.m., Bill 13, The Organic Agricultural Products Act, will also be referred to the same committee meeting.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

CULTURE, HERITAGE, TOURISM AND SPORT

* (14:50)

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 Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport): Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Very briefly, I'd like to just give some highlights of the department, and I certainly will be welcoming questions from my colleague the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

As I've indicated in past Estimates and the procedures that follow, the department I have responsibility for is involved in many aspects of life in our province, including industry development, the preservation of our proud heritage, community capacity and well-being, culture and creativity, along with sport and recreational activity and access to knowledge and information, among others.

Before dealing specifically with aspects of my department's Estimates, I would like to acknowledge some of the recent achievements of our fellow Manitobans. I think all of us can take pride in their accomplishments, including Prime Minister Harper's

welcome announcement in April that the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg would become the first national museum outside of the capital region. The addition of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives to the UNESCO memories of the world registry brings it worldwide recognition as a repository of internationally significant documentary heritage. Also, the recent recognition by Canada's Governor General of the Graffiti art gallery and the creativity of many of our inner city artists here in Winnipeg. As well, the 2007 Governor General's Award in visual and media arts awarded to Aganetha Dyck, and the election of eight Manitoba artists to the Royal Canadian Academy of Artists, along with the National Aboriginal Achievement Award in media that was awarded to Lisa Meeches.

Also hosting the highly successful 2007 World Women's Hockey Championships, the 2007 NORCECA Volleyball Championship, the 2007—or rather 2006 Grey Cup, the 2006 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games and the '06 Canada Senior Games among other highlights.

Also, of course, we had the 2007 Premier's Volunteer Service Award to the Winnipeg Folk Festival volunteers. We're very proud of their work here in the province of Manitoba; they've certainly been great ambassadors worldwide.

We're also very proud of our department's role in the economy with respect to promoting our province, its tourism and cultural industries particularly. Tourism in Manitoba is currently a \$1.5 billion industry and growing. Travel Manitoba has now completed its second full year of operation as a Crown corporation. Their transition to an independent, industry-led agency has resulted in a tripling of industry investments and marketing programs since 2004. I'm pleased that this year's Estimates include a provision of \$7.4 million to Travel Manitoba, as well as support for increased development and marketing of Aboriginal tourism in rural and northern Manitoba, and here in the city of Winnipeg.

The success of Manitoba's film and sound recording industries was celebrated just very recently on October 1 to 7, recognizing 20 years of accomplishment by Manitoba Film & Sound, the Manitoba Motion Picture Industry Association, the Manitoba Recording Industry Association. I was very pleased that this budget provides increased support to this sector of our culture here in the province of Manitoba. Manitoba's film industry

continues to outperform industry expectations; 2006-2007 production activity surpassed \$114 million, continuing a four-year trend of activity exceeding \$100 million. Film activity extended far beyond Winnipeg to include Hartney, where *The Lookout* was shot. I understand that movie's out now. Other activity included the final season of the TV series *Falcon Beach*, the TV movie *Elijah* and *Stone Angel*. So we're all very proud of these achievements, Mr. Chairman.

As well, Aboriginal musicians have had a lot to celebrate over the last year. Our made-in-Manitoba Aboriginal music program is the envy of many industry associations nationwide. Developed through a partnership between our department, Manitoba Film & Sound, the Manitoba recording industry association and senior Aboriginal artists, the program provides developmental support to help artists reach their potential.

*(15:00)

Recently, Tom Jackson, who is well known for his great humanitarian work and also his work as an actor and a singer, was honoured as the 2007 inductee into The Manitoba Aboriginal Music Hall of Fame, joining the winners last year, the late Reg Bouvette and the late Andy Dejarlis. The hall is the first of its kind in Canada dedicated to acknowledging the vast contributions of Manitoba's celebrated First Nations, Inuit and Métis recording artists.

Of course, the highlight of this year was the inaugural Manito Ahbee Festival and the first Canadian Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards, a spectacular celebration of Aboriginal music and culture. The events drew over 20,000 attendees from 16 American states and six Canadian provinces and territories, and I'm pleased that these Estimates continue to support these initiatives as well.

Our Estimates also include provision for continuation of repairs at the Manitoba Museum and the CCFM, replacement of the Winnipeg Art Gallery roof and the additional support that's required, to support the renewal of exhibits at the Manitoba Museum Science Gallery. Building on the success of our endowment agreement with the Manitoba Theatre Centre, we have entered into a similar agreement with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, matching their private-sector endowment contributions to a maximum of \$1.3 million. At the end of these agreements, we expect both organizations will realize endowment funds in excess of \$10 million,

providing them with greater fiscal stability for many more years to come.

I had the opportunity of being at the announcement last week at the ballet facilities here in Winnipeg, and I was very grateful to meet people like Kerry Hawkins and others like him that are involved, Judy Murphy and others that are involved in the Royal Winnipeg Ballet because I think it's one of the institutions that we have in our province that has been showing the world and has put Winnipeg and Manitoba on the map, and we're very proud of the work that they have done.

I'd like to briefly touch on the heritage and arts activity throughout our province. We've increased the maximum grants available to community arts councils. We've expanded the urban arts centres program to support the West End Cultural Centre, the Ndinawe community Youth Resource Centre in recognition of their efforts to offer culturally appropriate programming in their communities. Also, we continue to partner with the federal government and other provinces and territories in the Historic Places Initiatives. To date, we've forwarded 391 provincially and municipally designated sites for placement on the Canadian registrar.

Our staff are also currently working with Manitoba Conservation and Rivers West Association on the official recognition of the Red River as a heritage river. Last year we administered nearly \$1 million of the Building Manitoba Fund upgrading the technological capacity of libraries throughout Manitoba. We're very happy about that.

These Estimates also continue provision and support to communities throughout Manitoba through the Community Places program; 2006-2007, the program supported 299 community projects with \$3 million in grant support.

The staff are also helping departments review their personal information through the Privacy Risk Mitigation Project, and I know that the member opposite, Mr. Chair, will have some questions with relation to that, and I know that we are running short of time in my opening remarks.

The department also provides public information such as film and video game classifications, Manitoba in motion promotion, encouraging the use of bike helmets, alerting the public about the dangers of crystal meth, educating families about bullying, and distributing the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures

report encouraging Manitobans to buy Manitoba food products at their grocery stores and many more.

