

Second Session - Thirty-Eighth 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-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
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.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	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.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon	Riel	N.D.P.
VACANT	Minto	
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
VACANT	Turtle Mountain	
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 9, 2004

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: For the information of all honourable members, the Hansard will be late arriving today.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Highway 227

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition.

It is unacceptable for the residents of Manitoba to travel the unsafe gravel roads of Highway 227 in the constituencies of Lakeside and Portage la Prairie.

Inclement weather can make Highway 227 treacherous to all drivers.

Allowing better access to Highway 227 would ease the flow of traffic on the Trans-Canada Highway.

Residences along Highway 227 are not as accessible to emergency services due to the nature of the current condition of the roadway.

The condition of these gravel roads can cause serious damage to all vehicles, which is unacceptable.

Residents of Manitoba deserve a better rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) consider having Highway 227 paved from the junction of highways 248 and 227 all the way to Highway 16, the Yellowhead route.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider supporting said initiatives to ensure the safety of all Manitobans and all Canadians who travel along Manitoba highways.

Submitted on behalf of L. Balan, W. Fleury, K. Nugent, M. Vosters and others.

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

Alzheimer's Disease

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

Alzheimer's is a debilitating disease.

Cholinesterase inhibitors are known to slow or even prevent the progression of Alzheimer's.

The provincial government asked for the development of an Alzheimer's strategy in 2000 and was presented with nine recommendations in 2002, none of which has yet been implemented.

In the absence of a provincial Alzheimer's strategy, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority put in place a policy in November 2003 whereby Alzheimer's patients entering personal care homes are being weaned from certain Alzheimer medications in a move that the WRHA's vice-president of long-term care has referred to as a financial necessity.

The administrative costs of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority have more than tripled since 1999, to a total of more than \$16 million a year.

In a move that amounts to two-tier medicine, the families of Alzheimer's sufferers in personal care homes may request that the drugs continue to be delivered at the family's expense.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) to ensure that his attempts to balance his department's finances are not at the expense of the health and well-being of seniors and other vulnerable Manitobans suffering from this debilitating disease.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider reversing his decision to deny Alzheimer's patients in personal care homes access to certain medications.

To request the Minister of Health to consider implementing a provincial Alzheimer's strategy.

Signed by Rhoda Sewell, Joanne Lambert, Lynda Richard and others.

Minimum Sitting Days for Legislative Assembly

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:

The Manitoba Legislature sat for only 37 days in 2003.

Manitobans expect their government to be accountable, and the number of sitting days has a direct impact on the issue of public accountability.

Manitobans expect their elected officials to be provided the opportunity to be able to hold the government accountable.

The Legislative Assembly provides the best forum for all MLAs to debate and ask questions of the government, and it is critical that all MLAs be provided the time needed in order for them to cover constituent and party duties.

Establishing a minimum number of sitting days could prevent the government of the day from limiting the rights of opposition members from being able to ask questions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider recognizing the need to sit for a minimum of 80 days in any given calendar year.

Signed by Cecito Macabeo, Edith Nato and Carmelita Cruzat.

* (13:35)

Proposed PLA–Floodway

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for the petition:

Under the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway, the Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA) which would require all floodway workers to pay union dues and which may require all non-unionized companies and workers to join a union.

The Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) has publicly stated a project labour agreement would automatically require all floodway workers to pay union dues, even if they are not part of a union.

Forcing all floodway workers to pay union dues may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his government's plan to force all workers involved in the floodway expansion to pay union dues even if they are not part of a union.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ensuring any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Signed by Ben Thiessen, Myrna Thiessen, Gertrude Thielmann and others.

Pharmacare

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for the petition.

Pharmacare is a drug benefit program for any Manitoban, regardless of age, whose income is seriously affected by high prescription drug costs.

Under the Doer government, Pharmacare deductibles have been increased by 5 percent each year for the past three years. As a result of the 15% hike in Pharmacare deductibles, individuals are facing increased costs ranging from \$36 to \$660 a year. Seniors, fixed- and low-income-earning Manitobans are the most negatively impacted by these increases.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier of Manitoba to consider reversing his decision to increase Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent in Budget 2004.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider reducing health care bureaucracy, as previously promised, and direct those savings into sustaining Pharmacare.

To urge the Premier of Manitoba to consider re-evaluating his government's priorities and to consider suspending his government's plans to spend \$100 million on new VLTs at a time when seniors and fixed-income Manitobans cannot afford medication.

It is signed by Diana Dunn, Ruth Epp, Kathie Klassen and others.

Proposed PLA–Floodway

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Under the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway, the Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA) which would require all floodway workers to pay union dues and which may require all non-unionized companies and workers to join a union.

This Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) has publicly stated a Project Labour Agreement would automatically require all floodway workers to pay union dues, even if they are not part of a union.

Forcing all floodway workers to pay union dues may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his government's plan to force all workers involved in the floodway expansion to pay union dues even if they are not part of a union.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ensuring any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Respectfully submitted by Ray Johnson, R.H. Bray and Judy Nagribianko and others.

Pharmacare

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for the petition.

Pharmacare is a drug benefit program for any Manitoban, regardless of age, whose income is seriously affected by high prescription drug costs.

Under the Doer government, Pharmacare deductibles have been increased by 5 percent each year for the past three years. As a result of the 15% hike in Pharmacare deductibles, individuals are facing increased costs ranging from \$36 to \$660 a year. Seniors, fixed- and low-income-earning Manitobans are the most negatively impacted by these increases.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier of Manitoba to consider reversing his decision to increase Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent in Budget 2004,

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider reducing health care bureaucracy, as previously promised, and direct those savings into sustaining Pharmacare.

To urge the Premier of Manitoba to consider re-evaluating his government's priorities and to consider suspending his government's plans to spend \$100 million on new VLTs at a time when seniors and fixed-income Manitobans cannot afford medication.

This is signed by Joan Shillington, Ann Morris, Rosemary McDonald and others.

* (13:40)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Mrs. Nancy Dann and Mrs. Bernice McConnell. These visitors are the mother and grandmother of our legislative page, Rhiannon Kuzmin.

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

In the public gallery we have from Border Valley Elementary 46 Grades 4 and 5 students under the direction of Mr. Neal Remple.

Also in the public gallery we have from Sandy Lake School 10 Grades 5 and 6 students under the direction of Mrs. Pam Lewandoski. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Red River Floodway Expansion Master Labour Agreement

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, yesterday when the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) was pressed by the media about whether heavy construction employers would be at the negotiating table with the Floodway Authority, with the unions, the minister made it clear that this would not happen.

Instead the minister said the employers would be involved, but he said no to having them at the table. Today the Premier confirmed that when he said on CJOB that he has accepted Wally Fox-Decent's report, which of course recommends that employers be excluded.

Mr. Speaker, when more than 95 percent of the heavy construction industry is non-unionized, it is ridiculous that this Premier is going to have the unions doing the negotiating and on top of that is going to force non-unionized workers to pay union dues for those negotiating services. Will the Premier today commit in writing to have the employers as full participants at the bargaining table?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member obviously believes he knows into the future who is going to win all the tenders. I do not believe many of the tenders have been let yet.

Mr. Murray: Manitoba's non-unionized heavy construction workers deserve and are entitled to have their employers and employer associations negotiate on their behalf, Mr. Speaker. It is not the union's place to do so.

I would like to table a June 9 letter sent to this Premier from the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba and the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, which states, and I would like to quote from the letter, "We seek your written assurance that the construction associations whose signatures appear below and who represent industries that may participate in bidding floodway expansion work will be given equal standing in the process to be engaged in, negotiating terms of the floodway master agreement and all sub-agreements."

Mr. Speaker, that is the quote from the letter sent to this Premier. They are only asking for the same treatment as the Premier is extending to his union-boss friends. Will he give them a seat at the negotiating table?

* (13:45)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I have statements and communications from some of the same individuals the Leader of the Opposition is commenting on today stating how experienced and knowledgeable Wally Fox-Decent is when the process was established.

There are components of the proposal from Mr. Fox-Decent that deal with no strike or lockouts, that deal with the no forced unionization, that deal with the predictable way of proceeding. It is a report that has elements in it that one side or the other does not agree with, but in its totality what it presents to Manitobans is a clear plan to have a floodway proceed with no strikes or lockouts to allow for predictable construction of the site. That is the essence of the report. That is the essence of what we were seeking, that is in the public interest.

To try to take a negative comment from a union representative or a negative comment from a potential employer and try to cherry-pick one or the other, we have a choice. We can go with the macro plan recommended by Wally Fox-Decent, the middle way of developing a consensus in a plan, or we can take an extremist view like members opposite. We are taking the solid way to proceed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, when this Premier's education group insisted that he raise the PST by 1 percent, he stood up and said no to them. He immediately said no to them. So, we understand that this process that Mr. Fox-Decent has given to this

Premier, he is the Premier of the province of all Manitobans. He is the one that can make the right decision. We have heard this Premier and his minister repeatedly say that the Floodway Authority is the owner of the expansion project.

Well, Mr. Speaker, here is a news flash for both of them: Manitobans are the owners of this project, not this Premier and his union boss.

What Manitobans, the true owners, the taxpayers who fund the project are telling this Premier is that they do not want non-unionized workers to pay union dues, Mr. Speaker, and they do not support employers being excluded from the bargaining table.

I would ask the Premier, as the letter has asked him today that was given to him by the employer groups, will he do the right thing and put in writing and ensure that the employer groups, along with his union-boss friends, put the employer groups at the negotiating table.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is using a lot of rhetoric and not a lot of common sense. If he wants to campaign in four years on the basis that he will rip up a no-strike or no-lockout provision for the floodway construction, let him do so. We will be on the other side.

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

Construction Costs

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On a new question. The heavy construction industry says that the Premier's scheme to force non-unionized workers to pay union dues will add somewhere between \$3 million to \$5 million to the cost of the project. Yesterday, when pressed by the media, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) said that they are still working with the exact same \$660-million budget that they originally announced on the floodway project.

Mr. Speaker, if they are working on the same budget, it can only mean one of two things. They either planned on forcing non-unionized workers to pay union dues all along and had already worked that into the cost of the project, or perhaps they are not telling the truth. And they are not telling the truth

today about the millions of dollars in additional costs that their forced union dues will cost taxpayers of Manitoba. I ask the Premier, which is it.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I believe the member opposite used a figure of \$3 million to \$5 million. If I understand correctly the numbers that the member opposite has been using for the last three months, along with his house of cards that fell down with the Fox-Decent report of forced unionization, was some 20 times that number—

An Honourable Member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the last project in Manitoba that built upon two projects before that which, under a report of Cam McLean presented to Hydro under the Conservative's administration in the late sixties, the Limestone project, came in half a billion dollars under budget with the labour management agreement. One of the reasons it came in under budget, compared to the projects in the early sixties that did not have a labour management agreement, is because in the early sixties there were strikes that delayed the project, delayed the project and delayed the project, which resulted in loss of revenue for the completed Hydro dam.

The project that did have the labour management agreement came in under budget. The International Joint Commission has identified a \$70-million liability with every year of delay. That is why we are in favour of an agreement that has no strike or lockout. Members opposite can campaign to cancel that; we believe the people are with us.

Tendering Process

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we understand that in February of this year the Premier's union friends at the Building Trades Council presented the Premier's friends at the Floodway Authority with a floodway expansion training program proposal. The group who would do the training is called REACT Inc., Real Exposure and Access to Construction Training. The proposal says and I quote, "REACT Inc. will construct 10 percent of the floodway expansion project and deliver a finished product to the owner

while providing meaningful training and employment opportunities to equity partners."

Mr. Speaker, 10 percent of a \$660-million project is \$66 million. No tendering, no bidding, just a flat-out agreement to give the union representatives' Building Trades Council a contract for \$66 million. Will the Premier commit today that every single aspect of the floodway project will be properly tendered and not just handed out to his union-boss friends?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we see once again how misplaced the priorities of this opposition are. They seem to feel this is more important than the BSE situation and many other issues facing Manitobans. I think what is unfortunate now is they are not recognizing that there have been no tenders outside of the design and environmental assessment tenders that were put out for the engineering work.

We have indicated we are committed to training. We are committed to training and particularly, Mr. Speaker, I might add, to give opportunities to Aboriginal people and many other Manitobans who have been disadvantaged in terms of employment opportunities along with many other Manitobans.

In fact, I am anticipating that Wally Fox-Decent will be able to work with the stakeholders on this and there are no decisions in terms of particular performance, but I welcome input from any and all Manitobans who see the way we do that this is an opportunity for economic development and training for Manitobans.

Master Labour Agreement

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, what this is turning out to be is a way the Premier can feed his union boss taxpayers' dollars. This Premier's plan, his scheme, to force non-unionized workers to pay union dues and to see millions of dollars flow to his union-boss friends, he is, potentially, going to give them another \$66 million, or 10 percent of the floodway project. The end result of this is that tens of millions of taxpayer dollars are going to flow into the coffers of this Premier's union-boss friends and, ultimately, it will be a kickback of taxpayers' dollars. It will flow into the NDP coffers.

As one of the numerous members, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask the members opposite to pay attention to this because this morning we met with the heavy construction industry and one of them, when asked about what this Premier is doing to business in Manitoba, said, and I quote, "This reminds me of the federal Liberal Adscam scandal where they funnelled taxpayers' money to their friends."

Will the Premier do the right thing? Will he scrap forced unionization dues? Will he commit to an open process? Will he commit, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the employer groups have a seat at the negotiating table with his union friends?

*(13:55)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The member opposite should understand, Mr. Speaker, we have banned union and corporate donations to political parties. There is only one party in this province committed to repealing the donations from political parties. They want to go back to the old ways under which—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are the only political party who want to go back to the old ways of having donations.

Members opposite want to talk about the honesty. Look at the sale of the telephone system. Look at how the shares have gone up. Look at who is benefiting from the sale of the phone system. Look who is getting stock options in terms of the phone system. Shame on them.

Red River Floodway Expansion Tendering Process

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition asked a very clear question. The question was regarding whether or not the Minister of Water Stewardship planned, through the Floodway Authority, to allow 10 percent of the floodway project, \$66 million, to go to a union-bid contract, \$66 million under the guise of a name of REACT Incorporated without bid, without tender. Manitoba taxpayers deserve a straightforward answer

to a straightforward question. Is that the Minister of Water Stewardship's plan?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, our plan has been very clear. We see this as a tremendous opportunity for training. In fact, this may be news—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers in case there is a breach of a rule or departure from our practices because I am sure each and every one of you would expect me to make a fair ruling on it. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Ashton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a tremendous opportunity in terms of training. In fact, many Aboriginal organizations have seen this as a tremendous opportunity for training for Aboriginal people in this province. There have been no decisions on the training component. In terms of tenders, no tenders have been put out, no tenders have been let. Once again we are seeing from these members opposite the kind of extremist rhetoric. They are playing politics with the floodway. We are building the floodway expansion. That is the difference between us.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Water Stewardship talks about opportunity. This is an opportunity to pad his union-boss buddies' pockets with \$66 million of taxpayers' money. They talk about a company called REACT, run by the unions to do training, REACT Incorporated. Perhaps it should be called kickback incorporated because that is really what it is about.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very clear question that has been asked and it should not be difficult to answer. The Minister of Water Stewardship should stand up and say there will not be this type of kickback. There will absolutely not be a \$66-million payoff to his union-boss buddies without tender. He should answer the question today. Will he today say there will be no untendered training contract to the unions?

*(14:00)

Mr. Ashton: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I think the members opposite show time and time again how little interest they really have in terms of the actual

building of the floodway expansion. There are tremendous training opportunities. I might add, by the way, that members of the business community have been talking about potential training models. That is their right, but we have made no decisions in terms of training, no decisions in terms of tender.

So, once again, the members not only do not have an issue, it is a case again of trying to play politics with the floodway. We are not playing politics with the floodway, Mr. Speaker, we are building the expansion. That is what really matters to Manitobans.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, what the minister is really playing with is taxpayers' money, \$66 million of taxpayers' money. Is he planning to shut out employers who would normally get a bidding process on a project like this? Is he planning to shut them out and not allow them to bid on this particular contract?

An Honourable Member: They are not at the table.

Mr. Goertzen: They are not at the table. Now they potentially cannot bid on a \$66-million part of the floodway. It is not REACT Incorporated, it is kickback incorporated. The Minister of Water Stewardship should basically be very, very clear, \$66 million of Manitoba taxpayers' money is at stake. That is the issue here. That is what we are discussing. Will he turn down the application by the unions to have that \$66-million kickback?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, we see once again with this kind of extreme rhetoric reference to kickbacks. I find, I think, that it is becoming a growing trend with members opposite. Any time there is anything that involves labour relations, they resort to that kind of rhetoric.

Even this morning we saw them vote against an amendment to The Labour Relations Act, which has been broadly endorsed by employers. They cheer—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ashton: You know, Mr. Speaker, even when employers agree on an amendment, they vote against it. They do not even agree where there is consensus between employers and employee groups in this

province. So, I have no doubt, again, that they are only interested in playing politics. I will repeat once again we are interested in training opportunities, economic development opportunities and flood protection for Manitobans. That is the bottom line.

Crop Insurance Deadline Extension

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the crop insurance deadlines are fast approaching. Farmlands in many parts of the province are waterlogged and will take some time to dry. This spring has been abnormally cold and farmers, because of government policy, are desperately trying to meet crop insurance deadlines by using aircraft and other methods to put seed in the ground.

Will the Minister of Agriculture today recognize the unusually cold spring and consider further extensions of the crop insurance deadline to allow farmers to use good agrarian practices to get their crops in the ground?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having the opportunity to say in this House that as a government we recognize that it was a difficult growing season. We have made an extension to the program.

I want the members of this House to recognize this is a federal-provincial program and we have to come to agreement with the federal government as to whether there will be further extensions. I can tell you that this government has put in place excess moisture insurance that was not in place under the previous administration and should the producers not be able to seed, that program will be in place for them.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, \$50 an acre of crop insurance will be cold comfort to those people that cannot make a living. The government has signed on to the CAIS program and has not yet indicated that the government would cover the full 40 percent required under the program.

Farmers have been told that they will have to have crop insurance to cover the first 60 percent of their losses. Will the minister today consider an extension of the crop insurance deadline to allow farmers to properly put their crops in the ground?

Ms. Wowchuk: I have indicated previously that when we signed on to the APF our 40 percent was there, and it is there now. I do not know how many more times we have to repeat to the opposition that we have signed on to the amending agreement. Our money is in place, and we will continue to work with the producers of this province as this program comes into place and look at how we can make improvements to the program.

Mr. Penner: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture must recognize the dilemma the whole agriculture community faces today: No markets for cattle because of closed borders, pending tariffs on hogs from Manitoba to the U.S. market and large areas of farms that either are being drowned out or will not be seeded at all this year. We know that.

Will the minister today recognize the economic consequences facing rural Manitoba and extend the crop insurance deadlines and fully commit to the total 40% coverage instead of what Saskatchewan has done by indicating they will prorate it to their budgeted amount?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I will give this answer I have given before. We signed on to the agreement. Our 40 percent is in the budget the opposition members voted against. We are there with the producers.

With respect to the member's second question with regard to crop insurance, as I said before, this is a federal-provincial program. We were able to make one extension and we will have discussion with the federal government as to whether or not we are able to make another extension.

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Surgical Program

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): The Doer government has put over a billion dollars more into health care. Yet according to leaked WRHA documents they are doing over 4000 less major surgeries since 1998-1999, 4000 less major surgeries. No wonder some orthopedic patients are having to wait almost two years for surgery.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health: Can he tell us how he can spend so much money and get so little for it?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to the Member for Charleswood that 70 percent of the cost of health care goes to paying for nurses, doctors, lab technicians, et cetera. I might add we have 879 more nurses working in Manitoba today than when members opposite were government.

Mr. Speaker, there are 115 more doctors working today in Manitoba than when members opposite were in government. You notice in the member's question she says major surgeries. In terms of all surgeries, not only are we doing more surgeries in Winnipeg but we are also doing surgeries outside of Winnipeg, in Steinbach and in Thompson, which was never done before. You notice how the member tries to be cute by saying major surgeries.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I think when we are talking about orthopedic surgeries, gyny surgeries, which are down by a thousand, I am not talking about something that is about being cute. Major surgeries are down by 4000 a year under this Minister of Health. In the leaked WRHA 2004-2007 surgery program business plan, their concern about spending forced them to consider closing 100 beds or cutting back 20 000 major surgery cases or a third of all major surgery cases in order to avoid a deficit. They acknowledged it was going to increase surgical wait times.

Mr. Speaker, obviously things are very, very bad if the WRHA is even considering cutting back 20 000 major surgeries. I would like to ask the Minister of Health: Is this just the tip of the iceberg?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the member has taken numbers and fooled around with the numbers before but this is absolutely extraordinary. Not only are we doing more surgeries, we have doubled the number of surgeries at Pan Am, something the members opposite fought against day after day.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but on the point of orthopedic surgery, we reduced the wait time by 20 percent. We reduced the wait time by doing more surgeries. In addition cardiac surgeries, the wait time is down 67 percent. We are not only doing more surgeries but we are doing more outpatient surgeries. In fact outpatient surgeries have increased from 27 percent to 31 percent, and a lot of them are being done at a place called Pan Am that members opposite were vehemently opposed to for the last three years.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I see the members are really anxious to ask questions. I think if we had some decorum we would be able to get more questions in. Order. The honourable Member for Charleswood has the floor.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Pan Am Clinic accepted transfers of existing cases in the system. More were not added. With cardiac surgeries, they are doing more because Doctor Koshal forced them to do more, because 14 patients died waiting for care. We know that hospitals are being forced to consider staff layoffs, bed closures and program cuts. We know that the WRHA was looking at cutting 100 beds or cutting 20 000 major surgical cases. They had to consider it. This all sounds like an omen that Manitobans are in for a rough ride in health care.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health: How much are patients going to have to suffer for his mismanagement? How can they put a billion dollars more into health care and now even consider these drastic cuts? I would like to tell this Minister of Health to get his act together.

*(14:10)

Mr. Chomiak: I would table a document for the member that shows that surgical volumes in Winnipeg alone have increased from over 75 000 to 77 500 from the period of time we were in office; just in Winnipeg, not including Steinbach, not including Thompson and the other centres. I might add, to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority we gave a 4.4 increase in their budget this year, on a base budget of \$1.2 billion.

Members opposite in their proposal asked for a 1% increase, a 1% increase to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. The 1% increase to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority would not have even covered one tenth of the budget of Seven Oaks Hospital. That is what they proposed.

We gave 4.4 percent at a time when it has been very difficult, when members opposite asked us to cut programs. We have done more surgeries, we are going to do more surgeries, we have expanded cardiac surgeries, we have consolidated at

Concordia. Every time we have done that, the members opposite have opposed it, even though we have done a better job of it.

Sharon Horn Medical Inquest

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Unfortunately, the abandonment of society's most vulnerable, whether it is infants or the mentally challenged, has become all too common under the Doer government's watch. On January 2 of this year, Manitoba's mental health care system failed Sharon Horn when she died of hypothermia due to exposure. Last week the Chief Medical Examiner wrote a letter to Chief Justice Wyant requesting that an inquest be held into the death of Sharon Horn to determine the circumstances under which the death occurred and to determine what, if anything, can be done to prevent similar deaths from occurring in the future.

Can the Minister of Health identify today what steps he has taken since January 2 to prevent any other person from being failed by the mental health system?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I think it is well known in the province the number of measures that have been put in place by this government to deal with issues of mental health and mental health issues—

An Honourable Member: I would hang my head, too, if I were—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: For the first time in Manitoba history we have a PACT program, which is a mental health program that wraps itself around patients. For 10 years we asked for that. When we came into office we put it in place.

We do co-occurring mental illness and addictions. We have suicide prevention programs. We have enhanced community sports. We have put together patients and family advisers on our committee to deal with issues. We have made it our No. 1 or 2 or 3 priority for all regions to deal with mental health issues, including the region in question. We have put in place—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health identify today what steps he has taken since January 2 to prevent any other persons from being failed by this mental health system?

Manitobans can anticipate the results of the Sharon Horn inquest by the Medical Examiner later this fall. Will the Minister of Health commit today to implementing these recommendations put forward by the inquest so no other Manitoban who suffers from mental illness fall through the cracks?

Mr. Chomiak: I cannot deal with the specifics of a case, but let me indicate to the member opposite, when I attended the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society award luncheon and award dinner, the individual who received the award was very, very critical of the member opposite for the types of issues that she raised. That individual said, "I was one of those people who had mental illnesses. I was one of those people that was in an institution. I was one of those people that was told I could not remain on my own. I was one of those people who was told there was no hope. I was given independent housing, I was given independent support and I am here today receiving an award for independent living because there was hope and supports in there for me."

He directly criticized members opposite for attacking individuals who have mental illnesses, Mr. Speaker, who wish and choose to try to succeed in society on their own. I will provide transcripts of that member's speech because he signed it for me to provide to the member opposite.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I think this whole House just heard what the Minister of Health said from his place. At times when we have asked questions and perhaps in our questioning we became a little too personal, we have all been reminded of our responsibilities here, and I personally have retracted statements when I imputed motives on an individual.

Right now the Minister of Health is indicating the member who just posed a question was indeed attacking people who had mental illnesses in this province, Mr. Speaker. That is not accurate, to begin with. Certainly, I do not believe the Minister of Health would want to leave a comment like that of his on the record against an individual in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Minister of Health, on the same point of order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I was indicating to the member opposite when I attended the Manitoba Schizophrenia dinner, the individual who got the award was very critical and indicated he was one of those individuals who had been questioned, who had been on his own, living independently and having difficulties and was told by the system he should stay institutionalized.

But he went off on his own and he succeeded and he received the schizophrenic award. He was very critical of those individuals who think people who have mental illness cannot survive in our society and indicated to me, Mr. Speaker, and signed his speech.

An Honourable Member: Apologize.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: As he pointed out, Mr. Speaker, the leading cause of death of people who suffer mental illness is suicide. Those supports that are put in place are to help those individuals to survive and to continue to survive. He was very supportive of measures to be put in place in order to do that.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Minnedosa, on the same point of order.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, I, too, am very disappointed in the Minister of Health's response. We encourage individuals to live independently, but if we do encourage them to live independently, we also expect the resources and the supports to be in place.

That is the issue and that is what the inquest is going to be finding out is whether his department failed this individual who had every right to have her independence, but his department failed. This government failed her.

Mr. Speaker, my question—

Mr. Speaker: Order. First, when members are rising on points of order, it is a breach of a rule or departure of practices of the House and should not be used for debate.

On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Baby's Death Request for Public Inquiry

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): It took approximately six months for an inquest to be called into the death of Miss Horn and it will be another six months before it is completed. Systemic failure has resulted in Miss Horn falling through the cracks. Systemic failures resulted in a 16-month-old baby being brutalized. Manitobans are wondering how many more vulnerable in society will be falling through the cracks.

Do this Minister of Family Services and this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) stick their heads in the sand hoping it will go away? Accountability is something foreign to this Minister of Family Services and her government. She gags departmental staff and hides behind carefully scripted lines.

Will the Minister of Family Services do the right thing today, call for a public inquiry to determine the circumstances under which the brutal death of this 16-month-old occurred and determine what can be done to prevent other vulnerable individuals from falling through the cracks in the future?

* (14:20)

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate that we will respect the processes that are in place. The Chief Medical Examiner is right now going through a review to determine if an inquest will be called. We will respect that process as we will respect the two ongoing investigations with the Winnipeg Police Service and the Winnipeg Child and Family Services.

Sleep Disorder Test Wait List Patient Deaths

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): In March of this year, it was revealed that 35 people had died while waiting for testing for sleep disorders between 1998 and 2003. Yesterday, we learned of an additional 10 deaths on the waiting lists for sleep disorder testing from '96 to '98 and that these deaths were known in 1999 when this government first came to office.

Much evidence shows that sleep disorders, like obstructive sleep apnea, can lead to serious heart and lung disease and cardio-respiratory failure, as well as heart attacks and strokes. It is quite likely that some of these deaths may have been a consequence, in part, of an untreated sleep disorder.

I ask the Minister of Health to give us information about the causes of death of the people who have died on the waiting list for sleep disorder testing so that we can know whether or not there may have been a link between their sleep disorder and their death.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Dr. Brock Wright of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority has stated publicly that the relationship between sleep disorders and heart disease is not clear. For the member to indicate that 35 or 19 people who happened to be on a waiting list who died, died as a result of not receiving sleep testing, I think is irresponsible.

Mr. Gerrard: There is a substantial body of evidence showing that those with sleep disorders are more likely to develop high blood pressure and various forms of heart disease.

Clearly, the minister in his response does not have an answer to my question. The normal process when a minister cannot answer a very important question is to ensure that the research is done to provide the answer. This is a question of life and death for Manitobans.

Will the Minister of Health order a study to look at the reasons for the deaths of people who have died on the waiting list for sleep disorder testing, so that we will know how many of these deaths could have been prevented and what can be done in the future to prevent such deaths?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, patients who are deemed urgent receive their testing on a priority basis, often within two weeks. They are monitored by family doctors. We put in place, for the first time, a tariff for doctors in order to receive payment for this type of procedure and we have increased the budget substantially in this particular area.

I ask the member when his federal leader prioritized five areas of waiting lists during the course of this campaign why this area was not prioritized for federal assistance by his own member, by his leader of his political party of which he sat in the Cabinet room with when they cut millions and billions from the health care system. Why was it not a priority then? Why it is not a priority now, even though we have put in \$2.6 million increased funding to this particular area?

Mr. Gerrard: Reality is that a lot of other provinces have looked after this very well and this province and this Minister of Health have done it very badly. This government has been here for four and a half years. The government has known about serious delays in testing for sleep disorders for four and a half years. The government has had a report since 1999 which pointed to the fact that there have been a significant number of deaths of people on the waiting list for sleep disorder testing. Yet we hear today that the minister does not know the reason for the deaths.

I ask the minister when will he commit to a full study of these deaths so that we will know the reasons for the deaths, how many would be preventable and what can be done to prevent such deaths in the future.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, since this government has come to office in the last four and a half years, we have the lowest waiting list for cancer treatment, lifesaving cancer treatment, in the country. We have cut the heart surgery waiting list by 62 percent since we have been in office. We have the second-lowest waiting list for hip and knee replacements in this country.

Mr. Speaker, 26 people a day in Manitoba die. Many are on a variety of lists. We have provided this information. For the member to take a leap and say people that are on a waiting list die because they do not receive a particular treatment is not only irresponsible, it is statistically inaccurate, and I would have thought better from a person who is

trained, supposedly, in statistics and that kind of analysis.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the member look at the improvements that we have put into that particular program, providing a tariff and upgraded equipment and increasing the funding to 2.6 million for more tests.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. You know, the Minister of Health has reached a new low. When you talk about the Leader of the Liberal Party, one, and maybe we can advance the Minister of Health a copy of a bio. Quite frankly, as an individual that has been exceptionally well-educated, been in federal Cabinet, is a medical doctor and cares passionately about the direction of health care, it is highly irresponsible of the Minister of Health to take that type of cheap shot at the integrity of the Member for River Heights.

We would request that the Minister of Health should do the honourable thing and apologize for his cheap shot on this, Mr. Speaker. All members of this Chamber are honourable.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Minister of Health, on the same point of order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, when the session started, the Member for River Heights raised the point that people who are on this waiting list died because of waiting. Dr. Brock Wright looked into this. He went public with this and explained the relationship. For the member to get up and suggest that somehow there is a direct relationship is irresponsible, and I pointed that out to the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Inkster, it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manitoba Motor Dealership Awards

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a few words on the record today in regard to the 11 rural dealerships that were honoured for more than 60 years of success at the Manitoba Motor Dealership Awards.

On Friday, June 4, at the annual convention of the Manitoba Motor Dealership Awards, 11 family-run dealerships from rural Manitoba were honoured for their more than 60 years of operation in the province. I would like to read those out for the record.

Brodeur Freres Ltd. established in 1932 in St. Adolphe, Manitoba, General Motors.

Rhineland Car Company established 1927 Altona, Manitoba, owned by Roy and Earl Dick, Ford.

Gillis Service Garage Ltd. established 1939 Elie, Manitoba, owned by Lloyd and Vince Gillis, General Motors.

Chudd's Chrysler established 1936 Gimli, Manitoba, owned by Ed Chudd, Chrysler.

R.D. Ramsey Ltd. established 1937 Carberry, Manitoba, owned by Bob and Brian Ramsey, General Motors.

Metcalf's Garage established 1911 Treherne, Manitoba, owned by Dena and Neil Metcalfe, Ford.

Cross Town Motors established 1924 Roblin, Manitoba, owned by Robert Cross, General Motors.

Portage Dodge Chrysler established 1941, Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, owned by Dennis Thompson, Chrysler.

Murray's of Neepawa established 1932, Neepawa, Manitoba, owned by Richard Murray, General Motors.

Murray Chev Olds Cadillac established 1926, Brandon, Manitoba, owned by Clair and Doug Murray, General Motors.

I would just like to congratulate all of these businesses for their over 60 years of service to the rural community and to the rural economy as these businesses stimulate the growth and volunteerism and contributions to the rural way of life.

Métis Child and Family Service Agency

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, this June 3 served as an important moment for the Métis community of Manitoba. It was on this day that the first Métis child, family and community services agency in Manitoba was launched.

It was over four years ago in February of 2000 that our government signed a historic memorandum to establish this agency. In 2002, The Child and Family Services Authority Act was passed. This act received royal assent in November 2003.

All of these significant events are a result of the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and of the Child Welfare Initiative that is currently being implemented in Manitoba.

* (14:30)

These historic events are a demonstration of this government's commitment to the Métis community of this province. It also demonstrates our belief in strengthening families and communities who are crucial contributors to the overall health of our citizenry.

I would like to congratulate the board of directors, the volunteers, staff and the Métis community in general, whose hard work and dedication have brought about such a change in this province. They have been working hard to establish a separate system for the Métis, Inuit and non-status Aboriginal children of this province. Such a system will serve children and families in a culturally relevant and appropriate manner. Our government looks forward to working with this agency as together we can help contribute to the fostering of healthy families for a healthy future in Manitoba.

Albert Fia

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Today is a sombre day, as the man known as the father of Canadian rocketry is no longer with us. Albert Fia passed away

at the age of 89 on Saturday, June 5, at the Grace Hospice.

Born in Lethbridge, Alberta, in 1915, Albert Fia later went on to marry Kathleen Baldwin in Brooks, Alberta, who was serving as principal of the local school. Albert attended the Royal Military College of Science in England and Laval University, where he earned his engineering degree.

After serving in the Second World War and the military for many years, Albert left the army in 1958 to take a position with Bristol Aerospace in Manitoba as director of the aerospace program. His work at Bristol in the early 1960s led to the development of the Black Brant rocket. The Black Brant rocket series became one of the most successful solid propellant upper atmosphere research rockets used by scientists in Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Fia retired in 1980 as vice-president of Bristol Aerospace, but his legacy lives on. The Brant rockets are still used for research by NASA as well as other universities and government agencies in the United States and around the world.

Since 1962 more than 800 Black Brants have been launched around the world, contributing to a greater understanding of space and putting Manitoba on the map for bringing such a valuable export to the world. After his retirement, Fia was greatly honoured when he received the Public Service Award from NASA for his work on Brant rockets, which was the first of its kind ever awarded to a citizen of another country other than the United States.

Mr. Speaker, Albert Fia was an exceptional member of our business and science community. We greatly miss his presence. My condolences go out to his family and many friends at this difficult time.

Transcona Hi Neighbour Festival

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I was very pleased to participate in this year's 2004 Transcona Hi Neighbour Festival. This is a great annual celebration in the communities of Transcona and Radisson.

The festival started off Friday evening with a wonderful opening ceremony, where young local artists performed on the open stage. Saturday

morning I was up early along with my colleague the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) to help out with the Transcona Legion's pancake breakfast, which attracted many people. On Saturday afternoon, the Member for Transcona and I participated in the Transcona BIZ neighbourhood parade. We distributed trees to the cheering crowds.

In fact, all weekend people could take in musical performances, children's activities, cultural displays, the sports tournaments and many rides and games right on Regent Avenue. The Transcona Historical Museum organized some particularly interesting displays as well.

Mr. Speaker, there were also events to honour our veterans, especially as June 6 was the 60th anniversary of D-day. The Member for Transcona and I were very honoured to attend this ceremony of remembrance on Sunday afternoon at the Cenotaph Memorial in the Circle Park. It was really a pleasure to be among so many friends and neighbours. It is occasions like these when the community spirit and togetherness of neighbours in Radisson and Transcona becomes visible.

I would like to thank the 2004 festival committee, and Chairperson Nancy Bakosti, for their hard work in making this the best and the biggest Hi Neighbour Festival ever. They were supported by many local businesses and organizations that sponsored various portions of the festival. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all the organizers for their wonderful work in bringing our neighbourhood together and I look forward to next year's festival.

Legislative Process

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak on the question of democratic rights in our Legislature. Yesterday, we saw the governing NDP party and the official opposition Conservative Party collaborate to shut down debate on a resolution to substantially change the rules for operating the Legislature and limit the ability for democratic participation.

The NDP and Conservative parties have restricted the Legislature to 59 sitting days this calendar year. The NDP and Conservative parties have reduced the time needed for notice to presenters at committee stage from the normal 48 hours and

fast-tracked a whole variety of other procedures as well.

Already today I have been receiving couriered letters and e-mails from Manitobans concerned about the government ramming through legislation in the most undemocratic fashion. I quote from one letter. "This fast-track process is completely inappropriate, contrary to the public interest and intolerable in a democratic society."

Yesterday, Tuesday the 8th, the Tories and NDP conspired to limit, to close debate on a resolution without allowing myself or the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) the opportunity to speak to the motion or to recommend amendments to improve it. Mr. Speaker, June 8 will live in infamy as one of the dark days of our Legislature.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Fort Whyte, on a grievance.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Yes, Mr. Speaker, today I rise on a grievance. I want to indicate how deeply disappointed and saddened I am by the responses that we are not receiving from the Doer government. I have to tell you it is unfathomable that this government continues after three and a half years to refuse to answer very specific and very direct questions that are put to them on a daily basis, and the Premier of this province has to take the full responsibility and the full blame for that issue.

I was at a luncheon roughly about two weeks ago hosted by the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Speaker. At the end of his remarks to that conference, it was a full room, 250, 300 people, the Premier had the audacity to stand up before these people and say, "I have to get back to the Legislature because it is Question Period." He went on to say, "Notice I did not say it was answer period; I said it was Question Period." That speaks to the attitude of this Premier and to the attitude of every member of his Cabinet with regard to Question Period. It is our constitutional responsibility as opposition to pose questions to the government. It is their constitutional responsibility to provide answers to those questions.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that hides its head in the sand. This is a government that continually refuses to answer questions but even

worse than that this is a government led by Premier Doer that goes out in a very public way and mocks the very democratic system that has been put in place to protect the interest of the people of Manitoba. That is something this Premier and all his Cabinet members need to be embarrassed about.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen over and over, particularly in the last two weeks, the complete refusal of this government and the ministers of this government to answer the most straightforward questions put to them in the House, and we have been dealing with very, very serious issues. We have been dealing with the unfortunate death of a woman in Brandon who was suffering from mental illness and was left to her own devices, fell through the cracks and died of exposure in the middle of winter in Brandon.

We are dealing with the brutal and savage beating death of a 16-month-old baby in the city of Winnipeg. We are dealing with a reduction in services provided to the people of Winnipeg and the people of Manitoba in terms of surgeries, in terms of health care, and what does this government do? Not only do they refuse to answer questions, they know the answers to these questions.

The Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) knows full well how many children spent the weekend alone in hotels. That information is in her briefing book, yet she continually stands up in this House and refuses to answer the question. She goes back and says, "Well, we cannot talk about specific incidents." We are waiting on process of an inquest as well as another internal study in her department.

Mr. Speaker, we are not objecting to process, but in the meantime the opposition, the people of Manitoba deserve answers from this government. This minister has a responsibility to deliver those answers. They are straightforward questions. She knows the answers and yet she hides her head in the sand. The people of Manitoba have no idea how many other individuals suffering from mental illness, how many other infants are at risk of something terrible, of a terrible tragedy happening to them as a result of the inactivity and inaction of this government.

The Minister of Child and Family Services is responsible for the agency, Child and Family Services. That government is the one that brought

that agency into the direct control of the minister, and yet she continually refuses to answer any questions.

* (14:40)

Today we hit a new low with regard to the Doer government. That was when the Minister of Health had the audacity to stand up in this House and try and launch into a number of very, very personal attacks against members of the opposition that were asking him important, direct questions that he needs to take responsibility for and needs to answer. We see that on a continual basis with this Doer government.

Again, I want to make it perfectly clear that I lay the blame for that directly at the feet of Premier Doer. He is the one that stands up on a daily basis in this House and mocks the process. He is the one that goes out and tells the people attending a luncheon sponsored by the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce that this is not answer period, that he is not responsible for giving answers to any questions that are posed to him in this House. His ministers take their lead from him. So a very important issue is the issue surrounding life-and-death situations, situations where departments are in disarray, where staff morale is at an all-time low. Ministers follow the lead of the Premier and refuse to give direct answers to very specific questions.

It is not only in this House where we are seeing this effect. We are seeing it in Estimates. We ask direct questions of ministers. They tell us, "Well, we do not have the information here," even though they are surrounded by their departmental staff. They have their deputy minister and their ADMs in the room with them. They refuse to go to these knowledgeable people who have the information, and they just say, "Well, we are sorry, we do not have that information here. We will get back to you."

Do they ever get back to us? Well, very rarely, Mr. Speaker, do any of us hear back from a minister on a question that they take as notice or information that they promised to provide us? We have to write them and send them letters, we put phone calls, and yet we hear nothing. We get none of the direct specifics back from these ministers. It is all as a result of the attitude that Premier Doer, the Premier of the Province of Manitoba, takes in this House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have drawn to the attention of honourable members in the past, when referring to

other members in the House, it is ministers by their portfolios and not by their names. I have asked the co-operation of all honourable members, and now I ask the co-operation of the honourable Member for Fort Whyte.

Mr. Loewen: I apologize if in the heat of the moment I referred to the Premier of the province in an inappropriate way, but it is very important that he understand that this situation, the blame for this situation needs to lie squarely with him. He needs to change his attitude and he needs to talk to the ministers of the Crown and make sure that they understand that when they come into this House it is their constitutional responsibility to provide information.

The ministers have departments, they have staff that work for them that have the information, that provide them with information. It is information that the people of Manitoba have a right to have.

When we come into this House with very serious questions, we have the expectation that the Premier and the ministers of the Crown will stand up, do the right thing and provide information so that people can judge how this government is performing. When they refuse to do that continually, day in and day out, when the Minister of Family Services refuses to tell me how many young children are at risk because they are housed in hotels over the weekend, she is doing a disservice not only to herself, not only to her government, not only to us, but more importantly she is doing a disservice to all Manitobans.

I would implore the Premier to talk to his Cabinet, to review the situation, to change his attitude when he goes in public, to quit mocking the system, to take this issue of Question Period very, very seriously and come back to this House when we adjourn next fall fully prepared to answer questions that are put to that government and not try to turn our questions into an opportunity to launch into a personal attack on members on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on a grievance?

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today on a grievance, and my grievance relates as well to the lack of answers to questions that we have posed in this

House. Whether it be Question Period, whether it be Estimates, we are not getting any answers to specific questions that were put to ministers, or whether it is in concurrence.

Having heard the Member for Fort Whyte with respect to his grievance state that he heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) a while ago at a Chamber of Commerce gathering say that this is just Question Period, not answer period, obviously it now makes sense to me why they are not answering questions. It is very obvious. They are taking their direction from the Premier, and the Premier is fully responsible, totally responsible, for the lack of answers that we are receiving.

We deserve answers to very specific questions. Without those answers, we cannot properly serve our constituents, we cannot properly serve Manitobans, and Manitobans deserve answers. They are waiting for answers, they are asking us for those answers, and we are not able to get them from the ministers opposite. So I would again like to voice my very distinct displeasure at the way answers are being given to our questions.

I noted over this last session that the ministers, particularly when they do not want to answer questions, they resort to personal attacks. They resort to personal attacks on members of the opposition, and we saw that again today with the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), and the Premier today, making personal attacks against members of the opposition in hopes that they will not ask any more questions.

That certainly does not do any good for the members of the Doer government to do that, because I think Manitobans are watching, and they see what is happening with respect to the lack of answers that they are given by this government.

If they do not do personal attacks, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing outlandish statements. They are calling members of the opposition on the questions. They are saying that we do not have our facts straight. We do not have our research straight. Yet, at the same time, we produce facts and documents that are produced by members of their own department. They are calling, members of their own department, they are saying that they are absolutely not true.

So that is my concern, Mr. Speaker. They are giving us no answers to questions, and I would like

to site a few examples of what I have heard over the last couple of months. For example, when I asked the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), a question with respect to the Public Trustee.

I asked him whether or not he had been approached by the sister of the incompetent person at the door during the election time, whether or not he spoke to her and she raised the issue about the Public Trustee at the door, and in this House, and you can check Hansard, in this House, the Minister of Justice absolutely denied speaking to her about the Public Trustee.

He remembered speaking to her, but he said, he absolutely emphatically stated, that she did not speak to him about the Public Trustee. Yet a few days later, Mr. Speaker, I tabled a letter directly written to the Justice Minister just a few days after he had appeared at her door, just during the election, contradicting his statement. The minister then went on in the same Question Period and stated that he never had any letters from this individual. He absolutely had no contact with this individual at all after the election. Then I tabled another letter written to the Justice Minister a few days later. Two letters and the Justice Minister denied even speaking to her about the Public Trustee, and denied having received a letter from the individual.

Yet I asked the minister whether he would retract his statement in this House, and the minister stood up and gave me a textbook answer once again. He never once agreed that perhaps his memory was incorrect, that now he remembered speaking to her about the Public Trustee or even receiving a letter, no admission that he was wrong and no admission that he was mistaken.

This is just one example, Mr. Speaker, of what this Minister of Justice has done in this House and what we have come to expect from him. We should expect better from our Justice Minister, but clearly when the Member for Fort Whyte had mentioned what the Premier had said a few days ago. Obviously, he takes his instructions from his Premier. All of this begins to make sense.

Mr. Speaker, I refer to a number of other answers that the Justice Minister gave to me when I posed questions in the House. When we talked about court backlogs, he indicated that he did not know where we were the last decade when these kinds of backlogs were normal for us. Well, he did not give

us any statistics. He cannot produce one bit of evidence to prove that.

He went on further to say that 86 percent of the cases under his administration are dealt with in 18 months. Well, he fails to mention that there are 14 percent of the cases that are dealt with more than a year and a half after the charges are laid. He talks in circles and spins and spins and spins to the media and hopes that the media do not catch on to the story and does another press release, does another news release, stands on a soapbox and tries to spin the story his direction. Well, the facts speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker. He should get his facts straight.

* (14:50)

He came into this House. He told me that I came into this House on repeated occasions with wrong information. Now, the information that I gave him on court backlogs was his information. It came from his department, and he is denying that those figures are accurate. That is another example of this Justice Minister's answers to questions, or non-answers to questions, as I call them.

In fact, I talked to him in Question Period about increases in auto theft rates. Again, he gets around it by trying to blame our administration four and a half, five and a half years ago. That clearly is unacceptable. He has been in power for four and a half years. He is fully responsible for what has happened in the city and in this province with respect to auto theft rates, court backlogs or other Justice matters, but he never takes responsibility.

I asked a question in Question Period with respect to the legal aid review report, asking him to table the report. He clearly had the report in March, and I asked the question in May, asked him to table the report. He denied my request and said he would wait till the end of May. Why, Mr. Speaker? He has the report. Why does he not table it? Manitobans paid for that report. They expect the report. They want to see reforms to the legal aid system, the legal aid system that under his watch has turned into a nightmare. Manitobans expect that legal aid review report, which they paid for, and he denies a request by myself in this House to table that report.

I can go through a number of examples. We are not talking just about the Justice Minister today. We talk about other ministers, like the Minister of

Family Services (Ms. Melnick), who refuses to answer questions in this House. She looks at her book on her desk and she gives a textbook answer. It does not matter what the question is, the answer is the same. It does not matter what the question is. I am not sure whether she even listens to the question, but she gives exactly the same answer. Manitobans deserve answers.

A 16-month-old child has been battered to death and brutalized, and Manitobans want to know why. They want to get to the bottom of it. They want to know why so that children at risk do not fall through the cracks once again. But this minister is not interested in that. All she is interested in is in protecting her own territory and not giving answers. No matter whether it is the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), the Minister of Family Services, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), we constantly hear the same message. We do not get an answer to our questions.

With that, I would implore the Premier, I would ask the Premier to speak to his ministers and ask them to answer questions that are posed in this House. They are very important, very direct questions. Manitobans are waiting for the answer. We deserve an answer on this side of the House and Manitobans deserve an answer.

ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, if you could call Committee of Supply for Room 254 for concurrence until 5:30, only because we have a standing committee in there tonight, and in the House would you please call the Opposition Day motion, to be followed by third reading and concurrence on the bills before the House.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with Rule 23(5), the Committee of Supply will resolve into the committee in Room 254 and will sit until 5:30 p.m. In the House, we will move to Opposition Day motion, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Charleswood.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach),

WHEREAS the Doer government formed government on a platform promising to "end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million" as well as "rescuing health care"; and

WHEREAS the Doer government, since taking office, despite increasing the Department of Health's budget by more than \$1 billion, the majority of regional health authorities are running deficits and the WRHA is considering closing 100 beds or significantly cutting back on the number of surgeries to avoid a surgery program deficit; and

WHEREAS administrative costs at regional health authorities have tripled in some instances since 1999; and

WHEREAS, despite promises by the Doer government to "drastically cut" waiting lists, including cutting the wait for an MRI to eight weeks, ultrasounds to one or two weeks, CT scans to two weeks, the waiting time for CT scans, ultrasounds, MRIs and MIBI Stress Tests are all higher today, in some cases more than double; and

WHEREAS a number of policy initiatives announced by the Doer government have had negative consequences on our health care system; and

WHEREAS these policies include cutting off Alzheimer's patients in Winnipeg personal care homes of their dementia medications, demanding rural communities pay recruitment fees for physicians and increasing the Pharmacare deductible by over 15 per cent; and

WHEREAS despite several deaths and miscarriages occurring at Winnipeg's emergency rooms while patients waited for care, the Doer government continues to refuse to initiate an external review of Winnipeg's emergency room program; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has publicly acknowledged that he "has no grand scheme" for health care and refuses to implement any meaningful reform; and

WHEREAS major recommendations from Doctor Koshal's cardiac care external review have not been implemented over nine months later, including the immediate recruitment of three program heads; and

WHEREAS the Doer government recently admitted to breaking its commitment to introduce a prostate cancer screening program; and

WHEREAS the Doer government has also broken its commitment to hire nurses for our public schools; and

WHEREAS the Doer government allowed the Health Sciences Centre to avoid reporting critical clinical occurrences, which has slowed down the analysis of preventable deaths and injuries; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Health talks about accountability, his actions include refusing to answer questions accurately and providing Manitobans with misleading information.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn the Minister of Health for his inability to keep his government's health care election promises, including ending hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to involve front-line health care professionals in the development of meaningful reform of Manitoba's health care system to ensure its sustainability and universality.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), seconded by the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach),

WHEREAS the Doer government formed government on a platform promising to "end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million" as well as "rescuing health care"; and

WHEREAS the Doer government, since taking office, despite increasing the Department of Health's budget by more than \$1 billion, the majority of regional health authorities are running deficits and the WRHA—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

* (15:00)

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, as you can see from the resolution that has been put forward there are some major, major problems occurring in this government's management of the health care system and I would venture to say that what we are seeing is more related to mismanagement than any good management put forward by any government.

It starts, Mr. Speaker, in 1999 with probably the most famous or infamous election promise that has ever been made in this province and that was to end hallway medicine, to fix health care in six months with \$15 million.

Mr. Speaker, knowing from the phone calls that I get, hearing from the nurses and doctors that I am hearing from, we have a very, very serious problem in our emergency rooms and this government, despite hearing about those issues on numerous occasions, is failing to act on it. There are a number of initiatives that they could bring forward to deal with the problem. Instead, they have turned their back on it and they are trying to aggrandize all of their small successes as something far more than what they are. There is nothing more by this government except for smoke and mirrors, an illusion of activity to make it look like things are happening.

When I have front-line doctors and nurses phoning me, telling me that there is an ER crisis, I am going to believe those front-line people. I have worked side by side with those people and they are not going to be misleading in the information that they are putting forward. What they have said is they have a crisis. People are being warehoused in ER waiting rooms far longer than they have ever been. Patients are still in hallways.

This government likes to say that they have ended hallway medicine. Well, they have changed the way they are counting numbers in hallways, Mr. Speaker, and everybody knows that, including people on the front lines.

We have asked this government, we have given them several suggestions as to how they can address

these issues in the ER and I would urge the minister to pay serious attention to some of those recommendations that have put forward because I think, Mr. Speaker, if he were to look at some of those, particularly the tracking system, that systems like that may help to prevent patients from falling through the cracks and in some cases dying. So I would urge the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) to pay more attention, to quit personalizing these issues and not wanting to listen to good suggestions from other people because he does not want anybody else to get credit for it.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I would urge him, as we have done in the past, to pay attention to some of the warnings that have been put forward to him. We asked years ago for him to implement an external third party review of our ERs. He refused to do that. We urged him to implement an external review a long time ago before patients started to die waiting for cardiac surgery. What did he do? He waited until patients started to die before he moved forward to even listen and we had front-line workers, again, saying there is a crisis in the cardiac surgery program. I had front-line people talking to me day in and day out about that and yet this government would not listen.

The cardiac surgery program right now is still in a lot of trouble. I am told by people on the front lines that the whole program has gone really sour. They have some huge concerns about how everything is rolling out right now. The Koshal report, I mean, somebody could have had a baby by the time most of these recommendations are ever going to come to fruition.

Doctor Koshal recommended that three program heads be immediately hired after he put out his report in August, and his intent was that those three people lead the development of the new program, that they were integral to the development of the new program. What did this government do? We still do not have those three people in position, and I am told that they are having a lot of trouble finding people that actually want to come here and work. In fact, Doctor Koshal had looked at it at one point in time, and he said that with the way things were run here in Manitoba he was not interested in coming here. So I think, with Doctor Koshal saying that, Mr. Acting Speaker, that says a lot.

That cardiac surgery program needs a lot of attention by this government, and I would urge a careful, careful look by this government into what is happening, how it is rolling out, how many committees are struck out there right now to address the issue. Maybe he could tell St. Boniface Hospital what their budget is for it because I understand that they still do not even understand what their budget is for that cardiac program. It is very difficult to try to plan a program when you do not know the parameters within which you can work.

Mr. Acting Speaker, administrative costs of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority have tripled since 1999 until four years later, despite all the rhetoric by the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) that he has made changes. All you have to do is look in the audited report. The audited report under administrative costs clearly state that the administrative costs for the WRHA have grown from \$5 million to \$16 million. No amount of rhetoric, no amount of spin by anybody saying, well, we inserted a new program here, we are still talking administrative costs. We are not talking about program costs. So any of the spin out there is not bought by anybody. This minister needs to have a really good look at that. Administrative costs in rural Manitoba have also doubled, and the minister is choosing to ignore that.

Since 2000 we have asked this Minister of Health to consider a review of regionalization. We have asked for that year after year, that you do not implement something as big as regionalization and not go the next step. That is just good practice, to evaluate what you are doing. This government has totally ignored it. The Minister of Health has said he does not want to evaluate regionalization because it will cause more chaos. Well, if patients dying, skyrocketing waiting lists, growing human resource shortages in many of the professions in health care, if that is not chaos, Mr. Acting Speaker, I do not know what is.

The government in 1999 made some dramatic promises to drastically cut waiting lists. In fact, four of the five diagnostic waiting lists have absolutely skyrocketed.

An Honourable Member: Wrong.

Mrs. Driedger: The minister constantly says "wrong." Well, I would like him to tell me in all of

the diagnostic waiting lists—he likes to deflect from this by talking about different waiting lists out there. In fact, the waiting lists they made a commitment to in the election to drastically cut, to drastically slash were CTs, ultrasounds, MRIs, maybe stress tests. These, Mr. Acting Speaker, four out of five of the diagnostic waiting lists have all skyrocketed. Another, I am sure, embarrassing broken promise by this government who again likes to aggrandize all of their so-called things that they say that they are achieving when in fact they have some huge, huge challenges out there.

We are seeing how they are handling some of those challenges by cutting Alzheimer's patients in Winnipeg personal care homes off of their dementia medications. I was just in conversation today with somebody from rural Manitoba who is absolutely appalled, appalled that this government would actually allow that to happen. I think this minister, and we have asked him before and hundreds of people are signing this petition, this Alzheimer's petition, that I read in the House every day is being signed by people in the community. In fact, it is being driven by people in the community. I think this government needs to have a look at that.

There are so many other issues that this government has broken its commitment to, to front-line workers, to patients and to families in Manitoba. We are seeing right now some major challenges. I have brought them up several times in the last few weeks. This government, I think, is taking us down a very rocky road in health care and despite putting a billion dollars more into health care, this government is actually considering now making some drastic changes which is going to have a huge impact on patients.

When we bring this up and the minister cannot defend his record, he personally attacks anybody who asks him, viciously, and takes cheap shots at people when he cannot defend his record. It is insulting to those of us who are here doing the job of the people of Manitoba, when a Minister of Health sinks to a low like he has on several occasions and he cannot accept the responsibility and accountability of his job to be accountable, to be transparent, and that is his role, to be a role model in the system.

* (15:10)

This minister has failed grossly in that area. He is mismanaging health care. He is having a serious,

serious problem defending his record. And instead of doing the right thing, and doing that, he turns around and he viciously attacks anybody who ever asks him the question. I do not think that serves the people of Manitoba particularly well. I think this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), representing such a huge area in the department and in the government, needs to do better. He does need to get his act together. He is dealing with a huge budget and things are crumbling under his watch right now.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): It is a responsibility to speak to a motion, a motion, I might add, that in its essence is fundamentally anti-democratic. Why is this motion anti-democratic? It is contemptuous of the public of Manitoba, because it deals with a condemnation, a proposed condemnation of the Minister of Health for allegedly not being able to carry out his health care promise from the 1999 election.

Members opposite had an opportunity to put this argument and this resolution and this essence before the people of Manitoba about a year ago, and the people of Manitoba, not the member opposite, will decide who has kept their promises and who is keeping the faith on health care. The member opposite can act like a parrot, kind of a parrot with a recorded announcement, you know, the sky is falling, the sky is falling. She can condemn the Minister of Health, condemn the Minister of Health, but her parrot-like comments that have gone on year after year, month after month, the public judged her comments and they found her comments, her condemnations wanting. Because they did rule and vote for a continuation of the stewardship of the Ministry of Health under the leadership of this Minister of Health. That is what the people decided. And I say to the members opposite, they can carry on and fight the 1999 election, they are not even refighting the 2003 election, they can carry on fighting the 1999 election every day of this session. But you know, get on with it, get on with it. That is what I would say to my kids, get on with it.

So this resolution is contemptuous. *[interjection]* The member opposite again with her recorded announcement, her parrot-like comments, Polly wanna cracker, that the Minister of Health fails. You know, the bottom line is, Mr. Acting Speaker, this kind of language over and over and over again, this automaton, recorded language is in essence

contemptuous of the public because you know what? The public decided the critic of health, that absolute negative, critic of health, they decided she was wrong. They decided she was wrong. You know, when we were trying to rebuild our party, when the public said we were wrong on something, we got on with it. We got over it. We moved on. But these people have got this massive rearview mirror. They believed that the public was wrong in 1999 and if they just say it more and more times, it will change. Maybe they have been watching too many movies, *Back to the Future*. Maybe we will go back to the summer of 1999 again. Do you know what? We will not. You are living in a fantasy world. The people have decided. Get on with your life. Get on with your criticism. Take away your rearview mirror.

That is why I say if we were to pass this resolution, we would be condemning the public of Manitoba, because they ruled. The real issue here is who decides who is keeping one's promises. Is it the public or is it the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger)? You know, if I have a choice, I will go with the public every day of the week. I would think even members of the Conservative Party, if they want to vote with the public, if they want to celebrate democracy and elections, elections should mean something, and you vote against this resolution. You would vote against this resolution, as we will be proud to do, because we are voting with the people against the criticism of the member opposite.

Point 2. Involve health care professionals. Oh, you know, if members opposite were sincere they would understand that their way of involving health care professionals was to fire them, lay them off, get rid of them, contract them out. Did they involve the health care professionals when they tried to privatize home care? No. Did they involve the health care professionals when they laid off a thousand nurses? No. Did they involve the health care professionals when they reduced the number of doctors in medical schools? No.

Point of Order

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): The Member for Emerson, on a point of order.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Acting Speaker, I think it is time that the Premier was called to order and called to be honest with the people of Manitoba when he says we fired a thousand nurses. It was his

government that had to lay off and fire all the nurses at Morden-Winkler when the Boundary Trails Hospital was established. Exactly 500 nurses were fired by the NDP government, if that is the term he wants to use. We recognize that, when you want to make the changes, under the contractual arrangements, there had to be layoffs and rehiring on the same or next day. The Premier knows that. It is time that this Premier at least became honest in his approach that he takes in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): On the same point of order, but we should not use the point of order for debate, the Minister of Health.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I was going to remind the member that that is in fact the case, that it was a dispute over the facts and that the facts, as they say, indicated that a thousand nurses were laid off when members opposite were governing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): This is a dispute over the facts and not a point of order.

* * *

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): I would just like to warn people about your language. Be careful we do not cross the line. Thank you.

Mr. Doer: Did members opposite involve the RN nurses when they eliminated the RN training program? No. Did they involve support staff in the dangerous working conditions of the laundries when laundry machines were falling apart? No. Did they involve the staff on health care that were providing food to patients when they privatized frozen food and got our peas from Toronto instead of from Portage la Prairie? No.

Look at this Minister of Health. He is involving staff in the preparation of food now at Deer Lodge Hospital.

Point of Order

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): On a point of order, the Member for Russell, but before I recognize the Member for Russell, please do not use a point of order for debate.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): I would never do that, Mr. Acting Speaker.

When we rise in this House, there is supposed to be some relevance to the accuracy of fact that we put on the record.

The Premier talks about frozen peas that were imported from somewhere. Well, I just want to tell the Premier that he continued to import those frozen peas when he became Premier and, additionally to that, he got spoiled sandwiches from Edmonton during his reign of government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): This is a dispute of the facts, not a point of order.

* * *

* (15:20)

Mr. Doer: We are slowly but surely reversing those horrible contracts that were signed by members opposite, so when members opposite say, "Involve the front-line health care professionals," I mean, my God. My God, how do they even put a resolution like this together?

I mean, we are not perfect. There could be some issues they might be able to find a little bit of fault with, but to try to condemn the public for their decision last year or to hold out hope that they would involve health care professionals after they treated them with utter and total contempt for their whole 11 years in office, my God, who wrote this resolution? Who submitted this resolution? This is worst piece of resolution-making I have ever seen in my life, Mr. Acting Speaker.

This is a horrible, horrible resolution. In fact, members opposite privately are thinking, "Oh my God, how did this get through our caucus? How did we actually vote for this resolution? How did this happen? Why did we not see this silly resolution coming forward?"

But to condemn the public and then act like we are, you know, they have spent a whole session condemning us working with employees. They just voted against The Labour Relations Act which was supported by health care professionals, and now they are going to stand up and say, "Oh, we like to work with health care professionals." My God, develop a better resolution so we can have a more intelligent debate. This is a horrible resolution. Everybody should vote against this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): Order, please. I cannot hear the speaker.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): I am delighted to rise today to support the resolution put forward by the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) because I think what we just heard from this Premier was most enlightening and, frankly, most revealing about the Doer government's inability and their absolute utter contempt for the patients and the people of Manitoba.

I thought it was interesting that during our concurrence session I had a chance to ask the Premier of Manitoba an issue with respect to the number of MRIs that are being done. I said to the Premier of the Province of Manitoba, "I am not going to ask you the question on the number of people going to Grafton based on what you said during election campaign to the people of Manitoba. I am not going to make this all about politics. I am going to ask the question simply on the basis of how many people are going to the city of Grafton to get MRIs."

Rather than come up with a number, what we heard from the Premier was, he said, "Well, there are less going now than there were before." That was the answer that he gave.

I would ask this Premier if you are prepared to have a debate in public, and my question was very simple: Rather than the government going out and buying bricks and mortar and paying capital costs with taxpayers' money, into an MRI clinic. why would it not be bad if somebody wanted to come forward and put bricks and mortar at their own expense and buy an MRI at their own expense so that the government of the day could then go out and buy services for those people who are waiting in line to get better service? The capital costs would be borne by the private sector, not by the taxpayers of Manitoba.

All we heard from the Premier about when I asked him that question was he cited some American study. He cited some institute in the States, about 45 million people in the States do not have health care insurance.

I think it shows the utter lack of understanding of how we can improve the health care system in Manitoba. It is about how can the private sector get involved, as they do with X-ray clinics, how can they get involved with respect to capital costs that would

save the taxpayers money because then the taxpayers, through the government, could purchase those services to give them better service in Manitoba?

This Premier (Mr. Doer), Mr. Acting Speaker, does not have an answer so the best he can do is to cite some American study which is full of holes. It is a Swiss cheese kind of argument. That is the best thing we can hear from the Premier of the province of Manitoba is a Swiss-cheese argument full of holes about why it is they have a health care system that has failed under this government.

I have gone from door to door in my constituency and spoken to elderly Manitobans. I have asked them what they feel about this increase in the Pharmacare deductibility, the third increase in a row under this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and under the Doer government.

Mr. Acting Speaker, whether it is a widow or two seniors, when I asked them about it, they are appalled. They are appalled that they have had to absorb an increase in Pharmacare deductibility on the basis that this government cannot do the right thing and make the tough decisions around the Cabinet table, rather than saying let us not ask our senior citizens in Manitoba to choose between milk and medicine, let us not do that, let us sit around this Cabinet table and make some tough, tough decisions so that our seniors and our vulnerable are most protected, not being put and exposed the way we saw under the Doer government. What they did was they jacked up, for the third time in a row, their Pharmacare deductibility, and what does that mean? It means simply that those seniors, those most vulnerable, are now going to have to choose between milk and medicine.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the reason that this resolution is so important is because what we see from the Doer government is a whole lot of puff and smoke and mirrors when it comes to health care. I will be specific. This Minister of Health and this Premier stood in front of Manitobans and said, "If we are elected in 2003, our goal is to ensure there are 65% full-time nurses in Manitoba. That is our goal and that is what we are going to do if you elect us, we will make it happen."

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, what happened on the road to Damascus? Somehow that 65 percent is a

little bit too high. Maybe it should be 60 percent. That apparently is too high, 55 percent is too high, 50 percent is too high. This government cannot get their act together. They could not organize a two-car parade when it comes to this issue. That is a shame because they misled Manitobans to say, "If you elect us, we will ensure that 65 percent of Manitoba nurses are full time. That is our commitment to the people of Manitoba."

When it comes to the report card, they get a big F for that because again they said to Manitobans, "If you elect us, we will ensure that there is no hallway medicine in six months and we'll fix it with \$15 million." At that time, that was three days of expenditures in Manitoba. "Give us the long weekend and we will ensure of expenditures and in six months hallway medicine will be gone."

Well, they failed on that, Mr. Acting Speaker. They failed in terms of providing 65% full-time nurses. When it comes to waiting lists, they have failed again. I know today we heard in the House the great delight that the Minister of Health stood to say, "We are talking about the Pan Am Clinic and how incredible it is." About the Pan Am Clinic, he said something we were opposed to. Well, yes, anytime that a New Democratic Party gets into power they want to own things because that bricks and mortar, they want to be able to say we own that. It does not matter what is inside; it does not matter what the outcome is. They want to be able to say, "We own that building. See, we bought it." Well, actually, the taxpayers of Manitoba bought it, but they like to say, "We bought that building and we are proud of it and we own it. Now that building is doing all sorts of wonderful things."

Well, the fact of life is there are \$7 million of expenditure on behalf of the taxpayers of Manitoba that did not have to go in to purchase bricks and mortar. It did not have to go in to have the ability to stand up and say, "Now we own this building." That money could have better been spent to purchase services to ensure that Manitobans get better and more timely access to care. And, oh, by the way, the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) was so proud of his wait-list registry: "We are going to let Manitobans know exactly how long they have to wait for surgeries." Well, the only problem with that, not only was the wait length a long time, but the information that came forward was months out of date.

That would be basically like saying, "Well, here I have got a newspaper from 1998. Let us go see what movies are playing, because I want to go out and check out a movie," Mr. Acting Speaker. Well, how in the world can you stand in front of Manitobans and say that you have some kind of a plan for health care when you cannot get the fundamentals right? That is what we have seen time and time again.

* (15:30)

We have asked them to open up the regional health authorities, Mr. Acting Speaker. All we get back from this government is why are we criticizing our former government? Well, we are open to ensure that there are innovative ways to improve health care. We are listening to the public. The public is out there saying that the regional health authorities have become a bureaucracy, and they are protecting this minister, who, by the way, should know, and I believe his legal training will tell you that, as the Minister of Health, his constitutional right and responsibility is to provide timely access to care for all the patients of Manitoba.

It is not the regional health authorities, it is that minister, and it is for that reason that I stand in support of the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), who has crafted a very well-thought-out, methodical, factual situation that we face here in the province of Manitoba. It is for that reason that I am delighted to stand beside her to support the condemnation of this government when it comes to health care. As we get toward graduation and the end of this year, there should be some chair in the corner for this Minister of Health to sit on with a big F for failure.

Mr. Chomiak: I rise to talk about this flawed resolution from an opposition party that, as the Premier (Mr. Doer) indicated, seems to be stuck in 1998. Not just stuck in 1998-1999 in terms of fighting the election, but stuck on the same issues for which the public of Manitoba spoke in 1999 and spoke again in 2003. I agree with the comments of the Premier in regard to this. There are so many factual errors put on the record by the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) that I do not have enough time in this Chamber to correct the factual errors that have been put on the record by the Member for Charleswood, and I will not.

What I want to do, Mr. Acting Speaker, is just to talk about some of the significant issues. I had the honour of being at a joint Health-Finance ministers' meeting in Toronto a week and a half ago where all of the Health ministers and all of the Finance ministers together with two premiers got together to look at the state of health care in the country. The one thing that I was very proud of as a Manitoban is the number of programs that were looked to in terms of Manitoba that have been put in place by this government.

Let me give you a few examples, Mr. Acting Speaker. There was no province-wide Palliative Care Program in place. The province of Manitoba now has a Palliative Care Program that provides free medication and medication to individuals who are palliative at home. That is not something that one goes around and necessarily puts on the front page of the paper, but it is significant to the lives of thousands and thousands of Manitobans.

Mr. Acting Speaker, with respect to new programming, I have a list here. Protection for Persons in Care, there was no Protection for Persons in Care Act. I did not stand up when I was in opposition and accuse the minister of killing people in nursing homes or people dying in nursing homes. I said, "Put in place a Protection for Persons in Care Act." I brought it forward twice as a private member. Members opposite opposed it. We came into office. We now have a Protection for Persons in Care Act that seems to protect, and it is being looked at by other provinces.

Mr. Acting Speaker, \$400,000 to mental health housing and training. Do you know what we do? We do not brag about it, but we have gone out and we have taken mental health consumers, people who have mental illnesses, and we train them to be proctors and housing assistants to people in the mental health community. That was never done before in Manitoba.

We put in place a program for community treatment, the PACT program, never in place in Manitoba. Yes, it cost a million dollars a year, yes, but it takes a hundred severely ill mental health patients and gives them a program and wraps the program around them.

Some people in the department were asking for this program for 10 years. We put it in place. We put

it in place for all Manitobans. Mr. Acting Speaker, 24 Telehealth sites. There are 24 Telehealth sites around this province. There was not one when we came into office that allows individuals to go back and forth and to provide that kind of service.

Midwifery was not a reality until we came into office, Mr. Acting Speaker, and we now have in place midwives across Manitoba. The largest vaccination program in the history of Manitoba. Pneumococcal was not put in place—[interjection]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): Order, please. I cannot hear the speaker who has the floor. Thank you.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker. I am not talking about credit here. If the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) wants to take credit for all these programs, that is fine. As far as I am concerned, if we had these programs for the people of Manitoba, that is what our job is, and that is what we do every day in this Legislature to provide the kind of care and programming that is required by Manitobans.

There were no pneumococcal vaccinations when we came to office. The Center for Health Policy and Evaluation said do it to save lives. We put it in place.

Minimally invasive surgery—I could go on and on. I actually have six pages of new programs that we have put in place to help all Manitobans, but I want to turn to some of the ironies of what members opposite talk about.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

A CIHI report came out today. Members opposite do not like to talk about CIHI reports because generally they rate Manitobans as very favourable, as they have done today in today's report. Members opposite do not like to cite it, but I want to point out, the same CIHI that members opposite—it is a national reporting agency—said two things about Manitoba. First, it said we have done the best job on hallway medicine of any jurisdiction in the country. That is an independent, third party, national body, nothing to do with politics, that made that recommendation.

Secondly, the member talked about Grafton. I will admit it is not 100 percent, but I will point out

that the director of the Grafton clinic said his business was down 70 percent. The director of the Grafton clinic said his business was down 70 percent since Manitoba changed governments. I did not say that. The head of the Grafton clinic said it. CIHI today cited Manitoba and its pediatric cardiac surgery program and gamma knife as examples of innovation in the Canadian health care system.

Gamma knife, not existent when members opposite were in power. It is non-invasive surgery. I do not know if the Member for Charleswood understands it, but it means a patient can come in and does not have to stay in a hospital bed for 6, 7, 8 or 9 days, instead goes home the same day, the only gamma knife in Canada.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When we are in debate all members will have their opportunity if they wish, but right now the honourable Minister of Health has the floor.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite talked about front line workers and working with front line workers. What does it mean working with front line nurses, when since we have come to office there are 879 more nurses working in Manitoba than when we came to office? Those same stats indicate there were 1200 less nurses during the mean, lean, dark years of Tory rule over 11 years, a pretty good contrast.

How many more doctors are in Manitoba? Are we challenged on doctors? Yes. What have we done to solve that situation? Mr. Speaker, 115 more doctors today than in 1999; expanded the medical program at the University of Manitoba, expanded the residency program; put in place an IMG program to help foreign trained doctors to get credentials, of which there are many now working in rural Manitoba; put in place a program of bursaries to students, where we have over 300 person-years of returned service to Manitoba. Members talked about it for 11 years and they did nothing.

Actions speak far louder than words. Actions speak far louder than a poorly worded resolution that tries to fight the 1999 election over and over and over again.

Just this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, a head of the cardiac sciences program was hired by the WRHA. Months ago, the program director for cardiac science program was hired. The member got it wrong again, even in her speech today, did not even pay attention to the fact that these people have been hired already.

* (15:40)

Mr. Speaker, we are not perfect. People on the doorstep that I have talked to, and I have talked to thousands, recognize that, but they also recognize that we have worked very hard to retrain professionals, to reinvest in the health care system, to maintain and improve the system. Not only have we done that, but we now have the shortest waiting list for cancer care in the country. We dropped the heart surgery list by 62 percent, 62 percent.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Hip and knee replacement, the CIHI report that just came out today said we do more than anyone else in the country. We in Manitoba do more than anyone else in the country. How much could we say that between those lean, mean years of 1988 to 1999? We could never say that. We are not perfect, but we work at it. We reinvest, and we have got support with the front-line workers who we try to work with, try to solve the full-time, part-time nursing situation that occurred in the 1990s, when members opposite fired a thousand nurses and forced so many to part-time. It is moving upwards. It will continue to move upwards, but we did not impose it, and we worked with the nurses on a solution, something members opposite opposed.

They opposed it, Mr. Speaker. We tried to work with the nurses. I am sorry, they took away the medical lab technologist program. We are short medical lab technologists. We reinstated it. We are training lab technologists. We are training X-ray technicians. They actually cancelled the programs, and now they wonder why there are shortages in rural Manitoba.

You cancelled the lab technologist program. You cancelled it, 1997. I close on the fact, Mr. Speaker, that members ought to look at the facts, not the rhetoric.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I welcome the opportunity to say a few words on this resolution, Mr. Speaker, a resolution that basically allows the opposition to put on the record exactly the realities of how this government has been misleading Manitobans and has not been paying attention to their responsibilities as it relates to health care.