So I would like to conclude by saying the department is multi-faceted, plays many roles ranging from promoting fitness to the well-being and maintaining emergency communications to the public, to celebrating our arts, culture and heritage. We're definitely a department that works with Manitobans to maintain the quality of life in this province, and I'm proud of the job we do.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I think I would like to go directly into the Estimates process, please.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much.

First order of business is that under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary in Estimates is the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 14.1.(a) contained in resolution 14.1.

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

Mr. Robinson: I'm joined by our Deputy Minister Sandra Hardy and our Director of Finance, Mr. Dave Paton. I believe that's the number we have today.

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

Mrs. Rowat: Global discussion, please.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Minister?

Mr. Robinson: Agreed.

Mr. Chairperson: Very good. It is therefore agreed that questioning for this department will follow in a global manner with all resolutions to be passed once the questioning has been completed.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Rowat: General housekeeping to begin with, I would like to ask the minister if he could provide for me a list of all the political staff including name and position and the FTE, whether they're full time.

Mr. Robinson: The special assistant to the office of the minister is Tanis Wheeler and the executive assistant is Matthew Williamson.

Mrs. Rowat: Can I have a specific list of all the staff in the minister's and the deputy minister's office, please, and the number of staff currently employed within the department.

Mr. Robinson: The secretary to the minister is Barb Robson. The administrative secretary is Claudette Lambert-Johnson. The administrative secretary is Rema Chandran. The deputy minister's office, of course, is occupied by my Deputy Minister Sandra Hardy, and her administrative assistant is Beverly Beck. Her assistant is Laura Shwetz, and the administrative secretary is Brigette Lavitt.

Mrs. Rowat: And the number of staff currently employed in your department?

Mr. Robinson: We have currently, Mr. Chair, 283.25 FTEs.

Mrs. Rowat: If the minister can provide for me the names of staff that have been hired in 2007 and '08, including whether they were hired through a competition or an appointment.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chair, in the minister's office, Claudette Lambert-Johnson was hired on the 13th of August through a competition. In the deputy minister's office, Brigette Lavitt was hired on August 27, 2007, through a competition. Administration and Finance, now you're just asking the minister's and deputy minister's—everything?

* (15:10)

In the Administration and Finance Department, Administrative Secretary Lisa Armstrong-Rieu was hired on the 22nd of May, 2007, through a competition, and Administrative Secretary Kristi Doerksen was hired on April 11, 2007, by appointment. She started as a maternity-leave replacement to replace one of our departing employees. She was transferred over from another department to occupy that position. Financial officer Betty Jubinville was appointed, transferred from another department on May 14, '07. A library consultant, Crystal McGregor, was hired through competition on June 4, 2007, and on April 23, 2007, through competition, Sarah Bekeris, was hired. Through competition, on September 1, 2007, Kris Doull was hired, and through competition, in the Archives of Manitoba, James Gorton and Rachel Mills, Ian Keenan and Michelle Rydz were hired.

Jolyne Jolicoeur was hired on September 1 by competition. Michelle Wallace, on April 23, 2007, was hired by competition in Communications Services.

Mrs. Rowat: A description of any positions that have been reclassified. Have any of the positions that staff are currently employed in in the department been reclassified?

Mr. Robinson: I'm going to have to take that question as notice and get back to the member by writing.

Mrs. Rowat: I look forward to the minister's response to that.

If the minister can share with me a listing of all vacant positions and also if all staff years are currently filled.

Mr. Robinson: Currently in the department, we have 14.70 vacancies, and, further, I could provide to the member by writing a list of said vacancies in the various divisions of the department, as well, by letter.

Mrs. Rowat: If the minister has that available now, just the sheet that he's been referencing would be sufficient for that.

Mr. Robinson: Save me a letter.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me how many and what type of contracts have been awarded directly through the department and how many of these contracts are going to tender and what these contracts may be used for, or the purpose of these contracts.

Mr. Robinson: Currently, I don't think we have any untendered contracts above \$25,000. I will provide a list later to the member.

Mrs. Rowat: Just to clarify, what I'll be looking for in that correspondence are any contracts \$25,000 and under. Is the minister indicating there are no contracts over \$25,000? What I would like is—

An Honourable Member: No, I had said below.

Mrs. Rowat: There is nothing below \$25,000?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mrs. Rowat: Okay. I guess all contracts then awarded, the dollar value that they are awarded for, the details of the types of contracts, what is happening with those contracts, how many of them are going to tender and any details he can provide

that would give us clarification on those contracts. I appreciate that.

The next question would be: Has the Premier (Mr. Doer) or a delegation led by the Premier had their travel paid for by the department?

Mr. Robinson: There have been no trips.

Mrs. Rowat: Just to be clear, so there have been no trips by the Premier or a delegation led by the Premier paid for through his department.

Mr. Robinson: Yes, Mr. Chair, that's correct.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister then indicate to me ministerial travel, how many out-of-province trips the minister has taken in the past year, the pertinent details of these trips such as purpose, date, who went, who paid and what were the costs?

Mr. Robinson: Since April 2007, I have been on five trips. I met with the minister responsible for recreation on some preliminary work that we were doing with respect to some participation and some visibility for the Vancouver Olympics in Vancouver back on the 2nd of April.

I met with the Ontario Minister of Sport in Toronto on June 5 to 6. I attended the Western Canada Summer Games at Sherwood Park on August 2 to 4 this past summer, attended the Western Canada Summer Games as well at the closing ceremonies. Actually, I didn't go to the opening. It was the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) that attended that and represented our government; however, our department picked up the cost on August 2 to 4. However, I did attend the closing ceremonies on August 11 to 12 at Sherwood Park.

I was at Enoch, Alberta, to attend a preliminary meeting for the development at a world indigenous games concept that we're hoping to host here in the province of Manitoba in the city of Winnipeg on August 25 to 28. I attended that meeting with Vice-Chief Willie Littlechild of the Assembly of First Nations. Mr. Littlechild is a former member of Parliament from the Wetaskiwin area of Alberta and a huge supporter of recreation and amateur sport in Canada.

So those were the trips. The total cost of the trip was \$3,000—oh yes, and what's not indicated here I was at the Canadian Country Music Awards as well very recently representing our province. As the member knows, we'll be hosting that event next September here in the city of Winnipeg, and I will be attending the Western Canadian Music Awards this

coming weekend in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. As the member knows, this year's activities all seem to be centred around Saskatchewan, this being the year of their 100th anniversary, their centennial, so a number of events are occurring there.

*(15:20)

With me at the Canadian Country Music Awards was the Special Assistant Tanis Wheeler, who did some advance work. The total cost of the trips indicated, Mr. Chair, was \$3,872.

Mrs. Rowat: Can I have a breakdown of the costs for each of the seven trips that the minister has just outlined?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, I'll be pleased to provide the breakdown of the costs of the trips in correspondence. I don't have it broken down here.

Mrs. Rowat: We'll do a follow-up correspondence requesting that, as well. So we appreciate the minister being able to provide those details that he has and we look forward to the additional information from his department.

I'd like to go into an area of funding which is called the Building Manitoba Fund. There has been a number of eyebrows raised regarding the allocation of those dollars and how those dollars flow and what type of criteria and processes are followed in making the decisions on how funding is allocated. So I just would like to spend some time with the minister on that specific program.

On June 27 of this year, an Order-in-Council shows, through Intergovernmental Affairs, the minister recommending \$133 million-plus credited to the Building Manitoba Fund for the fiscal year end March 31, 2008. Also, an allocation of dollars going to grants that will be distributed to municipalities.

What I'd like to know from the minister, where these dollars would have been taken from. That's a substantial amount of money. If it's an Order-in-Council that comes outside of the regular budgetary announcements, I'd like to know what programs have seen a reduction if there is going to be \$133 million going into this Building Manitoba Fund.

Mr. Robinson: I'm not too sure if I know what the member is talking about. We don't administer that. I've never heard of amounts that great, particularly with my department. It may be an issue that could be taken up with Intergovernmental Affairs. So I'm

sorry, but I'm unable to provide an answer to that question.

Mrs. Rowat: Then I'll be more specific to the fund and how it relates to the department that we're currently involved in.

What kind of projects receive funding from the Building Manitoba Fund for recreation and library purposes?

Mr. Robinson: The Building Manitoba Fund projects that received funding include Dauphin's recreation complex. They received \$200,000. The funding will be used to complete the Dauphin arena parking lot.

The Y and BU recreation complex, \$2.4 million. This joint project will expand and renew the current fitness facilities at Brandon University and also the YM-YWCA and the surrounding community. That was announced on the 1st of March 2007.

The City of Flin Flon, \$400,000. These funds will be used to enhance community recreational facilities.

The Pembina Wellness Centre, \$517,000 plus. This project will include space for an indoor therapeutic pool, change facilities and a wide-ranging exercise and wellness centre for Manitou area residents.

The Allard Library, \$400,000. A new 3,500-square-foot library will be built in the community of St. Georges.

The Benito Library, \$100,000. The library services, such as adult and children's programming, seminars, distance education, computer and Internet services, as well as wheelchair access will be added.

A new Selkirk Regional Public Library, \$600,000.

The City of Selkirk and the R.M.s of St. Andrews and St. Clements will build a library in Selkirk to LEED standards.

The Grand Rapids arena, \$500,000. The details still have to be announced.

Thompson Recreation Centre, \$500,000.

Grandview community hall, \$500,000.

Melita Pool, \$200,000. This new universally accessible leisure pool will allow swimming lessons, diving, competitive swimming, a waterslide and leisure activities.

We also have a technology fund library for \$1.8 million. This is the 54 northern and rural public libraries; they have received funds for community access computers and servers. We did not fund the recreational projects. We consulted with the proponents and the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs. That's where the Building Manitoba project monies was used to fund these programs that I've just described.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chairperson, I'm finding it a little bit interesting that Brandon University, YW-YMCA project was listed as a recipient. That project is running into some challenges. I believe that it may be at risk of not moving forward. Can the minister give me some background on that?

Mr. Robinson: I can't comment specifically on the facility that the member raises; however, our staff would consult with the other departments, and obviously, the proponent. The project would be monitored for the delivery and if there are any shortcomings that are identified, then obviously, the department officials and other departments from this government would be alerted. They would deal with these issues and I'm sure at some point the concerns, if indeed there are some concerns about a specific project, would be raised with members of our caucus and members of our Cabinet.

Mrs. Rowat: The Brandon University YW joint project is definitely facing some challenges right now. I would highly encourage the minister to become involved in those discussions with the ministers that are directly related to the university through post-secondary and into the other ministerial departments that may be involved. This is a project that I believe the community has been looking at for some time. I do know that there are some challenges with moving that project forward.

Segue into that, I guess, is if there is a project that has been announced to have funding, or receive funding, who holds the discretion for whether funding is approved and in what amount? Is there a selection process? Is it the same as the Community Places? Is it a little bit different? Can the minister share that with me?

* (15:30)

Mr. Robinson: Yes, thank you for the question, to our colleague from Minnedosa. First of all, there is an internal review process that occurs. There are discussions with Intergovernmental Affairs, and then

the recommendations ultimately are referred to Cabinet and, ultimately, the decision is made there.

Mrs. Rowat: What role do municipal governments have on the process and what role would school boards have in the process of decision making?

Mr. Robinson: Ordinarily a school division's organizations like the AMM who are the proponents of such projects would oversee, of course, the application process, be a part of the consultation process, and then ultimately they would also be contributing partners in many of these initiatives that are embarked upon. So they're also a large part or a huge significant player in all these initiatives that I've described earlier.

Mrs. Rowat: The minister's comments raise several new questions for me. What is the intake time lines for an application? Is there a deadline for applications? What is the process? Is there an application form and is there a decision on the funding time lines?

Mr. Robinson: These are really questions that are better directed to Intergovernmental Affairs because they administer this Building Manitoba Fund. However, to the best of our knowledge, when an application exceeds the capacity of the Community Places program—the deadline, by the way, on that is the 15th of February—they're referred over to Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Building Manitoba Fund, and from there they have their own procedure.

Now, I'm not capable of responding to that question directly, as the member asked, because that would be better responded to by the Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs.

Mrs. Rowat: I do appreciate the minister's comments.