Mr. Speaker, I just listened quite attentively to the Minister of Health as he put on the record some of the things that he perceives as the right directions that they have taken under his administration in Health. But let us go back to 1999. Let us go back to the promises that were made by this government. Let us go back to the promises that were made by this Premier (Mr. Doer), who stood in his place during the election campaign in ads on television, on radio stations, in the newspapers, who said, "We will fix health care. We will fix it within six months and with \$15 million."

Now, Mr. Speaker, talk about hoodwinking the public. The public in this province has never been hoodwinked by such inaccuracies and such falsehoods as it was in the 1999 election by this now-government of this province. The lieutenant to the leader who was making those commitments was none other than the Minister of Health today, who made those same commitments, who said we will fix health care. If we need more nurses, we will put them in place. If we need more professionals, we will put them in place. If we need more doctors, we will put them in place.

Well, Mr. Speaker, just in last year's election, in the June election of last year, this same group ran around the province, into rural Manitoba specifically, and said, we will not close any rural hospitals. And what do we have today? We have hospitals in rural Manitoba that, for all intents and purposes, are closed, except that they are now geriatric wards, if you like, or personal care homes, who might be able to put a Band-Aid on a gaping wound, and that is about the extent of it.

Mr. Speaker, we have gone from hallway medicine to avenue medicine. We have gone to highway medicine. Today patients are dying in ambulances because there is no longer care in their communities. Today we have old and young people both succumbing to death because they cannot get to a facility that can treat their ailments. This is what this Minister of Health calls a positive way to look at modernizing the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on about the emergency wards that we have in this province, and what this minister has done in abandoning his responsibility in looking after people who are in emergency wards because he does not provide the personnel required to handle those emergencies. People are dying in hallways under this minister's watch, under this government's watch.

No matter how they spin it, and they have hired enough spinners to do a lot of health care if they wanted to re-channel that money, but they have put an emphasis on spinning their message to Manitobans. Yet the realities are glaring us in the face. People are dying in emergency wards. People who have been waiting for three hours to be seen by a doctor, are not seen by a doctor, and they are dying.

Mr. Speaker, they are dying under this minister's watch. They are dying under this Premier's (Mr. Doer) watch. That is what this resolution talks about. It talks about a wake-up call to this government to start paying attention to Manitobans and to start paying attention to the people who are the most vulnerable, the people who are sick, the people who need the attention in our facilities and are not getting it.

I ask the question when we have a man die in a wheelchair waiting for attention in a waiting room in a hospital, why in this day and age would that happen. Why would we have people dying in emergency wards under this government's watch in this day and age?

Mr. Speaker, the report card on this government is dismal. When we read that more people die in Manitoba than in any other jurisdiction because of either inappropriate or incorrect medication, 25 percent of the cases across Canada are right here in Manitoba, 25 percent of the cases in Canada are right here in Manitoba. Why? Why?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, the minister can call out from his place and say this is wrong, but I ask him, if that is wrong, even if it is 10 percent, why is that happening under this minister's watch? It never used to happen in any other jurisdiction. It never happened

under the former administration. It is happening under this administration.

Furthermore, this minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, on a point of order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as the Norton-Baker report pointed out, it has never been tracked in Canada. We know about this stuff because we are the first administration to actually report this stuff and as the Norton-Baker report indicates, not only are our stats lower, we are actually reporting it and facing it as opposed to the 1990s when it was hidden and covered up.

Mr. Speaker: Before I rule on the point of order, I want to remind all honourable members what points of order are. Points of order are to point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure of Manitoba practices.

On the point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Health, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister can rise on a point of order if he likes. The facts are glaring him in the face. He likes to stand up in this House and personalize his attacks. When he does not have any answers, he attacks either the person who asked the question, sometimes it is the critic for Health, today it happened to be the critic for Family Services. He personalizes those attacks. He takes things out of context and then attacks the individual instead of answering the question and being factual about the information that he is supposed to put on the record.

Mr. Speaker, this minister likes to refer to the nine baby deaths that happened. Were they the fault of government? I do not think so. Were they the fault of a physician? It may have been. We have had the report that indicated what happened in all of that situation, but you cannot go to a government and say, "That was your fault." We moved to correct that.

That was a situation that happened. Nobody is denying that. It was a situation that needed correcting, and it was corrected, Mr. Speaker, but not under their watch, under our watch. But what is happening under their watch is not being corrected. We are having people die in emergency wards. That is not being corrected.

We have people like Sharon Horn freezing to death, and the minister does not accept responsibility, does not accept the fact that you might have to have an inquiry into that matter to make sure that that does not happen again.

Mr. Speaker, we had a baby death last week. We went to the government to ask for an inquest and an inquiry, but the government continues to dodge, just like this minister does his responsibilities.

We have cardiac patients waiting for heart surgery that are dying, dying under this minister's watch, dying under this government's watch, and yet they refuse to do anything substantive about it.

That is what this resolution is about, Mr. Speaker. This resolution calls on this government to get its act together. It calls on this minister to get his act together, to stop allowing patients who are in much need of attention in our hospitals, to keep them from dying. Answer the call is what this resolution is about. Answer the call to your responsibility. Answer the call to the Manitobans who are now dying under your watch because you are not prepared to take the policy steps that are required.

We have asked the minister for a plan. Have we seen a plan? No, because there is no plan. This Premier does not have a plan. This minister does not have a plan on how to deal with the long-range implications with what is happening out there in the real world.

*(15:50)

In the real world, Mr. Speaker, this minister has spent \$1.4 billion more on health care since he has taken office, but what are the results? What are the results? He can talk about more CAT scans, more MRIs, but what is tragic is people cannot get in to get an MRI, but at six o'clock the MRIs click in for people who want to bring their dogs and animal pets in to do MRIs and CAT scans. Can you imagine?

An Honourable Member: Yes, that is true.

An Honourable Member: Did you know that? The minister does not admit that.

Mr. Derkach: Come on now, the minister does not admit that, Mr. Speaker. Then we have a problem

Now, Mr. Speaker, yes, we have two-tier medicine now. The member calls across, "two-tier medicine." We have one tier for perhaps the non-humans and another tier for humans.

Mr. Speaker, I say to you that it is time for this government to wake up. It is time for this minister to wake up and start paying attention to the real needs of Manitobans, not to the bureaucracy, not to his own little ego building, but to the people who need the services.

He said, along with his Premier, that no rural facilities, no rural hospitals would close. Well, you do not have to let them close. All you do is deny professionals to work in those facilities and the facilities have to close.

His RHAs out there that he is directing are telling communities "butt out" when it comes time to hire professionals. The minister, on the other hand, says, "Yes, we want communities engaged in hiring." The message is two-fold, one from the minister, one from the RHAs. They do not get their act together. Now we have a situation where town is pitted against town in RHAs because of the communication that is being given from the RHAs to the communities. The RHAs love communities to get into a fight because at the end of the day they can close the facilities and say, "Well that is what the communities really wanted."

I ask the minister, where is the Erickson facility. It has been closed for over a year. Why do we not have medical professionals in there, and doctors? We have a bizarre situation where a doctor who had to take six months, she took seven months off because her husband was critically ill and died, and he wanted to die in his homeland which was England. She took him back there, looked after him for the period of time until his death and then came back to Erickson and said, "I am prepared to practise now because my husband is gone." But she has been denied by the College of Physicians. She has to go through a series of examinations to prove that she is worthy—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time is expired.

Mr. Penner: I rise today with some sadness in my heart. When I see the resolution that the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) has brought forward today and the issues that are raised in this resolution, I think all of us in Manitoba should be saddened by what we see in this resolution.

When we look at the promises that were made initially by the NDP government when they were elected some five years ago, a bit better than five years ago, people really believed the Premier of this province, I am sorry, who, by the way, is named Gary Doer, which we all know. [*interjection*] I am sorry, but we will refer to him as the Premier.

When the Doer government formed government on a platform of promising to end hallway medicine, they told the people in their ads, "Give me \$15 million and give me six months and I will fix health care." People believed this. People truly believed this. Wherever I went they said, "You know we are going to elect this Doer government because we think you guys have not been able to fix the health care system. We believe this Doer administration will be able to fix the health care system." Well, what did we get? What did we get, Mr. Speaker? Did we get any quick cure for the MRIs in the province? All we did was buy another one. Did we fix anything? No. The waiting lists are still long. Why? Have we every asked ourselves why? Have we ever done an analysis?

Has this government ever done an analysis of all the promises they have made and all the failures they have had? [*interjection*] All the failures, and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) says, yes, every one of them. Well, then, they should be able to advertise now a list of failures. The interesting thing is that this failure of meeting the commitment of \$15 million, six months, has cost the general public of this province over a billion dollars a year.

We now spend a billion dollars a year more on health care after only four and a half, five years of administration. A billion dollars a year more on health care, and what has changed? Have the waiting lists been smaller? No, they are longer. Have the waiting room deaths been shortened? No, they are longer. There are more waiting room deaths today

than there ever were. As a matter of fact, the first 10 years that I was in government, never did I hear of anybody dying in the waiting room. That is why we had emergency areas. When they came in, they were taken in immediately and dealt with. But they are not under this administration.

Under this administration they tell them to go lie on the floor. Have you ever gone to a doctor, a waiting room, and been told, go lie down on the floor? In a waiting room? That is what happened here. That is what happened under this government's watch. I know the backbenchers of this government find it hard to accept that kind of a system that has been devised by their Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). He is, whether they like it or not, responsible for all the miscarriages of justice that have occurred through the mismanagement of the health care system.

Despite the promises of the Doer government to address the cut waiting lists, what have we seen? MRIs to wait. Not only have they gone up, they have gone up dramatically, the waiting lists. And what happens? Why would this government not do what some other jurisdictions have done? Why would they not allow a private entrepreneur own the MRI machine as they do just south of where I live? They allow a private entrepreneur to own it. It is in a van. If somebody needs an MRI tomorrow, you can have it. You just phone for an appointment and you get your MRI. Does the health care system there own the technologist that operates this machine? No. It is done by a contract. You pay so much to get an MRI.

Why would we not, as a government, want to hire a private entrepreneur, put him in a van, put the MRI machine in a van, and if somebody at Morden needs an MRI, whip it over there. Get the MRI done, pay the person on a per call basis instead of having that million-dollar MRI machine sit there, day in and day out, night in and night out, and not be able to use it.

Why would we want to hire a full-time bunch of technicians and put them on staff and have to pay them, and not be able to use them? Because somebody decided to do animals at night. Why would this government allow for something like that, with publicly owned facilities? Yet that is what happens in this province today.

There was a lady that sat with my daughter in a waiting room waiting for an MRI, and the lady said,

"You know what happened to me?" She said, "I brought my dog in here because the veterinarian said he must have immediately an MRI." So we walked into the MRI machine place and said, "When can I get an MRI done?" And he says, "At six o'clock. That is when we schedule animals." And she said, "Can I have it done right away?" And he said, "No, not right away. You will have to wait your turn." And she said, "Well, what would it cost me to get it done right now? Could I get it done for \$1,000?" And he said, "Yes, for \$1,000 you could get it done." Then the lady asked: "If I had to have one immediately, could I pay \$1,000 and get it done?" And the technologist had said, "No, not for human beings; for animals, yes, but not for human beings."

What kind of a system have we devised? Our publicly owned and publicly operated and publicly administered health care system under this Minister of Health, under this NDP Minister of Health, boy, that is what you call social programming at its finest, I think.

Where can we go today to get the kind of care that we need from day to day on a more immediate basis than we get it here in Manitoba? Well, let me ask you, Mr. Speaker, why would the health care sign, the "H" sign on Highway 75 at Emerson have disappeared? First of all, there was a bag put over the sign. Now the sign automatically just mysteriously disappeared. Why did it disappear? I wonder if the Minister of Health would like to stand in his place and tell us why it disappeared. Not when, why did it disappear? He sits there and drinks his coffee. No response, and I do not blame him. I would be embarrassed too.

* (16:00)

The reason it disappeared is because they pulled the funding for the doctors and for the nurses. There is not proper staff there to have an "H" sign on the highway anymore. Why is that? Because this minister refused to recognize his responsibility. Why did this Minister of Health at Morden and Winkler fire 500 nurses? Why did he do that? You know, if he was honest, he would say, "Well, that is what the union contract demands when facility changes are made—"

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would just like to make aware to the honourable member that all members in the House are honourable members and all members are honest members. They are all honourable members.

So I just caution the honourable member to pick his words carefully.

Mr. Penner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to remind the honourable member that his actions by firing 500 nurses at Morden and Winkler were prescribed under the union agreement, and he knows this. It was the same union agreement that forced the previous government to remove, he says, a thousand nurses. It was not a thousand nurses. It was less than a thousand nurses. It was remove them from their positions and reinstate the next day. The same has happened at Morden and Winkler, no difference in process here than there.

The minister holds up his little, black chart. Well, let me say this to you, Mr. Speaker. The minister has constantly tried to portray his interpretation of the health care system—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I, too, was wanting to put a few words on the record in regard to this particular resolution.

I think it is a resolution that is worthy of passing, actually. I am not going to focus my attentions on the WHEREASes but rather the BE IT RESOLVEDs. To start off, I was here listening to the Premier when he was talking about this issue not being important, because, after all, the government had a new mandate, and Manitobans have forgiven the government in regard to hallway medicine. I remember the campaign quite well in 1999, the slogans and so forth. For \$15 million we will get rid of hallway medicine.

I can assure the Premier that in fact this was an important issue. Back in the last provincial election I talked a great deal about health care. I reminded people about that commitment in terms of ending hallway medicine. So in that corner of the city, they did send a message to the Premier or to this government. The message that they sent is in contradiction to what the Premier was saying. They recognized that there are severe shortcomings that this government has in dealing with health care.

In some of the debates that we are talking about, and I heard some heckling back and forth, someone made mention that MRI machines are being used for

dogs and cats. This is the first time I have ever heard that being the case. I look to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) or any government member to tell me if, in fact, that is true or false. I find that it would be incredibly difficult to believe that we would be using MRI machines for dogs and cats in our province. I do not see someone standing in their place saying that is not the case.

So does that mean that—*[interjection]* Someone said that it was federal government machines. I do not care if they are federal government machines or provincial government machines. The province is the one that is responsible for the administration, ultimately, of health care in our province. Are we providing MRIs for dogs and cats in our province? *[interjection]* MRI, magnetic resonance imaging machines. MRI. So let me rephrase that. Are we performing MRI scans in the province of Manitoba for cats and dogs? I believe and I have been led to believe that we are.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first time that I have heard that. I think it is absolutely bizarre. That is why they call it a "cat" scan.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Minister of Health, on a point of order.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the member is getting confused. We have recently purchased and have, for the first time in Manitoba, a PET scan in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to rule on the point of order first and then I will recognize the honourable Member for Inkster to continue with his speech.

On a point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Health, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the point of order. The Member for Kildonan, the Minister of Health, has been around for a long time, and I know that he can play with words in a certain way. I guess I would look to the Minister of Health to be very clear and transparent with me on this. My understanding is that, in fact, we have machines that are

being used in the province for health care purposes for people and some of those very same machines are being used for pets. If I am wrong, please tell me I am wrong.

I appeal to the Minister of Health to tell me that I am wrong. Mr. Speaker, I do not see the Minister of Health standing up telling me that I am wrong. I would suggest to you, if in fact this is the case, I think that Manitobans would be most interested in knowing. Is this new territory, is this new in Canada, that we are doing something of this nature? Well, I think there are issues today that need to be addressed and there are issues that we have to ensure that Manitobans are aware that this government did make commitments on. That is what this resolution deals with in regard to hallway medicine, because that commitment was not fulfilled.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I do think that the province can play a very positive, creative role in resolving health care, not only in terms of the province of Manitoba, but contributing to health care policy throughout Canada. The current Prime Minister, Paul Martin, has made reference to the fact that we are going to see some sort of a health policy conference over the summer. I think there was a commitment that it would be as many days as it takes to try to hammer something out. I would like to see this government play a leading role in the generation of some ideas that will ultimately be a part of a national plan.

I can reflect back onto the constitutional debates where there was a Charlottetown or the Meech Lake. In fact, Mr. Wally Fox-Decent really came to bat for us on the Meech Lake issue, as a result of Manitoba and the role that we played in the constitutional rounds, that we were able to have considerable influence. I would suggest to you, in dealing with health care, because it does not matter where you live in the province or in Canada, people are concerned. We know people are concerned about health care.

Now is the time in which the province should be entering into dialogue more than ever prior to going into summer discussions with the federal government so that it takes an approach, Mr. Speaker, that is built on consensus that they are able to go to the table and say, "Look, we have worked with Manitobans, we have worked with even opposition parties." When you talk about the dollars that we spend on health care, I would suggest to you that a great deal of prep

work should be done before we go to the table. I hope and I trust that the government will defend the importance of a strong national government having a strong role in health care delivery because there will be provinces, provinces like Alberta, that will advocate more of that privatization, more of that two-tier system.

* (16:10)

I think that what we need for provinces like Manitoba, Newfoundland and P.E.I., our Atlantic provinces, to go to Ontario, who has played a very strong leadership role in many areas, and the province of Québec, and appeal to these provinces to recognize the value of having a strong national presence in health care. As a Canadian first, I like to think, no matter where I might live, that I have certain expectations in terms of health care delivery. It does not matter where I live. Well, I would suggest to you that the cop-out would be a government that goes to the table, and the only argument that they have is, "Give us more money and that is all we want."

There has to be more to it than just asking for more money. There has to be a higher sense of accountability, the type of accountability that the Leader of the Liberal Party asked today about information, about waiting lists for sleeping disorders. You know, there is information that needs to be gathered. We need to have that sort of information in order to make good judgment calls. That is why, with this particular resolution in principle, there is nothing wrong with supporting the THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVEDS. The WHEREASes is preamble, and we acknowledge that. The government feels uncomfortable with the WHEREASes, they can go ahead and they can make some changes to it.

Having said that, I think that it is a good resolution and I appreciate the fact that the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), I believe, is the one that brought it forward. We trust that it will come to a debate, and ultimately what we want is more accountability on public health in the province, and, as one of the private members' bills from the leader is suggesting, that we incorporate even financial accountability.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I want to put a few comments in support of this resolution.

In looking through the resolution, I think that every one of the WHEREASes is quite sustainable. The problem that we have and if you look, the government, when in opposition, did everything they could to politicize health care and then they gave us the granddaddy of all health care surprises when they said that they could fix health care for 15 million bucks in six months and they said, "Nothing wrong with health care that we could not fix in that short a time. These guys just do not know what they are doing," when they were referring to the previous government. Of course, then I have to give them credit. They have been running on pretty low octane fuel, but they have been managing to have high octane communications. Many of the situations that needed some additional funding, this government perchance seemed to fall into a puddle of you-know-what and came up with a billion dollars' worth of cash over the first three years that they were in government.

I want to point out something that I think that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) is going to have to acknowledge. It is probably one of the first cracks in this seemingly seamless approach to health care that he wants to talk about and how this government has done something miraculous other than spending a billion dollars. I would suggest that there is very little miraculous about what has happened.

But I look in Hansard of June 25, '02. The Minister of Health is responding to a question about palliative care, and he is saying, "Another example of a little information being dangerous for the members opposite."

Well, he likes to disparage the information that we bring to this Chamber, and he does it willy-nilly without any particular proof. So I am going to use his own words to bring my information to this Chamber. He says, "The 24-hour service is available across the province. It co-ordinates with rural health authorities, in case the member does not know but should know because it did not have a palliative care program. We put in place funding for a palliative care co-ordinator in every region, Mr. Speaker, something that apparently members opposite do not know."

Well, I am wondering if the minister today knows that one of his regions is in the process of phasing out palliative care. Is that something that he directed, or does that come as a surprise to him? He was quick to jump in to respond to some of the other

speakers a couple of minutes ago. I wonder if he would like to either give me a passing nod as to whether or not he knows that that is happening in at least one of the regions of this province for which he is responsible.

An Honourable Member: He does not have a clue.

Mr. Cummings: Well, my colleague says that he does not have a clue, and that is my whole point, Mr. Speaker. This minister has spent a good part of this day with great derision attacking this side of the House when he is standing on some pretty thin ice himself.

Another comment from the Minister of Health, "Mr. Speaker, we were rolling out the program across the province in a variety of fashions and a variety of functions, but at least we have a palliative care program, a comprehensive program."

Well, it is a comprehensive program that he is about to take apart. I think that is what is concerning. We have seen a lot of strong words, a lot of announcements about health care in this province, and yet there is still a significant amount of concern out there on the steps of our hospitals about whether or not they are going to get appropriate service when they go to our health care system. Frankly, my colleague from Emerson was raising the question about the use of equipment. It is also my understanding that, for veterinary purposes, certain pieces of health care imaging equipment can be leased after hours as they can be paid for, for professional athletes.

If the minister is unaware of that, I can appreciate his problem. But, if he is aware of that, and is trying to deny it, then I suggest that he should get up right now on a point of order and correct me if that is not true. I suspect it is true.

I had the privilege of sitting with someone from the United States who was doing a professorial paper studying the Canadian health care system. He thought we had a wonderful social system. He thought that the access to care was wonderful. But he said, "I cannot understand why it is in Canada, under your government's system, that you will put millions, yet may you put billions, of dollars into equipment and you run them eight hours a day. We would not even think of doing that in the New England states," was his comment, "We would put them to work probably 24 hours a day."

So while the inefficiencies that this government loves to portray across the line, he should not dismiss it in such a way that he does not learn from what can bring some efficiencies to this system in Canada. The one that I would say, universality, is so important and where, in fact, we pride ourselves in universal access, but there is not one political party in this country that is not willing to say that we may not be able to throw enough money at health care to reach the expectations of the public.

I guess that is why I am quite happy to support this resolution, because what has happened is that the public was led to believe that, for very little time, effort and money, we could correct what was wrong with health care in Manitoba. Well, we have probably exceeded the amount of money by a hundredfold, I guess, and we have not fixed many of the issues.

* (16:20)

We have made services available in some cases, and in other cases things have changed. There are hospitals out there, as my colleague from Russell pointed out, there are hospitals out there that cannot function as hospitals anymore. To that community, it is not an improvement. To that community, it says that they are being failed by the government by the government that they might even have helped to elect.

So I look at one other piece of information that I want to bring to this same issue around palliative care, which is only one small part of health care in this province and for all of us, it will very likely be one of the final acts that the community will perform on our behalf before we go to our rewards. I just want to remind this minister that the model of those who work in palliative care, I am sure he is familiar with this but it needs to be put on the record, I would suggest that we enter this world surrounded by love, comfort and care and do we not deserve the same when we leave?

I am looking at correspondence from one of the regional health authorities and they are saying, "Funding and program disparity has been an issue between the urban and rural health authorities. Knowing this, how could the region lobby for equality in order to provide necessary programs and services to our residents? One example of inequality cited is the amount of funding received by the

WRHA for a palliative program compared to that of the rural regions."

At that particular time, the rural regions were receiving zero, or very close to zero. This minister has put a lot of strong words on the record about how he was going to support palliative care. We have rural regions who raise almost all of the money that is needed to pay for and manage palliative care in their hospitals and this minister is about to approve them being shut down or grandfathered so that they will be phased out at the end of the working time of whoever is managing the co-operative and the volunteer bodies.

Why, why, why, would a government that prides itself in improving health care turn against groups of volunteers who are willing to work in palliative care and communities that are willing to raise the money to make it work? This government, once he gets past bragging about how he is going to fix it, really does not want to sustain it and that, I think, is why we are so concerned about all of the bragging we hear about health care in this province and very little of the results.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I am pleased to speak to this motion today. I think when we talk about the increase of a billion dollars into health care; I think that is something that is unfathomable, a billion dollars. How many people can relate to a billion dollars? It is just a huge amount of money, and then we talk about the deficits in the RHAs. I know in the region that I represent, the Central Region RHA with \$4 million of deficit, it is hard to imagine those numbers.

It is hard to imagine that those numbers do not fix anything. It seems like a lot of money and yet we know that with that money we do not see any progress. I guess I am just not confident that any amount of money going into the health care system would actually make a change. I think that we have to re-look at our system. I think we could put our whole provincial budget into health care and I do not suspect that it would make any difference in the services that people get.

I think that we would need to really look at our system again. We have seen that waiting lists have certainly not gotten any shorter. I think that members opposite would claim that they do, but I suspect that might be because people have decided not to be on

waiting lists but have decided to go to other provinces or to the States to get the timely care that they need and they deserve.

A person that I am well acquainted with recently has made an appointment to go to Seattle for a knee replacement. She has been on a waiting list for 14 months. She is told she will be on that waiting list for at least another 12 to 14 months. She is also told that her second knee is in very bad shape and, because she is compensating in her method of walking and carrying on daily routine, because of that, because she is compensating for the injured knee, her other knee is, she has been told by her specialist that if she waits the 14 months longer to get the knee replacement, she will be in need of a second knee replacement.

It just seems to me that the logic in this is that you would fix the one now, before you have to put money into fixing two later, but that does not seem to be the priority of the government today, to actually get people moving through the system and get the work done. I know that there is one particular specialist when we talk about orthopedics in the city, and his waiting lists are very long because he is the person of choice. We need to attract more of those people into the province so that the waiting lists will get shorter.

I know, just having had a very minor surgery and speaking with my orthopedic surgeon, that there was not a very long waiting list for that. What he did tell me is, it is not hard to get OR time. You can get the OR time, but there is not enough staff. There is not enough budget by the end of the year, so that ORs are left empty and there is not enough staff. You cannot pay the staff, so the surgeries have to be delayed which compounds the waiting lists. In fact, people just are not prepared to wait and have to go to other centres to get the timely care that they need.

When health care is delayed, health care is denied. We have a right, I believe, to get timely care for your health because in matters of health, these matters of health are deteriorating cases. When you are sick and very, very ill, you cannot wait because if you wait, things just get worse.

Another instance of waiting, waiting in emergency rooms: I know my son was involved in an altercation not that long ago in which he was trying to break up a fight between two people, and before

he knew it he was hit right in the face with a rock, knocked unconscious and was taken to hospital by ambulance. He waited six and a half hours before being seen. He had a broken cheekbone, mild concussion. They wondered about the sight of one eye, whether he might lose the sight of his eye, and yet he waited in the emergency room for six and a half hours. Now is that because this is a young person and they are not speaking out? I was not there with him. He is 24 years old, so it is not like he is calling his mother to be with him in cases like this, although I would have happily been there if I had known what had happened.

Subsequent to that he did have to return to emergency to get his stitches out. He was told at that time, "You know what? We do not have time to take your stitches out." He said, "Well, what should I do?" They said, "Well, go to your own doctor." So he went home, and he took his own stitches out, because it would have been another week or so to get an appointment with his own doctor.

They told him, "Those stitches need to come out because they will be infected if they stay in any longer, but we do not have time to do it." So, too bad. Go and find your own way to do it. So he did. I do not think that speaks well for our health care system, that as minor a thing as it is, people are turned away from emergency rooms in that way.

* (16:30)

I also had the opportunity to speak with a lady from the Alzheimer Society, and she was detailing the problems associated with Alzheimer's disease and removing the medication and what actually happens to these patients. It is a learning experience to listen to people whose families are affected by this very debilitating disease, and to learn that once these people are taken off their medication, they rapidly go downhill. Once reinstated on the medication, they do not recover to the level that they were previously at. So taking them off the medication is very devastating and traumatic, not only for the person, of course, that is afflicted, but for the entire family, who need to care and support their family members.

I have been reading Pharmacare petitions in this House for several weeks now, and I think it is disheartening. It is just terrible that this government has put extra increases in Pharmacare fees onto people that can ill-afford it. The seniors, the elderly

and the low-income families really do not have the money, but still have the need and, in fact, in some situations probably have more of a need for these programs.

I can tell you that the petitions that I did take around I went into some seniors' homes in St. James-Assiniboia and I went into some seniors' homes in Selkirk. I can tell you that this was the first time that these people had heard about Pharmacare deductibles. It was like a feeding frenzy with these seniors: Let me at that petition, where do I sign, give me more of them, I will get more people to sign. It was incredible, the interest of these people in wanting to sign this petition.

I also want to speak about one of the hospitals in my constituency, the DeSalaberry district hospital in St. Pierre-Jolys. They have a very excellent facility there, excellent doctors, excellent staff, a personal care home attached. It is a beautiful facility and I thank Clayton Manness for that. However, just recently it has been closed two weekends because of lack of staff, and they have had to cover the hospital sign and reroute patients to Steinbach.

The problem with that is this is the only hospital on Highway 59. Highway 59 is a very busy highway with lots of traffic. It is an alternate route from the States, going into the States and from the States. It is also the route to St. Malo Park, and St. Malo Park is a growing tourist area. In fact, we did have a drowning death there last summer, unfortunately. I am concerned that with the closure of a hospital—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I rise today to address the resolution which the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) has proposed to this House.

I believe that the health care system we have in the province of Manitoba is ailing itself. There are so many areas that constituents each and every day approach myself and other honourable members of this Assembly with grave concern about, not able to access the health care system.

As the honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) stated, health care delayed is health care denied, and I truly believe that is a very appropriate

statement, because right now we are seeing a rationing of health care services here in the province of Manitoba by the delays that individuals that are seeking health care services are experiencing.

Mr. Speaker, a few short years ago, Canada was recognized by the United Nations as the best country in the world in which to live. Currently, this country of ours is now ranked No. 7, and it looks like we are going to be slipping even lower in the rankings. The reason for this diminished ranking within the stature of world countries for quality of life is health care and health care services in the country of Canada.

We have not been able to maintain the health care services that we saw in years past, and yet we are expending a great deal more money. Mr. Speaker, I have not been long a member of this Chamber, but within the six short years that I have been a member of this Chamber, we have seen the health care budget as a percent go from approximately 28.5 percent to 40 percent of the provincial budget.

To grasp that increase dollar-wise, the health care budget has increased by \$1.281 billion in my short tenure of a little more than six years here in the Chamber. I believe that increase is extreme in anyone's assessment and this type of growth cannot be sustained. I want to ask the minister to really clearly and strategically look at our health care services here in the province of Manitoba.

I know he and I have shared a number of occasions to just talk about the health care services here in the province of Manitoba and some brainstorming type of sessions, but I would look to the minister that potentially he can seek guidance from some of his colleagues that he shares in Cabinet, where just within this legislative session we have seen public-private partnerships coming by way of various bills here in the province of Manitoba.

The Transportation and Government Services Minister (Mr. Lemieux) has proposed the Trucking Productivity act, Bill 12, which proposes public-private partnering in achieving the ends and the goals that all Manitobans want to see in the infrastructure of transportation and its improvements here in the province of Manitoba.

We have also seen The Travel Manitoba Act, Bill 24, in the Legislature, which comes from the

Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Robinson), once again, proposing a public-private partnering to promote and encourage tourism here in the province of Manitoba.

It is recognizing that along with public financing and interest, the private sector can, indeed, partner together and make certain that the goals that all of us want to achieve are, in fact, achieved. I would really, truly encourage the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) to look favourably on what can be achieved in that type of arrangement.

I know the honourable colleague from Ste. Rose spoke about the usage of capital investment in health care here in the province of Manitoba, and very, very costly pieces of equipment operating on very, very short time frames within any given day, within any given week, within any given month. This type of short run times is not cost-effective. The investment that we see in health care equipment should be maximized. We should see that equipment operate on perhaps a 24-hour period.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

We all know that there is required service time and personnel changeover time, but to have that as a goal to make maximum use of our investment in equipment such as MRIs or CT scanners, or even the item that the minister recognizes as leading-edge technology, the gamma knife, I believe that it would be in everyone's best interest to make the most of that investment by seeing the equipment operated on a very lengthy day, if not all day, around the clock.

* (16:40)

Madam Acting Speaker, if the government continues to ration and acknowledge that there is a quota within any given service here in the province of Manitoba, whether it is hip or knee replacement or cataract surgery, that there is a limitation as to the number of procedures that can be afforded by the Treasury, why does the government not look to particular allowances that these investments within our health care services are made available to persons outside of our jurisdiction, even if it is not available to persons inside our jurisdiction because of potential contravention of the Canada Health Act? Why not see persons traveling from Grafton, North Dakota, to Winnipeg in order to seek health care

services and adding some much-needed dollars to our health care programming here in the province of Manitoba?

Now I believe that that is doable. I know that there are certain health care services in the province of Manitoba that are recognized as being leading-edge, top-quality services. I know our cataract surgical unit at one time was recognized by the Mayo Clinic as the program to aspire to. I do not know if that is still the case, but in any event, Madam Acting Speaker, I think that this is the creative way of thinking that one requires because we cannot sustain the increases we have seen over the last number of years invested in health care because there are other very, very needy areas of government expenditure, such as our infrastructure, clean water, our waste water treatment facilities. Our roads and northern airports are in vital need of investment.

So, Madam Acting Speaker, with those short comments, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this afternoon's debate.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I speak to this resolution and we in the Liberal Party support this resolution because we see in the area of management of health care there is much room for improvement. I could go down a huge long list of areas, but I want to talk particularly about one area as an example of how improving the quality of care can improve the quality of health and can decrease mortality and improve the cost of health care budget for the province all at the same time.

I am going to talk about sleep disorders and the testing for sleep disorders because this is an area where the government has failed to deliver appropriately, and as a result, we have got a poorer quality of health than we should have among a number of people and we have higher costs of health care than we should have at the same time.

I am going to refer the members of the Legislature to a study which I tabled recently by Dr. Kathleen Ferguson, Review of Sleep Disorders Programme, University of Manitoba, Health Sciences Centre Sleep Laboratory and St. Boniface Sleep Laboratory.

This review was completed in 1999. The review concludes there have been at least 10 deaths between 1996 to 1998 of patients on the waiting list. The

review indicates, given that obstructive sleep apnea is associated with significant cardiovascular comorbidity, patients with severe sleep disordered breathing may end up hospitalized in cardio-respiratory failure. When sleep apnea is contributing to the reasons for hospitalization, it becomes an urgent issue to have the patient diagnosed and treated. And yet patients at the moment may have to wait, under some circumstances, for up to five years to get testing in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

What I want to point out is that there is quite a body of evidence at the moment which shows that obstructive sleep apnea is a risk factor and is associated with the development of high blood pressure and cardiovascular complications.

Let me quote from another review: "Systemic hypertension is observed in 50 percent to 70 percent of patients with obstructive sleep apnea. Several large cross-sectional studies have demonstrated that obstructive sleep apnea is a risk factor for developing hypertension, independent of age, obesity, alcohol intake and smoking."

More recently, studies in Wisconsin, cohort study, were prospectively monitored for the development of hypertension. The investigators found a dose response relationship between the degree of obstructive sleep apnea and the presence of hypertension four years later.

When we are looking at this, in a recent study of Logan, et al., in *The European Respiratory Journal*, they show very clearly that in patients with refractory hypertension acute abolition of obstructive sleep apnea by continuous positive airway pressure reduces nocturnal blood pressure.

Here is an example of how blood pressure can be reduced. We know blood pressure is a risk factor in such patients with refractory hypertension, for stroke and a variety of other cardiovascular problems, including left ventricular failure. The incidence of stroke and myocardial infarction, heart attacks, are known to be higher in patients with obstructive sleep apnea. Evidence links obstructive sleep apnea to the development of left ventricular hypertrophy.

The review by Dr. Kathleen Ferguson showed that patients with obstructive sleep apnea may end up

hospitalized in cardio-respiratory failure. This says it very clearly. There are now clear studies which show that you can improve these conditions, improve mortality using continuous positive airway pressure breathing devices.

This matter of mortality is not something that the Minister of Health should dismiss lightly. As long ago as 1988 there was a study done by Yeung Hei and Doctor Kryger of our St. Boniface Hospital Research Centre. In this study of some 385 patients, what is clear is that there is a major impact or major effect on mortality in patients with obstructive sleep apnea who are not treated. In fact, the cumulative eight-year mortality reaches close to 40 percent. That is huge, almost four out of ten patients with obstructive sleep apnea dying in eight years if it is not treated. This speaks volumes of the importance of treating obstructive sleep apnea.

This was a particularly severe problem or a particular notable problem in those who have the more severe sleep apnea, but it was not completely restricted to such patients. It is clear also that the use of a continuous positive airway pressure monitoring device or a tracheostomy reduced this mortality. In fact, in those who were followed there was no mortality in those treated with the continuous positive airway pressure device or with a tracheostomy. That is an extraordinary difference and it shows how important it is to have rapid diagnosis and effective treatment for obstructive sleep apnea.

So the minister makes a major mistake in trying to dismiss the problem of now up to 45 people who have died on waiting lists for sleep apnea. The minister at least should investigate the reason for the deaths. The minister at the very least, if he wants to pursue this further and still has questions about whether the mortality is related to the obstructive sleep apnea, could have a case-control study in which he looks at cases and controls to look at how many of these deaths may be related to the untreated obstructive sleep apnea or other problems for which they are referred.

* (16:50)

This is a serious matter, both for the quality of health, the issue of life and death of individuals with sleep disorders, but it is also a very important issue in terms of management of the health system in

terms of its costs as well, because there are now clear studies showing that if you treat the obstructive sleep apnea you can reduce hospitalizations, you can reduce complications, you can reduce costs. So it is one example of how this government has done very poorly in managing the health care system. It has failed to reduce complications, reduce problems, reduce costs in just this one area, when the evidence has been there going back to 1988 that there are approaches which are effective and should be used and that we do need rapid treatment.

I will bring my remarks to a close, Mr. Speaker. I think the case is adequately made. I could bring forward many other examples but this one suffices quite clearly to raise the problem and to show that this government has done a very poor job of managing the health care system.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I am pleased to be able to speak to this resolution as well. Certainly, I do appreciate the fact that the Member for Charleswood and the critic for Health has taken the time to draft this resolution which we can speak to today. At the outset, I want to indicate what has been most disconcerting over the last number of years, is the fact that in 1999 when this government came out and this was under the direction of the present Premier (Mr. Doer) and his Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), when they made a promise to Manitobans that they were going to fix health care in six months with \$15 million. What an outrageous claim.

Of course, the other thing was, the irony of it was, when they stood at the Emerson border and said that they were going to be closing down the road to Grafton, North Dakota. Well, I find that very disappointing when they would make promises that they know they cannot keep, they have not kept them, and yet, to date, what they have spent in excess of a billion dollars on health care, they still cannot keep that promise. It is unbelievable. The waiting lists are continuing to grow and we cannot see how they can go and confront Manitobans and continue to tell them that they are solving the problems that are out there when, in fact, they are getting worse.