I'm just trying to get a sense of how this relates to the Community Places grants application process. I do believe in the announceables that were made in March, that the majority of these projects that were funded, or I should say all of them, or not all of them, the majority of them were related to Culture, Heritage, and Tourism, and Sport and recreation objectives. So I just wanted to know what the tie-in was to Community Places. The minister has indicated it's to address, if I'm correct in assuming, or from his statement, that this would accommodate applications that cannot be funded through the Community Places grants. These are over and above, projects that are similar but would fall into a

category over and above what Community Places can support.

Mr. Robinson: Yes, that's correct.

Mrs. Rowat: So the \$7 million that was allocated early into the new year, I would believe March, April, there was, I believe, almost \$7 million that was held over year after year—or not \$7 million each year, but the total fund came to about \$7 million being allocated in March.

Can the minister indicate to me, then, if this fund was supposed to help Community Places applications over a period of time, why the \$7 million was held until March of this year, instead of being allocated over the three-year period that the announcement was made?

Mr. Robinson: Again, I don't feel comfortable responding on behalf of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton). I think that he'd be better able to respond directly to that question.

The program that we have called Community Places supported, as I said in my comments, 299 community projects with \$300 million in grants supporting it. That's all we have within that particular program. These projects include museums, playgrounds, multi-use and recreational facilities, child-care centres, community halls, seniors' facilities. The grant provided assistance toward critical repairs. Some of these facilities that we have in Manitoba, and the member would know, some of these arenas that we have throughout the province of Manitoba were built around the year of the Centennial, and a lot of them are in dire need of repair. We're trying to catch up. I think that we've done some good work with the federal government since coming into office in 1999, trying to address fresh-air ventilation, as one example, safety upgrades with relation to fires. Last year, over 400 people from 250 non-profit organizations attended the Community Places programs' 29 project planning and application assistance workshops that were held throughout the province of Manitoba.

Again, the maximum grant that we have within that particular program is \$50,000, and this is disbursed throughout the province of Manitoba. With respect to the Building Manitoba Fund, I think that I would be more comfortable if the member requested the information from the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton), whose

department it is that administers that particular program.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister then indicate to me which ministers are then responsible for making the decisions on grants?

He had indicated it goes to Cabinet. Does that lead me to believe, and is that correct, that all ministers of Cabinet determine who receives grant assistance, based on the recommendations received from the department?

* (15:40)

Mr. Robinson: The staff recommends, makes the recommendation. On the Building Manitoba Fund, staff recommends and the recommendations are made. They go to Cabinet for ratification, for the Building Manitoba Fund. For the CPP, the Community Places program, the decision is laid with the minister responsible for that department at that particular time.

Mrs. Rowat: Another critic area that I am responsible for is Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, and in my visits to several northern communities, I have been able to learn of the challenges that they have in recreation supports.

I just wanted to ask the minister if he can share with me what level of government is responsible for recreation funding on First Nations communities in Manitoba.

Mr. Robinson: One of the things that, in my tenure as being a member of a government, is not to play the political football game with the jurisdictional arguments that sometimes occur with respect to who's got responsibility where. It is my preference that we do our best to try and work with a particular reserve, if that's what the member is talking about, and stimulate some partnerships with the national government, if need be, in trying to address the dire situation that many of our First Nations communities find themselves in. We have been able to do that and in some cases there's a lot more to do.

Regrettably, there are some communities that don't have recreational facilities that we're doing our best to catch up on. There are some, on the other hand, that have been able to utilize the non-conventional method of recreational activities. Some communities have asked their elders to help in creating programs and models, outdoor activities, trapping skills, survival skills and with those, we've

been able to help, our government's been able to help financially.

A community that stands out is from Bunibonibee First Nation, otherwise known as Oxford House. We've been able to work with those communities in being able to secure some money in order for them to carry out some of the work they would like to do. There's huge challenges on any given reserve, as the member knows, in trying to work with these communities.

One of the things that we did when we came into office in 1999 was, at one point, the Community Places program was not made available to First Nations communities. We changed that when we took over government in 1999 to ensure that First Nations communities would be able to capitalize on the Community Places program. There are some communities that have utilized this program now and we're very happy about supporting many of these communities.

We have regional staff that are located in northern communities, the major communities in northern Manitoba, including Thompson and The Pas, and they consult widely with the First Nations communities and also work with the communities in accessing funds in areas that they are able to, obviously.

But the member is absolutely right. I think that that's one area that we all agree on in this. I'd like to think so, anyway, in this Legislative Assembly, is the inequity that Aboriginal people, indigenous people, Indian people in this province are faced with. There's a lot of work that has to be done, and we are obviously doing our utmost best to try and work with the communities in trying to catch up with the remainder of the world.

One of the things that we were able to do is to capitalize on an opportunity a couple of years back, and that is the project that we were able to initiate with the national government called the bilateral project. That's administered now through Sport Manitoba.

The bilateral project is a project that gets away from the conventional thinking that volleyball and basketball and these other great games—I mean, there's nothing wrong with these games, but in some communities you just don't have the capability to build a basketball court or a badminton court or a soccer facility. So, in these communities, we've been able to use the bilateral project in being able to

afford young people activities, including canoeing, survival skills, swimming, other safe activities.

We're very proud of the accomplishment that we've been able to do and the work that Sport Manitoba has been able to do in ensuring that all Manitobans will become active as well and, hopefully, make our First Nations people and other Aboriginal people in this province feel that they're a part of this province as well.

Mrs. Rowat: I thank the minister for his comments. I agree the recreation programming and the supports available that are the non-traditional programs—my children play volleyball. They're going to Killarney tonight to play, but I grew up in a community that didn't have a gymnasium so that's not a sport that I was necessarily involved in. But we did other activities to deal with no gym and 40-below weather. We had to keep busy and keep running.

So I understand what he's saying. I've travelled to some of those communities, including Nelson House and the Island Lakes. Having activities that are relative to the needs of those communities is important. So I'm pleased to see that through an Order-in-Council that the department has changed or has restructured its name to include sport, because I think that is something that is significant to all Manitobans to remain healthy and active.

I agree that recreational programming is key. It not necessarily has to be bricks-and-mortar projects. I think we all need to be more active, and I think that communities in northern or isolated communities have more challenges in finding opportunities such as the minister was sharing earlier. I do believe that this has to be looked at as an effort by all members within the Legislature to support, so I will continue to work with communities and work with the members of government who represent northern communities to build on that need.