My colleagues have spoken eloquently on this issue of the whole state of health care but the one area that I do want to expand on is the whole area of palliative care. Mr. Speaker, my wife happens to work as a volunteer in the palliative care area. I

believe it is a service that many people wish to be able to have, where people come and are able to sit with them during the last days or hours on this earth and be able to have someone out there, but the approach that this minister has taken of taking away the funding for just the organizational structure of this within the local area is something that is unforgivable.

We need to be able to at least give part of the resources. I do not have a problem with volunteers going and assisting in areas such as this, but there needs to be an organizational structure, someone who is in charge of this and who is going to take it upon themselves to continue to structure it so that people will be available during that time.

Now, what is happening in this southern Manitoba area is that at this point in time volunteers are looking after the organizational part of it as well. So I just would challenge this government to continue to live up to the promises that they make but do not fulfil.

Mr. Speaker, the other area that they were going to deal with, and of course they said they would respond to and that they would fix, was the area of hallway medicine. We have had, in our own family, we have had experience with that promise. It is not called hallway medicine. In our case and what I have heard from a number of my constituents is that they are not allowing the people who need health care services, they do not even allow them to enter the hospitals or to come to Winnipeg to see the specialist and then to be able to receive the services that they need so desperately.

So what they are doing is they are forcing people to stay in the local, in the rural hospitals, until there is availability for the services within the city of Winnipeg. Now that to me is a directive that has been given out by the minister, by his department, and they are not meeting the needs of those that are concerned in this area.

So, Mr. Speaker, I support the resolution that our critic for Health, the Member for Charleswood, has put forward and, again, I am really concerned that the message that is out there is not the same as what is actually taking place. They are deceiving Manitobans, and that is not the way that government should be running.

So, with those few words, I am going to turn it over to my colleague who is going to address the issue as well, but, again, Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned that the message that is left out there is one that is totally different from what is actually taking place.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to put on a few words of appreciation and support for the resolution that was brought forth by the Member for Charleswood in regard to the condemnation of this government's handling of health care over the last few years.

I have to remind the House it was interesting to sit in the House here and listen to the First Minister rant and rave about the people's choice: "The people have made a choice. Get over the fact that we are talking about a promise that was to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million" as well as rescue health care. This was the Premier's promise back in the election of 1999 and he says, "Get over it. The people have spoken. The people have made a choice."

It is so ironic that this minister can stand up, the First Minister can stand up and say that, when shortly after they were elected they took away the people's right to vote to join the union, took it away. There is no recourse on that. They are bringing in legislation now in regard to the floodway where they are taking away the rights of the workers to participate. They have to make a union contribution. The both sides of the mouth that this Premier talks about to suit himself in a particular moment are always something that he has been a master at.

We all remember the big sign, him standing by the sign there down on Pembina Highway or heading south on Highway 75, that he was going to close Grafton, going to shut her down, going to shut down those clinics. The people are going to stay in Manitoba because he was going to provide the health care.

What has happened since then, Mr. Speaker? This is why we are debating this resolution. The resolution is saying that they failed. They failed miserably in keeping to their promise. They failed miserably in reducing the waiting list. They failed in addressing hallway medicine. They had the unfortunate tragedy of deaths in the cardiac care

under his watch. They have had the unfortunate deaths of people in the waiting rooms and in the ER, waiting for coverage for their conditions.

The minister has failed in so many different ways, and yet they stand there and they are spouting all these statistics. The oddest thing about statistics, and I have to put this in the record because I noticed that the minister came out with a press release a while ago and again, he is getting just as good as the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) in getting paper flowing through the system for government news releases, and the minister came out with a press release on, I will get the exact time, it was on Thursday, June 3, at 9:53 when the news media put out a press release in regard to the minister announcing there was, since 1999 to 2003, an increase of 155 doctors.

Just shortly after that, at 10:59, there was a correction that came out, also from the minister's office, in regard to the number of doctors and the doctors are 115 and everything, so the minister stands up, he berates the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) for bringing in so-called false information. His own department cannot even put out the proper information and he stands here sanctimoniously saying that the Member for Charleswood is always bringing in false information and everything like that.

* (17:00)

It is incredible how the minister can go down that road and have the capability of trust when he cannot even bring forth his own messages that he is trying to convey to the people that everything is better. They are very, very good at bringing out these various press announcements and, anytime there is a crisis, well, we will get to the bottom of it. There will be a discussion group. There will be a round table. We will set up commissions. We will do all this.

Nothing happens. We saw that with the cardiac review, the external review of Manitoba cardiac care services by Doctor Koshal, and there are some excellent recommendations in there. The minister got up and said, "We are going to bring forth these recommendations. We are going to have these things that Doctor Koshal brought forth."

It was introduced in August 18, 2003. To the best of my knowledge, they still have not hired a

head person for chief of cardiac surgery. That was one of the first recommendations that Doctor Koshal came out with. The minister has stood in this House and said, "Well, wait for the announcement. Wait for the announcement."

Mr. Speaker, the report was tabled on August 18, 2003. The waiting is getting a little bit monotonous. We keep waiting for all these things to happen from the minister and other things are happening. Unfortunately, there is death. There has been a tragedy of misfortune in the ER. We see it in the headlines in the papers. "Medicare System Killed My Mother." Very tragic, but the minister and the government keep diddling like there is nothing wrong with it.

Mr. Speaker, we know that they have had an increase in their funding over the last few years of over a billion dollars, over a billion dollars and yet we still see health care in crisis. We have seen over a billion dollars, and Pharmacare deductibility has gone up 5 percent per year over the last few years.

We have had numerous, numerous calls on the phone line that we have set up for people to express their displeasure with the government regarding the Pharmacare increases and we have heard some real different type of situations where one person said they had to dip into their RRSPs. Other people have said that they cannot afford various luxuries of necessity in their day-to-day lives. We have had people say that they cannot afford it. People have said that they have had to make choices of their medication that they can now buy or cannot buy.

These are some of the things that are directly affecting a lot of people in Manitoba and, Mr. Speaker, we are hearing this from the people. The minister has said that all these things, everything is fine, there is nothing wrong with the health care system in Manitoba, that the people are satisfied with it. That is not what we get when we talk to the people when we are either in our constituencies or when people phone us or when people email us their concerns.

Some of these, as each one of us has known in our constituency, these are all very, very personal commitments that some of these people make to us when they finally do address some of the problems that they are having.

We have had meetings with the Alzheimer association in trying to get some sort of resolution on the report that was tabled to this government years ago. Nothing has happened. There was a report that was tabled where there was a recommendation for a steering committee to be formed. The minister said that he would do it. He has not done it.

The Alzheimer association here in Manitoba have lobbied not only the government, they have lobbied us as the opposition to try to help. We have tried to help. We have brought it to their attention. They still have not been contacted. There is nothing that has happened by the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) or the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) in trying to get these problems resolved.

These are some of the things that the government has talked about. Now we are seeing that even the First Minister has admitted that we, when we were in government back in 1995, faced some very, very severe cuts in health funding to this government. In fact, the First Minister put on record that we had cuts of \$240 million out of the health care budget in 1995. Even the First Minister admitted how many doctors did we lose, how many nurses did we lose, what was the impact on patient safety in Manitoba. These were the things that the previous government, the Filmon government, had to face when we were in government, that shortfall.

We still increased our government commitment to health care. That happened even with those cuts from the federal government of \$240 million. We have always been there to try to defend health care. We will continue to defend health care. This minister is lacking in his initiatives to make it happen.

Mr. Speaker, I will now call for the question on this resolution.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the motion moved on Opposition Day motion, moved by the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger).

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the motion say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Reimer: I think we should call for Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A formal vote having been requested, call in the members.

All sections in Chamber for formal vote.

Order. The question before the House is the Opposition Day motion moved by the honourable Member for Charleswood.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Cummings, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faursschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Loewen, Mitchelson, Murray, Penner, Reimer, Rocan, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Nays

Aglugub, Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Selinger, Smith, Struthers.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 20, Nays 30.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Before proceeding to third reading and concurrence, I wonder if there is agreement of the House to break for staff and members for supper from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there will of the House to recess for one hour between 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. for supper? *[Agreed]*

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 10—The Gaming Control Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 10, The Gaming Control Amendment Act, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: We are in concurrence and third reading right now, and we are dealing with Bill 10.

It has been moved by the honourable Attorney General—I need the honourable Minister of Finance to take his seat, please. I need the honourable Minister of Finance to take his seat, please, because I cannot move a motion if the members are out of their seats.

It has been moved by the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh), seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance, that Bill 10, The Gaming Control Amendment Act, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It is a pleasure to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 10 on third reading.

I am not surprised that the Minister of Finance did not want to take his seat to second this particular bill. I would probably be ashamed if I was members opposite, too, to put my name to something that on one hand talks about gaming control when, in fact,

what they are doing in this province is an unprecedented expansion of gaming in the province, when we talk about how they are going forward and advertising to Manitobans to lure them into casinos.

We have seen the recent \$100-million announcement for expansion of VLTs in the province at a time when the government talks about their being in economic difficulty in Manitoba, at a time when the government does not put real cash on the table of farmers who are suffering from BSE, who are suffering in a number of different areas in our agricultural community, and our livestock producers, our commodity producers. Virtually every area of agriculture has been affected in the last year, Mr. Speaker. Yet the government finds a way to pull \$100 million, they found money for new VLTs. I think that speaks loudly about the priority of this government or, as most Manitobans would say, the lack of priorities of this particular government.

* (17:20)

It also speaks volumes about the fact that the government does not have an economic plan to build beyond gaming in the province. It is too easy, I think, for them every time they find themselves in trouble because of their spending habit, because they have not been able to control their own need to spend more and more, to turn to the gaming industry and turn to gambling and say, "Well, how else can we addict Manitobans to gaming and gambling in the province? How else can we drum up revenues on that particular revenue stream?" It is disappointing.

I know that members here today who were part of the former Conservative government spent a good amount of time working at developing new industries, new opportunities and new ways to grow the economy, well apart from issues of gaming in the province, Mr. Speaker. That was a true balance, a balance between looking at opportunities and niches that we had as a province to grow the economy, to find new industries. It is a balance that this government has not struck. They simply have not been able to find either the will or the capacity or the motivation to develop new sources of revenue, those that are sustainable and that are not built on the gaming habits of Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. I think that that is certainly regrettable.

It is also regrettable in terms of responsibility in gaming. This is a bill that I think there is general

acceptance of, that we are looking to move forward in terms of more responsible gaming, yet the government rejects all calls from members on this side of the House and members of the public for an independent and public review of the effects of gaming in Manitoba as we have it today. It would seem to me, and I think a lot of Manitobans would agree, that we are at the maturity of the industry, the stage of the industry where it is time to take a look back and to stop and to see what the costs to Manitobans are in terms of gaming in the province.

We have had the debate, I guess, regarding revenues and the effect of revenues of certain legislation in this House, Mr. Speaker. A lot of discussion has happened regarding the income or the revenue that is generated from gaming but very little, very little has been said about the costs of gambling in Manitoba and what those social costs are, what it is costing us as a province.

Yet members on this side of the House have said that now is the time to put a halt to the expansion of gaming, Mr. Speaker, and to see what those costs are before any further changes, before any further movement is put forward. That, to me, would seem to be a best practice mentality because you would be looking at the evidence and looking at the data that was brought forward in terms of what the status of gaming is in the province and its effect on Manitobans. Then, with all that information in front of you, with all the available data, you could then go forward and make an argument for various other changes within the gaming industry in Manitoba.

When this bill was before committee, Mr. Speaker, we had a presentation by the provincial women's council who spoke very eloquently and very passionately about having that type of review, about having a review on gaming in the province. They came forward as an independent organization and said, "Is this not the appropriate time?" This was a council representing women and it is a specific area of the problem but certainly a very valid concern and, I think, a very articulate presentation that they put forward about why would not the government take the opportunity now, at this stage of the gaming industry, to do that review and to get all the facts on the record prior to moving forward with any other changes within our gaming industry. So I thought that their presentation was very telling and I thought it was very appropriate, it was at an appropriate time.

Unfortunately, members opposite, certainly the Minister of Energy (Mr. Sale), kind of brushed off their presentation, did not really have a lot of time for it, did not have a lot of concern about what they were saying, and kind of half-heartedly said that if the opposition wants to ask questions about this, they can ask it in concurrence, they can ask it in Question Period.

Certainly, we have done that, Mr. Speaker. We have asked questions regarding the need for this type of public review in both Question Period and concurrence, and in Estimates. I think that we will continue to do that, continue to ask those questions, but it is important to know that it is not just us as opposition who are asking those questions. It is Manitobans, across the province and, I daresay, if you were to poll Manitobans and ask them whether or not there would be value in doing this type of a study, I think that the vast majority of Manitobans would say, yes, there would be that type of value. Yet for reasons that I do not understand members opposite simply refuse to do exactly that.

We brought forward, as opposition, an amendment at committee that would have allowed the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission to make recommendations on certain issues regarding gaming in the province, dealing with issues like hours of operation, the number of schemes, the designs of schemes. There would have been the opportunity for a body outside of the commission to say well, this is what we think might be appropriate, this might not be appropriate, and here are our reasons why.

They would have taken the form of recommendations, and I think they would have been very welcome recommendations. Yet the Minister responsible for the Gaming Control Commission decided not to agree with the amendment. He tried to dazzle the committee with some legislative or legal terms regarding the Criminal Code and saying, "Well, this would violate the Criminal Code and the requirement of a controlling mind for government over gaming." When I pointed out to him that the Criminal Code would not be violated, because in terms of the definition of the controlling mind, simple recommendations by something like the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission would not violate the requirement of a controlling mind, that it would just simply be recommendations, another source of opinion, the minister responsible said nothing in response to that. I think he realized he was

not on sure footing, that he was not on solid ground, and decided to simply let the matter go and did not want to make any more comments regarding it.

So the opportunity was there, Mr. Speaker, for this minister responsible for the legislation to make it stronger, to give it more teeth. I think, as opposition, it was incumbent upon us to give him that opportunity to address the concerns, not only that we have been raising but that other Manitobans have been raising across the province, to give him the opportunity to really put some teeth into the legislation. But he decided not to. He decided not to make it strong. He decided not to answer the call, as it were, of the people like the women's council that were before us.

Some members suggest perhaps that the minister does not really care. I would hope, as a new legislator, I would hope that would not be the case but one wonders. You have to weigh the minister's words against his actions, and when he refuses to take a simple amendment like that to make legislation stronger, to make it more effective, to respond to concerns, it is true that actions do speak louder than words, and this minister's actions simply pale in comparison to the words and the rhetoric that he puts on the record regarding his government's concern about gaming, responsible gaming, and those programs.

So it is very, very disappointing that kind of rhetoric comes forward—[interjection] One of the members of the NDP notes that I rarely use rhetoric, and I appreciate that recommendation. I appreciate the pat on the back, and he has seen clearly that I only bring facts to this House, and I appreciate the comments that the member brings forward. That vote of confidence that the NDP member gives me, I think, is well taken. As a new member, it gives me the determination to go forward and to continue to put more words on the record.

Certainly, I know that the minister has refused our recommendations. He has refused the recommendations of the Council of Women who brought forward their particular area.

An Honourable Member: Why has he done that?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) asked me a good question: Why has he done that, why would he turn down those

recommendations? It is a difficult question to answer, and I certainly do not know the answer.

I know that there are a number of members who have been on the record in the past who sit on the government side now, but when they were in opposition spoke very loudly and very boldly, I think, about having a review and the socio-economic costs of gaming in the province. But that was then. Today, as they sit in government, they sit there quietly reading their newspapers and saying very little, being smug in their—*[interjection]* Muzzled perhaps, on those backbenches, just here to vote when they are told to vote, here to clap when they are told to clap. That is unfortunate because I think that they had the power of their convictions, the courage of their convictions at that time, in the 1990s, to speak out about the costs of gaming in the province of Manitoba. But now they have been muzzled. Perhaps the order has gone out, the edict has gone out not to speak about this anymore, and just show up to vote when you are told to vote and just clap when you are told to clap. *[interjection]* There is a demonstration now by an NDP member who is demonstrating exactly—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 19 minutes.

As previously agreed, we will now recess for one hour and we will reconvene at 6:30 p.m.

The House recessed at 5:30 p.m.

The House resumed at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we are reconvening. We are on Bill 10. The honourable Member for Steinbach has 19 minutes remaining.

Mr. Goertzen: It is a pleasure to be able to continue with the comments that I was making regarding Bill 10. I know that members have had the opportunity now to have supper and are reinvigorated and waiting with bated breath, I understand, on my comments.

When I last left off the suspense of my speech, I was talking about the disappointment that I had in a number of the members opposite who, at one point in

their legislative careers not so long ago, made many, many comments regarding gaming and gambling in the province and the potential social problems that also come along with gaming and gambling.

I know the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) was kind of leading the hit parade when it came to the number of comments that he made almost on a weekly basis back in the 1990s, throughout the 1990s, about the social costs of gambling in the province.

The Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) had made comments in the past. The Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) correctly says he remembers, because he was in this House when the Minister of Water Stewardship said that a day does not go by that the Minister of Water Stewardship, the Member for Thompson, did not meet somebody who had been affected or was being affected by gambling in the province.

Yet we hear nothing now from those members, from the Member for Burrows, from the Minister of Water Stewardship, nothing. I wonder if the Minister of Water Stewardship has simply stopped talking to his constituents. Maybe he does not ask anymore if anybody is having any difficulties with gambling. Maybe he does not listen anymore to his constituents. Maybe he just simply does not tell us anymore, does not report to us anymore about the things that his constituents are saying regarding the social impact of gaming and gambling, Mr. Speaker.

I think that is part of how the public becomes cynical and skeptical about the work that we do here in the Legislature when they hear the Minister of Water Stewardship scream and yell throughout the 1990s about his concern with gaming in the province and the number of people who come up to him.

Yet now a very reasonable suggestion is brought forward, a very reasonable suggestion by members on this side of the Chamber and by members of the public to say maybe now is a good time to stop the expansion of gaming and to review the actual social impact of gaming, the costs of gaming, so that we can see the other side of the ledger so that the balance sheet on this particular issue is not just the assets, is not just the revenue of gaming, but we can also see the liabilities and get a true picture of what it is that we want to do, what it is that we do not want to do with gaming and gambling in the province.

I am simply asking for adequate information, more information. Detailed and reliable, independent public information is something that I think most Manitobans would support. I think most Manitobans would see it is the least we could do as legislators before we make broad, sweeping changes or expand gaming anymore, as the members opposite, the NDP government, the Doer government has done over the last number of years, whether it is increasing advertising, increasing the hours of VLTs, whether it is purchasing more VLTs, new VLTs, super VLTs to try to get more people gaming in the province.

I think it is difficult to understand, to explain to people why it is that members opposite would have that particular viewpoint. I certainly do not understand why the Minister of Energy (Mr. Sale) in committee on Monday refused to consider the amendment. I know he tried to put forward a legal argument. Perhaps at some point he might want to actually study the law, and he would see that his argument in terms that he put forward in terms of the Criminal Code did not hold water.

When it was explained to him, and I tried to explain to him why it was that the amendment was clearly in order in terms of a controlling mind theory, he had nothing more to say about it. I think he took the wise approach at that point simply to say nothing and to let the amendment not go forward based on an ideological belief as opposed to a legal rationale.

I think that, I know in fact that members of the presenters who were there that evening who asked for a public, independent review of gaming and gambling in the province would be disappointed, would be disappointed that that additional step was not taken.

With those cautions and, I think, concerns, certainly I would want to encourage members opposite, especially those who made comments in the past regarding gaming and gambling, to think back on their own words, to think back on what it was that sparked them to make those comments, and to consider doing what they have not done so far and that is to ask for this public review in terms of the impact of gaming in the province today.

Mr. Speaker, I think that with those comments, we will probably move forward on the legislation. We have not spoken about the intention of the legislation, how we have general intent for

legislation that will bring forward any more responsible gaming policies. We have concerns that this particular piece of legislation does not go far enough, that it certainly does not address the concerns that we raised in committee, the members of the public have raised. It is a very tepid step. It is a very small step in that regard, and we have concerns that the government has not really backed up their words, their rhetoric with real true action. With that I look forward to hearing from other members of the Legislature who wish to speak on this bill.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I do want to put some thoughts on the record with regard to this bill and to indicate my displeasure with the government in terms of their lack of a responsible approach to gaming and gambling in the province of Manitoba.

With regard to the bill, we are certainly in favour of more accountability within gaming and gambling operations. We do think it is important that the contracts and the regulations that are in place are enforced with regard to the auditing of all of these operations and ensuring the funds that are taken out of the pockets of the public who choose to gamble are handled in a proper fashion and all of us in this House are aware of situations where that has not happened, where audits have not been done on various operations and where the operators themselves have not been forthcoming in terms of what, indeed, is actually going on and where all the money is going from their operations.

Having said that, I mean, how the die has turned, Mr. Speaker. In opposition, the NDP members of this House to an individual would stand up and rail against the evils of gambling. They would introduce private members' bills calling for more examination of gambling and more responsible gambling and a moratorium on any expansion of gambling until these types of studies have been done. I was not in the House at the time, but I remember them railing at the government of the day when their former minister, Mr. Desjardins, came out with his report and called VLTs the crack cocaine of gambling. I still believe today that he had a very, very valid point.

This government railed against the then-Conservative government, about their policies regarding gambling even though it was very clear at the time that the previous Conservative government had put a moratorium on the expansion of gaming

and gambling activities in the province of Manitoba. Now, at that point someone can argue, well, is there too much or is there not enough or there is too little, but at least there was a moratorium; at least the line in the sand had been drawn.

The Doer government no sooner took office than one of their very first courses of action was to expand upon the gambling activities in the province of Manitoba, and they did that under the guise of economic development for reserves, and their master plan was to go and create five more casinos in the province of Manitoba. That was one of the first issues that they brought forward in the Legislature after they took power. They were going to expand gambling by five casinos in the province of Manitoba under the guise of economic development.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the public of Manitoba is not as naive as the New Democrat Party would lead people to believe or would think they are. They understood clearly that what really was driving that process was government greed. Greed on behalf of the members opposite, on behalf of the Doer government, to get more revenue, more money for themselves so that they could go out and spend it as they saw fit.

Mr. Speaker, since that time we have seen a government expand gambling opportunities, even in spite of the fact that in a number of communities there was an overwhelming majority of people who voted in plebiscites and they voted against having a casino in their community. This government would not set down the proper parameters and then they would not stick to them. They would say that we will live by what the community says. When the community voted no, they started looking at other options. They did that in the community of Headingley. They are still doing that in the community of Brandon which voted resoundingly against having a casino in their city, and yet this government still is proceeding with plans to put a casino in the city of Brandon.

Well, it is time that this government wised up, listened to the people of Manitoba and understood that many, many Manitobans are concerned about the path their government is taking them in terms of gambling. Most of the people I talk to, in fact the majority of residents of my constituency, want to see a reduction in gambling, a reduction in the number of VLTs that are in operation at the current time. This

government does exactly the opposite instead of doing any socio-economic impact study, instead of doing any real research into determining how many lives are lost in Manitoba, how many lives are taken each year in Manitoba as a result of gambling-related problems.

* (18:40)

We see provinces all across the country doing more and more thorough studies, more thorough reviews, on the cause and effect as it relates to gambling and suicide. This government refuses to even live up to a commitment made by the Chief Medical Examiner that all the coroners made across Canada, and that is to ensure that the legislatures have information relating to how many suicides in each province had some tie to gambling as a cause of the suicide. This government refuses to even provide us, as legislators, with the most basic of information.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is a double standard for this government to come to this Legislature with a bill which they stand up and try to convince people will have a more positive effect in terms of responsible gaming and responsible gambling in the province of Manitoba when every day they are working behind the scenes to do exactly the opposite. They are out spending \$75 million on brand-new VLTs. They try to spin it. They come up with, "Oh well, the new VLTs have new technology which will help problem gamblers." Well, we see through that. The people of Manitoba see through that.

What is the real motivation of this government? The motivation is a fact that in their own budget they project that their revenue will go up by some \$27 million with the newer VLTs. So they have done their business case. Their decision is not based on what is responsible gaming and responsible gambling. Their decision is based on, "Is there a cash flow, will there be cash flowing from the installation of new VLTs in the province of Manitoba?" That, Mr. Speaker, is wrong.

This government needs to do the right thing. They need to take the first step and that is commission a socio-economic study on the effects of gambling in the province of Manitoba. Every study that comes out indicates that gambling is the cause of more and more harm in society. Those studies are also indicating that the populations that are at the greatest risk are poor. There is a much higher

percentage of those people who would be classified as low income or poor who are addicted to gambling, and they are caught in that vicious cycle of gambling as sort of their only hope to get them out of their situation.

It also shows that Aboriginals, in particular Aboriginal youth, are the most susceptible segment of society when it comes to gambling addictions. Those youth under the age of 17 have a higher percentage of addiction than anywhere else, and even those 17 to 24 have a very, very high percentage.

This is a very, very serious situation. It amounts to, basically, a social crisis that the people of Manitoba are facing on a day-to-day basis, and what is the response from this government? Well, this government when people come to them for help, the Minister of Energy, Science, and Technology (Mr. Sale) says, "Well, I have some help for you. We will give you keno, put keno in your Laundromat." He would refer to that and then he would stand up the next day and proclaim in this House that they are the first government to have responsible gaming policies, have responsible gambling. The same minister who, on a whim, without any research, without any understanding of the situation, with only greed driving him and his Cabinet colleagues, decided that it would be good for Manitobans to have keno in a Laundromat, the same minister who has stood in this House and explained to us that his constituency has a school in it where nobody's parents in that school own a house.

I remember him standing in this House and telling that story as an example of how tough it was for young people in his constituency, and now he was prepared to put a keno game in the Laundromat. His constituents that went to use it, it was fine for him if they had to come home with wet clothes because they could not afford the dryer because all the money had gone into keno. He did not see any contradiction in that. He did not see any problem in that. That is an indication to me that the only motivation for him, the only motivation for his Cabinet colleagues was in fact government greed, the desperate need that this government has to raise more cash and try to give the appearance of not running the deficit.

Mr. Speaker, I would that again we are for, and will always be for, more accountability in gambling operations and gaming activities in the province of

Manitoba. But I think that the true method, the true means to get there is, first of all, to have a complete understanding of the devastation that is caused in this society by VLTs and the gambling addictions that we see on a day-to-day basis. The only thing is for the government to fund an independent study on the social and economic effects that gambling is having on the citizens of Manitoba.

It does not help that the government set another precedence. The Premier wanted to, as he refers to it, put the puck in the net. You know, one of his famous glib phrases. So what did he do? He decided that, with taxpayers money, he would basically fund the construction of the new MTS Centre, and then he announced later that one of the primary sources of funds was going to be basically a mini casino attached to the arena. There is a contradiction right there. He is going to build a sports and entertainment new arena with mostly government money, and how is he going to fund it? He is going to fund it by trying to draw those very people who are going to come to enjoy that centre into basically a mini casino.

Here is another example. Somebody wants to take their family to watch the Moose, to an AHL hockey game. The Premier expects them to walk in, buy some tickets for the kids and send them off to the hockey game while the adults go into the casino and gamble away their hard earnings, all to fund an arena. Again, just another example of wrong-headed decisions made by this Premier.

But we leave most of those for another day. Just to reiterate, we do definitely support the section of the bill that calls for greater accountability. But I would call upon this government to start having a serious look at responsible gambling, start studying in depth the socio-economic impacts, and do the right thing for all Manitobans.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 10, The Gaming Control Amendment Act.

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

Bill 23—The Red River Floodway Act

* (18:50)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin), that Bill 23, The Red River Floodway Act, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development and subsequently amended, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I had the opportunity to speak to the amendment earlier today on Bill 23. It was with disappointment that the amendment, as it was proposed by the Minister of Water Stewardship, moved forward.

We certainly were not opposed to the fact that there was an amendment. In fact, we, ourselves, had asked for an amendment at committee on the consideration of this bill on Monday night. Our amendment, I think, would have addressed the concerns that were raised by Manitobans not only in committee on Monday night but had been raised by Manitobans over the course of the last number of months in relation to this particular piece of legislation. It has been raised publicly by members of the opposition, together with members of the public.

Members opposite should not fool themselves that this is really just an issue for those that might potentially be flooded, both north and south of the floodway gates. I think all Manitobans, when they would look at this piece of legislation, will wonder why it is that the government of Manitoba, that the NDP government, the Doer government has prevented the type of appeal mechanism, the type of compensation mechanism that is fair, that is just and that is not only independent but that is seen to be independent.

Clearly, that is an important concept when we talk about any legislation. It is an important concept when we talk about the law, that not only does there have to be independence, but there has to be the appearance of independence so that no one can question that in fact the decision that is brought forward by individuals, the decision that is brought forward either by a panel or by an individual adjudicating or mediating on its own was clearly independent and without bias.

Now we do not have that here in terms of the way that this has gone forward. Certainly, our amendment, which would have allowed individuals who are seeking compensation for flooding north and south of the floodway gates, would have allowed them to go through the scheme that was set out in the act.

Those who would have concerns with the speed of a judicial review or a judicial process would have had concerns about the financial aspect of a full-blown judicial review, judicial process, would have had the opportunity to go through the legislative scheme of the disaster financial assistance board and then the appeal board.

What we have asked for is just simply another step, and I think it is a step that most people would consider to be a democratic one, by allowing those who are not happy with the compensation, do not think it was fair, are not happy with the eligibility criteria that were set out or laid down upon them by the disaster financial assistance scheme to go forward and then ask for a judicial appeal as a final step.

That would clearly give them an opportunity to be heard by a person or a body that was beyond government, that was clearly separate from government. That is important, I think. I remember hearing at committee hearing on Monday night. The Minister of Energy (Mr. Sale) suggested, he said to me, "Well, what is the difference between those who are appointed to the Disaster Assistance Appeal Board and a judge?"

You know, it seems passing strange to me that a minister of the Crown would ask such a question when he knows full well that one is appointed by an Order-in-Council, one serves at the pleasure of the minister, whose job depends on the pleasure of the minister. One is an independent individual who is appointed for a set period of time. Generally, there is not that type of interference, but he did not seem to understand the difference and did not seem to be concerned about that clear distinction in law.

There is a fact, Mr. Speaker, where there was not just an apparent difference of independence, there was an actual difference of independence. Clearly there is a difference between a judge and an

individual who is serving on a government committee through an Order-in-Council of Cabinet. It seems disturbing to me, perhaps, that that is the kind of research or the kind of examination this kind of bill underwent before the minister brought it forward.

Now we have seen two amendments essentially to the same section on this particular bill, on Bill 23. Now, of course, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) stands up and says, "Well, that is responsiveness. We are responding to the concerns that were raised." Well, they halfway respond to the concerns that are raised.

They have only gotten half of it right, but it also, I think, is an indication that the government simply had not done its homework when it brought forward this legislation. They had not really consulted with anybody.

Had they gone to talk to those north and south of the floodway gates to ask them what it is that they would like to see in a compensation package, now, of course, we would have gotten many different opinions depending on where you live along the Red River, depending where you live in relation to the floodway gates north and south. You would have gotten different opinions, but at least you would have gotten opinions from those who would have been affected.

You would have heard from those who this legislation apparently is intended to benefit. I mean, that is what we are really debating here, compensation legislation. It is about providing those who are going to be affected by floods, and we know that there will be floods in the future, protecting those individuals and ensuring that there is an appropriate scheme there.

It seems logical, it seems almost a moot point to say that you would go forward and consult with those people and ask them what type of a scheme do you think would work for you. What type of a compensation program would meet your needs based on the experience that you have had in 1997 or based on the experience that you have had in other floods in the valley or north of the floodway.

That would seem like the starting point, step No. 1. Clearly, it is a step that the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) chose not to take, chose

not to consult those individuals because, as we heard very loudly and very clearly at committee on Monday, one of the recommendations, clear recommendations, unanimous recommendations I might say, I do not think there was a presenter that night on Monday who did not raise the issue about having a judicial appeal process and not an either/or kind of proposition like the Minister of Water Stewardship brought in today, but a clear, judicial appeal process so that they could go through the legislative scheme that was set out in Bill 23, the bill we are debating here this evening. Then, if they were not satisfied or did not feel that they had the type of hearing, did not feel that they had the type of compensation, did not feel that the eligibility was applied appropriately, they could go to that judicial appeal process, but that is not what we had when we got into committee on Monday night.

So the Minister of Water Stewardship scrambled to bring forward an amendment. That evening, he heard very clearly and, I think, very passionately from Manitobans, both north of the floodway gates and south of the floodway gates, heard very passionately about their concerns with the way that the legislation was structured, that they would not be able to appeal this decision, any decision regarding compensation, to a third neutral party, a judicial body.

So the Minister of Water Stewardship, through a kind of political sleight of hand, brings forward this amendment. I think he thought himself quite the hero that night after having heard 10 to 12 presenters, very, very critical about the legislation and how it was set out, the inability to appeal to a judicial body. He brought forward this amendment that I think he felt quite proud of himself. Well, the pride did not last long, Mr. Speaker, because when we read the amendment we saw what the trick was. The curtain was pulled back and when we saw the amendment for what it was, it was really nothing more than a sham, because the amendment as it read on Monday night said that the only appeal that could be made to a court was one that was on a matter of law. An appeal based on a matter of law.

Well, this is a compensation bill. This is about providing compensation to individuals who have been affected by a flood. That is what they are going to be appealing, Mr. Speaker. If there is going to be concern with a decision that comes from the financial assistance board it is going to be on the

amount of compensation. It is going to be on the eligibility of compensation. It is not going to be, very likely, to be on a matter of law, whether or not the ruling was somehow *ultra vires*, whether or not the ruling somehow did not apply the act appropriately.

Appeals on matter of law are probably the most narrow form of appeal. It is one of the forms of appeal you can make to the Supreme Court, and we know how often Supreme Court cases are heard. Those that have made application are very, very restrictive, a very, very narrow type of appeal, but I imagine the Minister of Water Stewardship figured, well, you know, I will bring forward this amendment and I will say we are going to appeal the legislation to allow there to be a judicial form of appeal and no one would ever know. No one will ever know, at least until the committee hearing is over, until the law has been passed through third reading and given royal assent that the restriction is on matters of law only.

Well, imagine his surprise when opposition members on the committee quickly saw what was up and quickly saw through the Minister of Water Stewardship's smoke screen. We brought it forward and there was a passionate plea. The Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) was there. There was a passionate plea from those presenters in the audience that day who I know was out of order, but they were making comments from their seat and saying this was a sham what the minister was doing. This clearly was not what they were looking for.

The Minister of Water Stewardship looked very uncomfortable that evening, Monday night, and he should have been because he was found out. He was exposed for what it was in terms of what he was trying to do. I guess he probably sat in his office before committee and worked up this little amendment and figured he was quite the political mastermind in terms of how we were going to mute the criticism that is going to happen at the committee hearing, probably had the news release already done up, ready to go out about how they had made this great amendment, how everybody was happy. It did not work.

His plans did not work, Mr. Speaker, because members of the committee saw through it. Members of the presenters certainly saw through it as well. So that brings us to today. Having sheepishly been, I think, called out at the committee hearing, the

Minister of Water Stewardship brings forward a second amendment, his second shot at bat. He is up for another pitch of the ball to see if he can make another attempt at trying to send up a bit of a smoke screen and see if the people will fall for this one.

So what does he bring forward today, Mr. Speaker? I might say of course that the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) was quick to make this announcement on behalf of the government yesterday, that the amendment would be coming forward and quickly, I guess, put out a press release that this is what they are going to do. This time they tried to put the spin out beforehand to see if they could get a better response. There are some comments by individuals in the paper that did not give them a much better response, but I guess they had to try.

* (19:00)

The Member for Selkirk, who also had a constituent at the committee on Monday night who was quite concerned about the direction this was going in, I suppose, felt pressure as well. So they bring forward an amendment today, one that they had announced already to the media yesterday. This amendment puts people in the position where, after they have been flooded out, after they have had devastation to their property or to their homes, they are left with a decision.

The decision is that, up front, they have to decide whether they go through the court process or go through the scheme now legislated under Bill 23.

But they are parallel paths, Mr. Speaker. They do not cross again. Once you have decided which path you are going to go down, you are restricted to that. You cannot go back, of course, and you cannot cross over in terms of an appeal. If you are not happy with your decision in terms of how you go through the government process, you cannot appeal to the courts after. So imagine the position this puts homeowners in, those who have been flooded out, who have been devastated by the flood. Not only now are they dealing with the economic hardship and the personal hardship that comes with devastation by a flood, but now they are left with a choice, a choice that could very well determine their economic future.

They are left at this fork in the road and they have to decide whether to turn left or whether to turn

right. That decision alone could make the impact before what exactly is going to be their economic future. So imagine the decision. Of course, those who were facing economic hardship will see the Minister of Water Stewardship's scheme as he holds out the olive branch and says, "Well, this is not a very costly process, and it will go more quickly than a scheme will." Probably there is some hope there that that will be the better alternative and the road that seems more attractive.

But then they move down that road and if they are not happy, if they, for some reason, think that the eligibility criteria were not applied appropriately, or the compensation was not applied appropriately, we had a number of people at committee who suggested that there was not the expertise in the department to assess the damage that comes from flooding. So then they get down that road, and they are not happy at the end of the day with how the compensation has come by.

The Minister for Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) says, "Oh, they are never going to be happy, they are never going to be happy. Throw up your hands and just let them go, they are never going to be happy. Manitobans are always complaining." I guess that is the Minister of Healthy Living's opinion, and maybe that is what he feels about people who live in the valley, people who live north of the city. I think shame on the minister for those types of comments, because we have hardworking Manitobans north of the floodway, south of the floodway, who are contributing to the province of Manitoba, who are making a contribution to their areas of the province.

What they are asking for is what any other Manitoban would ask for, and that is the democratic right to appeal from a system. They are asking for a democratic right to be heard by an independent body if they are not satisfied that the internal process governed by government was, in fact, done appropriately.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) again has failed on his second try, on his second amendment. He is up to strike 2. I do not think he is going to be taking another shot at the amendment, but he had it before him on Monday. He had the amendment properly before him when we brought forward an amendment on the committee that would have allowed individuals to go through the government's scheme,

but also to appeal to an independent body. That is what should have been done, I think, by the Minister of Water Stewardship, but now the Minister of Water Stewardship has to live with his decision.

I would say that, in the years to come, we are going to see individuals who are going to be affected by flooding finding themselves lured in, in a sense, into the government-run operation, the government scheme. They are not going to be happy with the outcome. They will be surprised to know that that is it; there is no other place for them to go. They will wonder how it is that this legislation came to be. How it is that a piece of legislation like this could have passed the Legislature.

I think that the Minister of Water Stewardship will have that burden to bear in the years to come as individuals will say that this is a very, very difficult scheme, that there could have been a better one.

With those comments, I look forward to hearing comments from the Member for Morris and also I would encourage members opposite to reconsider in the future this particular scheme because I think they will have difficulties. We are all, of course, in favour of compensation for those who find themselves affected by flood. We all, of course, want to see compensation, appropriate compensation, for those who are affected by flooding in our province because we know the degree of flooding that happens in Manitoba. So we think a scheme should be put in place that will recognize the needs and recognize the value of those who are living both north and south of the floodway.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I, too, would like to speak, again, to Bill 23. A very important piece of legislation, unfortunately not adequate to address the concerns of people in the Red River Valley and also north of the city, I am afraid.

First of all, just going back again on the idea of artificial flooding, again how can anybody determine what artificial flooding actually is? We have been told at the community meetings that were held in the Red River Valley that artificial flooding, every flood finds its own level so the level that is determined to be artificial over natural flooding can change. In fact, it did change after the 1997 flood, the level that was originally determined after the flood then that level changed and that is, I believe, why many people had

difficulty with compensation because of that particular clause.

What exactly constitutes natural? What then becomes artificial? It makes no difference whether there is a difference of four feet or one inch. If you are flooded, you are flooded. It is very important that this particular clause, artificial flooding, be determined and exactly who is going to determine that. Would it be the government people who determine that, the people that could then rule against compensation claims? It just leaves a lot to be desired here.

With the lack of the ability for a judicial appeal in this bill, I mean, you know the government says, "Oh, do not worry. We are going to fully compensate you so you do not have to worry. Trust us. We will do the right thing."

Well, I can tell you that people do not trust this government to do the right thing because many of them have been dealing for seven years trying to get the right thing done and that has not happened. So to take away their right to appeal to them is just ludicrous. They just cannot imagine that constitutional right to have third-party review taken away from them.

The Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) brought up the notion of actually involving people affected from the area and involving them in the writing of this piece of legislation, to just find out what their thoughts would be. There needed to be participation. In fact, they were promised that they would be involved in the process but they were not involved in the process.

I would like to quote from a letter that was sent to me from a constituent. It says: "Urgent. Please review the enclosed information that was distributed to the various citizen groups. There are two pages that clearly state Manitoba Floodway Expansion Authority plans a separate consultation for flood compensation. This has not happened," and he underscores "not" three times. "How can they continue with this legislation?" he goes on. "When I questioned about it in the June 1 meeting, I was told nothing was planned and that the meeting on April 21 held at Howden Hall to outline the Floodway Expansion project was in fact addressing the issue. That is not what happened at that April 21 meeting because I was there. There was no addressing of

compensation issues. In fact, when they went over the legislation they left out the clause that said, 'there would be no course of appeal to any judicial body.' They left that out. I stood up and I questioned, 'Why did you leave that out of your review tonight?' and they had no answer for me except that they would take it under advisement."

This person who writes this letter to me says, "Please, try and have them stop this bill. Some 5400 Ritchot residents will face artificial flooding that may once again wipe them out. We need our say, as they promised. We do not want our right to sue taken away. This bill is too full of loopholes. We must be guaranteed 100% compensation. Who will verify if there is artificial flooding?"

Mr. Speaker, these are passionate words that will not reflect the emotion in Hansard, but I want to guarantee that the emotion in these words is very evident as they appeal to a heartless government who does not really care that these people will be flooded again. They know they will be flooded because they were told at this meeting. They were given it. It was laid right out in front of them. If you lived anywhere between Ste. Agathe and Winnipeg, you were going to get flooded again if we have a flood event of 1997 or greater. That is it. That is the fact.

* (19:10)

These people want to say, "Why aren't we given the opportunity for a 1-in-700-year flood protection? Why are we second-class citizens? Why do we only get 1-in-250-year?" Now 1-in-250-year is good. But 1-in-700-year flood protection is better. There is a double standard here for people in some parts of the province and people in others.

This proposed amendment, the amendment that was passed today actually, which the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) was fairly smug about I think, now there is a choice. There is a choice now in the course, as we know. The press release went out yesterday even before the amendment was proposed and passed. The arrogance of that is apparent.

But the two choices: You can either go through the Disaster Assistance Appeal Board, that is the first option, and if you trust the government to do the right thing, to do right by you, that is the one that you would choose because it is less expensive, of

course, and as we have seen, some of these people have spent a lifetime of savings in litigation. So that would be the most attractive course of action to take, to go through the appeal board, to the Disaster Assistance Appeal Board, and have your case dealt with there.

But people do not trust that they would be dealt with fairly because of the way they have been dealt with in the past. In the past, many of those people's claims are still not settled, and the way in which the government intended to try and settle the claims were coercive. In fact, I have said this before in the House, these people were given an offer and these offers were often zero percent and they were told that, "You can take this or leave. If you take it now, we will not charge you the government fees that come along with having to bring you in here to offer you nothing, and then, by the way, you have to sign this non-disclosure order so that we do not want you to talk about this," and I guess it is—

An Honourable Member: A gag order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, it is a gag order, certainly a gag order. "We do not want you to talk about it because we do not want anybody else to know how poorly we dealt with you."

The second option was, "Okay, if you do not like going to the Disaster Assistance Appeal Board, then you can go to the courts." One or the other. You did not have the opportunity to try to go through the Disaster Assistance Appeal Board, find that you were not dealt with fairly and then have another route of appeal to go to a judicial appeal. No, that decision would have to be made right up front.

And now, if you decide to go through the court system, you have decided that you could be up to seven years in court. That is very cost-prohibitive for people. How can people that have been flooded out already, have no home, have no business, how do you think that these people are going to scrape up the money to go through a lengthy court battle? And the government knows this, knows this from past experience, that people that were flooded out had a difficult time. In fact, it took them a few years to scrape the money together to actually try and go through the court system. The government knows that they have tied the hands of the people.

We spoke of this earlier, the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and I. It is pick your poison here. Which poison do you want? The Disaster Assistance Appeal Board, which the government will intervene in and say you get nothing, or you go through the court system and have the government manipulate that system until they have run out the statute of limitations, worn down the people, expended all the money and still get nothing? There is nothing fair about this clause in this legislation and there is certainly nothing fair about the amendment.

I feel very, very empathetic with the people, the 5400 residents of Ritchot that know they are going to be flooded. They have been flooded already. They know that this will happen again. If you have been through that situation, you would understand it. I do not think that anybody in this room, and I might be wrong, but I do not think anybody in this room went through what those people went through. I remember sitting in the kitchen with these people and them telling me that the mayor of Winnipeg stood up and said ring the bells, the flood is over. Well, it was over in Winnipeg because it never happened in Winnipeg, but these people were sitting in six feet of water, still, when she said this. So it is difficult to appreciate the situation unless you have actually been in it.

I have not been in it, but I have spoken so often with people that have that I feel like I have been in it. I would encourage the members opposite who have had the opportunity or should have taken the opportunity to go and speak with these people before they brought in this legislation. Perhaps if they had done that they would have understood the emotional issue that this is and will be in the future when these people are again flooded, as they know they will be. They know that they will be sacrificed.

I do not believe that anybody in any other part of the province would want these people to be sacrificed if they knew what they had gone through. In fact, I think if we sent this legislation out to people all over the city they would look at this and say this is unfair. It is unfair to some people. People support people. In communities people support people. When people in a neighbouring community know that something has gone wrong for them they come and they help.

As we saw in the flood of '97, people poured out of Winnipeg to Brunkild and to Domain to build that

Z-dike. They helped on that dike because it was a neighbouring community who needed help. People came out of Winnipeg and helped people that were putting up soup kitchens in Ste. Agathe to feed people because people had no home to go to, to feed themselves. People opened up their homes in Winnipeg to bring flood victims that had to be evacuated from their residences. People opened up their residences. I opened up my home to people from the St. Norbert area, south of the floodway. I think that the people in Winnipeg, when they see this legislation and know that people will be flooded again, this government does not have an intent to deal fairly with these people, have given them no judicial recourse.

Well, now, they say that they have given them a choice to appeal to the court, but we can see through that. We can see through that as the people from the Red River Valley see through that very easily. They saw through it at committee and they see through it now. Sure, maybe it sounds a little bit better. Of course, that is the way the spinners from the government would have it. That is the way they would have it spun in the media, that it would sound very good so that people would go, yes, this is what we want. We are happy now.

Well, I can guarantee they are not happy. They are not happy because they know they cannot trust this government to do the right thing. They will not be compensated to the level of their losses. In fact, how can you compensate for the loss? Certainly you can give financial compensation, which compensates for a person's home, their material goods. Yes, you can compensate them for that, but you cannot compensate for things that you lose that are of sentimental value, that are priceless and irreplaceable.

You cannot compensate for emotional stress. Many of these people that were flooded in '97, there was apparently, I am told there were a lot of divorces that arose from that, there was a lot of alcoholism that arose from that because the stress level was so high. Yes, you can compensate for losing your physical business, but how do you compensate for losing the actual business that you do, the business that your business does not do anymore. The money that you lose is money that would have perhaps gone down to pay off your mortgage, to pay down your debt, to savings, to pensions, all those things these people looked forward to. Now they know they have

been set back at least 10 years in their life cycle, in their life savings cycle. So people, when they reach a certain age, would like to be able to have money to retire. These people know that they have been set back at least 10 years to that.

* (19:20)

Now they also know that this is likely going to happen to them again. How would you feel knowing that you are living with the threat of this happening again every single year, every single spring this could be coming down on you, and you live with that fear? It is always over your head that this flood could be coming. You never know. Certainly, we are still running the risk right now as we wait for this compensation legislation. We went through this spring. Fortunately, we did not have a major flood event this spring, but one never knows when we will.

Certainly, as well, this legislation does not address the summer flooding, summer operating rules of the floodway, which is another thing that people of the Red River Valley, those particularly south of the floodway gates, have brought up as an extremely important issue to them, because, was it just the other day that I was reading in the newspaper about wanting to have the floodway gates operated so that The Forks walkways could be relieved of the water that is spilling over them so people could come, tourists could come and enjoy our Forks area and our walkways. We encourage that and we would like that to be the case, but certainly we cannot expect to flood people so that other people could walk on a dry walkway. Certainly, we have to have a priority here that we cannot ruin people's livelihoods. We cannot flood their physical space just to have walkways open.

I was at some of these committee meetings in Howden and in Morris. One of the things that was brought forward was how would we use for recreation purposes the floodway. I can tell you people stood up at those meetings and said, "You insult us. You insult us by bringing up the idea of recreation on the floodway expansion project. Here we are living in fear of being flooded, know that we are going to be flooded again. We know that. We've been told that, and here you dare to come and ask us how we would like to see recreation uses on the floodway."

I had an e-mail about that the other day. I wrote back and I said, "Please, you must understand if you

go to these people, you insult these people when you talk about recreational issues on the floodway expansion before you have even settled compensation packages for people that will be flooded out again. These people are distressed and just insulted by comments like that that just show you that certain people within the Floodway Authority have no idea of what will happen to people when they are artificially flooded, and they will be."

Well, clearly the idea of the summer flooding issue has not been addressed. The legislation says, "Well, don't worry about that. We'll address that on an individual basis. If we have to operate the floodway during the summer, then we'll deal with individual landowners over that and we'll compensate individually. That's easier for us to do that."

That is, again, cold comfort for the people that will lose their businesses again. I suggest that if they wanted to go and offer to these people, we know we are going to flood you out and we might do it every summer, would it not be just fair and simpler to go to these people and offer them a buyout package and say, "Okay, here's a fair market price for your property. We'd like to expropriate and take your land because we know we're going to flood it." Would that not be more fair? Would that not be the way that a fair government would deal with an issue like this?

Instead, they will deal with it on an individual basis. This artificial flooding caused by summer operation of the floodway is not covered in the legislation. So it is not covered under this compensation package and, indeed, the people south of the floodway gates are very concerned about the operating rules.

In summer of 2002, people were flooded again because of the floodway operation, and it came up very quickly and the road, in one particular instance, was flooded out before people could get their furniture out of their house. The moving van, they had just ordered a moving van, was coming down the road, and the road was washed away before the moving van could get to the house to get out the furniture. That is how quickly the flood came up, and the people got themselves out. They could not get their furniture out, because they could not get the moving van there. That is how quickly the water came up.

So, again, this is a very important piece of legislation gone very, very wrong here. I cannot

speak out against it enough, especially the notion that people will be fully compensated. People can never be fully compensated. You cannot compensate people for the anguish that they are going to feel from this, and then say, "Well, do not worry. We will replace everything that you lost."

Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, that sounds attractive. But we know that it is not attractive to the people that have seen this legislation. I think that is evidenced by the people who were at the committee on Monday night that spoke against this. As the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) said, there were not any of them that did not bring up the idea of this compensation package, and how inadequate and unfair and unjust and unconstitutional this is.

Well, when you remove the right of choice and make it, as we spoke of earlier, pick your poison, one poison versus the next, when no choice is a good choice, I think the ability to make a good choice is a right that people should have. With those very few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I cannot support the amendment to this bill. Thank you.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 23, The Red River Floodway Act.

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

Bill 31—The Floodway Authority Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux), that Bill 31, The Floodway Authority Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development and subsequently amended, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): We have before us a bill today, in which not the substance of the bill itself, I do not think, has caused great controversy in terms of the structure of an entity such as The Floodway Authority Act, but certainly how this

particular issue regarding the expansion of the floodway has proceeded.

I think it is important to put comment early that all of us in this House, I believe, are in favour of the expansion of the Red River Floodway. We believe that it is an important part of providing flood protection to many, many residents in the province of Manitoba. We believe that it is going to provide protection for years to come for residents inside the city of Winnipeg. I believe, in fact, that the Conservative government, had it remained in power after 1999, would have also been taking steps to provide greater flood protection.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Certainly, the Conservative government at the time, in 1997, saw first-hand the destruction and the devastation that did happen in the Red River Valley, and the extent that could have happened within the city of Winnipeg.

* (19:30)

On that, I think we find common ground in terms of there being agreement the floodway should in fact be expanded. There are many different roads on the way to Rome. There are many different ways one can get to a conclusion. There are many, many different ways one can reach the totality of a project, and how it is this government has gone about the expansion of the floodway has been the subject of great, great dispute, great, great concern in Manitoba.

You know, it was an interesting exercise. I was looking for a particular article that had been written in one of the local newspapers regarding the floodway expansion project and I went to the Legislative Library here in the Legislature to find this article. I asked the individual who was working at the desk in the library if they would pull for me the file on the floodway expansion project from 2003 and 2004. I absolutely could not believe the tome of information that came back, in terms of this. There were two huge files of newspaper articles that had been written on the expansion of the floodway.

I looked at these files and I wanted to give the benefit of the doubt to members opposite. I thought when I opened up the files there would be all these newspaper articles extolling the virtues of the project because I think we all have agreement the project is a

valuable one. I thought within these particular files I would find those types of newspaper reports and I would have to go through them. As I started going through them, dating back to 2003 and moving into this year, article after article, after article, was not about the virtue of the floodway.

It was not about the goodness of the project. It was about the controversy, the controversy that has been created by this particular project. Headlines like "Forced Unionization" for months went on in the daily newspapers here in Winnipeg. National newspapers picked up on some of the stories, I believe, and of course the rural newspapers in Manitoba, as well, newspaper article after newspaper article.

I hesitate to wonder how much ink has been spilled on the controversy surrounding the Red River Floodway expansion. That was my disappointment when I was looking for this particular newspaper article. Here I thought there would be all these positive articles, all these positive articles about what should be a positive project, the expansion of the floodway, but there was not. There was controversy after controversy, after controversy. It reads like a sad story.

We learned some months ago, I believe it was early in March if I am correct, the government, the Floodway Authority, the arm of government under the direction of Mr. Ernie Gilroy, would in fact be looking to force all workers on the floodway expansion project to join unions. This was discovered on a late-night, or not late-night but relatively late talk show on one of our local Winnipeg radio stations, where the admission came forward that in fact all workers on the floodway project would have to join unions if they wanted to work on the project, despite the fact that 95 percent of workers within the construction industry are in fact non-unionized. They have made that democratic choice within their individual workplaces that they do not want to join unions. I would say that choice is a reflection of the fact that employers in that particular industry recognize the value of their employees, treat them in a way that keeps their employers happy, and they are happy to be in the workforce.

There is, in fact, The Construction Wages Act that governs in this province. My understanding is the vast majority of employees within the industry get paid far in excess of the minimum wage that is laid out in that particular act so these individual

employees have chosen not to work in a unionized environment. They enjoy the flexibility they have. They enjoy the treatment they are receiving from their individual employers and they have made that democratic choice.

Quite a shock it was obviously to employers that they would now be forced to participate in this forced unionization scheme, or their employees who were going to work on the floodway project would have to join a union. I think that came as quite a surprise and certainly quite a disappointment.

Employees were also concerned, were also shocked to learn that and I heard from many of them who said, "How can this be? How can this be in a democratic country, in the democratic province of Manitoba? How can it be that we can be forced when we walk onto a job site, a floodway expansion site, that we have to sign a card or join a particular union for the duration of that project?"

There was great concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this would be the scheme that the government was proceeding with and one that in fact was confirmed, which was confirmed by the Floodway Expansion Authority and certainly was not denied by the government at the time the accusations were brought forward. I do not believe it has been denied to this day.

So those concerns were the ones that one would expect. This is here, I think, where the government had a fatal flaw in its own plan. I think that the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) felt that, and it is ironic to know that the Minister of Water Stewardship was also the Minister of Labour until late last year, in fact, they had the joint role, both Minister of Water Stewardship and Minister of Labour housed under the same minister. At the time it seemed maybe somewhat passing strange.

I know there were comments raised about the workload of that particular minister not being able to do either job appropriately. Now we see it in a different light and wonder when it is that these schemes were developed? Was the minister in fact holding both portfolios? At the time when he was Minister of Labour and Minister of Water Stewardship, was he negotiating from both sides of this issue? Was he looking out for labour's interests? Was he looking out for the floodway's interest? Or, was he simply looking after his own interest? Those

are, I think, very interesting questions that we have not heard answers to in this House.

I mentioned that of course there was much concern from employers and employees who were directly involved in the construction industry in Manitoba. They saw this for what it was, an undemocratic plan to force workers to join unions. But where the government, I think, made a mistake is they probably thought that the backlash, the concern, would be limited to those particular groups, those directly involved within the industry itself. So were they surprised to learn, I think, that Manitobans spoke out. Manitobans rose up in great numbers through petitions and faxes and phone calls to the Minister of Water Stewardship, to the Premier, I know. Certainly, as members of the Legislature here, we have heard those concerns. Thousands of petitions were signed. Thousands of faxes went in.

There was a member, I believe it was the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), who shouted from his seat about three weeks ago that he had never heard from one constituent who had any concern about it. That is interesting, I think. It is quite possible that they have either given up talking to their MLA from Burrows because they do not think they are going to get a response or he simply has stopped talking to his constituents. I find it very difficult to believe when we have received letters and petitions from individuals across the province, in every riding, that he has not heard from one particular individual. But maybe that is the "do not ask, do not tell" philosophy of this Doer government.

The concern, I think, or the surprise that the government had was how the general populous rose up in Manitoba and were concerned about it, but I am not surprised, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think Manitobans saw it for what it was. It is your democracy. Quite apart from the issue of union or non-union, they saw this as an issue of a democratic choice, people's individual choices in terms of what it is that they wanted to do, how it is that they wanted to proceed in a work environment. That is why I think we got the response that we did.

So the government of course found itself in a bit of a difficult situation and brought forward Mr. Wally Fox-Decent. I suspect that the minister, perhaps the Premier in his office somewhere has a light, sort of like the "Batlight" that usually goes up on the movie. They put it into the sky and whenever

they need Batman to solve a problem, the bat signal goes up. Probably somewhere over in the bowels of the government office, there is a big "W" that the Premier shoots up. Every time he has a problem he shoots the "Wally" signal up into the sky and Wally has to come in like a bat out of glory into the legislature and solve all the problems that the government has gotten themselves into.

So he did. Wally Fox-Decent came in and brought forward a report, a much delayed report, I might add. I believe the report was commissioned two months ago and I remember reading in the newspaper that it was either the Minister of Water Stewardship or Mr. Fox-Decent himself who said that at the latest it would take two weeks. That was "at the latest." At the outside, it would be two weeks before the report came down.

Well, lo and behold, it was about two months for this report to come down and I suspected after that much delay there was going to be quite a long read when I heard the report was coming down. I figured, well, it is going to be like being back in law again and reading those Supreme Court decisions by Judge Iacobucci which tended to range in the 100-to-200-page range. I figured boy, I am going to sit down and read and I got this little envelope, I got this little brown envelope, and I thought well, my, this must be the executive summary. Well, in fact, it was the entire report, five to six pages is what it took after those two months of waiting, of sweating it out and of delays. *[interjection]*

* (19:40)

The Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) asks how much the report costs. Certainly, I raised that question with the Premier (Mr. Doer) in Estimates and with the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) in Estimates, and the response that I always got was, well, it is an appropriate figure, it is an appropriate figure and it is an appropriate figure. Of course, we do not see those numbers. It is not unlike the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick), who, when we ask a question regarding how many children are being housed in hotels on a weekend, we just find out that there is some kind of airy-fairy number that might be different than an airy-fairy number from a year ago, but we never actually hear any hard concrete facts. We never get any concrete numbers. That has certainly been the way of this government on this project.

It is a nice segue actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we talk about numbers that are loose and numbers that are ever-changing. So we talk about the budget of the floodway expansion project. This project, while we do not debate the value of the project to Manitobans we are certainly debating the moving target budget that the Member for Pembina suggests. You know, the Premier has stated in this House that this is a project that is going to be on time and on budget, but we have not seen a time line and we have not seen a budget. So I am pretty sure that the Premier is going to be able to meet those standards. When you do not set yourself a budget and you do not set yourself a time frame it is pretty difficult not to come within that budget and not to come within that time frame

I remember asking questions in the House when I saw in one of these newspaper articles that the new projected costs of the budget had gone from \$660 million to \$700 million. It was not in the form of a press release. The Minister of Water Stewardship is quick to put out press releases on virtually every small amendment, every small subamendment that he does, but when he increases the price of the floodway by \$40 million there is not press release. It is just all of a sudden it is the new number that starts to be referred to. Suddenly, we go from \$660 million to \$700 million, so I asked the question about why it is that we had the number of 660 and now we are at the 700 number. I asked it of the Premier directly and it came after, of course, we heard media reports that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) said, "There really was not a budget for the floodway; there really was not this type of line-by-line budget for the floodway at all."

This was right after the provincial budget was introduced a few months ago and the Minister of Finance was asked in the hallway by local media about the budget. He said, "Well, we really do not have a line-by-line budget." So I asked the question of the Premier and the Premier said, "Well, in fact, the budget for the floodway project is \$240 million." He suggested that that was as a result of the joint agreement between the federal government and the provincial government. That \$240 million would be the budget for the floodway.

Well, interestingly, a day later the Premier (Mr. Doer) was not here so we asked the question again and this time of the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton). The answer that we got was \$8

million. Now the project was going to be \$8 million, not the total project, but that was what was budgeted in this particular budget, an \$8-million project that had been allocated in the provincial budget.

So these are the numbers that we are now dealing with in terms of what the costs would be for the floodway. We had the \$8-million projection, that was what was in the budget this year according to the Minister of Water Stewardship. We had \$240 million according to the Premier. That was what was a negotiated agreement between the federal government and the provincial government. We had the original \$660-million budget, which has been talked for a number of months, and which the Floodway Authority still refers to, and we have the \$700-million number which is the popular number that the media seems to refer to because that is what the Minister of Water Stewardship has been telling them for the last number of months.

I believe, just a few days ago, he went back to the \$660 million. So it is quite a moving target. When the minister talks about this project and the budget that we have contained we are left to wonder what is the budget when we talk about on time and on budget. We are very, very concerned. We have put on the record many, many concerns regarding how this project has proceeded, through Question Period, through concurrence, through Estimates, through this process, through the committee process. Time and time again we have put forward our concerns.

Let it be very clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our concerns are not with the expansion of the floodway itself, our concern is with the process. I started off by suggesting there are many different roads to Rome and this here is also the example. There are many ways we could have got the floodway built. We could have done it the right way, in a way that responds properly to taxpayers' concerns and still gave the flood protection to the city of Winnipeg and what residents were looking for, but that is not the road that this particular government chose to take. We are disappointed with that part of the project.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): I, too, would like to put a few words on record with respect to the bill. I would like to congratulate the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) for his words. I think he has been very much involved in this process. I thought that the

comments he made with respect to this process are very, very accurate, and they are very germane to this discussion.

I would like to just say for the record that the process with respect to getting the floodway underway, the expansion of the floodway project, I think has been incredibly mishandled and incredibly flawed. We all know and I think it has been very clearly put on the record that we believe that the expansion of the floodway project is a good project. We think it is the right thing to do. We have always said that from day one. We believe that to expand the floodway is necessary to protect the city of Winnipeg, south of Winnipeg. We know that there are always issues about what is happening north of Winnipeg, but we have never stood in this Chamber or publicly, privately ever said anything other than we support the expansion of the floodway project.

I think the issues that we have with this project again are about process. I think it is fascinating to see what we have witnessed with this floodway expansion. We have seen what happens when a government, ministers of the Crown and the Premier are not on the same page. We know that the minister, we know the fact that there was a floodway authority that was established, Mr. Ernie Gilroy heading up the Floodway Authority.

We know that there are certain facts around this expansion that have been somewhat troubling to numerous people in the province. For example, there was always a discussion that the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) was very public about the fact that to build and expand the floodway there would be a project labour agreement. Well, we all know that a project labour agreement has to deal with unions and collective bargaining and agreements. He went out and he put that on the record and said that that was the way it was going to be. It is Manitoba law that if you have a project labour agreement you have to ensure that those people that work are part of a collective agreement and are a part of the union.

So we started to ask questions about this because it sounded a bit sort of fishy, that there would be some sort of a project labour agreement. I thought it was interesting that I believe the Premier (Mr. Doer) stood in the House and indicated that when he talked about the expansion of the floodway, made some reference, albeit a cloaked reference, but there is

some reference to the former Premier, Duff Roblin. Well, I had a chance to speak with the former Premier, Duff Roblin as I do on many occasions, and I just happened to ask him: "Do you recall having any sort of project labour agreement when you built the original floodway? Was that part of what you needed to do to get the process underway?" Of course he said, "Absolutely not. It is not something that we would have done. We don't believe in that."

So I thought it was interesting that we did not hear that again from the Premier. All references to the former Premier, Duff Roblin, were dropped like a cold stone. So that was interesting as this process went along.

So we then hear, going back to the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) saying, "No, absolutely, there is going to be a project labour agreement." Then they march out some spin doctors and say, "Well, maybe that is not quite the way it is going to be." So we start asking some questions because process is important in this, because ultimately this is all about the taxpayers of Manitoba, who are going to be paying for the expansion of the floodway project. Again, I repeat the obvious. We are very much in favour of that expansion.

The next thing we hear is that the Doer government says, "Well, I don't know what everybody is concerned about."

* (19:50)

I think that from time to time the Premier always talks about the fact that the sky is falling, the sky is falling. Well, it was interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we asked questions in this House about the floodway expansion and we were told very clearly, "Well, there is really no agreement. I do not know what the members opposite are upset about. There is no agreement in place."

Yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we find that in fact the Floodway Authority head is down speaking with the federal counterpart about the agreement. All of a sudden, there was not an agreement, then they are down in Ottawa talking about the agreement. So, again, here we come with the process in terms of what is up and what is down and what is this whole process all about?

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Well, then, Mr. Speaker, we will go on to find out that the employer groups, and I think what is always interesting and it came clear that the employer groups, those that are 95 percent non-unionized, the heavy construction in Manitoba, they got word that there was some possibility that there was going to be a single contract. A single contract clearly would have ruled out any Manitoba company from working on the floodway.

So one has to ask the question, and we were delighted, Mr. Speaker, to have the opportunity on behalf of the non-unionized heavy construction industry to come forward and just simply say, "Are you going to have a single contract, is that part of the mandate?" so that we can move the floodway project ahead. If it was, then why would you want to exclude Manitoba companies by having a single contract?

Again, Mr. Speaker, I only raise this issue because it showed how badly bungled this whole process was. So, the single issue became a discussion point. Well, the employer groups had a chance to be part of the discussion through many, many meetings. Through talking in public and making a lot of issue about this, the employer groups had a chance to sit down eventually with the Floodway Authority and, I think, developed a sense of mistrust.

There was a sense of mistrust because the Premier (Mr. Doer) would say something, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) would say something different and the head of the Floodway Authority would say something different yet again. So all you have, Mr. Speaker, is a group of employers who want to get on with building the floodway, who deserve the opportunity to be part of this project.

Why, Mr. Speaker? Simply, they were the ones that in times of trouble and times of necessity in 1997, they came to the forefront to build the Z-dike. They did it on time and on budget, no questions asked. We on this side of the House believe, and I know on the other side they have difficulty understanding and recognizing this, but we on this side of the House believe those are exactly the companies that should have the opportunity to bid on the floodway expansion.

We feel, Mr. Speaker, that they have earned that right. I know members opposite have some difficulty with that. That is their prerogative and that is what

they choose to believe. We think it is wrong, but that is up to them. So we find that there is distrust with what the Minister of Water Stewardship has said. There is some concern about what the Premier has said, and there is some issue about where the head of the Floodway Expansion Authority is making public statements.

So what is the ultimate that has to take place here, Mr. Speaker? Well, it is unfortunate that because the Doer government bungled this so badly, they had to bring in Wally Fox-Decent to try to make some sense out of the process. That is unfortunate because it was not required.

All of the employer groups are basically saying, "We just want to get on with building the floodway. We are 95 percent non-unionized. We do not believe that it is important for non-unionized companies to be forced to be part of a union. We think that that is wrong. We just want to get on with building the floodway," but it was never clearly indicated from the Premier of the Province of Manitoba, and to this very day, Mr. Speaker, the Premier of the Province of Manitoba does not agree that forcing non-unionized workers to pay union dues is a bad thing.

So in comes Wally Fox-Decent, and all of us in Manitoba know and recognize the work that Mr. Fox-Decent has done in situations throughout the province of Manitoba. We recognize that, but we now have a situation where Mr. Fox-Decent has had to come forward to bring a recommendation and, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Fox-Decent was put in a very difficult position. He was put in a difficult position by the Doer government because we had one minister saying something about forced unionization. We had the Premier (Mr. Doer) not sure what position he should be taking, and the head of the Floodway Expansion Authority taking yet another position.

Mr. Fox-Decent, rather than being able to step back and look at this process and really look at people and say, "Why is it that I am called in here to be a part of this? Why do I have to be here? Am I here basically because this pendulum has swung so far to the left that we can try to make some sense and try to slowly bring it more to the centre of where this should be at?"

Mr. Speaker, nobody can necessarily fault Wally Fox-Decent for what he has done. He brought forward a recommendation that I think to quote the

Premier, he says, "Well, we should just add a little water to our wine." That might work in the former Premier's position. That might work in the union hall, but if you asked somebody on the street, "Do you believe it is fair to ask somebody who is not a member of a union to be forced to pay union dues against their will simply because they are working on a particularly project?" I do not think there is a Manitoban, a Canadian, a North American that would say, "Yeah, that makes sense; absolutely they should be forced to pay union dues." The answer to that is absolutely not.

We recognize it is the right of workers to choose in a democratic society if they want to be part of a union or they do not. Mr. Speaker, to force non-unionized workers to pay union dues is wrong. I know the First Minister says things like if the members opposite use some sort of political rhetoric that if we want to go out and campaign in four years, well, I can tell the House we would be delighted to campaign with Manitobans and ask them the question, "Do you think it is fair to force non-unionized workers to pay union dues?" I would be delighted to have that kind of an election.

The other element, Mr. Speaker, that is unfortunate and the bungling of the Doer government in this process, is the fact the employer groups, by recommendation from Mr. Fox-Decent, have been excluded from the bargaining table. You have 95 percent of the companies that are non-unionized that do not have a seat at the bargaining table. All we have is the Premier, the Premier's staff, the Floodway Authority and the unions that are going to be negotiating on behalf of a bunch of non-unionized companies. I think if you asked the smell test, "Does that make sense?" the answer would be, "Absolutely not, it is crazy." Why would you exclude the employer groups from the process?

I can tell you that we believe very strongly we should get on with building the floodway. We think it is unfortunate the Doer government is forcing non-unionized workers to pay union dues. We think it is unfortunate the employer groups have been excluded from the process at the bargaining table. We are going to fight on behalf of those employer groups to make sure they have that place at the table and, Mr. Speaker, we believe that at the end of the day, for all of the political rhetoric and all of the bungling of the Doer government, we hope there is going to be some common sense that is brought into this debate that

allows the employer groups to be at the table negotiating on behalf of their non-unionized workers.

The fact they are going to flow millions of taxpayers' dollars simply to the NDP coffers, Mr. Speaker, we think that is fundamentally wrong and we know that as Manitobans get a better sense of what it is the Doer government is doing in this process, they also will agree it is absolutely wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I will close simply by saying we want to get on with building the floodway, but we want to do it in a fair and equitable and a transparent way that does not force non-unionized workers to pay union dues and does assure the employer groups that non-unionized groups have a fully participating partnership opportunity at the negotiating table. Thank you very much.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I do want to state that as, I think, with every member of this House, I am in favour of the construction of the floodway and, quite frankly, the sooner the better. I guess what I question and have questioned for a number of years, all the way along, is the resolve that this government has failed to show with regard to moving forward with the floodway project.

*(20:00)

Mr. Speaker, the first three budgets that this government presented in this House included the first budget \$40 million, the second budget was \$20 million, the next budget was \$20 million. This was money that they had set aside in their budgets to fund the construction of the floodway.

Mr. Speaker, the simple question is, if they are that dedicated to the construction of the floodway, how much of that \$80 million was actually spent? Well, the answer is virtually nothing. So, for three years this government stood up year after year when it presented its budget, they told the people of Manitoba that they had set aside very, very significant sums in order to move construction of the floodway forward but as usual what did we see from this government. We saw no action, that from once again a timid government that refused to get on with the business of governing this province and set a stage for the future of the province of Manitoba.

So \$80 million that they had dedicated in their budgets to the floodway went unspent and, in fact,

went unspent on the floodway but was in fact actually sucked up by overexpenditures in other departments. That to me, Mr. Speaker, from day one shows definitely that the New Democratic Party was not and is not committed to the construction of a floodway in Manitoba. Now that is very unfortunate.

We see again with this bill the setting up of the Floodway Authority and that is a good thing. Hopefully, what that will do will take some of the political gamesmanship out of the process. When I first heard of this bill that is what my hope was for the outcome of this bill, that the government would get on with the business of setting the funds aside, would set up a professional organization, staffed and manned by independent professionals who would do the right thing for the city of Winnipeg and for the province of Manitoba and that would be to take the politics out and build a proper flood protection system for those that are inside the boundaries of the city of Winnipeg, and at the same time provide some protection or assurance of protection for those either south or north of the floodway who would be affected, one way or another, by possible artificial flooding as a result of floodway use.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen from day one and, you know, I must have been naive at the time because it would be terribly unusual to see the government led by the Premier of the province take the politics out of anything. So, even with the establishment of a floodway authority, they have managed to set the process down a political course that will be very, very difficult to turn around and they did this right from day one. As has been said before, we had, you know, contradictory and differing statements from the Minister of Water Stewardship who is trying to claim responsibility for the project and the Premier of the province who says time and time again that, you know, all financial decisions stop at my desk. Well, they cannot even get on the same page. I do not know if they even talk in Cabinet meetings or caucus meetings.

You know, the Premier stands up and says, "Well, there will be no forced unionization." The same day the Minister of Water Stewardship stands up and says, "Well, of course, there is going to have to be unionization." I believe in that case he actually was speaking what they all knew, that there was no way that this New Democratic government was going to forge ahead with the expansion of the

floodway unless there was some assurance or some mechanism to make sure that their political allies, the union bosses, received a share of what was going to be spent on the floodway. So they came up with this clever mechanism, well, we need a project labour agreement.

What was their reasoning for a project labour agreement? Well, you know, we are going to prevent any strikes or lockouts. Well, Mr. Speaker, from a non-unionized workforce I do not think we have any fear of strikes or lockouts. These are the same individuals that built the Z-dike, in an unprecedented time frame and did it very, very well and did it on budget.

Well, you know, the fallacy that this government would lead us to believe is that you cannot run a project of this size without a project labour agreement but their only example of where that has been used or been needed is on the northern construction of dams, an entirely different situation. One cannot draw any parallels between the construction of a dam in northern Manitoba and the floodway reconstruction that is going to have to take place.

We all know that in northern Manitoba there are very special circumstances when you are looking at those types of construction projects. You have workers coming in, coming out. They need time off, they need time with their families back where they live. Most go in for work-related activities. They do not reside where the dam is being constructed. In those situations you do need some type of project agreement to ensure that it will actually happen on time and on budget.

The difference between those projects and the expansion of the floodway is the distance they are from major centres and the distance they are from where the majority of the workers actually live. So, Mr. Speaker, it is a fallacy for them to stand up and somehow try and draw a comparison between a northern dam project, what might be needed there, versus what is needed on a project that is going to be located right on the outskirts of the city of Winnipeg.

That is their fall-back position, in trying to explain to the people of Manitoba, why it is that they feel there needs to be a forced unionization of employees. While we are glad that after finally agreeing to sit at the table and listen to the

contractors that would be involved, the employers that would provide the necessary workers to build the construction project, that this government finally agreed to back off a little bit.

They finally, much to their chagrin, were forced into a position where they had no other option but to draw in a mediator. They chose Mr. Fox-Decent, with whom we have no bone to pick. I mean, he has obviously proved his worth and his abilities in the past in being able to mediate different situations but, Mr. Speaker, the problem is they did not give him free range to negotiate a settlement. They sent him in as a mediator, some might say, with one hand tied behind his back. I would say with both arms tied behind his back. They sent him there. The Premier (Mr. Doer) hired him. The Premier sent him there with the specific understanding that there needed to be some compensation to unions even though workers maybe did not have to belong to a union.