The Heritage Grants Program is something that I would like to talk to the minister about. It's a program that looks like the funding has been flat-lined for quite a few years, and there seems to be a need to—I guess a community need, or a want, to stimulate the sustainability of a lot of the infrastructure in these communities. Several communities now are 100 years or 125 years of age and have a lot of historically significant infrastructure that they would like to retain and share with visitors to those communities.

I believe that we have to be looking at ways to stimulate the interest from individuals in the community who either own these buildings or sites, so I'm asking the minister what type of leadership there has been from his department in looking at creative ways to encourage individuals to restore and sustain infrastructure. I do know that the provincial government has encouraged municipalities to take a leadership role, and the communities have come forward and taken a leadership role by providing tax credits.

* (15:50)

I'm just wanting to know if the minister has even considered such an offer and whether he is aware that there seems to be an increase in the number of project requests for support, and there doesn't seem to be an increase in support financially from the government.

Mr. Robinson: We have obviously a lot of work to do here as well. Much of the infrastructure that the member talks about is in need of repair and our officials are working, I believe, in a very good way with the appropriate municipalities and others in trying to address this issue. We have programs like Community Places. We have also a Grants Advisory Council that assists with research. We have municipal support. We are establishing some partnership arrangements. We are also administering with federal dollars the Historic Places Initiative, and we're encouraging partnerships with foundations to address the need to address these places that both the member and I are familiar with throughout the province of Manitoba.

At a September meeting in 2005, a meeting of federal and provincial—a meeting of provincial and territorial ministers responsible for culture and heritage met, and the ministers formally requested that the federal government provide a tax incentive that encourages the private industry to preserve historic places and call upon the federal government to ensure that the program is expanded to include components for rural, remote and Aboriginal special places, historic sites and so on.

In March of 2007, the City of Winnipeg also wrote to the federal ministers of Finance and Environment requesting tax incentives to the federal budget that would encourage private sector investment for the rehabilitation of historic buildings

as well. So much work is going in and more work has to be done, obviously, in this regard as well.

Mrs. Rowat: I appreciate what the minister is saying about the federal government coming to the table, but I'm looking for a provincial government commitment.

Can the minister indicate to me the number of applicants under the Heritage Grants Program, the number of applications that have been presented 2005-2006—I don't believe 2007 would be—the last three years—the number of applicants and the total number of recipients over the last three years?

Mr. Robinson: For clarification, Mr. Chair, does the member want the historic places or historic buildings information?

Mrs. Rowat: The Heritage Grants Advisory Council provides the Heritage Grants Program. So I'm looking for the heritage grants' number of applications that were submitted over the last three years, the total number submitted. That's not the ones that would have been accepted and received. Also, the total number of recipients who were successful in receiving grant dollars. I'm just trying to get a sense of the number of applications that have been made.

Mr. Robinson: Allow me a little bit of time, Mr. Chair, for the critic, to assemble this information, and I shall forward it to her.

Mrs. Rowat: Thank you. Something in writing, sharing the details of that would be greatly appreciated.

I'm going to go into the area of Tourism next, Mr. Chair. Based on what I've been reading and what I've learned over the years, the department does provide support for Travel Manitoba to market Manitoba to the U.S., overseas, and across Canada. I thought, gee, that's an excellent tie-in to what would be Manitoba's way of branding itself or providing information on the benefits of Manitoba, or the benefits of either touring Manitoba, moving to Manitoba, or investing in Manitoba as a business owner.

Looking at Travel Manitoba's annual report, their goal is to generate more than \$100 million in economic impact in Manitoba GDP over the next 10 years. That's fairly ambitious. I encourage that and I support that, but I would like to know if the minister can indicate to me, of the \$7.4 million that he indicated is invested in tourism, how much of that

money would have gone to the Spirited Energy campaign?

Mr. Robinson: The total grant is \$7.4 million from this government to our newest Crown agency, Travel Manitoba. As the member knows, it's only the second year that the Travel Manitoba agency has been in existence, after I felt that government should not have a direct interest, or should not have any direct involvement in tourism. Of course, obviously, we're all involved in tourism and trying to promote our province. What I'm trying to say is that we thought that, because of all these years that the tourism folks were talking with government, we felt that it was time that we allowed the agency to take shape and allow itself to operate as an agency of the government, or as a Crown agency almost independent of government. However, they are still reliant, obviously, on government for their operating grant.

With respect to the specific question by the member, to the best of my knowledge, no monies were expended on the Spirited Energy campaign. However, staff were dedicated in some of the committee meetings that occurred with respect to the Spirited Energy campaign, but no hard money was expended to the initiative.

*(16:00)

Mrs. Rowat: I'd like the minister to explain to me what he means by "hard" money. Is there a difference? Is there, you know, there's no cash?

Mr. Robinson: Staff from Travel Manitoba participated in committees with respect to the Spirited Energy campaign, but no dollars flowed from Travel Manitoba into the campaign itself.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister tell me what type of committees staff would have been attending? I know that there are research committees that talk about emerging issues and that type of thing. Can the minister explain to me what the different committees were so that I have a clear understanding of what role the department or Travel Manitoba had in this campaign?

Mr. Robinson: Some of the interim work that was required in the Spirited Energy campaign, of course, included committee work with respect to the implementation, participation on the Premier's (Mr. Doer) Economic Advisory Council which was business led, as the member knows, identifying businesses with the logo and some of the other activities related to the roll-out format of the Spirited

Energy campaign. So the staff of Travel Manitoba were involved in some of the committees that were required in order for that campaign's work to commence.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me who from Travel Manitoba was on those committees and what committees they served on?

Mr. Robinson: I'm going to have to take that question as notice. I'll speak with the CEO, Hubert Mesman, and also some other key players within Travel Manitoba to get names of some of the folks there that may have served on different committees, but I don't have those names readily available here.

Mrs. Rowat: To be clear, I'd like to know who from Travel Manitoba served on the committee, what committee they served, and what the mandate of those committees would be, and how often they met.

Mr. Robinson: I will avail myself to try and get that information for our colleague.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister give me dollar contribution that the Province has committed to Destination Winnipeg for this last year, and the year before? And also to Brandon First, the dollar allocation.