So, on that basis, the only solution that he could come with up with, the only compromise that Mr. Fox-Decent could come back with was a scheme whereby, "Yes, there will be no forced unionization." That is the "out" the government was looking for; they can stand up proudly and say, "Well, no, no, you were wrong. There is no forced unionization," but they were forced into a box and they had to back off that. Mr. Fox-Decent was also forced into a box because going into that mediation he had a clear understanding that there had to be some giveback to the unions. That had already been carved in stone by this government.

His solution to ask all individuals working on the project to pay union dues; whether you call it union dues or service fees, it is the same thing, I think it is not entirely satisfactory to either party. This government stands up and says that that is a good thing. This side is complaining and that side is complaining, so we must find some middle ground. The ground he found was the only ground left that he could balance himself on while he had both of those arms tied behind his back.

We now have a situation where we are going to have probably in the neighbourhood of 5 percent of the workers on the floodway are going to be unionized and 95 percent are going to come roughly from non-union shops, but what is going to happen is that that 95 percent are going to have to pay the same dues, the same fees as the 5 percent.

We read in the agreement that the fees paid by the non-union workers are supposed to go into a pot that is going to be administered by a third party. It all sounds fine and dandy except no one has been able to explain, no one will explain what is going to happen to that pot of money, other than it is going to get paid to the unions. So what is the difference? I mean, they might as well all be forced to join the union and pay the dues up front as opposed to having this circular mechanism in order to get the money to the unions.

Now, if the Premier would stand up and say that, yes, there will be a certain amount paid to the unions for the work they do, for the negotiating that may take place, and give us a reasonable understanding of what could happen to the rest of the funds that are in that pot, the rest of those funds that have been taken, forced to be donated by any individual working on the construction problem, then we might have a little better feel, or a little better understanding, for what the logic is behind this agreement.

Until the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) or the Premier (Mr. Doer) is ready to drop the kimono and come out and tell us exactly what their intentions are, the workers, the employers that are going to be involved in the project are going to be at a loss because there will be no understanding of what those funds are going to be used for or where they are going to go, other than to say they are going to get siphoned out of the pockets of the employees and they are going to go directly to unions.

* (20:10)

A big problem is a lot of those funds are not even going to stay in Canada. They are going to be funnelled off to the top and sent down to the union headquarters in New York, in the United States. Here we are building a floodway project in the province of Manitoba, and, as a result of this government's necessity to come up with some type of generalized kickback scheme for their buddies, the union bosses, we are going to see money drained out of Manitoba, drained out of the hardworking individuals, the hardworking Manitobans, who are working on this project and sent directly to New York to fund union operations across North America. That is simply not right.

This government had a choice. This government had an option. They could have set up a completely

independent floodway authority. They could have set up a mechanism whereby a board was appointed on an independent basis, whereby a board went out and hired an individual with knowledge and experience in the field, knowledge in the construction field, knowledge in how contracts work, knowledge in how to negotiate.

The individual this government has appointed, I have known him for a long time. He has his connections. He was a city councillor. He worked in the mayor's office. But I cannot recall one instance where this individual has had any experience with a construction project the size of which is a \$660-million project. This is serious, serious money and something that is going to have to be managed, and managed very, very closely.

What do we have? We have this Premier and we have this government basically putting a neophyte in the chair of this organization. I am sure Mr. Gilroy has a lot of skills, but he does not have the experience necessary, I would argue, in order to do justice to this project. I think that is unfortunate. If this government had wanted to do the right thing, I mean, the reconstruction of the floodway, I believe it should, in the purest of forms, have the intention of providing some good to all Manitobans.

Its main priority, is of course, to protect the city of Winnipeg against a catastrophic flooding situation, but it should have spinoff benefits for all Manitobans, not just spinoff benefits for the political friends of the ruling government of the day. That is what we have. That is what we have now. We have a government that has continually interfered in the process to the extent where even the people working on the project, even the contractors who are going to gain contracts and work experience from this project, are saddled with the fact they have to move everything through government policy. That is not right.

This project should be independent. The three levels of government should provide funding. The federal government should be involved; the Province should be involved; and the City of Winnipeg should be involved. Other than providing the necessary funds, those three levels of government should simply step aside. They can set some overriding policies with regard to recreational opportunities, with regard to how they envision the project should

work in the long run, to set up some parameters in terms of operating the floodway for the benefit of the citizens so that we can have access to the river walkway on a continual basis, but we should not be in a situation where a particular stripe of government is dictating how this very significant project is managed from day one. That is what we have right now.

They could have had control. They could have had input on an independent board. We have a similar situation with The Forks North Portage board where, in essence, the government has the power to appoint individuals to the board, and they, for the most part, take that very seriously. I think that is a board that has not been politicized too, too much. It has tried to do the best for that particular facility. At the same time, it is that board that goes out and determines who the chair is. It is that board that goes out and determines who the CEO is. The government representatives on that board bring the government's preferences to the table, but it is decided in an open and constructive forum.

We do not have that here. We have the government appointing the board members, basically, who turn out to be their lackeys or political friends. We have the government appointing the CEO so that he is bound in some respects to the whims of this government. Who loses? Well, the people of Manitoba lose in that situation. I think that is something that this government needs to look at very, very closely. It is something I would like to see changed in terms of this process moving forward.

This is one of the most significant construction projects we will see in the province of Manitoba, we will see in and around the city of Winnipeg for decades to come. For this government to manipulate it, based on pure political ideology, based on the fact they have some obligations they feel they have to pay back to their union supporters is wrong. It is wrong for the people of Manitoba. It is wrong for the people of Winnipeg. It is wrong for the workers who are going to have to be responsible for constructing this project.

Once again, we hear today that out of the blue, supposedly out of the blue, the union group has put forward a proposal to look after training for 10 percent of the contract. They are calling themselves REACT but really it is the heads of the labour movement that have put this proposal forward. No

tender issue, no requests for proposals from anywhere else, it is just something that somehow mysteriously has ended up at the desk of the CEO of the Floodway Authority. There is just too much coincidence in that.

If the government would be up front with these things, would say we need someone to help us with the training, we are going to have a request for proposal calls, we are going to go through a tendering process, I would have no problem with that because that would open it up to everybody, provided there was an independent management and board in place to award these contracts, but already we are seeing again another example of political interference.

This has the feel of a boondoggle all over it, and there has not even been a shovel put in the ground. That is because to date there has not even been a proper budget done. The government talks about \$600 million, \$700 million, maybe 660. They are basically pulling numbers out of the air. That is understandable because the background work has not been done yet. The government should come forward and set up a process for those background budgets to be made, and then they should come forward and say, here is the budget. Here is what it is going to cost. Here is the time line. Here is how we are going to stick to it.

They have got the process all backwards. They are pulling numbers out of the air, throwing numbers here, throwing numbers there, all as a means to diffuse the fact their main agenda seems to be how to flow money through to the union bosses. That is something that does not serve the people of Manitoba in any way whatsoever.

As I said at the outset, we are very interested in seeing this project move forward. We are extremely disappointed this government has chosen to budget \$80 million over three years, and spend none of it on the floodway project. Now it appears a deal has been settled between the three levels of government.

What we are asking for, what we are pleading for, is this government to start taking the politics out of it and start putting the people of Manitoba first. Start looking after the interests of all Manitobans, particularly those who might be affected by a catastrophic flood. We are asking them to take that as their primary objective and to remove the politics

from it, set up an independent board. If they feel they have to appoint the first board of directors, well, go ahead and do that, but make sure that it is done from a broad cross-section. Make sure that there are people on that board who have the experience in projects, large-scale construction projects, people on that board that understand the nuances of negotiations between construction funders and unions, that understand the nuances of how the business is going to work, because the next big problem facing this government is the Floodway Authority is going to sit down and negotiate a deal with the unions.

* (20:20)

So you have an inexperienced Floodway Authority sitting down with experienced union leaders to negotiate a deal, and the Premier has the gall and the audacity to leave out the employers, who are traditionally at the table when any type of negotiation takes place between workers and those funding a project.

Mr. Speaker, again, to gain political advantage, this government is leaving out a very, very important piece of the puzzle, and who is going to suffer? Well, the people of Manitoba are going to suffer. They are going to suffer in a number of ways. They could suffer because the project is going to take too long, and in the meantime there might be another catastrophic flood like we had in 1997. The project could be way over budget, because they have inexperienced people at the negotiating table. We could end up paying \$60 million or \$70 million more than the taxpayers would have had to pay had the right people been at the table from day one.

We could run into unexpected difficulties in terms of the engineering structures, the work that is going to have to take place. Quite frankly, there could be some very significant suffering by individuals either north of the floodway or south of the floodway if the design structure is not done properly to take into account what will happen to those individuals should we have a situation where the floodway is needed to be used.

So I will close off my comments again just by reminding the Premier, reminding the Minister of Water Stewardship, that their responsibility has to be looked at as a bigger responsibility than just flowing money back to their buddies and basically making

concessions to the union leaders, which they seem to be so beholden for. Their responsibility is to all the people of Manitoba to ensure that this project is brought in on time.

I do not agree with on time, on budget. It should be on time at the lowest possible cost. That is their responsibility to the taxpayers of Manitoba and to the other parties of the agreement, to bring this project in at the lowest possible cost, given that we want a good product at the end. That is their challenge. None of this on time, on budget, because they do not even know what the budget is. Right now they have the ability to set the budget everywhere or anywhere and nobody will know whether that was a reasonable cost or was not based on the process that they have undertaken.

So I would ask them to review the process, to review particularly how they form the board that is going to oversee the Floodway Authority, particularly give that board the authority to go out and hire the best possible resources in terms of staff, in terms of a CEO to get on with this job so that the people of Winnipeg and the people of Manitoba can gain the full benefit from a properly run project.

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

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I, too, would like to put just a few comments on the record. Certainly, I have been listening to the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) and now the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen). I would agree with the comments that they are making.

But I also need to represent the feelings and the wishes of the constituency of Pembina. I have had thousands of petitions, signatures from people who have signed petitions come my way. Certainly the people are very concerned about the issue of forced unionization within this province. Now, of course, we take it to the next step of where they are going to be taking the dollars and putting those into what they call that private fund, which we are assuming, and I think rightfully so, that it is going to help and assist the unions. That is something that is not democratic.

That is the point I want to raise tonight. We live in a society and in a country and we value very

highly the democratic rights that we have, the freedoms to make decisions. In this case, that freedom has been taken away from those who are involved and wanting to participate in the floodway project. As has also been indicated, 95 percent of those potentially working on the floodway are non-unionized. I believe that in a democratic society they should have the ability to make that decision. I am not speaking against unions; I am speaking about the fact that this is something that is being forced upon them to do that. That is not right.

If I go back several years, the whole area when Bill 44 came in, that right to be able to, on a secret ballot, make that decision was taken away from them. This again in a country that we value, a province where we value the rights of democracy, that has been taken away. That is something that I object to. The people that I represent object to that as well. We have companies within the city of Winkler, in Morden and within our community, who employ many people. Now, they have associations, they have bargaining, but they do not necessarily have to have a union come in there and dictate for them what is going to be taking place.

I would say that, as long as the employees have good labour relations with the employer, what else would you want? As has been indicated within the province of Manitoba and with the heavy construction industry, that is taking place. Again, as I have indicated before, if you have 95 percent of the people involved in the industry who are non-unionized, obviously there is a good relationship between the employer and the employee. So now, to force this upon them and then to take those fees, and of course who knows, half of the fees, which could be \$30 million or so, would be leaving the province. Who knows?

I mean, we do not know where these dollars are going. They are going to Washington. Although we, and I know it is the NDP that spoke very much against free trade and now, of course, they are trading their dollars and sending them south. It is an interesting position that they have put themselves into.

Again, I would suggest that possibly the majority of the members opposite, of the government, do not agree with this. I would say that they do not agree, but they have no choice. The

union bosses have come in, and they have demanded that they want their dollars out of this.

So now we are going to have the taxpayer within the province of Manitoba, and of course it is also being funded federally, but we are going to have up to \$60 million going to go to the unions. I object to that, to allowing that to take place. So, Mr. Speaker, in this whole equation of getting someone else, and again this is another interesting point where, of course, they had to get a mediator in here, Wally Fox-Decent, who, the way it would appear from the documents that we are receiving, actually he is being dictated to as to the information that he is giving back to the government.

So there is very close communication between the two. So really what is taking place is something that is being dictated by the minister, probably by the Premier (Mr. Doer), and then finally this document is placed in order. I really feel that Manitobans should be listened to. I do not think that this NDP government has gone out and listened to Manitobans and in a fair way listened to what they are asking to take place. That is again a fair democratic process where the people can, on their own, make that decision. It is not something that through legislation is going to be foisted upon them.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I just want to thank you for the opportunity to put a few comments on the record. Again, I want to speak from the area that I represent, the constituency of Pembina, that they are opposed. I have had no people who have called me or written, e-mailed whatever and indicated that they believe the government is going in the right direction in this area. So I have to speak on behalf of the people that I represent.

In conclusion, and I have said this time and time again, what we are doing, and I realize that we need to protect the city of Winnipeg, but I have always said that the whole area of water retention is something that we need to, in the long term, look at. Any time there is a flood or there is excess water coming in from the south, what we do is we just as expeditiously as possible just divert it, move it off to the lakes, and then we are looking for water, for good potable water within our own area. I believe it is important that we have a longer-term view, a strategy where we try to retain some of this water, and that in essence would also help to eliminate the

flooding problem, the type of a flood that we saw in 1997.

With those few words, I will turn it over. I believe the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) wanted to make a few comments on this bill as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I, too, wanted to be able to put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 31. As I indicated earlier, prior to the bill going into committee, this is a bill in which we should be very clear in terms of being supportive on. I believe that we are being supportive for all the right reasons. We recognize the value of the floodway. The floodway has saved the city of Winnipeg on numerous occasions to date already.

* (20:30)

There have been other concerns in terms of the expansion of the floodway and the impact that that is going to have. As a result, government has also introduced some other legislation which we had believed was somewhat flawed because it did not have that independent appeal mechanism.

We would not want government to try to confuse the party's position as to where we are on the floodway itself, because I think that opposition, both opposition parties have clearly indicated that the floodway expansion is a good idea, and the support has been there and will continue to be there for that.

If we look at the benefits, and I did get the chance to talk about some of those benefits the other day, you know, when we talk about the potential for damage. I have made reference to both the economic side of things, to the social component.

When we look at the social cost to it, really what we are talking about is a family that has a basement flooded quite often, obviously it happens in late spring, and their summer is in essence ruined, because, even though the water itself has receded, the mess and the cleanup, the ripping down of drywall and all this kind of stuff has to be taken care of. Quite often that then ends up ruining the summer.

Obviously, there are ample cases of this that have occurred over the years. The floodway has afforded literally thousands of homes throughout the city the opportunity to be able to avoid that tragedy. The economics of it, we have seen the city in past

floods, especially if you go prior to the floodway, where it has literally shut down the city of Winnipeg.

The city of Winnipeg contributes so much, immensely to the overall GDP of our province. The cost of shutting down the city is really immeasurable in the sense of the types of damages and the loss of economic activity.

For those two reasons, we do recognize the value of the floodway. We especially appreciate the fact that this bill will go a long way in putting together possible alternatives for the floodway that could be used outside of just the diversion of water. I did get the chance to comment on that during second reading in more detail.

So, you know, the creation of the corporation, there are a lot of people that will win through this whole process. As I say, the only real concern that we have is the negative impacts on people, whether it is downstream or upstream of the diversion. That is one of the reasons why we truly believe that there needed to be some sense of that independent appeal process that would ensure that the proper or adequate compensation not only would be given but would be perceived to be given.

That is the bill which we do oppose, but, having said that, this bill we are very supportive of. We look forward to its passage.

With those few words, we are prepared to see the bill pass.

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the opportunity to rise on third reading of Bill 31, The Floodway Authority Act. I would like to enter into the debate in the broadest of fashion insofar as the floodway expansion, without question, is a consideration that should be addressed. But I have studied with great intent what and how the decisions that have led up to this proposed act have unfolded. I believe that there are a number of other avenues that have not been explored to date that could have significant relevance to the expansion of the Red River Floodway.

There are other avenues in which to protect the investment in Winnipeg from inundation by flood waters of the Red River by way of holding back waters prior to entry into the Red River proper, as well as that there is a natural flow to Lake Winnipeg

from the Red River that is a more passive channel, if I might use that terminology. It is not as well defined as a large diked channel like the Red River Floodway as it exists today, but this passive channel is naturally occurring that is upstream from the existing inlet of the Red River Floodway that offers a water course to Lake Winnipeg. I believe the study of this natural occurrence has not been made to any extensive nature. I believe that, if one was to explore the opportunity to potentially enhance this natural water course, this may be a viable alternative to the massive investment in the Red River floodway and potentially allow for lesser disruption to the area, as has been aired through concern and debate in this House as to the potential of further contamination of the aquifer and displacement of quality waters within that aquifer.

That is the premise that I believe I show concern about passage of this bill. I know that there has been a lot of study done directly on the channel and, also its relevance to a structure near and about Ste. Agathe that had been devaluated as a potential alternative. But I do not believe that there was further study to the passive water channel that I have made mention here in the House. As well, I do not believe there has been extensive study as to the other structures on tributaries to the Red River that would effectively hold back waters that could potentially offer enhancements for recreational, agricultural, industrial and domestic water supplies. I speak specifically of the Pembilier dams that have been made mention of by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

As well, I have spoken on numerous occasions about the potential construction of what has been known as the Holland No. 3 Dam, which is just upstream from the Highway 34 crossing of the Assiniboine River. I believe that specific dam would enhance the water qualities which the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) has come to know as a concern here in the province of Manitoba, especially when waters from the Assiniboine and the Red River enter into Lake Winnipeg.

* (20:40)

Because of the shallow nature of the Assiniboine River, the warming of the sun and air temperature allow for the development of algae blooms within the river, and when the waters from the Assiniboine end up in Lake Winnipeg it continues to make the

situation in Lake Winnipeg, which has been well documented, that there is extensive growth of algae within that water body.

Now if the construction of the Holland No. 3 Dam were to take place, the depth of water at that point would be of significant depth that neither sunlight nor air temperature would have that warming effect on the waters at a depth of 30 metres, and that is where the water would be discharged, from the bottom of the reservoir in that dam structure. So the waters that would be flowing in the Assiniboine River downstream from that structure would not have the developed algae blooms that are now occurring and causing significant concern in Lake Winnipeg.

So I hope that the Minister of Water Stewardship is listening to this point, because I know that he is very concerned about the growth of algae in Lake Winnipeg and this particular structure, the Holland No. 3 Dam, would enhance the water quality in this regard. Also to the government, they have been promoting and encouraging development of electrical generation here in the province of Manitoba, and I will say the Holland No. 3 Dam would allow for hydro-electrical generation as well, because there would be a depth of water great enough to have the installation of turbines in the structure, and the discharge of water from the Holland No. 3 Dam would generate electricity. I believe the minimum generation would be 15 megawatts, and there is potential for more than that as well, Mr. Speaker.

This body of water upstream of the Holland No. 3 Dam would also provide a water body that could very well see significant cottage development. I know that the Premier, the First Minister, has said, on a number of occasions, his desire to see many more cottage lots developed within a reasonable driving distance of the city of Winnipeg. This particular water body in and about the Spruce Woods Provincial Park would provide just that for the First Minister to fulfill his pledge to Manitobans to make certain that there are a thousand-plus cottage lots within easy access of the city of Winnipeg.

I know also that the soil structure of the area is very sandy in nature, and would afford individuals who have cottages there, as well as a potential public beach, a very sandy beach that is not afforded, say, at the Shellmouth Dam on Lake of the Prairie by

nature, as it would be in the Spruce Woods Provincial Park.

This particular proposal of which I speak, the Holland No. 3 Dam, has so many positive attributes, I encourage the current government to look very favourably at the potential development and the significance that this would have to southern Manitoba.

The original purpose of the Holland No. 3 Dam came by way of a study done by the former Finance Minister, the Honourable Eugene Kostyra, who tabled in this House on March 8, 1988, the South Hespeler report, which identified the Holland No. 3 Dam as the most cost-effective, the most economically desirable project to be considered by government for development. Mr. Kostyra, I believe, still does have a position of authority that has influence on economic development here in the province of Manitoba. I believe he serves as the chair of the Economic Development Committee. I would hope that the government would look to the former Finance Minister and his tabled report and his own personal understanding of the potential of this project and to seek out his counsel. Potentially, one can look to see the development, at the very least enter into the beginning stages of this project by a pre-feasibility study and progressing to a feasibility study.

Also, during the deliberations that ended with the publishing of the South Hespeler report was the potential for potato production in southern Manitoba, identified back in 1988. That was prior to the First Minister's announcement in Portage la Prairie in December 2000 that told of development in Portage la Prairie by Simplot Canada Incorporated. Now, three years later, we see that particular potato processing plant up and running and being one of significant engineering, providing that plant with the notoriety of efficiency and also too of technology. That particular plant employs approximately one half the number of employees of the McCain potato processing plant in Portage la Prairie simply because of the use of technology. They said that it is a plant that could be affectionately known as the plant that is run by a mouse, referring to the mouse of a computer. It is that highly technologically driven that a computer can in fact start and finish the entire process without a human hand being laid on any of the processing equipment within the processing line.

I slightly digress from the point of water flow and The Red River Floodway Act that we are debating here. There is a need for a greater scope of discussion and study before we go headlong into a very, very significant investment in expansion of the floodway. I just want to leave with the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) and the First Minister some thoughts that potentially they could be so much better known in the legacy of capacity in the province of Manitoba should they potentially choose to look at numerous other developments that would effectively address the situation of flooding by the Red River but would also enhance so many other different areas of this province and they then could be known throughout the province as being ones who looked to the future and made the investments necessary for the longevity of the province's rural economy through the storage of water in various locations within the province of Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to participate.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Just to put a few comments on the record in third reading of Bill 31, I believe that this bill establishes the authority of the floodway expansion under an administrative body that I understand will have total authority for the acquisition of land for the construction of the floodway, and for the application of other means of developing the floodway for recreational purposes and other matters.

* (20:50)

I believe also that the act allows for the board to borrow money for the purpose of the expansion and/or development of the floodway to ensure that flooding of the city of Winnipeg will not happen in the future. I think it is a tremendous amount of responsibility to place on a group of people who have not currently governed a body such as this, and I believe the confidence that, obviously, this government will place in that board will have a large impact on the future development of this province.

I want to touch on at least three different areas in this respect, because the floodway and the delivery of water into Lake Winnipeg via the floodway in a flood event can have a major environmental impact on a body of water such as Lake Winnipeg. We all know that when floods occur, riverbanks erode and soils drop into the river out of those riverbanks, as

has occurred in the last five years, six years now on the Red River, and I have never seen the deterioration of the riverbanks of the Red River, and I have grown up there, as bad as it had been in the last five to seven years, since 1997.

That flood seemed to have weakened the banks to the point where large chunks of land, including large oak trees, slide right into the river, and the water levels as high as they are today will, I think, have a tremendous impact again, once those waters start receding. They seem to almost draw the riverbank in with them when the water level is lower.

The reason I say this is because I have heard so much criticism of the agricultural community in the pollution of Lake Winnipeg, or the perceived pollution of Lake Winnipeg, and yet never in the history, as long as I remember it, of this province have I seen a greater effort made by a group of people in a province than farmers who have attempted to make, to restore and prohibit pollution off their farms. I believe the environmental impact that has had on the quality of water has not been properly assessed, nor have farmers been given credit for the enhancement of the quality of water that is coming off the farms today.

When I flew the Red River not too long ago, I was amazed at where the streams such as the Aux Marais River entered the Red River, the Roseau River entered the Red River, and in other words, the tributaries entered the Red. The Red was a muddy flow of water, and I would make the case that much of that mud came from the banks which are almost straight up and down now on that Red River as they wash away.

The water out of the tributaries which would, in large part, be waters attributable to the run-off of farm land were clearer, and you could see the trail of water entering from the Aux Marais River downstream at a much clearer level than the actual river water that flowed where it eventually merged into one flow. Similarly, the waters at the mouth of the Roseau River, significantly cleaner than the Red River, I should say, less muddy than the Red River, and the same happened on the Plum River and the other smaller streams that enter the Red River on the Canadian side.

I think, when we consider the huge damage that can occur when floods such as '97 occur and the

human aspect, the human despair that is caused when people's homes are in water up to their roofs and towns are in danger of flooding and must be evacuated, it is not well understood by those people in this province and other areas of Canada that have never experienced an event such as this.

Now, why am I raising this? I paid a lot of attention last year to everything that was said about Lake Winnipeg and the quality of water in Lake Winnipeg. I want to make the case today that I believe that it was largely due to the policy of this NDP provincial government that caused the large algae blooms in Lake Winnipeg last year. I think this government has become so addicted to increased revenue flows over the last five years that they have governed, and I think we need only point at the budget today, which is roughly about \$1.4 billion higher than it was in 1999 when we left office.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I believe that the Province of Manitoba attempted to keep the flows of the waters through the power dams at a relatively high level, therefore draining down Lake of the Woods, draining down Lake Winnipeg, draining down many of our Manitoba lakes to the point where the water levels were so low that the warm-up of the lake waters in fact occurred much quicker than what normally would have been the case, and therefore the algae blooms occurred.

We all know that lakes, be they big or small, all need a certain amount of nutrient levels in them to be able to maintain a proper environment within a lake to be able to house and nourish fish and other creatures that live within the lake. However, when you draw them down too low, as we did to Lake Winnipeg this last summer, in order to create revenue through Manitoba Hydro that this government could again draw dividends from that Hydro fund, as they did a few years prior, up to \$280-million revenues accrued to the Province of Manitoba.

Now, I believe that they knew, last year, that their revenues would drop dramatically because of the low water flows, yes. But in large part, I believe that states such as Minnesota and others simply bought less power and used less power because those states have in large part become dependent on other sources of energy within their own boundaries, such as wind energy. You look at South Dakota and the Buffalo Ridge and the huge amount of power that is

being generated off of that Buffalo Ridge today, I believe there are better than 400 wind turbines generating power in the state of South Dakota just on the Buffalo Ridge alone.

I note that Minnesota is currently talking very significantly about enhancing and expanding their wind energy, as they are their coal energy, and therefore will become a lot less dependent on Manitoba Hydro and other energy sources from other provinces such as Manitoba to reflect that. So the minister decided to order the draw-down of the lake—the minister of water is sitting and intently listening to this. I would suggest that he was the one who ordered the draw-down of the lake to the level that it was so low, it became so shallow that it warmed up the water to the extent where an algae bloom, in fact, was germinated and caused the large algae bloom that we saw from satellite photos, if indeed they were algae blooms that were identified.

* (21:00)

I believe it was in large part the satellite reflection of the bottom of the lake that we saw coming up through the water. The minister is sitting there with that guilty look on his face, knowing full well that it was his action and his government's action that caused the draw-down of the lake and the desecration of the environment within that lake.

I think he is the one that should bear the brunt of the responsibility of having caused an environmental situation which could have been very chaotic to the fish life and other life that exists in that lake. So I think the minister needs to be very careful, No. 1, how we operate the floodway; No. 2, how we operate the exiting areas of Lake Winnipeg; and how we allow levels to be reduced to the point that we did last year.

I want to not only talk about Lake Winnipeg, I also want to talk about Lake of the Woods and how Manitoba drew down Lake of the Woods. When I was there last fall, Lake of the Woods, you could not get into Lake of the Woods out of Birch Point. You could not launch a boat there. The lake had been drawn down five feet lower than what is normal.

For what reason was it drawn down that far? Because there are dams and locks there that can be regulated quite easily to keep the water levels high in

that lake, but no, this government chose to flow water out of that lake to a much lower level than what I had seen in, as a matter of fact, I cannot remember when it was down that low.

It was largely to generate what? Hydro for sale into the export market to ensure that Manitoba Hydro would not have any greater losses than they will show from last year's operation under this. I believe it was largely to ensure that Manitoba would not have to import even a larger amount of hydro than we had to import last year because of their mismanagement of the water systems in this province of Manitoba.

Thirdly, the reason I say this is I want to get back to the point I made the other day. I believe that this minister, if he truly had a desire to look at the environment, to look at the quality of water in our lakes and the maintenance of the quality of water in our lakes and our rivers and our streams, he would start storing water.

If we took the 700 million or some-odd-million that is going to be spent on this floodway and spent that money on building water storages on the Pembina River, on the Assiniboine River, on the Souris River and on many other streams and rivers such as the Pipestone Creek and others, that we could very easily store large amounts of water.

Then, when you hit drought situations as you did this year, you could on a regulated basis flow that water into our Lake Winnipeg and into Lake of the Woods from other areas. Minnesota is really paying a lot of attention to this, flow that on a regular basis into those water bodies, keep them at a higher level and maintain a much cleaner environment in those lakes and a much healthier lake for the fish and aquatic animals or life that is dependent on good quality water and good levels of water in Lake Winnipeg and our other lakes.

I think if that minister would take as much action to ensure that these kinds of structures were built, you would see a totally new economy develop in this province of Manitoba. We have seen what the potato industry can do to Portage la Prairie, what can really happen in employment numbers in a town and city such as Portage and the growth that occurs when a structure such as the potato processors that operate in Portage la Prairie now.

I think you can very easily point at Altona, for instance, the Canola crushing plant and the Friesens' book operation and other manufacturing opportunities that occur when there is an economy and there is an environment created to ensure that there will be enough resources there to maintain a human population the way we want to maintain it.

That then requires a presentation of recreational facilities. Those lakes that would be created by the dams that we could build for the \$700 million that we are going to spend on the floodway could create recreational facilities and create wealth for the province of Manitoba the likes of which we have not seen before. I take the minister to the Shellmouth Dam. I want to say to the Speaker, if you ever want to go walleye fishing, or pickerel fishing as we call them, there is no better place in the province of Manitoba to go walleye fishing than at the Shellmouth Dam and Lake of the Prairies. It was indicated just last year as one of the best pickerel fishing lakes in all of North America.

Why can that be said of Lake of the Prairies? That was a body of water that never existed, until a Conservative government decided they wanted to provide flood protection and, at the same time, provide a recreational area and a water storage area for the province of Manitoba.

Since then, I say to you the level of flooding on the Assiniboine River has decreased dramatically, historically from the time that Shellmouth Dam was built, operated responsibly by the province of Manitoba to flow consistent amounts of water through the Assiniboine, that allow for the Maple Leaf plant to operate in Brandon, that allow for the potato processing plant to operate at Carberry, the potato processing plants and other plants to operate at Portage la Prairie.

Look at the benefits this province has accrued from that one small project. If we would build seven to nine other projects like this in the province of Manitoba, the wealth that we would create by doing this is unimaginable at this time.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, if this Province, if this minister and if this Premier (Mr. Doer) had a vision for this province, they could change the way the future would be in this province if they only had the vision. Yet I have not seen any element of visionary aspect come out of the mouth of the Premier or any

of his ministers. The only thing I have seen that they know how to do well is spend money. They know how to spend money, and they scrounge and they squirm. Once revenues start dipping a bit, they squirm and they have no idea, they use all kinds of excuses. They seek all kinds of excuses to cover their deficits that they have run, even this last year.

They blame the farmers and the BSE crisis for creating for them an economic dilemma, while the only amount of money this government has been responsible for to pay for the BSE crisis, as they call it, is \$31.9 million. They budgeted \$43 million for disaster in agriculture, so there should, in my view, still be about \$11 million that should be surplus. Surplus money, and yet they say, "We ran a deficit because of the BSE crisis." I believe it. Thousands, though, in this province do not.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that if there was any responsible, visionary action taken by this Province, the floodway project might, in fact, have looked entirely different than what we see on the drawing board today. The authority that is being established by this legislation could have been given a totally different direction if the ministers and the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province would have had a vision. Yet the visionary aspect of this government has been non-existent in what I have seen so far.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would propose that this government immediately embark on a study on how to store major volumes of water, whether in major flood events or not, and those studies be immediately brought to this legislative body for further consideration that discussions should immediately start within the parameters of the province of Manitoba to see how we could co-operatively move with North Dakota, Minnesota and South Dakota into an agreement that would see the construction of major water storage areas in North Dakota, Minnesota and South Dakota.

* (21:10)

I must give North Dakota and Minnesota a tremendous amount of credit. They have started numerous water storage projects over the last couple of years since the major flood event. They know that they can impact the future water levels in a major flood event such as '97. They know that they can reduce them by holding those waters back at the headwaters of the Red River or at the headwaters of

the other lakes and streams that flow into the Red River and by controlling them properly.

So I say to you, Mr. Speaker, there are tremendous opportunities. What it needs is a Premier that will get off his spending horse and climb onto the horse with both eyes open, who has a vision and a direction and a plan as to where they want to take this province. In the last five years we have seen none of that in this province of Manitoba.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I am pleased to add a few comments to the debate on this bill, Mr. Speaker, because this bill is fairly important, but I want to take it back a little because what is being attempted here by the government is to build on the tremendous work that was done by a visionary. That was the former premier of this province, Mr. Duff Roblin, the Honourable Duff Roblin, who has indeed, I think, been rightly honoured in this province as a visionary and a man who was true to his word and did look after the needs of not just one group in this province but looked after the needs of the province in general.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to 1967 when the dam, the Shellmouth Dam and the original floodway were constructed to protect the city of Winnipeg from flooding and also to provide additional water for the province. It was all connected. It was done in a way where the Premier of the day looked at this province and looked at what really needed to be done in order to not only protect from flooding, but also to manage the tremendous resource that we have in our province. By reconstructing the floodway as is being proposed now, what we are doing is we are forgetting about what we should be doing in terms of a vision and how we should build for the future in this province, because what is being done is a very short-sighted approach in trying to mitigate flooding in the city.

That is only one part of the equation, Mr. Speaker. The Floodway Authority that is being put in place has got a very restricted mandate because, in my view, the mandate should be to look at how we harness this tremendous resource that we have in this province, fresh water, rather than simply allowing it to be flushed through our city into the lake and then on into the bay.

Mr. Speaker, I think Manitobans expect more of us. Although we are caught with the euphoria of the

tremendous potential of jobs that are going to be created on the floodway, what we are not looking at is the tremendous opportunities beyond. As I spoke to the Premier not a long time ago, I said to him, "What we need to do is have a little bit of the Duff Roblin in each one of us so that we could look beyond just what the immediate problem is and look at how we can resolve issues for the future."

I believe that we need to look at how we can hold back some of this tremendous resource that we are flushing through our river systems for use, for building industry, for building recreation, for building tourism and for attracting people from outside of this province into this wonderful province.

I live in the part of the world that is part of the network of the water protection from the flooding in this part of the world here in Winnipeg but also harnessing that tremendous resource for its uses. As a result of holding back some of that freshwater, we have seen the likes of the irrigation projects developed in this province. We have seen the potato processing plants developed in this province. We have seen a packing industry developed in this province. We have seen the canola crushing industry developed and other seed-crushing industries developed in this province where there is a tremendous expectation of use of water.

All we have to do is build on those things so that eventually we can attract larger and bigger and better industries into this province, be they in the food processing business, which is one of our strengths, the livestock processing industry, which is another one of our strengths, but also in the attraction of industries into this province from other places in the world.

My colleague the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) spoke about the need to construct retention dams on tributaries that lead to the Red River. At the same time, I spoke about the need to develop another reservoir above the Shellmouth Dam to use as a reservoir to maintain the level of the Lake of the Prairies, which is the Shellmouth Dam, and also to maintain a regular flow through the Assiniboine River so that communities like Brandon, Portage and all of the communities along the Assiniboine would have not only adequate water but also could harness that water for the use within their communities.

This, to me, is not just a whim. It is not just a pie in the sky. This is an actual project that was

engineered back in 1967 and could today be put in place to harness some more of that wonderful resource that we keep flushing through our river systems in the spring of each year.

Water, as you have seen by this government, seems to be a fairly important focus. This government has put in place a minister responsible for water. It is these kinds of people that we expect to put these suggestions forward. I have put them forward because I believe that this goes beyond partisan politics. I think I put it forward because it goes to the building of the blocks that need to be put in place for the economy of our province.

I want to go back again to 1967, when the government of the day, led by the Honourable Duff Roblin, made a commitment because they were going to be flooding out a significant portion of agricultural land in the Assiniboine River. So along the Assiniboine River they bought up the land, flooded that land, and then said in lieu of us flooding this land and taking it away from the people where a hundred families were displaced out of the valley, another community of 450 disappeared because it was cut off from the rest of the world, so to speak. But there was a payback for that. The payback was the development of recreation, tourism and agricultural resources along the Shellmouth Dam.

Unfortunately, what happened, another government came into place. That government saw as its mandate another opportunity. That opportunity was at Hecla Island. So the resources that were identified for the building of recreation and business opportunities along the Lake of the Prairies, as it is known now, disappeared and went to build Hecla Island.

Now, I have no difficulty with using resources for those kinds of purposes. I have a problem with a commitment made and not kept. For years we have been fighting to get that commitment back.

Mr. Speaker, it is no different than some of the northern flood agreements that were settled by our government that were outstanding for a number of years. This is our "northern flood agreement" that is still outstanding because those commitments were not made. While we were in government, we did invest the money in projects like the Assiniboine Ski Hill, like enhancing some of the recreation areas allowing for some business opportunities to develop

along the shores of the Lake of the Prairies. But it is a far cry from what was really committed.

* (21:20)

So I look at the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) who represents the Aboriginal people of this province, and I respect his fight for his people in terms of fighting that they are treated properly under the Northern Flood Agreement. We tried to make that commitment true by making sure that we signed off on all of the northern flood agreements that were outstanding. I think there was one that we were not able to accomplish. This is another one. This does not include Aboriginal people only, but there is an Aboriginal component to this that has not been settled.

So I come back to the bill that is before us today, and in speaking to it I look at the government's approach to this and the short-sightedness of this approach, because what they are trying to do is seize an opportunity for political purposes. In that, what they are doing is they are setting up a scheme where people who are going to be working on this project are going to be forced to pay union dues or to be unionized.

I am not an anti-union person. I think there is a place for unions. I think they have a place in our society. I think they have a function that is very important to the stability and the balance between many employees and employers in our province. We have seen in the past how workers perhaps were taken advantage of; on the other hand, there has to be a balance also on the other side. That balance today is being attacked.

Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing under the flood agreement is a forced unionization of people who are going to work on the project, not by virtue of them becoming a member of a union but by virtue of them paying what is now going to be called a "service fee" for services that may or may not be rendered. But that fee is there. The other thing that is quite objectionable to many Manitobans is the fact that today this government has chosen to dedicate the training aspect of it, by the reports that we have received lately, to a particular group, again, to a union group to provide training for the floodway.