Mr. Robinson: There is no dollar flow from our department to Destination Winnipeg. The money flow does occur from Intergovernmental Affairs, however.

Mrs. Rowat: Then I'll refer the questions. As well as Brandon First? Is that correct? The same?

Mr. Robinson: Yes.

Mrs. Rowat: Okay.

In the annual report for Travel Manitoba, there was a comment made regarding the importance of service and quality in the tourism industry, and that there is an industry task force that has been developed to identify opportunities for efficiencies and improvements. Can the minister share a little bit of background on who is on this task force, what is the mandate of this task force, and how often this task force has met and if there has been a report submitted to the minister from this task force?

Mr. Robinson: I'll try and cover the question asked by the critic, Mr. Chair. I think she's referring to last year's annual report. *[interjection]* Yes, she is.

Currently, the Industry Quality and Competitiveness committee of Travel Manitoba

consists of the chair, Jim Baker. His members are Carl Wall, Bev Shuttleworth, Celes Davar, Chantal Sturk-Nadeau, Daniel Lussier, Don Finkbeiner, Doug Ramsey, Marina Kulba, Melanie Woodward. Some of these people are also the board members of the Travel Manitoba board. They also have some other committees, as the member knows, within Travel Manitoba. These members are chosen from a cross section of related industries in the tourism field, all with the view of ensuring that the travel and tourism industry in the province of Manitoba is enhanced and perfected, I suppose.

To the best of my knowledge, this work is ongoing and they've identified things that they would like to pursue. However, no reports have been provided to my department or to myself as a result of the work that has been done. There's also some work that relates to the outdoors-leisure, culture and heritage, of course. We also have some Aboriginal tourism possibilities that the Travel Manitoba folks are involved with, along with the secretariat within my department.

Mrs. Rowat: If there is a report that is prepared or recommendations made, who would receive these recommendations?

Mr. Robinson: The board of directors, through the chair, Mr. Paul Robson. Mr. Robson and I try to meet periodically, at least quarterly, to bring each other up to date on some of the developments relating to the work of Travel Manitoba. Whenever we do meet, he also brings me up to speed because he is also chair of Sport Manitoba.

So we get the business done over a lunch hour, maybe. We bring each other up to speed on some of the things that Travel Manitoba is doing. However, any reporting is done through his role as chair and, ultimately, the board of directors that he works with.

Mrs. Rowat: So one of the areas of issue that I hope the minister is meeting with Travel Manitoba staff on would be the area of apprenticeship in the culinary arts area, where there seems to be, based on what I'm hearing from the industry, a frustration in that there doesn't seem to be a clear movement from level one training into the red seal area, I guess the final level of culinary training.

So I want to know if the minister is aware of those frustrations. There seems to be frustrations with the industry saying that there doesn't seem to be an outward line of communication on this. I'm wondering if the minister is aware of a review that

may be occurring, if he can share his thoughts on that, and also let me know when a review such as this, if it is taking place, when it can be expected to be released and who it would be presented to.

* (16:10)

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chair, I'd like the member to provide me with that information. Certainly, I'll raise that with the chair of the board. What she is telling us is indeed very important and I'd like to follow up on that. However, not having the benefit of having the details before me that she has just pointed out, I'm at a disadvantage to raise that with the chair of the board. So I'd like the member to provide me that information. I'll gladly pursue it with the chair of Travel Manitoba.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, I will gladly provide that background. That's just in discussions with different stakeholders within the industry who have raised this with me as a serious issue. The culinary arts program is an excellent program and people are graduating from that, but there doesn't seem to be a strong enough push for individuals to continue through the program to get their Red Seal. Again, I'm just curious to know why this hasn't come up as an issue in the industry task force look or review of efficiencies and improvements because I do believe this has been an ongoing issue for a number of years.

I would, I guess, recommend to the minister that he may want to speak to experts within his department or through Travel Manitoba to determine how this is going to be addressed. My understanding, though, is that there is a review occurring right now. They are looking at all trades within the tourism sector. I'm just wanting to know why the minister hasn't been told of this review or if he has been told of this review, maybe he can indicate to me the status of it.

Mr. Robinson: No, I'm afraid I've not been made aware of it. I'm certainly interested now by the member's information that she's brought to this committee, and I will certainly follow up on some of these things. It will definitely be an agenda item when I next meet with the chair of the board.

Mrs. Rowat: I'll also do a follow-up letter to the minister asking for the status of this review and what type of work has been done to this point. So I do appreciate the minister's interest in this.

I'm going to go into the area of FIPPAs. I'm just wanting to know if the minister can give me some information on the recommendations, or the review

that was done and the recommendations. Has the minister been able to—I know that we had raised some questions during Question Period during the Right to Know Week. There were still some outstanding issues with regard to the recommendations that were going to be done to improve lines of access for information. The minister, I'm sure, is aware of the seven-month delay that we had with regard to the Spirited Energy focus group data. I do believe that this is not an isolated incident, that there are continual delays with regard to receiving response times for information.

I just wanted to know if the minister can give me an update on what the status is of his department's role in implementing a streamlined approach to the FIPPA process.

Mr. Robinson: We're obviously committed to an open and accountable government. As I pointed out to the member, I'm sure she's tired of hearing me say that we've been identified as one of the governments in Canada that's been doing quite well in the accessibility of information with respect to our process here in the province of Manitoba.

We've made some progress. We went through the review some time ago, and we have made corrections by putting Orders-in-Council on-line as one example that came into effect in January of this year. We're looking at a number of other amendments that can strengthen the act, and, as I'm on the public record as saying, we are planning on introducing legislation this fall to, hopefully, improve the act itself right now. We're absolutely committed to doing that.

With respect to the Right to Know Week that just occurred last month, I'd like to congratulate the folks that worked on this, the organizing committee, of course, the sponsors and all those that participated in these important events. We're routinely making more information available and are looking at a number of other amendments that can strengthen the act. When this work is completed, I expect to bring amendments before this House.

Now, to put this into context, departments and agencies received more access requests in 2006 than in any other year, at least two to three times the average yearly total. Almost two-thirds of these requests came from one person and were distributed between Conservation and Water Stewardship. This clearly puts a strain on a system as the member can appreciate. One of the impacts was to delay completion of responses to other applications already

in the system, and applicants may complain about delays about this. But, hey, when you have these kinds of strains on a particular system, then you understand why. As outlined in the Ombudsman's office report in 2006, that office conducted an audit of access and privacy in the Department of Conservation, and the department accepted all recommendations made. They have been implemented, and I'm very proud of our government in that respect.

I know that the member asked me some time ago this very question, and my response is that we are going to be introducing legislation that will, I believe, improve FIPPA. We are absolutely committed to that, and, obviously, the opposition will have an opportunity to have their say as well when the time is appropriate.

Mrs. Rowat: We're looking forward to this legislation. I believe the report came back a couple of years ago, and we're looking forward to the minister eventually introducing this legislation that we hope will help improve or streamline the FIPPA process. Waiting seven months for focus group data is a bit cumbersome, or a bit of a stretch when it comes to requesting information and receiving it, so we look forward to that.

There seems to be a prevalence of waiting the full 30-day time period for responses to FIPPA requests as well as a prevalence of asking for extensions for an additional 30 days. Can the minister explain to me why that is happening?

* (16:20)

Mr. Robinson: The majority of the requests that have been made have been dealt with within that 30-day period, and the majority of the requests have been responded to. The cases for the most part that we haven't been able to comply with within the requested time are because of the congestion of the number of requests.

Just let me give you some numbers here. This is in 2006, 470 requests were done within the 30-day period; within 60 days where an extension was required, 207; and 78 were done after more than 60 days. So we're not doing bad in comparison to other jurisdictions. There are occasions when we're unable to fulfil one when we get a pile of Conservation requests as an example. I'm just reading here from the annual report of FIPPA: 1,500 requests in the year 2006 were received, 1,500 requests in that one department alone. That is,

I think, a significant increase from the previous year that this government has had to deal with FIPPA requests, but I think overall we're doing a pretty good job in trying to address all these requests.

Mrs. Rowat: When the report came out in 2005, I was concerned about the number of requests that Manitobans were having to make just to access information that should just be made public in the first place. Seeing this report, it shows that the problem isn't getting any better. In 2006 there were only 66 percent of the requests that were responded to within the 30 days, compared to 2005 when 85 percent of the requests were responded to within 30 days.

In addition, when responses were finally made, complaints about these responses more than doubled to 19 percent up from 9 percent. So the complaints with regard to these responses have more than doubled in 2005. So there appear to be some systemic problems with the department and with the response time with regard to FIPPA, and I believe that just having the report come out late, three months late, to be exact, is an example of things not flowing as freely as we would like to see.

So I guess I'm just going to ask: Is this a staffing issue or is there a lack of reluctance from the government side to provide this information in a prompt and expedient manner?

Mr. Robinson: Let me repeat what I said earlier to put this into context. The departments and agencies received more access requests in 2006 than in any other year, at least two to three times the average yearly total, and almost two-thirds of these requests came from one person and were distributed between Conservation and Water Stewardship, those two departments. So, congesting the department with that number of requests, it's very difficult to attempt to keep up with the remainder. We're trying to, obviously, improve the system, but I, certainly, can't fault our staff. I, certainly, can't fault any incompetence on the part of our staff, but the amount of requests have in that particular period of time multiplied more than in any other year that I'm aware of.

Mrs. Rowat: I'm wondering if the minister can share with me then, how many people are employed to respond to FIPPA requests for each department. Again, I'm reflecting back on—is this a staffing issue, with complaints more than doubling in 2005, from 19 percent to 9 percent? Obviously, there seems to be some issue here with the prevalence of wait times

for information exceeding the 30-day period. So I'll ask the minister again: Is this a staffing issue or is there a reluctance for government to reply to the FIPPA requests promptly?

Mr. Robinson: Every department in government has an officer and a co-ordinator to ensure that these requests that are placed before government and the requests that are put forth are responded to. Our department, the department I have responsibility for right now, has three resource persons to give advice to each of these department people that I have described in terms of acting within the spirit of the act and to ensure that the information requested is provided to the citizens that request such information.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me what percentage of requests were denied, and what percentage of requests were partially denied in 2006?

Mr. Robinson: Forty-three percent were responded to; 21 percent were partially not responded to because the information that the government was seeking was not readily available; and 21 percent of the requests, the information did not exist.

* (16:30)

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, I'm just going to leave the FIPPA now, but just to indicate to the minister, I strongly recommend he get the legislation put forward. People are waiting for some direction, some leadership from this government in this area, and it appears that delays in information being received by individuals who are making requests are going to continue to increase until some type of leadership is shown from this government on FIPPA requests, and I'll leave it at that.

Regarding recreation. As I indicated earlier, I was really pleased to see that the minister had, again, changed or had renamed the department Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport. You wouldn't believe the number of times that I've heard from recreation officers from within my communities and outside of my communities how they don't feel that they really fit anywhere. So I applaud the minister for bringing recreation or sport back into the title because I think it slighted a lot of the communities who do great work.

I believe recreation commissions throughout rural and northern Manitoba—and that would be my experience in discussions—do a lot of work in the area of community building, capacity building within their areas. They have been known to take leadership

roles, whether it be healthy living, whether it be economic development, whether it be infrastructure and community development.

So I was pleased to see the name, but I would like to know also if the minister can share with me if there're any type of supports other than putting them on the minister's new department name, if there's any type of strategy to ensure that communities can expand their capabilities, whether he's looked at increasing the funding per capita, if there're any supports that are going to be provided for these types of recreation commissions to do what they have done with very minimal support or guidance from this government?

So I'd like to ask the minister to provide me some background on where you're going to go from here now that you've got Sport in the name. What type of support can these communities look for from this government?

Mr. Robinson: Certainly, one of the things that I made a priority when I was appointed to this post was to make this a priority with the federal-provincial-territorial ministers responsible for recreation and sport. What we've been able to do with respect to the decaying facilities that we all have in the province of Manitoba—it doesn't matter whether we come from northern, central or southern or western or eastern Manitoba. As I said at the outset, many of the facilities that we have currently were built around the year of the centennial and some of these facilities are a fire hazard at best.