This is unfair. Again, it destroys the integrity of what we should be about in including all Manitobans

rather than segregating and giving a piece of the action to a specific group without tender, without proper accounting, if you like and without due diligence. I do not care who sits in the Premier's chair. But the issue here is one of fairness. Manitobans will not accept this. Eventually, this government will be punished by Manitobans for what it is doing.

Now our side of the House has given enough warning signals to the government that they should not do this. We have pleaded with them to change their minds. They put a commissioner in place, an arbitrator, if you like, or someone who can negotiate and conciliate, and they call him independent. But I have to ask the question: Is Mr. Wally Fox-Decent as independent as this government says? I think Mr. Wally Fox-Decent is an employee of government and was an employee of the former government. So there are some questions that are arising in the minds of people about the integrity of the process that was entered into.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about this legislation and we talk about this bill, we really have to ask ourselves many questions about whether or not this is the best way to proceed. In discussing this bill, I can only talk about some of the unfairnesses I see developing. When people who are going to be looking after the interests of ratepayers and taxpayers in this province are excluded from sitting at the negotiation table, I say we have a problem. If we are really open and we really want to lay our cards on the table, then why would we not allow the employer groups to sit at the negotiations table? What is there to be afraid of, that these people are going to talk for the taxpayer? Are they going to talk for the people whose money is at risk? Is that what there is a fear of? Or is there a fear that, in fact, those who have vested interests here are not going to be able to have their way quite as easily?

We have seen the construction industry speak out about the process that this government has entered into, about the approach, the attitude. You destroy a province's integrity. You destroy the attractiveness of a province for investors to come to when you do things of this nature, because, if you can do it on a project like the floodway, what is to preclude you from doing this on other projects, whether it be at a hospital construction, at a university construction, at an industrial construction? What is to prevent the government from saying that

we are going to use this very same approach on other projects as well?

So I think we need to be thoughtful. I think the government has to step back. It has to take another look. It has to take a broader look at what it is doing. I say to this government that rather than looking at just simply widening the ditch around Winnipeg take a look at how we can harness that resource that we want to flush through this floodway for the use of the people of this province and for the building of the economy of this province. Because the opportunities are just not here in Winnipeg, we have to make sure that we provide opportunities outside of the city. At the same time, we have an obligation to protect people outside of the city, too. Now, I am supportive of making sure that we protect the people who live in this large city. This is the engine that drives the economy for our province. We have to protect it. This is our city; we know that. But at the same time, we have to ensure that we also protect the other parts and we also allow for opportunity to exist in other parts as well.

I hear the Premier talking about that, well, maybe we need to start looking at what recreational enhancements, what recreational opportunities can come along with the construction of the Red River floodway. Yes, that is probably true. But we have not even lived up to the commitments that were made back in 1967 and in 1970 to the people in the western side of this province, namely the Shellmouth Dam area. Those obligations have never, ever, been fulfilled. We put something like \$1.5 million into that Asessippi Ski Hill, which is a drop in the bucket in terms of what was committed. It is a drop in the bucket of the tax losses that were incurred by the municipalities as a result of dislocation of people out of that valley and taking the actual land out of the assessments and out of the tax base of those municipalities. There were hundreds of thousands of dollars lost to the people in that area, to the economy of those communities, that has never been replaced. All we are asking for is that those people be treated just like we want to treat the people in the construction of the Red River Floodway.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I have gone on long enough now. I would just simply say that I expect this government to take a step back, to take a look at how they are approaching the whole issue of the building of the Floodway. The Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) says; "We will build this.

We will build it on time, and we will build it on budget." But he cannot tell us, specifically, what the budget is.

I say to this government take a sober look at what you are doing about forced unionization and unionization fees. Take a look at disenfranchising important groups in this province from sitting at the negotiation table, and ask yourself whether, in fact, you are embracing Manitobans to ensure that this project is of benefit to everyone, but whether you have a very narrow focussed view of the world as it relates to this project.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity, and I will give up my place at this time.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 31, The Floodway Authority Act.

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

Bill 33—The Public Servants Insurance Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister for Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), that Bill 33, The Public Servants Insurance Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

* (21:30)

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 33, The Public Servants Insurance Amendment Act.

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

Bill 34—The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Water Stewardship, that Bill 34, The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 34, The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act.

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

Bill 35—The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister for Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), that Bill 35, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I would like to just put a few words on the record regarding Bill 35, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act.

I think this is a fairly straightforward bill. It has been extensively reviewed in the industry over the last three to four years. It is part of a regular process that the caisses populaires and credit unions go through in reassessing their legislation, their act.

There has been, as I say, industry involvement and it is fairly industry driven. There is consensus that it is a good bill. It reflects the proposed legal name changes. It makes it easier to change the forms as required so that the caisses populaires and credit

unions can carry on their business, and it also gives a little bit more power to the registrar.

We certainly recognize the importance of credit unions and caisses populaires, especially throughout rural Manitoba. They have generally formed the backbone of some rural farming communities when they were first initiated many years ago to allow for credit for people to carry on in an agrarian economy, which can be very unstable, and we certainly recognize the growth of the credit unions and caisses populaires. We are thinking of the Steinbach Credit Union now that it also has head offices in Winnipeg.

In my own community, where there are no other banks and the credit union is part of that community, certainly, with the services they provide and the lower interest rates for lending and greater savings plans that they have, I want to commend their operations. Therefore, I think, Mr. Speaker, we have no concerns with this bill and think that we can pass it.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I, too, want to put a few points on the record regarding the caisses populaires act, credit unions. The purpose of the credit union and caisses populaires act is stated to provide them with the flexibility and the financial services that they may offer.

Mr. Speaker, I have been on the credit union board, actually, for 15 years and, for 5 of those years, I had the privilege of serving as the president of the Winkler Credit Union. Certainly, the credit unions do have a tremendous impact within the communities where they reside. So I am pleased to be able to put a few comments on the record here regarding the act that has been put in place here. It is something that is going to be of benefit to the people that they serve. So, as the credit unions in the province of Manitoba continue to grow and expand and meet the needs of many, many people, it is certainly something that we are looking forward to speaking to, and indicate that the credit unions need to be supported in the work that they continue to do.

With those few words, I am going to turn it over to the Member for Southdale.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand up and put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 35, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act. The purpose is

related to their giving them more flexibility in the financial services that they may offer.

We have seen a tremendous growth in the credit unions here in Manitoba. In fact, a lot of times you go through some of the small towns and some of the hamlets here in Manitoba and you see the various credit unions. I know in my constituency, I have financial institutes; I have credit unions, and they appeal to a lot of people. I think that with their involvement in the community—I know that they have supported community events and functions in my area. I happen to have a community centre in my area where I have seen some of their activities and their involvements in some of the situations that I have come across.

The idea behind the bill, the amendments, is to give them more flexibility in financial services that they may offer. I think that that is something that a lot of people are trying to get their finances in order. It is a situation where, now, when we look at planning for the future, we see ads more and more about financial planners, financial institutions wanting to offer services to people so that they can be more prepared for retirement, or for investments, or for long-range planning.

I think that this is one of the areas where credit unions can fill some voids that are created, and where more people are doing their financial banking. It is always nice to go to one institute where you can have the ability to establish a relationship, a rapport, a knowledge of not only the banking manager, possibly, the clerks and the tellers—I do not think they even call them tellers any more. I think they are all called financial planners right now or financial assistants. In that way, people can look at the availability of what they can invest their money in.

What we are doing with this bill or what is being proposed with this bill is the right to issue directives which give credit unions and caisses populaires some areas that they must follow. I think that it is naturally an outgrowth of confidence that the people have in dealing with financial institutions. They want to be able to deal with a financial institution that has the credibility, the background and the ability to give them direction or advice in not only the handling of their own affairs internally for the financial institution but the confidence in the people who are dealing with them, so that they can have access to advice, to investments, or, as has been mentioned a

lot of times, for even the availability of making loans in regard to purchases of homes and in capital investments of a significant nature.

* (21:40)

In my particular area of Southdale, my constituency, we have a tremendous amount of new growth there. A lot of it has been recognized. It is growing. The reason is because of the availability of that area of the city, the fact of having the ability to enjoy some of the community in efforts other than the fact that the schools are not being adequately looked after by this government.

This government wants to stifle the growth of my particular area by not providing the social infrastructure, the schools, the community efforts and community clubs and expansions there. They recognized that just because they are involved with a land deal—in fact, in the Royalwood area of my constituency, you have a tremendous amount of new homes under the government as a financial partner. I believe the former, former, former minister of Urban Affairs, maybe, was even involved with that deal in the Royalwood area. That is a good thing, Mr. Speaker. It is a good thing. It is a good thing for our area that the government is able to participate in that growth, but they also have the responsibility to look after the educational needs and the social infrastructure that we looked at.

One of the things that the people go to is the financial institutions, like the credit union, to look for funding. This bill, here, will give them the ability to be a little bit more flexible in their dealings with the credit unions. I feel that that is a good thing.

So, with those short comments, I know there are other members here that are wanting to—*[interjection]*—short comments and short words, short comments, but good words. I will now sit down. I know my other colleagues are wishing to make some comments.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I take a great deal of pleasure to be able to speak to The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act. I think it is very good legislation that will be allowing the credit unions to expand their services and become more competitive with the banks.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) says I used to work for the banks. Well, I did kind of indirectly, but never in

the banking field. They would not trust me with those big pots of money, you know, so I had some other opportunities, but this is particularly important to my constituency because not only do we not have any high schools, we do not have any banks either, but we do have the good fortune of having two wonderful credit unions.

We have Vantis Credit Union; we have the Steinbach Credit Union. They serve the lovely constituencies of Fort Whyte, Lindenwoods and Whyte Ridge. I know the Premier takes great pride in his involvement in the development of Whyte Ridge. It is a lovely community. It would be lovelier if it had a high school, but we will leave that up to funding.

I have had the very great fortune of being able to attend a couple of events at the Steinbach Credit Union. It is that wonderful building that was the transformation of Kleysen Transport's head office into the Steinbach Credit Union. I was able to be there for the sod turning and for the grand opening, a tremendous addition to the community. They provide a drive-through teller.

The Premier wants more growth, more growth. Well, I am with him. We want more growth in Fort Whyte. We want more growth in the city of Winnipeg, but, in particular, to the Steinbach Credit Union. They are following their traditional history. I had the opportunity to remark on this at their grand opening. If you think of where they started in Steinbach, a thriving community of hardworking people who needed some banking services, the Steinbach Credit Union was there to provide the services that they needed, and to help that community grow to provide good financial advice, to provide sound loans when people came forward with good business plans.

The only problem the Steinbach Credit Union had was that, for a number of years, a tremendous number of their customers on the way to the credit union were forced to stop as the train went by on the train track. Now that train track is north of Steinbach, but it was still an impediment to business. But the business grew and grew and the Steinbach Credit Union we all know is a tremendous success story and somebody at some point had the wisdom to look forward and decide that there should be some type of crossing for that railway track. Now we have today unimpeded routes to the Steinbach Credit Union; you get there over a nice overpass that goes over the

railway tracks so no one is forced to wait, and it has been good for the credit union.

We have the Steinbach Credit Union moving to Winnipeg. The first branch in Winnipeg is in Fort Whyte, a hardworking community, people with a strong work ethic, a good sense of business, who need the services that the Steinbach Credit Union can offer. The only problem is a lot of their customers and employees have to wait at a train track. You know, similar to what had to take place in Steinbach. We are also fortunate that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has had an awakening, an epiphany as it could be described, and finally, after three and a half to four years of fighting it tooth and nail, he finally before the last election had to concede that yes, it would be a wise expenditure of government money to build an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes, thereby not only freeing the citizens but freeing the credit union movement to continue to grow and grow in the city of Winnipeg and have unimpeded access.

So we are looking forward to the day when anybody from all over Winnipeg will be able to do their business at the Steinbach Credit Union, take advantage of their services and take advantage of their wonderful drive-through teller without having to worry about being held up by a train at Kenaston and Wilkes. We thank the Premier for driving that home. We are looking forward to at least one promise, one election promise that he will be around to see the fulfillment of, and that is the building of the Kenaston underpass. We are pleased with that.

We are pleased to see this bill pass. We are pleased to see the government take one small step in terms of helping local business in Manitoba expand. We have heard over and over and over from the Business Council of Manitoba, from the Winnipeg Chamber, from the Manitoba Chambers, all the impediments that the Doer government has put in the way of business. We are pleased to see that finally the Premier is doing the right thing and removing some of those impediments to business growth. We thank him for that, we thank the government for this legislation, and we wish the credit union movement, in particular the Steinbach Credit Union, the Vantis Credit Union in my constituency, much success in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 35, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act.

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

Bill 38—The Fisheries Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), that Bill 38, The Fisheries Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I heard a yelp of dismay across the way, but there are only 10 minutes left, so surely he will be able to endure.

Mr. Speaker, this act has a nasty habit that this government has acquired lately, and that is to put about three or four very disparate parts of a bill together into one piece legislation where some of it is laudable and should well be supported. Other aspects perhaps should be treated with less enthusiasm, and this bill represents exactly that combination of changes.

At first glance, changing the name "fisherman" to "fisher," while it may be important, it does not seem to warrant a bill quite all on its own after all of these years of having fishermen out there, going back to biblical times; I am not going to go there, despite the conversions that have occurred on this carpet from time to time, but there are some aspects that need to be fleshed out and considered carefully by the minister and by the department in terms of the changes that are included here.

* (21:50)

This bill adds some significant sweeping changes for enforcement and while that seems to be the quickest and most normal reaction of the department when over the last few years they were criticized for allowing fishing to occur that many of us figured was illegal, many of us felt was damaging

the future of the fisheries in some parts of the province, the reaction was, "Well first of all, we will increase the fines." I remember the press release saying that we will increase the fines if you destroy the nets that you find that might be fishing illegally so we would have balance. So the community out there, if it was fighting among itself, everybody would get fined or penalized.

This now brings some of that to fruition, but the basis of some of these changes, it seems to me, began about three to four years ago when there was an increase in what many conservation-minded fishers, if you will, or those who were sport fishermen, people who were involved in tourism, were extremely concerned.

Frankly, there is an issue out there that this bill will give us an opportunity to think about in terms of sport fishery, tourism and all of the aspects of attracting people to this province because they wish to participate in fishing, in this case for our natural resources, the sport fish in the lakes in this province. We have many and we have some good lakes, but while this addresses the regulatory, it addresses the press release side of government; I am not so sure that it addresses the government's responsibility in terms of keeping up with the tourism aspect which is driven only by the fact that we will have lakes that do have fish in them that will be available for those who want to get involved in sport fishing, catch and release in some cases. But we have a lot of lakes out there right now that are stocked by the government or assisted in being stocked by the government.

What seems to have happened is that the hatcheries have had their budgets reduced by about 25 percent in the last series of manipulations of the responsibility of the Department of Conservation. That is getting down to the point. I will be the first to admit that during the nineties this government, among others, was reduced in its budgetary responsibilities, and in some cases reduced its capability to provide services. But in the end one of the things that has to be considered is at what level of management, or what level of non-management, is the government going to say that this is the basic minimum which we are prepared to support this activity?

The fish hatcheries in this province are at risk of not being able to deliver and meet their mandate. Right now, Mr. Speaker, and there has always been some question about this over the years, being able

to even transport the fingerlings to the lakes where they want to have them stocked. Now the department is saying to those who are volunteers and work in the area, they are saying, "Well, if you can find a way of transporting the fish we will give them to you, you can take them back and stock them." That is not a responsibility that we can afford to undertake anymore.

Worse than that, despite all of this regulation and despite the dependence of tourism on having well stocked lakes that are attractive to anglers from within and outside of the province, we need to have some assurance from this government they will continue to support these lakes through fish enhancement projects. Right now it would appear that when the time comes this fall to begin to assemble the fry for next spring because there are some fall spawn that can be collected, that the hatcheries may not even have enough money to keep the hydro on.

Mr. Speaker, that is what I am talking about not being able to live up to their core responsibility. If you cannot keep the lights on, you probably cannot keep the pumps going to keep the fish healthy so you have those fingerlings in the spring. It is elementary fish rearing I suppose.

That is not my reason for bringing it to this floor. My reason for bringing it here is that we can have all of this regulatory authority in the world given to the department, but from the aspect of fish enhancement, tourism, the two go hand in hand. We have a lot of bragging going on in this Chamber about how tourism is going to be managed better. We are going to have an all-encompassing, all stakeholders involved. Here we have the Department of Conservation that might not be able to keep up with one of its elementary responsibilities, to provide some supplemental hatchery to support these sport lakes.

So, if we pass this bill, and I am sure we will, I hope that the government takes it to heart and considers the other responsibilities and aspects that go with the management of fisheries in this province.

There is one other thing that needs to be put on the record, Mr. Speaker.

An Honourable Member: You did not tell us that in Roblin the fisheries were not going to have any money for producing little baby trout.

Mr. Cummings: Well, you know what, it is not too late yet. The minister could redeem himself. If he went back to Treasury Board and did a little massaging or if he looked at some of the other methods of financing fish hatcheries in order to keep them functional, then we will be quite supportive of it.

I can clearly recall the absolute outrage on the part of the now government members when angling fees were increased to this province. It was an outrage. We were going to destroy tourism. Some of my own colleagues were getting a little excited too. It was not a good thing.

Now we see again in this bill another increase in the angling fee for non-residents and even an increase in the cost for conservation licences. Of course, conservation licences are generally where our senior fishers will apply, those who do not need to have all the fish they can eat or perhaps are satisfied with a couple, as long as they catch it. They may even be able to take a picture and release it.

But this government roars ahead every time it introduces another bill in this session. There is a little bit of cash that sticks to the government as the bill goes through this process. The licensing is increased and the revenue stream will be increased. I hope the minister will take some of that revenue and put it back into the hatcheries so we can in fact have the quality of fishing that we need. Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 38, The Fisheries Amendment Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): You know, the Premier (Mr. Doer) is right. All the government wants to do is get this legislation passed. I agree we had better get it passed, because there are some elements of this legislation which perhaps are questionable but at the end of the day we are trying to get the business of the people done. We have co-operated so much with this government. We will continue to do that until the hour is ten o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order, he does not have a point of order.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): The Committee of Supply has before it for our consideration the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of expenditure, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

On June 1, 2004, the Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) tabled the list of ministers of the Crown who may be called for questioning in debate on the concurrence motion.

The ministers listed are as follows: Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux), Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson), Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton),

Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick), Minister of Advanced Education and Training (Ms. McGifford), Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers).

We are now on this item, Minister of Family Services and Housing.

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I was asked to bring some information back, so perhaps I could. The question was about the position of Carolyn Ryan. I went back and got the information that I think you were wanting.

Carolyn Ryan had sent an e-mail to the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) on Friday, the 21st, 2004. I am reading from the e-mail. "I just wanted to let you know that I have accepted a short-term reassignment in our Housing division for the remainder of my pregnancy which will be in September. I am finding the hours here a little more than I can take on right now. I have enjoyed working with you. Feel free to call Tom"—that would be Tom Garrett, the special assistant—"with whatever you may need."

So that is some of the information that I think was inquired about earlier. This is a three-month assignment. It is to deal with special assignments relating to special initiatives such as the Affordable Housing Initiative. Then, of course, Ms. Ryan will be going on maternity leave, certainly by September 21, which is her due date. So that one is a little bit of a moving target. After that the department's understanding is that she will be off work for one year, and there has been no discussion up until this point about if she would return, and in what capacity she would return.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): My question, again, regarding Carolyn Ryan. She has been in the department on a term, so does that then secure a position back within Housing when she returns?

Ms. Melnick: It is a seconded position. There has been no discussion thus far beyond her going on maternity leave probably in September and that she is wanting to take one year off after that, but there has been no further discussion that I am aware of.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Chairperson, so the position, then, was a vacant position within the department and Carolyn Ryan was seconded to that position from the minister's office. Am I correct in that assumption? I am sorry. I just arrived, so I did not hear the answer.

Ms. Melnick: If you would like, I could go over the information.

I was asked to bring back information about Carolyn Ryan, as had been requested previously today. I have an e-mail that was sent from Ms. Ryan to the Member for Minnedosa on May 21, 2004, "Just wanted to let you know that I have accepted a short-term reassignment in our Housing division for the remainder of my pregnancy." On an aside, she is due on September 21. "I am finding the hours here a little more than I want to take on right now. I have enjoyed working with you and please feel free to contact Tom," that would be Tom Garrett, the special assistant, "with whatever you may need."

Ms. Ryan has been seconded for approximately three months to work on special assignments relating to special initiatives, such as the Affordable Housing Initiative. She will be going on mat leave sometime in September, I assume. It is a bit of a moving target as to the exact date right now. My understanding is her intention is then to take one year off for maternity leave. There was a question that was posed earlier about her returning. There has been no discussion as of yet if she will return and in what capacity.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I would assume the department approached Ms. Ryan and asked her to come over to work on special projects. Would I be correct in that assumption?

Ms. Melnick: I was not involved in any of the discussions, so I really could not let you know how it evolved.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The minister is indicating to me there was no discussion by her with her deputy or with anyone in the department regarding Carolyn Ryan's moving into the department. She had no discussion with anyone, was not aware until she was informed that Carolyn Ryan was moving?

Ms. Melnick: I was made aware discussions were happening, but I did not partake in them.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Is the minister indicating her special adviser, Carolyn Ryan, approached her and indicated she was going to have discussions with the department on moving into the department? Am I fair on that assumption?

Ms. Melnick: I was made aware Carolyn Ryan was wanting to move, and I did not involve myself in the discussions.

* (15:10)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess, just to be clear, because Carolyn Ryan was a political staff of the minister's, a political appointment, I know, who was there before the minister arrived, but she was political staff and the minister indicates she was made aware. I guess the question is who made her aware. Did Carolyn Ryan have those discussions with the minister indicating she wanted to move into the department and that she was going to pursue that option with the department?

Ms. Melnick: Carolyn Ryan was the special adviser. You are right; she was there certainly upon my appointment. She had made me aware that she would be wanting to move into another position. She wanted to move. I acknowledged her right to do so. I was not part of the discussions that ensued from that point on.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chair, but again, if a political employee of the minister seeks to move into another position within the bureaucracy, that becomes a civil service position. It is a position that is protected under The Civil Service Act. The position that she moved from was not a position that was protected under The Civil Service Act. So then what would be the process? What did Carolyn Ryan explain to the minister would be the process for her seeking a job? Normally speaking, there is a vacancy; there is a position that is bulletined. I do not know whether the minister answered or not whether this position was a bulletined position. There was a job available. Was there a bulletin circulated through the civil service indicating that there was a need to fill this position?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I was not involved in further discussions. I had, I think, reiterated when the member came into the room that it is a seconded position.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chair, but there is a process for civil service positions. I know that there are many

individuals that I have spoken to out in my community or throughout Manitoba that are looking to possibly explore a career opportunity within the civil service, and there is a process that people have to follow. There are positions that are bulletined. People apply for those positions. There is a competitive process and individuals are hired. That is when there appears to be a need within the civil service to fill a vacancy. Now that is one way of doing it. Another way of doing it is a direct appointment. A direct appointment usually is at the recommendation of someone. Obviously, this is a seconded position, but it then appears to me that it was a direct appointment, because I am not hearing the minister say that the job was bulletined unless she can expand upon that. If it was not bulletined, then it becomes a direct appointment.

What process would be followed to move a political staffperson from the minister's office into a civil service position? There has to be a process that was followed and, out of the clear blue, Carolyn Ryan must have approached someone. She indicated she approached the minister. The other option would have been to approach the deputy minister or someone directly within the Department of Housing. The minister is saying that she had no discussion with anyone in the department, her deputy or no one else, indicating that her political staffperson wanted an opportunity to move into the bureaucracy.

Is the minister telling me that she never spoke to anyone, that her political adviser went directly to someone in the civil service, someone in the bureaucracy, and indicated, "I want to move into a job in the bureaucracy. Will you accommodate that for me?" It was one or the other. Did the minister direct it, or did her political staff have the authority to approach someone on her own in the bureaucracy to obtain a job.

Ms. Melnick: Again, I was made aware by Ms. Ryan. I did not involve myself in the process.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Mr. Chair, the minister indicates that she was not made aware that Carolyn Ryan was looking for a position in the bureaucracy. Did she believe, the minister in her responsibility, that Ms. Ryan had the ability to speak directly? I mean, if the position was not bulletined, how would Ms. Ryan have been provided with the opportunity to be seconded into the department if there was no position bulletined?

Somebody would have had to make Carolyn Ryan aware, or Carolyn Ryan had to go to someone, or the minister would have had to intervene on her behalf with someone to have that secondment take place. Maybe the minister could try to explain what the process was.

Ms. Melnick: This is a secondment into a position for three months. It is not a civil service position, as the member has been describing. It is a secondment.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, if there is no civil service position, how could Ms. Ryan be seconded into a position? Or was there a position created? There are only two options. It is a civil service position that was there or a position was created for Ms. Ryan. It is one or the other.

Ms. Melnick: There was a position. Ms. Ryan has been seconded.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is not good enough. That is not a good enough explanation. How did Ms. Ryan know that there was a position in the civil service unless someone on her behalf asked someone in the bureaucracy to look for a position for Ms. Ryan, or Ms. Ryan went directly over the minister's head into the bureaucracy to ask for a job? Now, it has to have happened some way. Can the minister explain to me what happened?

Ms. Melnick: I was made aware that Ms. Ryan was wanting to leave her position as special adviser. I did not become involved in further discussions.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So the minister is indicating that she gave her blessing for Ms. Ryan to approach someone in her department to ask for a job in the civil service.

Ms. Melnick: As I have explained before, this is not a civil service position. She has been seconded into this position to work on special assignments dealing with special initiatives such as the Affordable Housing Initiative. She still is maintaining the position of special adviser.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, that explains things a little bit more. So she is still occupying the position as special adviser in the minister's office. She has not moved into a civil service position, so she is not protected under The Civil Service Act. She is still a political appointee but is working on special

initiatives in the department. Am I correct in that assumption?

Ms. Melnick: She is working on special assignments that are dealing with special initiatives.

* (15:20)

Mrs. Mitchelson: So that means, then, that she is not entitled to the benefits under The Civil Service Act that employees of government are. She still is employed in a political staff position.

Ms. Melnick: That is correct.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chair, it seemed to take a long time to get to that, but I am glad that we got understanding of that.

Ms. Melnick: I know that the member has been waiting for some information on Estimates, so I would like to give you what we have today. I know that you are still waiting for other pieces of information.

Mrs. Rowat: I was wondering if the minister would be able to table that information for me, please.

Ms. Melnick: Sure.

Mr. Chairperson: In the meantime, we can continue.

Mrs. Rowat: Is there any other information that you were planning to table or is that the extent of it?

Ms. Melnick: That is it.

Mrs. Rowat: I would like to go back to the issue of the death of the baby that we had discussed earlier, prior to the break for lunch. When we were discussing with the minister the issue of process, we care a lot about the process. We are not interested in getting in direct conflict of the interest or making comment. Otherwise, we think the process is very important for getting the details of specifics of what happened to the baby. But we are very interested in wanting to know what the minister has done outside of this specific incident but very much related to her department's process in dealing with babies in care. So I would like to ask the minister what briefing she has had with her department, with her staff to this point and what assurances that she believes she has

that the checks and balances are in place to ensure that all other children that are out there, that may be at risk or are potentially at risk, can be assured that their best interests are being taken into consideration by this department.

Ms. Melnick: I am very happy to hear that the members of the opposition are respectful of the processes. I think it is extremely important that, if we are to understand what happened, we recognize that there are certain processes that we should be following. I have mentioned the two investigations that are underway and the review of the CME to determine whether or not there should be an inquest. Certainly we are watching this situation very closely. I am having discussions with staff which are also recognizing the need to respect the investigations and the review currently underway. We will continue to follow that pattern.

Mrs. Rowat: My question is specific to outcomes. What has the minister done in response to the incident, the tragedy? What has she done with discussions with her staff? Have there been any changes, any recommendations? Is she moving forward on ensuring that the children that are out there right now that are at potential risk can be assured that there will not be any incidences similar to what has happened here? Can the minister respond to that, please, and provide some type of assurances?

Ms. Melnick: Well, certainly, the discussions that we had have been around the processes that are to be followed and how those processes, we understand, are going to take a bit of time. We are continuing to provide the full services through the perinatal service unit that we have been providing since 1999. This, of course, includes the one-on-one counselling for every teen mother under 18. We provide services for teen mothers and fathers, and we will continue to ensure that those services are available to teen parents around the province.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, my question is regarding the positions that are presently available through the perinatal unit. If the minister can indicate to me—my understanding is there are eight positions with this unit and are they all full? Are there people in place in those positions and, specific to the case or the cases similar to the tragedy, I am curious to know whether there is a one-to-one consultation with parents that may be at risk?

Ms. Melnick: There are ten positions. Two, I believe, are advisers—looking for their actual titles—and eight social workers.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, could you indicate to me how many positions are filled? Are there any vacancies within that department or branch?

Mr. Chairperson: May the Chair make a suggestion? May the minister indicate to the committee, third person? Thank you, Minister.

Ms. Melnick: My understanding is that that is an area that we do keep fully staffed. From time to time people may be on vacation, may be on various leaves. There may be positions opening and then of course it may take time to fill the positions, but I know that that is an area that we do maintain.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, are, at this point, the positions all filled?

Ms. Melnick: My understanding is that that is an area that we do keep staffed. I do not know exactly right now if someone is on vacation, if someone is on a leave, if there is a position open, but that is an area that we do keep staffed.

Mrs. Rowat: Would the minister be able to share with the committee the caseload that these staff people would have on an average and what the position is of the department on leave, either vacation time or sick leave, if there is a replacement that is brought in to cover that person's caseload.

Ms. Melnick: My understanding is that at any given time there would be a caseload of 20 or 25 that may fluctuate on the individual worker, may fluctuate on the individual person the social worker is working with. I am sorry, what was the second half of your question?

Mrs. Rowat: Caseload. I have forgotten.

* (15:30)

Ms. Melnick: Oh, leave. You asked me about leave. As I had mentioned, this is an area I know is a front-line service, and so we do make every attempt to keep it fully staffed. If there are people on leave, on vacation, people changing positions, we would cover as best we could. Certainly, if there are positions that are becoming vacant, there is a process, as the

member from River East spoke to earlier, we would be going through.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to the committee what the current caseload is, per worker, right at this present time in the unit and, if for the last month, there has been anybody on vacation or on sick leave within that unit?

Ms. Melnick: Again, as I stated a few minutes previous, my understanding is the caseload is roughly 20 to 25. This may vary depending on the individual social worker and the one-on-one counselling that is necessary for individuals. As for the leave, for the last month I know people are taking leaves, going on vacation, et cetera, and if there are openings, individuals do try to help out to fill any gaps there may be.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Can the minister indicate, she has indicated there are eight staff, how many positions are filled today, how many are on leave and how many are on vacation today?

Ms. Melnick: As I mentioned previously, I know sometimes people are on leave, on vacation, leaving positions. This is an area we do certainly attempt to keep fully staffed. It is a front-line position area of the department. There are two supervisory individuals and eight social workers.

Mr. Loewen: I can appreciate the minister tries to do a lot of things in her department, but I have a straightforward question. As of today, how many people work there, how many positions are on leave and how many people are on vacation? What is the specific status of the staff today? I mean, it is an issue we have been dealing with in the Legislature for two weeks. You know, the minister should know the information, and I think Manitobans have a right to know what it is.

Ms. Melnick: I would be happy to get back to you with that information as soon as I can.

Mr. Loewen: The information is only a phone call away. I am absolutely astounded that given the situation and given the situation of the baby death the minister does not have that information at her fingertips. How long does she think it would take to find out that information? If she needs five minutes to make the phone call, I think this committee would

be willing to have a five-minute recess so she could find that information out. It is very critical.

Ms. Melnick: If we would like to break the committee, we could do that.

Mr. Loewen: Well, we would be willing to do that for five minutes, if the minister could make that call and come back.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee that we take a recess for five minutes? *[Agreed]*

The committee recessed at 3:33 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:51 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee, come to order, please. We are continuing the committee proceedings.

Ms. Melnick: We have an unofficial number, but we are just waiting to make sure that we have the verified numbers. It will be brought down as soon as possible.

I just wanted to clarify, I think I misunderstood a question earlier asked about caseload. The 22, 25 is overall. In the perinatal unit about 30 is an average caseload.

Mr. Loewen: Can the minister just give us that rough estimate so that we have an idea?

Ms. Melnick: I would really prefer to wait for the official number.

Mr. Loewen: Well, we will take the minister at her word that we will get that soon. With regard to the perinatal program, can the minister confirm that the young child that was unfortunately beaten to death was included in this program? Was it an active file in this program?

Ms. Melnick: I cannot speak to the specifics of this case.

Mr. Loewen: I am not asking for any specifics. The minister stood up in the house repeatedly and gloated about this program. I just want to know if this young child was a part of this program, because that will

indicate to us where we should go with the questioning?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I cannot speak to the specifics of this case.

Mr. Loewen: Is the minister unaware or is she just refusing to answer?

Ms. Melnick: I am simply unable to speak to the specifics of this case.

Mr. Loewen: Why are you unable? Have you got legal advice that you cannot even advise if there was a file open on this child? What makes you unable to give the information to this Legislature that you are bound to?

Mr. Chairperson: Can we again learn the learning curve. Instead of using "you" direct, can we do it in the third person?

Mr. Loewen: Can the minister indicate who has told her that she is unable to talk about this file, or is that something that she has just determined by herself?

Ms. Melnick: Under The Child and Family Services Act, I cannot speak to the specifics of this case or any case.

Mr. Loewen: So you cannot indicate, the minister is unwilling to indicate to this committee whether there was a file or whether this child was even covered by this program?

Ms. Melnick: As minister, I am unable to speak to the specifics of this case or any case.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I find this hard to grasp. We do not know who this child is. The public is not even allowed to know the first name of the child. We have a 16-month-old baby that has been beaten to death. Nobody except the immediate family has been allowed to have a proper grieving period. This is horrendous. We read in the paper that experienced and dedicated police officers who have dealt with these situations over the years indicating that if we, the general public, were to find out the details of this, it would make us sick to our stomach.

Quite simply, we are not asking the minister to divulge any confidential information. She stood up in the House and talked a number of times, both in

committee and in the Legislature, about the program that she seems to be so proud of. We simply want to know if the child that was beaten to death was being provided service through the perinatal program. She is not divulging any confidential information to anybody. Nobody can put information together. If she is speaking to it in the House, surely she can tell us whether or not the child and her mother were being provided service by this unit.

Ms. Melnick: I really appreciate your concern. I understand that you are deeply saddened, as we all are. However, as minister, I cannot speak to the specifics of this case or any other case under The Child and Family Services Act.

Mr. Loewen: Well, we have some general questions on the program itself then. We are all saddened. You would have to be a rock not to be saddened by this case. I think we all agree to that, but, on the other hand, I think it would be terribly disrespectful if that is used as a shield to prevent information from getting to the public.

One of the reasons for the question, quite frankly, is that in the description of this program it indicates that an individual or an infant would be moved out of this program on the first occurrence of either the mother turning 18 which we know she was not, or the child turning one, which she was. The child was 16 months. Is that the standard practice within this perinatal program?

Ms. Melnick: The perinatal service unit deals on a one-on-one basis, and when a mother is brought into the program, as mandated also under The Child and Family Services Act, she would be assessed as to various areas: parenting skills, financial ability, relationship with the other parent, relationship with family, kinship relationships. There would be a lot of assessment, a lot of discussion on a one-on-one and then the case would be treated on an individual basis. So what may be decided in the case of one person, there would be another decision made in the case of another, just depending on the circumstances that I have outlined as well as perhaps others, depending on individual need and ability.

Mr. Loewen: Well, specifically, and I quote from the *Manitoba Journal of Child Welfare*, page 16, April 2002: "The unit is committed to providing a continuum of services from the time of referral until the child is one year of age or until the mother is 18

years old, whichever occurs first." Are those the criteria or—

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable minister.

Mr. Loewen: —are there other criteria that are used in providing services through a perinatal unit?

Mr. Chairperson: Let us see who has the floor. Member for Fort Whyte.

Mr. Loewen: Well, if you do not cut me off and allow me to finish asking the question.

Mr. Chairperson: No, I am not cutting you off. I am trying to have the record straight. The Member for Fort Whyte has the floor.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I thank you, Mr. Chair, and I put the question.

Ms. Melnick: I am sorry, I did not hear the second half of your question.

Mr. Loewen: Well, the question, quite frankly, did you hear the quote from the *Journal of Child Welfare*?

Ms. Melnick: I heard the first—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Before you speak, please, for the purpose of record, let me recognize you.

Ms. Melnick: I heard the first part of your question, but I did not hear the second part.

Mr. Loewen: I will repeat. Again, from *The Manitoba Journal of Child Welfare*, April 2002, and I quote: "The unit is committed to providing a continuum of services from the time of referral until the child is one year of age or until the mother is 18 years old, whichever occurs first." I would ask the minister, are there exceptions made to this policy.

Ms. Melnick: Again, there would be a one-on-one assessment, and it would be based on the areas that I had outlined just previously.

* (16:00)

Mr. Loewen: Is there an assessment made when the child turns 1 or the mother turns 18 to determine if the perinatal unit with continue to supply services?

Ms. Melnick: There is another criterion I did not hear the member mention. Until the mother is 18 years of age, or until the mother is over 16 and the child has turned 1 year of age, I did not hear that in what you said, so I am not sure if that is in your publication or not.

Mr. Loewen: Can the minister indicate where that criterion would be published?

Ms. Melnick: I know it is not in what you have. I am not sure where it would be published. We could look into that for you if you would like.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, I would appreciate if the minister could provide that in hard copy. Once again just for clarification, I would ask her to go through that exception she has just mentioned.

Ms. Melnick: Perinatal units stay involved until the mother is either 18 years of age or until the mother is 16 years of age and the child has turned 1.

Mr. Loewen: In this case, the mother had turned 16 years old and the child was over 1, so I would assume then a one-on-one under normal practices would have been conducted. Okay, sorry the mother was 15. I got ahead of myself. It was 16 months. I got those two numbers confused. It is quite possible then the mother would have still qualified under the criteria of this program. Is that what the minister is telling us?