What the Ontario minister and other ministers and I have been working with the federal government on is trying to have a dedicated program to be partnered by provinces and territories with our national government dedicated to the infrastructure needs with respect to recreation and, particularly, sporting facilities in Canada. Our last meeting occurred in Whitehorse, I believe, in the month of February. A follow-up meeting will be held very shortly. Again, the priorities of recreation ministers and sport ministers will again occur, but, certainly, that is a priority of our government.

We have made some inroads by finding some other programs that we could capitalize on in trying to offset the infrastructure deficit, as I heard it described, in Canada. It's not only our province, but, indeed, across Canada. We have made efforts with respect to trails funding as I talked about in my open remarks, as well as providing an increase in monies to Sport Manitoba, the delivery agent of sporting

activities in the province of Manitoba, \$1 million over the last four years in order for them to be able to have a broader scope in the delivery services that they offer.

Also facilities assistance. There's a lot of work that we have to do. I think these are one of the issues that are non-partisan that we can work together on as elected people of this province. I mean, whether you're in western Manitoba, whether I'm in northern Manitoba, it doesn't matter where, we need some recreational facilities, and we need our national government and, obviously, our government as well, to a large degree, to make investments in these areas that definitely need some help. We're committed to doing that. We are making it a national priority. My colleagues, the other ministers responsible for sport and recreation from other provinces and territories are very well aware of what we need to do.

We've identified, under the program I described earlier, the bilateral project that we were able to talk the federal government into investing in here in Manitoba, that we have three priority groups, those being: Aboriginal people, people known as new Canadians, and women. So we have a program that we've identified with the federal government, and we are working in partnership with the federal government. People who live in urban areas who don't have accessibility, new Canadians particularly, Aboriginal people, and people who live in remote areas of this country in this province, we need to pay particular attention to them. We're committed to doing that.

I thank the member for her kind words with respect to giving sport and recreation more profile. I believe that we're one of the few governments in Canada to give this priority, sport and recreation. It's something that we're absolutely committed to, and I look forward to working with the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) in some of these areas that cross over and hit us all as Manitobans, never mind our party colours.

Mrs. Rowat: What I was really wanting to know, what kind of supports and resources would be available for recreation commission or recreation directors?

Infrastructure is important, absolutely, but I believe that, in discussions with recreation directors, either in The Pas, or whether they be in Thompson, or whether they be in Souris and Minnedosa, there seems to be a need and a want from these groups to

see some leadership from this government to provide some type of supports.

I believe there was a 50-cent-per-capita increase recently, but that, you know, in some of the communities I represent, would be less than a thousand dollars. I guess we need to be looking at ways that we can provide supports to individuals and groups who do amazing community work and have been relied on by not only government when the Healthy Living Task Force was out and about, I think they relied on the recreation directors in a lot of the communities to co-ordinate these activities. To me, it just goes to show how important they are in the communities, but we need to see a little more leadership from this government in providing recognition of what they do.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

I'm interrupting the proceedings of this section of the Committee of Supply because the total time allotted for Estimates consideration has now expired. Our rule 76(3) provides that not more than 100 hours shall be allowed for the consideration of the business of Supply.

Further, our rule 76(5) provides that, when time has expired, the, quote, Chairpersons shall forthwith put all remaining questions without debate, amendment or adjournment, end quote. I am therefore going to call in sequence the resolutions on the following matters.

Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, Healthy Child Manitoba, Capital Investment, Enabling and Other Appropriations, Civil Service Commission, Employee Pensions and Other Costs, Legislative Assembly.

I would again remind members that these questions may not be debated, amended or adjourned.

I'd also like to thank the critic and the minister presently here.

I'm moving to the resolutions for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport.

*(16:40)

Resolution 14.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,147,100 for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$44,920,300 for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,156,600 for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, Information Resources, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20,222,100 for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, Tourism and Sport, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,910,000 for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, Capital Grants, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$667,600 for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

MANITOBA SENIORS AND HEALTHY AGING SECRETARIAT

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 24.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,357,400 for Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,000 for Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

HEALTHY CHILD MANITOBA

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 34.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$26,384,600 for Healthy Child Manitoba, Healthy Child Manitoba, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 34.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,100 for Healthy Child Manitoba, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.**CAPITAL INVESTMENT**

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution B.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$50,000 for Capital Investment, Legislative Assembly, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$435,000 for Capital Investment, Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,420,800 for Capital Investment, Competitiveness, Training and Trade, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,777,400 for Capital Investment, Conservation, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$90,000 for Capital Investment, Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$175,000 for Capital Investment, Education, Citizenship and Youth, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,826,500 for Capital Investment, Family Services and Housing, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$845,900 for Capital Investment, Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$336,100 for Capital Investment, Health, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.10: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$551,294,700 for Capital Investment, Infrastructure and Transportation, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.11: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,050,900 for Capital Investment, Justice, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.12: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,333,800 for Capital Investment, Science, Technology, Energy and Mines, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.13: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$244,300 for Capital Investment, Water Stewardship, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.14: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,429,000 for Capital Investment, Internal Reform, Workforce Adjustment and General Salary Increases (an Enabling Appropriation), for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

ENABLING APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 26.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$85,063,800 for Enabling Appropriations, Enabling Vote, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,400,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,250,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Justice Initiatives, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$300,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Security Initiatives, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$16,350,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Internal Reform, Workforce Adjustment and General Salary Increases, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.**OTHER APPROPRIATIONS**

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 27.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$25,000,000 for Other Appropriations, Emergency Expenditures, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 27.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$805,000 for Other Appropriations, Allowance for Losses and Expenditures Incurred by Crown Corporations and Other Provincial Entities, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.**CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 17.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,391,100 for Civil Service Commission, Civil Service Commission, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 17.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$58,900 for Civil Service Commission, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.**EMPLOYEE PENSIONS AND OTHER COSTS**

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 6.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$88,223,300 for Employee Pensions and Other Costs, Employee Pensions and Other Costs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 1.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,018,200 for Legislative Assembly, Other Assembly Expenditures, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,459,400 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Auditor General, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,622,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Ombudsman, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,338,900 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,427,800 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Children's Advocate, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$177,700 for Legislative Assembly, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

This, remarkably, concludes our consideration of the Estimates in this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 255. I would like to thank the ministers, critics and all honourable members for their hard work and dedication during this process.

Committee rise.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 15, 2007

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The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>