Ms. Melnick: I have just read out the criteria which you asked about. Again, I cannot, and I really do not think it would be appropriate for me to make any assumptions about this individual. I certainly cannot speak to the specifics around this case.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Just to continue a few questions around the perinatal program. The minister has indicated then every young woman under The Child and Family Services Act that parents a child that is under the age of 18 receives a continuum of services for the whole year until that child becomes 1 year old. Would that be a fair assessment of the program?

Ms. Melnick: Under The Child and Family Services Act, every teen who becomes a mother or is going through with her pregnancy must be referred to the unit and assessed depending on need as I have outlined previously, the need for counselling, the need for financial information, the need for

assistance in her relationship with the father, with her family, with kinship. That would also be available to teen fathers.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The minister indicated the caseloads were approximately 30 and there were eight workers. That would indicate to me there would be 240 adolescent parents serviced by this program, if that was an accurate account. Yet it appears, and I would imagine this would be an average year in 1999-2000, that in Winnipeg there were 1243 adolescent parents.

I wonder if the minister could indicate to me what would happen to the other 1000 adolescent parents and their babies, if in fact the caseloads are only 30.

Ms. Melnick: What I said was the average. It could be more, it could be less, depending on the needs of each individual, Mr. Chair, that there is a one-on-one assessment, and that needs are determined from that basis. Needs may change, situations may change. Again, it is all based on an individual discussion with the teen parent.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Can the minister indicate sort of what monitoring there is? I would imagine there would be case notes on each individual situation. Can she indicate to me whether in fact, at the end of the year when the criteria are met, whether it is either the babe turns a year or the mother turns 16, is there always an exit interview?

Ms. Melnick: Well, services would be provided with service providers around the province, and when that time would be reached, there would be a discussion and perhaps further development in areas of ongoing services. Perhaps the services may not be required. Again, it is all based on a one-on-one discussion and one-on-one plan with each individual.

Mrs. Mitchelson: As the result of this tragedy happening, has the minister sat down with officials in her department and asked the direct question of whether the program is working, that indeed every adolescent parent and every infant is monitored according to a risk assessment? Has she been assured by the staff in her department that the caseloads are not so onerous that maybe the proper supports are not in place? Has she asked that question, and has she been assured that in fact a risk assessment has been done and that all of those that are at high risk are being monitored in appropriate fashion?

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, we are having ongoing discussions since this tragic event occurred. We recognize the need to respect the processes of the two investigations currently underway. We understand the CME is currently reviewing the situation to determine if an inquest should be called. We are allowing those investigations to go on.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I respect that. I guess the question is has the minister asked whether the program that she has talked about and is in place is doing what it is intended to do.

I am not talking about in the case of the one baby death. I am talking about all of the other cases that are open under this file, under the perinatal program. Has she asked her staff whether in fact the appropriate monitoring of each individual case, all of the babies that are alive out there today, has she asked the question of whether the appropriate resources are there, the proper follow-up is done, the appropriate resources are in place for each and every other child out there, so that she can be assured that these children are safe? Has she asked that question? I understand she cannot speak on the case specific. I am not asking about that case, I am asking about other infants that may be at risk.

*(16:10)

Ms. Melnick: We are having ongoing discussions since the tragic event occurred. Again, we are respecting the process that we have outlined. I do have the information that was requested earlier. Did you want me to relay it now or did you want to wait?

Mr. Chairperson: What is the pleasure of the committee?

An Honourable Member: Sure.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes.

Ms. Melnick: Okay. One position is technically vacant pending the return of someone from mat leave. This position was covered by a term and that person resigned for another job on June 4. The person who has gone on mat leave will be returning on June 25. The current staffing complement is eight FTEs for social workers, maybe more than eight actual individuals as there is some part-time posting. There is one supervisor and one administrative support person.

During the last two pay periods, so during the last four weeks, one employee was away for one day vacation and two employees were away for a half day each that was attributed to sick leave. This week there are two employees away on vacation, so everyone else is there. The current caseload as of this week is 42, the current average caseload this week. Are those all the questions that you had asked?

An Honourable Member: That answers those questions, yes.

Mrs. Rowat: Regarding the situation of the baby death, I just have a couple of questions. It is our understanding that the father of the accused works with Child and Family Services. I would like the minister through the Chair to indicate to the committee the position held by this individual in her department and the roles and responsibilities that this individual has within the department.

Ms. Melnick: I do not know if I am at liberty to disclose that. I honestly do not. I could clarify that and I could get back to you but I really do not know if it is appropriate for me to speak on that or not. Do you want me to get clarification on that?

An Honourable Member: Yes, I do.

Ms. Melnick: Okay.

Mr. Loewen: Just for clarification, the minister, I think when I first sat down, indicated that the average caseload was 20 to 25. She has since corrected that to roughly 30 and now she has just told us that the caseload is now 42.

Ms. Melnick: When I referred to the average caseload, 20 to 25, I was referring to the broader spectrum of the department. Then I had come back after I went to get the other information that was requested. The average caseload has been 30. As of this last week, there has been 42. Now that is the average caseload.

Mr. Loewen: Just for clarification, the average caseload is now 42?

Ms. Melnick: We posed that question when we went up and that is what the department has come back with as of right now.

Mr. Loewen: In terms of providing necessary and optimum services, does the perinatal unit have an ideal number in terms of caseload?

Ms. Melnick: The perinatal unit has been ongoing since 1999. It was the model that was proposed by the previous government, and it has worked with the staffing that was set out at that time. As I said, caseloads can be higher, can be lower depending on the individual needs of the people receiving the services. I think the determination is based on needs of the services, and I know that they are a group that works very well together. I know that they would be having discussions about what areas that they would be working together on and areas that they would be working individually on. So there would be discussion around caseload in that respect.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I appreciate the answer, but again, the issue here is not whether the staff is working well together. I am sure it is, I am sure they are all working hard, and I am sure they are doing the best they can. The issue is that, although the minister will not confirm it, we can assume from the answers in the House that the perinatal program had some dealings with the mother and the child that was beaten to death.

The question is, simply, did this child fall through the cracks because an average caseload of 42 is too high. Is the minister saying that they do not have any guidelines within the department in terms of what are optimum and maximum caseload workers that can be handled in this unit?

Ms. Melnick: I think we have to understand the nature of working on cases on a one-on-one. Some would require extensive services, extensive counselling services and extensive monitoring services. Others would not require as much. It is on the basis of the individual needs of the individuals being served through the program that people would be determining not so much caseload but the needs of the individuals. Of course, people would be needing the services and then moving out of the need of the services.

So I appreciate the member's questions and concerns. The nature of caseload can be something that can change, depending on who is actually being served.

Mr. Loewen: Well, let me try it in reverse then. So the minister is saying that there is no maximum

caseload or optimum caseload that has been worked out by the department. It is all on an ad-hoc basis in terms of what they think they can handle?

Ms. Melnick: Again, we would look at what the needs were.

Mr. Loewen: What is at issue here is the fact that we have heard from staff within her department, and this department is in disarray. I want to be clear. I appreciate the fact that the minister is not only fairly new to this role as an MLA but new to the job, and she has inherited a department that is in deep trouble as a result of, quite likely, some of the steps that were taken by previous ministers, both the member from Brandon East and the current Minister of Science and Technology (Mr. Sale). But what we need to do and what this minister needs to do is to get to the bottom of it and figure out what steps need to be taken to get her staff's morale up and to allow them to do their jobs properly.

Does she have any concern that an average caseload of 42 is too high given the intensive care that would be needed by mothers under the age of 18 needing this type of support? Is she satisfied that there are enough resources in this department and that an average caseload of 42 is something that can be handled?

Ms. Melnick: I appreciate the member's concerns, which is why it is important that we allow the processes that are underway to investigate this tragic situation and that we allow those processes to continue, that we allow the investigations to be as thorough as they need to be and that we allow the CME to have as complete a review as necessary to determine if an inquest should be called.

Mr. Loewen: I appreciate the answer, but it is not the answer to the question. Is the minister satisfied that the staff in the perinatal unit can handle and do a reasonable job with a caseload of, on average, 42? I mean, she is the minister. She is responsible for this department. Is she comfortable that 42 is a manageable caseload for social workers within the perinatal unit?

Ms. Melnick: Again, when we speak to the nature of casework, some files will be very intense, requiring very intense services, other will not be. I certainly appreciate the member's kind words about the staff in the department. I know that they are professionals who do very good work on behalf of the people of

Manitoba. Again, I point out it is very important to respect the processes currently underway so that we can find out the results of those processes and go from there.

Mr. Loewen: Is the minister telling us that she is not going to act on anything in her department until she hears from an inquest? What happens to the next child that is in trouble? Do we have to wait for the results of an inquest, which we have heard from the paper may take a considerable amount of time? I am asking the minister some important questions here. Is she saying she is not going to have any answers until after the inquest?

* (16:20)

Ms. Melnick: As I have said, I think it is important to respect the processes in place. I also think that it is important, as I have said numerous times both in the House and here today at least once, that the perinatal unit does not work in isolation from the array of services that are available throughout the province for teen parents through other service providers, indeed throughout other departments in our own government. I know with the dedication these people have that they take every opportunity to work with these other service providers and that there is a real network of support available throughout our province.

Mr. Loewen: To make it perfectly clear, we understand quite well that this government is in deep financial trouble, and the point of the questioning is to find out is this department being managed according to what the needs are of the clients or is it being managed on a financial basis, which would mean that staff is overworked and there is the possibility of more infants falling through the cracks. What is it?

Ms. Melnick: I am sure the member knows there are certain areas that are not capped, that the needs are met by people certainly within the array of services that we have provided in this department and also the other services that are provided throughout other departments in this government. We did have a 4.4% increase in this year in our budget for our department and we are working again with other service providers throughout the province.

Mr. Loewen: Can the minister indicate how much of an increase Child and Family Services got out of that 4.4% increase, how much extra money did they get?

Ms. Melnick: Rather than guess, I will again bring that information back.

Mr. Loewen: I would appreciate getting that as soon as possible. Can the minister indicate whether Cindy Knott, who is the author of the article I quoted from, is still—she is listed in her bio here as the supervisor of the perinatal unit for WCFS—in that position?

Ms. Melnick: Again, we could get that information for you.

Mr. Loewen: I mean, I am dumbfounded. The minister is responsible for a department. She stands up in the House on a regular basis and talks in glowing terms about this program, as if she knows it in every detail, and yet she cannot even tell me today who Cindy Knott, who is a supervisor of the perinatal unit, is.

Ms. Melnick: We can get that information for you.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I am dumbfounded, because if this minister is, as she has in the House, indicating on a regular basis that her perinatal unit is a unit that is put in place to ensure that incidents like this do not happen again, I would surely have thought that she would have had a personal conversation with a supervisor of the unit. What she is saying now is she does not even know who the supervisor is. Just for clarification, I will give her one more opportunity to answer: Does she know who the supervisor of the perinatal unit is for WCFS?

Ms. Melnick: We can get that information for you.

Mr. Loewen: I will take that as a no.

Ms. Melnick: We can get that information for you.

Mr. Loewen: I apologize, Mr. Chair, for having to take some time to compose myself here. I never dreamed for a moment that the minister at this stage, after we have had the death of a 16-month-old baby, would not even know who is in charge, of someone within her own department. I mean, that is, you know, I come from—maybe government is different, maybe her background is different. I come from an environment where I employed a thousand people, and I knew most of them by their first name, and this minister does not even know who is running a unit that was supposedly providing services to a 15-year-old mother of a 16-month-old child that was beaten

to death. What can I say, I am speechless. I will turn it over to another member for a minute while I compose myself.

Mrs. Rowat: I would like to ask the minister on behalf of the committee, in the death of another baby some years back, it is my understanding that the minister immediately took action and pulled staff together and had them meet with the public and share what their plans were and how they were going to deal with the situation. They did not hide. In a sense, by coming forward and saying they were going to take action, they were going to do an investigation and a review, it gave, I think, a sense of care for the family and for the people that knew the baby. It also gave Manitobans an assurance that this government and the minister, who was ultimately responsible for the baby, would look into this.

I feel that the minister, I am going to recommend that she discuss this with her staff and take some responsibility and encourage her staff to take a leadership role in this and share with Manitobans where she plans to go with this and to work proactively with her department on this matter.

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, we have been very clear that there is an investigation ongoing in Winnipeg Child and Family Services. We have also been very clear that we are respecting the other processes that are ongoing. So there is in fact, as you know, a Winnipeg Child and Family Services investigation ongoing. We have been very open about that. We have been very clear that these are processes that we are respecting.

Mrs. Rowat: The minister, at that point when the situation occurred, took leadership and took ownership of her department and indicated that she wanted Manitobans to be assured that steps were being taken to ensure that all checks and balances were in place, and that there was compliance and quality assurance in place to ensure that this situation, as awful as it was, parents and families of little ones would be assured that this would not happen again at that point. Through the inquest of that situation, it was strongly recommended, through the inquest, that the ideal caseload was 30.

Based on the number that is presented, 30, and to know that the minister is indicating that presently that unit is working at a 40- to 45-caseload, I am very concerned and I am very worried for the

children in Manitoba that are looking at this as a resource, as a source of support. Knowing that there are more than 10 cases more than they should be ideally handling is very concerning. I would definitely recommend the minister taking some leadership, working with that unit and with her department to ensure that another tragedy does not occur.

Ms. Melnick: I am not sure if there was a question in there or not.

* (16:30)

Mrs. Rowat: My question is to the minister: Is she not concerned that, based on the inquest report that was provided on this other child death, that the caseload recommendation was 30 and, knowing that her department or her unit, this perinatal unit is working with a 45 child caseload, is she not concerned and will she investigate and see what she can do to ensure that she has a full staff complement in place in that department?

Ms. Melnick: Certainly I want to assure the members that I am extremely concerned about this situation. We had spoken earlier about maintaining full staffing and doing it in as timely a way as we can. We talked about people being on vacation. We talked about people needing to have time for leave and people moving on to other positions and filling positions as quickly as we can, and we will continue to do that.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, I guess my question is this: It appears that the minister is waiting, you know, for the staffing to be moved around and shuffled, like reorganized in a sense. Ultimately, it is the children who are at risk and our thoughts and our actions should really be based on what is in the best interest of the children in Manitoba. I worry that with the caseload being at 45 that the best interest of the children at this point and the resources being available are just not there. I would like the minister to comment on that, please.

Ms. Melnick: Well, certainly the focus of the perinatal unit is on the children, is on the care of the children. I would include the newborns and in many cases the parents. We have all agreed that, or we have realized that all of the people that we are caring for here are under the age of 18 and this is exactly the focus of the perinatal unit.

The caseload average is at this point in time, this day, because the members have been asking for the information for this day, is at 42. We are, again, focussed on caring both for the teen parents as well as the newborns which I can assure you is the focus of the perinatal service unit.

Mrs. Rowat: I just want to touch on another child death that occurred earlier this year. I just wanted to know if the minister would comment on what the status is of an inquest being conducted and in the child, John Demery.

Ms. Melnick: I could not speak specifically to any specifics around this individual case. The Chief Medical Examiner is the one who would be conducting an inquest if an inquest has been determined to be necessary by the Chief Medical Examiner.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, the comments that we have heard publicly from the Medical Examiner's office is that they were concerned with regard to whether or not the standards of care were met by the agency involved with the child. Winnipeg Child and Family Services has also indicated that they hope that the inquest will shed more light on how the death occurred. Again, this was earlier in the year. An inquest date has not been set.

Since the department has come under the minister's watch it appears that less information is available. There seems to be less compliance or quality assurance in place. I would like the minister to just comment on the fact that based on just these two specific situations, there seems to be a lack of direction or initiative to get to the bottom of what could potentially be more tragedies in the future.

Ms. Melnick: Well, certainly one of the areas that we are working on is the implementation of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry-Child Welfare Initiative. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry was, of course, released in 1991, but it was not until 1999 that the new government of the day really seemed to pay any attention to it.

One of the major initiatives in our department has been the Child Welfare Initiative. I am not sure if the member has read the AJI-CWI, but this is a document that we have taken very seriously. We have been working in partnership with the members of the First Nations, northern, southern, Métis and

Innu. In fact I was able to proclaim the act on November 24, 2003. Since then, we have established four authorities: one for northern First Nations; one for southern First Nations. We just had a member's statement in the House on the Métis authority. We had the grand opening last Thursday, I believe it was.

Through these authorities we believe that culturally appropriate services will be provided to children in care. We believe that this will be very good, not only for the children in care, but also the communities. I think we can all agree that when a child is taken into care there are concerns about the family, there are concerns about the community. We believe that by taking this initiative and working to implement it that this will be an improvement for the children. We also believe that it will be an improvement for the future of our province in which we will be working in partnership with the people of the First Nations and able to work with them to determine not only what may be improvements to children in care, but also improvements in the services such as we are offering now. I have to tell you that I look very, very forward to working in this new partnership in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Loewen: I just want to advise that my only choice is to assume from the minister's responses, both in committee and in the House, that the perinatal unit did have some interaction with this mother and child and quite likely her grandmother as well. I am not asking the minister to confirm that. I think we have to take that as fact. We will certainly find that out when we hear from the inquest. Quite frankly, if that is not the case, the minister will have a heavy price to pay at that time because that is certainly the road she is leading everybody down.

I do want to advise her that, in just checking the e-mail address list, Cindy Knott is listed as a social worker. She lists herself as an author of this article in 2002 as the supervisor of the perinatal unit at Winnipeg Child and Family Services. She has a Master's in Public Administration, a Bachelor of Social Work, 12 years experience in child welfare, including 9 years direct experience working exclusively with adolescent parents. Is the minister telling us since she has learned of this baby death she has not had a meeting with Cindy Knott?

Ms. Melnick: I have been having several meetings within the department.

Mr. Loewen: Will the minister confirm she has met with Cindy Knott to discuss this issue?

Ms. Melnick: We have had several meetings within the department.

Mr. Loewen: Was Cindy Knott in attendance?

Ms. Melnick: We have had several meetings with people within the department.

Mr. Loewen: Was Cindy Knott in attendance at any of those meetings?

Ms. Melnick: No, she was not.

Mr. Loewen: We could have saved some time just with a simple answer from the beginning. It was a pretty straightforward question, I thought.

Mr. Chairperson, this is the type of situation that I rose on a grievance in the House today. It is ridiculous that we cannot get answers to the simplest of questions without appearing to badger the minister. So the minister has not met with Cindy Knott who lists herself as a current supervisor of the perinatal unit, yet she wants us to believe as opposition, and wants Manitobans to believe she is deeply concerned about this situation, and wants to make sure nothing happens again.

Can the minister explain why it would be that when the perinatal unit is contacted and asked for general information regarding what services are provided by the unit, individuals are advised staff cannot release any information and the only avenue to get it is through Linda Trigg, who is the CEO of Winnipeg Child and Family Services?

* (16:40)

Ms. Melnick: I think it is important, on your previous question, to understand that in a bureaucracy the minister has the deputy minister, and it is the deputy minister, the ADMs, and there is a reporting process that is a correct process, and that is one that really should be respected particularly in a time like this. That process has, in fact, been respected. We can talk about the question just raised by the member. Again, there is a process particularly in a time like this when people are very upset. When a tragic event such as this happens, there is again a process put in place so that people in the department

are not asked to do things that perhaps it would not be appropriate for them to do.

I understand Linda Trigg has been appointed the spokesperson. Linda Trigg is in the executive director position of Winnipeg Child and Family and I feel it is appropriate Linda Trigg would in fact be the spokesperson. Many people are very, very upset. We have two investigations. We have a review undergo. I think it is very important that processes, such as the ones I have outlined here, in fact, be respected.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I certainly understand a respect for process, but I would hope that the minister would have more respect for a 16-month-old baby that has been savagely beaten to death, when in fact there was some contact between her department and bureaucratic process. For her to fall back on that as an excuse for not having any communication with the person responsible for administering the program that she wants to stand up in this House and claim is put in place specifically to deal with these issues, I think, is a dereliction of her responsibility.

But that is a personal comment that I hope she will take to heart and understand that Manitobans are expecting her to get to the bottom of this and to do that. If she has not got the understanding and enough compassion to go and talk to front-line staff, and falls behind this veil that somehow she should be protected by the bureaucracy, I find that extremely disrespectful to the young baby who has been brutally murdered, and I find that disrespectful to all Manitobans.

My question was simply no one was phoning and asking specifics about the case, people were phoning to ask for general information on the perinatal unit, which is understandable given that the minister stood up in this House on a number of occasions and referred to it. I want to know why her staff has been told that they cannot give out general information on the perinatal unit and why the only avenue is through the CEO of Child and Family Services, or the executive director maybe, as she is now called. What is the reasoning behind that?

Ms. Melnick: Who were you referring to was phoning?

Mr. Loewen: As I mentioned before, one of our staff phoned and wanted general information, not specifics about the case, general information on the

perinatal program. It could have been anybody phoning and in fact they were told that the only person who could give out information was Linda Trigg, the Executive Director of CFS. That is obviously an indication of an agency in crisis, staff in crisis, saying that we have been told, we have been gagged, we cannot say a word. You are going to have to talk to the executive director for this information, for even the most general of information. Does the minister feel that that is an appropriate circumstance to put staff in her department under?

Ms. Melnick: Who was the phone call placed to?

Mr. Loewen: Well, I just remind the minister that typically in concurrence I ask the questions, she is asked to provide answers. It was someone that apparently she does not speak to very often, an individual by the name of Cindy Knott, who, I understand, is a supervisor of the perinatal unit for Winnipeg Child and Family Services. Apparently, Ms. Knott has been told that even as a supervisor she cannot give out general information. Everything has to go through Linda Trigg. I would like an explanation as to why.

Ms. Melnick: Was there more than one person that you are aware of phoning in to the department?

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: Point of order being raised, the honourable Member for Russell, on a point of order.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Chair, I think that the House leaders had agreed that in a process of concurrence, the ministers would answer forthright questions. This minister is doing nothing but stalling and, Mr. Chair, we will not tolerate it. This minister wants to make this House a sham and we will not tolerate that either. The minister is being asked questions and she is responding by asking silly, non-relevant questions.

The member from Fort Whyte asked a straightforward question, why it is that members cannot answer questions in her department, why they are channelled through a particular individual. That is pretty straightforward. Now the minister tries to avoid answering the question by placing silly questions on the record.

Mr. Chair, if the minister is not prepared to do that, then I think that we are going to have to pause

the House, and I will call the House leader in to ensure that this process is respected and is conducted in accordance with the agreements that we have signed and we have among each other.

So I say, Mr. Chair, that although this may not be a point of order in accordance with the *Beauchesne's* rules, it is not a dispute over the facts. This is a procedural issue, and the minister has an obligation to answer questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Any dispute as to facts is not a point of order. Matters of House business are dealt with by House leaders.

* * *

Mr. Loewen: I would leave the floor open to the minister to answer the question.

Ms. Melnick: Sure. I had actually answered the question previously when I talked about respecting process, particularly at a time when an incident such as the one we are discussing has occurred. I was just quite surprised to know that at least someone that you knew had been calling. It appears staff within the department—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. No use of direct third person.

Ms. Melnick: —that the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) knows at least one individual had been calling directly into the department. I was just quite surprised at that and just wanted clarification to see if I was actually understanding that he was saying a staffperson, at least one staffperson had been calling into the department. So I was just wanting to make sure that I was understanding the information that the member was giving.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thanks, Mr. Chair, but you know members of the Legislature, from time to time, request general information on general programs right throughout government.

Now the perinatal program is a general program. There are some criteria, some guidelines. The EarlyStart program is a program. The BabyFirst program is a program. Is the minister telling me now that every program within her department, if staff or research staff or MLAs call and ask for a pamphlet or a brochure or information that it has to go up

through the channels and the deputy minister or the assistant deputy minister or the executive director have to be the ones that provide a pamphlet to members of the opposition so that they might give that pamphlet to one of their constituents that is asking about a program. Is that what the minister is telling me now is the policy and the process within her department?

Ms. Melnick: Not at all. I was just getting clarification on the comments that the member had made previously.

Mr. Loewen: Well, Mr. Chair, this is again an incredible situation. Obviously, the words come down from on high, either the minister's office or the Premier's (Mr. Doer) office, that no staff is to talk to anybody about anything for fear that something untoward about the government may come out.

Again, we have heard from staff that a little over a year ago they were asked to sign non-disclosure agreements, basically what amounts to a gag order. Would the minister table one of the documents that her staff has been required to sign with this committee?

Ms. Melnick: That was before my time, so I am not aware of it.

Mr. Loewen: I mean there is just so much that this minister is not aware of. It is mind-boggling. I would ask the minister if she would agree to table a copy of the document that her staff is required to sign, basically the secrecy order, the gag order that was put on them. Would she be willing to table that with the House?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I am not aware of the document. We can look into it.

Mr. Loewen: If she is not aware of the document, that is one issue. The question is will she make herself aware of the document and will she table it.

Ms. Melnick: I think I just said that we will look into it.

Mr. Loewen: I thank her for that, and will she table it?

Ms. Melnick: I am not sure if the document exists, so we will have to look into it and find out if in fact

the document exists and that is really as far as I can go at this point.

* (16:50)

Mr. Loewen: Well, we certainly hope that the minister would find the document and table it. I think the public has a right to know just what is being asked of her staff.

Just to finish off this situation, and you know, again, it speaks to the incompetence of the minister in how her staff are being handled and the incompetence of this entire government in this situation. But, when Ms. Trigg's office was contacted, again looking for general information, an individual in her office replied that all requests would have to go through the Communications branch of this minister. Nobody can phone up and get information from Child and Family Services without being told that they have to go through the Communications branch of the government. Obviously, there is a lot of concern about how things are unfolding for this department.

Mrs. Rowat: On the same topic, I had asked from the minister's office on May 28 for information regarding adoption rules and regulations and the changes that were made in March of this year. I have asked for that information on two separate occasions now. Again, I had asked for it through somebody in the department and have been told to place my requests through Tom Garrett. I did that, and I am still waiting for the information.

I guess my question is, if we are going to be having to go through the minister or through the minister's staff, we would also expect in that interest to get the information in an expedient manner.

This is definitely causing problems with Manitobans who are asking for information on different programs regarding adoption rules or whether it is regarding programs such as the perinatal. I would ask the minister to comment on the reasons for her wanting all this information to be funnelled through her department or through her office and if she is willing to look at ways to make sure that the information is received, as the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) indicated, through MLAs, research staff or just the general public. To have the runaround and be led astray and often not responded to is, as far as I am concerned, unacceptable.

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, we can look into your request.

Mrs. Rowat: I could ask the minister to table it, I would say, before the end of today or tomorrow. All I am asking for are the rules and regulations regarding adoption and the changes that were made. That should be information that should be readily available. The frustration of the parents that have asked me for this information is reflecting on her government. I would encourage her to do that in an expedient manner.

Ms. Melnick: Yes, I can ask about that. I was not aware that you had not yet received that information. So thanks for mentioning that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Just a couple of general questions. I know that there has been significant change in the Child and Family Services system. The Winnipeg agency is no longer an independent Winnipeg agency, but in fact the staff that deliver child protection services and child and family support services are now members of the minister's bureaucracy or staff and report directly up the channel to the minister. So, it is no longer an arm's-length agency.

I am wondering if the minister could indicate whether in fact her senior staff have indicated whether there are any morale problems within the Child and Family Services agency or division within her department. Has there been any discussion? Have any issues, front line issues, been raised to her attention by senior staff in the department?

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, we have discussed that people are very upset about the incident. Well, people are very upset, as we all are, that people are continuing to do their work in a professional manner, but there is a deep sadness. I have discussed it with my senior people. It is an area of great concern to me. I know it must be very difficult for many of those people at this time.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I certainly do understand some of the issues that can be associated with something as tragic as this, but I am not referring specifically to morale as a result of this incident.

My question is, as a result of the significant changes from an independent agency to becoming a branch of a government department and with all of

the issues around devolution happening, have senior staff in the minister's department indicated to her, because I am sure it was one of the areas she received extensive briefing on when she first became a minister back in October, November, were there any issues raised with her or have there been any issues raised, isolating the tragic incident, of morale within the department? Are the front-line staff that are delivering child and family services, whether it be protection or support services, are there morale issues and is the minister aware, has she been briefed on those kinds of issues?

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, I am aware there has been a lot of change. With change can also come—well, change can bring on feelings of questioning, feelings of concern, feelings of worry. Certainly, it is a big move to have been an independent agency and to have been brought in under the Family Services and Housing. Yes, we do know some people are having a harder time with the change than others. Moving into a bureaucracy such as government can bring on a learning curve that sometimes does not feel like a curve. It can feel quite straight up, actually. We are aware there are some challenges currently being faced within what was the Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency and what is now part of the Department of Family Services and Housing.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank the minister for sharing that information. I wonder because, quite frankly we know people working on the front lines in our child welfare system are under a lot of stress. My sense is that workloads are pretty heavy. We see in the perinatal program that a caseload of 42 is pretty high.

I think the minister indicated a little earlier that generally over the whole system, the caseloads were 20 to 25. I am hoping that is accurate and in fact if, you know, there are people, maybe she could just indicate to me whether there is a full complement, not only in the perinatal program, but that there are no vacancy management issues dealing with front-line staff in the Child and Family Services system.

Are we fully staffed and when people are away on vacation or away on long-term leave or sick leave there are additional people or additional resources brought in to manage those caseloads? We want to assure that the support is there for the front-line workers to be able to do their job. Maybe the minister could indicate whether we are up to full complement and assure us there is no vacancy

management process in place in the front lines of Child and Family Services.

* (17:00)

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, this is an area we make every attempt to keep fully staffed. I am sure, as the previous minister, the member would understand, again, we can have times of turnover as individuals can move on to other positions, and we would try to fill the vacant positions as quickly as possible, certainly in the times of vacation, and, while sick leave is not as predictable as vacation time, we would try to keep fully staffed there.

I also want to agree with the member that these people are dealing with very difficult situations. They do an incredible job with some incredibly tough situations and they are really very professional. We know that there are, as in any circumstance in dealing with a Child and Family Services front-line position, certainly there are stresses that may not be as dominant in other positions. I want to take this opportunity to commend staff for the good work that they are doing. We recognize that this is a very big change for many of these people who are again moving from an independent agency into a government, becoming part of a government department.

We have had discussions. We are working with people. We are very, very appreciative of the work that they do each and every day as they come in and deal with these tough situations.

Mrs. Mitchelson: A very simple question: Is there a vacancy management directive or process in place in the front lines of Child and Family Services work? Has there been a directive to manage vacancies as the result of an overall initiative that the government has undertaken. I know because of tight budgetary reasons there has been a vacancy management strategy. Has there been one in place or is there one in place presently in the Child and Family Services division at the front lines?

Ms. Melnick: This is an area that we do keep fully staffed as well as we can with vacations, illnesses, people leaving positions, et cetera.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Just one more question, I think, and that is, given that there has been such significant change, given that there is a little bit of uncertainty

and confusion, and we are asking people in very high-stress jobs to work through that process, I am just wondering, because the minister has been made aware by her senior staff that there are issues, is there any process that has been put in place by her to ensure that she gets feedback from the front lines on what the issues are, and then has she looked at any sort of strategy to try to address those issues?

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, this is a task that we are undertaking just now. Your question is very well timed actually because we are looking at the changes that people are undergoing having been brought in. We are discussing ways that we could perhaps help people feel more comfortable, helping people to work through this time of change that I think we all agree is quite difficult for some people, not as difficult for others. But, yes, we are certainly having these discussions at this time.

Mr. Loewen: The minister has indicated that there are eight full-time employees and this week two are on vacation, so 25 percent of her staff has gone. I would ask her what processes are in place to handle the casework of those 25 percent of the staff that are gone.

Ms. Melnick: Again, the perinatal unit works very closely as a team. They would be aware that these people were away this week. They would be working together to ensure that the services are maintained.

Mr. Loewen: So, is the minister indicating that all of the caseload of those workers that are on vacations would be reassigned on a temporary basis to a worker who is in fact on the job?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I would say that the perinatal unit work well as a team, and they would be deciding how they would be handling a time when people are away.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I am sure they do work well as a team. What I want to know is what policy is in place to cover off people who are on vacations. Is their caseload split up? Are their cases just left to languish until they get back?

Ms. Melnick: Well, we can look into that for you if you are looking for specific information like that.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I would have to assume within a government department that there would be specific

information regarding caseload management and what to do when somebody was either on vacation or on leave, and I would appreciate getting that from the minister as soon as possible, hopefully by the morning at the latest.

Ms. Melnick: Sure. We will do our best.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Chair, the minister has indicated on a number of occasions that there are two investigations going on. We certainly respect the process for those. I would ask her who is conducting the internal investigation that she has talked about.

Ms. Melnick: That investigation is being conducted through Winnipeg Child and Family Services.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I hope we do not have to do this song and dance forever. Specifically, who is in charge of the internal investigation?

Ms. Melnick: I am not sure if that is information that I can release, so I would have to get clarification on that.

Mr. Loewen: I will come at it from a different angle. Is the minister telling us she does not know who is in charge of the investigation into the department where we have had a 16-month-old baby savagely beaten, and that she will not tell members of the House who is in charge of that committee? You know, it is unbelievable. Who is running that investigation?

Ms. Melnick: I will repeat what I had said previously, that I am not aware if I can release that information. I can get clarification on that.

Mr. Chairperson: We will take a recess to be able to participate in the recorded vote.

The committee recessed at 5:07 p.m.

The committee resumed at 5:22 p.m.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Chairperson, we have had a little break. I wonder if the minister has had a bit of an opportunity to clear her head, and if she could tell us now who is in charge of the internal investigation.

Ms. Melnick: Linda Trigg would be in charge of the internal investigation.

Mr. Loewen: This is the same Linda Trigg that is the executive director of Child and Family Services?

Ms. Melnick: Correct.

Mr. Loewen: Can the minister give me the parameters of the investigation?

Ms. Melnick: The parameters would be looking into any specific information that we would have around the case that we are discussing.

Mr. Loewen: Can the minister indicate whether the results of that investigation will be made public and when?

Ms. Melnick: That is an area that I am not clear on. I could get information on that, but I am not sure at this moment if that would be made in public or not.

Mr. Loewen: When is the minister expecting the final report?

Ms. Melnick: We have not placed a time line on it. Again, we are wanting to make sure that the investigation is as thorough as it would need to be.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I would remind the minister once again that she is in charge of this department and, you know, she stands in the House on a daily basis and tells everybody, tells Manitobans, tells members of the opposition that we should be patient and wait until the results of the police report and an internal investigation. She is the one that has the responsibility and the authority not only to put a time line on it but to determine whether it is to be made public.

So is she telling us right now that she is not prepared to say at this moment that she will make the report public? Is she not prepared to give us a time line in terms of when she will have that report back to the House?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I will have to seek clarity on whether that report would, in fact, be made public, as I mentioned a few moments ago. I think also that it is very important that we allow the process to be as thorough as it can be. So that is why we are awaiting the results of this investigation.

Mr. Loewen: I would ask the minister to get that information back to us as soon as possible.

Hopefully, maybe should she could come prepared in the morning with that information with her. Once again, all she has to do is make a decision.

Can the minister indicate how many children were housed in hotels on the weekend of May 21-22?

Ms. Melnick: I know some numbers were distributed to the critic last evening. I am not sure if they were shared, or were you made aware of them?

Mr. Loewen: Well, I have been made aware of the information that the minister shared. That is not what I asked her. I asked her if she could tell me how many children were in hotels on the weekend of May 21 and May 22.

Ms. Melnick: On average, we have 27 children at any given time up to this point of time in the year. Certainly, it is when we are talking about the shelter system, when we are talking about hotel usage, it fluctuates day to day. To get a better sense of the children who are in, what we have presented are the annual averages and, up until this time, it is 27. We are not quite halfway through the end of the year, so we would have to wait for those averages for the end of the year.

Mr. Loewen: Well, once again, the minister is just dodging the question, and presumably the only excuse for that is because she is trying to dodge the bullet here. It is a simple question.

If you have the averages up to the end of May 31, to arrive at that number you must have the numbers for May 21 and May 22. Friday, May 21, and Saturday, May 22, how many children were lodged in hotels?

Ms. Melnick: Again, our average is 27 up to this time in this year.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I would ask the minister why she will not answer a simple, straightforward question.

Ms. Melnick: When we talk about occupation in shelters, when we talk about occupation in hotels in this case, which is what we are talking about, it is important to recognize that there are fluctuations in numbers, and one of the areas that we are looking in are overall trends which is what we have presented to the members opposite.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I just remind the minister that she can do whatever she wants in terms of figuring numbers. Her responsibility to this session of concurrence is to answer specific questions that are asked to her.

Can she indicate on May 21 and May 22 whether there were over—let us say, were there more than 70 children lodged in hotels those two nights?

Ms. Melnick: The average number for this year up to this time has been 27.

Mr. Loewen: Again, we have had our House leader in here instructing. I understand the minister has got a note that it is her responsibility to answer direct questions directly. I am looking for two specific days. I would ask the minister if she would quit being contemptuous of this session of concurrence, answer the simple question. May 21 and May 22, how many children were lodged in hotels?

Ms. Melnick: I am not trying to be contemptuous at all. It is unfortunate if that is how it is being perceived. We are looking at the trends, and the average for this year is 27.

Mr. Loewen: I am not asking for trends. I am asking for two specific days. Would the minister be willing to give me a list? Obviously, numbers have been

used to arrive at an average up to May. I would like to see a list of every day in May. Would the minister provide that to me as soon as possible, please?

Ms. Melnick: Again, that is an area that we would have to look into.

Mr. Loewen: The minister makes decisions. Well, maybe she does not make decisions and maybe that is the problem here, that we have got an ineffectual minister that refuses to make decisions. You obviously have the information. You have given us an average up to May 31, 2004. To arrive at that average you must have had a daily number identified. I would like to see, for the month of May, every day in the month of May, a number associated with how many children were in hotels every day for May. Can the minister provide that by tomorrow at 10 a.m.?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I will certainly check that out.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5:30 p.m., committee rise.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour now being 10 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

Bill 31–The Floodway Authority Act		Bill 35–The Credit Unions and Caisses	
Goertzen	3250	Populaires Amendment Act	
Murray	3254	Taillieu	3272
Loewen	3257	Dyck	3273
Dyck	3261	Reimer	3273
Lamoureux	3263	Loewen	3274
Faurschou	3263		
Penner	3265	Bill 38–The Fisheries Amendment Act	
Derkach	3269	Cummings	3276
Bill 33–The Public Servants Insurance			
Amendment Act	3272		
Bill 34–The University of Winnipeg			
Amendment Act	3272	COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY	
		Concurrence Motion	3277