

Third 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.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
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.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	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.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 23, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Highway 200

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Highway 200 is paved from Winnipeg to the Canada-U.S. border except for approximately a 10-kilometre section between highways 205 and 305 which remains unpaved.

School buses, farm equipment, emergency vehicles and local traffic must travel on Highway 200 which is dangerous, if not completely impassable, during wet spring weather and other times of heavy rainfall.

Due to unsafe conditions, many drivers look to alternate routes around this section when possible and time permits. The condition of the gravel road can cause serious damage to all vehicles.

Insufficient traffic counts are not truly reflective of the traffic volumes because users tend to find another route to avoid this section. Traffic counts done after spring seeding, during wet weather or during school recess are not truly indicative of traffic flows.

Maintenance costs for unpaved highways are high and ongoing. It would be cost-effective to pave this section.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) consider paving Highway 200 between highways 205 and 305 to ensure a smooth, safe and uninterrupted use of Highway 200.

Signed by Julien Lemoine, Ron Edwards, Justin Simundson and others.

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

Provincial Road 355

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The unsafe conditions of PR No. 355 from the western edge of Minto municipality to PR No. 270 (including the hill out of the Minnedosa valley), poses an undue risk to Manitobans who must travel on this roadway.

The steady stream of traffic on this stretch of PR No. 355, which includes automobiles such as "B" train semi-trailer tractors, mail delivery vehicles and school buses, makes the roadway in its current state dangerously impassable.

Continued expansion of the regional economy in livestock development, grain storage and transportation and the proposed Mohawk Plant, puts additional strain on PR No. 355 and creates further safety concerns for motorists.

PR No. 355 experiences an increased risk in traffic flow during the spring season when there are weight restrictions on surrounding provincial trunk highways.

For several years, representatives of six municipal corporations, as well as ad hoc citizens' group have been actively lobbying the provincial government to upgrade and reconstruct the stretch of PR No. 355 at issue.

Manitobans and visitors to the province deserve a better rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) to consider

upgrading PR No. 355 from the western edge of the R.M. of Minto to PR No. 270 (including the hill out of the Minnedosa valley).

To request the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) to consider supporting the said initiative to ensure the safety of our Manitobans and all Canadians who travel along Manitoba highways.

This petition signed by Margaret Northam, Donald Northam, J. Raupers and others.

* (13:35)

Ambulance Service

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

In May 2004, 46-year-old Peter Krahn suffered a heart attack while exercising in East St. Paul and was pronounced dead just under an hour later after being transported to the Concordia Hospital in Winnipeg. Reports show that it took nearly 18 minutes for an ambulance to arrive for Mr. Krahn.

The Interlake Regional Health Authority claims that 21 minutes is an acceptable emergency response time, whereas the City of Winnipeg uses a benchmark of 4 minutes.

Ambulance coverage for East St. Paul is provided from Selkirk, which is almost 25 kilometres away.

The municipalities of East St. Paul and West St. Paul combined have over 12 000 residents.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider providing East St. Paul with local ambulance service which would service both East and West St. Paul.

To request the provincial government to consider improving the way that ambulance service is supplied to all Manitobans by utilizing technologies such as GPS in conjunction with a Medical Transportation Co-ordination Centre (MTCC) which

will ensure that patients receive the nearest ambulance in the least amount of time.

To request the provincial government to consider ensuring that appropriate funding is provided to maintain superior response times and sustainable services.

Signed by Marianne Toews, Chris Toews, Nathan Toews and many others.

Minimum Sitting Days for Manitoba Legislature

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): 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 35 days in 2003. In 2004, there were 55 sitting days.

The number of sitting days has a direct impact on the issue of public accountability.

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 R. Navarete, A. Gacutan and R. Bantugan.

Supported Living Program

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government's Supported Living Program provides a range of supports to assist adults with a mental disability to live in the

community in their residential option of choice, including a family home. There is a lack of group homes available and this means special needs dependants must remain in the family home.

The provincial government's Community Living Division helps support adults living with a mental disability to live safely in the community in the residential setting of their choice.

Families with special needs dependants make lifelong commitments to their care and well-being, and many families choose to care for these individuals in their homes as long as circumstances allow.

The cost to support families who care for their special needs dependants at home is far less than the cost of alternate care arrangements such as institutions or group and foster home situations.

The value of the quality of life experienced by special needs dependants raised at home in a loving family environment is immeasurable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick) consider changes to the departmental policy that pays family members a reduced amount of money for room and board when they care for their special needs dependants at home, versus an amount paid to a non-parental care provider outside the family home.

To request the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider examining on a case-by-case basis the merits of paying family members to care for special needs dependants at home versus paying to institutionalize them.

Signed by Dallas Gerbrandt, Margaret Waldner, Tracy Friesen and many others.

* (13:40)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Third Report

Mr. Daryl Reid (Chairperson): I ask for leave to present the report of the Legislative Affairs Standing Committee.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Reid: I wish to present the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Third Report.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

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

Meetings:

Your main committee met on the following occasions:

Thursday, December 2, 2004, at 10 a.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building

Tuesday, December 21, 2004, at 1 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building

Tuesday, March 22, 2005, at 3 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building (in camera)

Your sub-committee met on the following occasions. All meetings took place in Room 1023 – 405 Broadway:

Thursday, January 6, 2005, at 10 a.m.

Monday, January 31, 2005, at 1 p.m.

Tuesday, March 1, 2005, at 1 p.m.

Thursday, March 3, 2005, at 9:51 a.m.

Friday, March 4, 2005, at 9 a.m.

Monday, March 7, 2005, at 9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, March 8, 2005, at 9:30 a.m.

Friday, March 11, 2005, at 1:30 p.m.

Matters Under Consideration:

Recruitment and Selection of the Children's Advocate

Motions Adopted and Reported:

Motion adopted at the December 21, 2004, meeting (motion was reported in the 2nd Report of this Standing Committee)

THAT a Sub-Committee of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs consisting of:

Kerri Irvin-Ross
 Greg Dewar
 Kevin Lamoureux
 Kelvin Goertzen
 Daryl Reid, as Chairperson

be struck to establish the selection criteria, the advertisement, conduct the screening and interviews and provide to this Committee their recommendation of the appointment of the individuals to fill the positions of the Ombudsman and of the Children's Advocate.

Sub-Committee Report

At the March 22, 2005, meeting, the sub-committee reported that it had met in camera on Thursday, January 6, 2005, at 10 a.m., Monday, January 31, 2005, at 1 p.m., Tuesday, March 1, 2005, at 1 p.m., Thursday, March 3, 2005, at 9:51 a.m., Friday, March 4, 2005, at 9 a.m., Monday, March 7, 2005, at 9:30 a.m., Tuesday, March 8, 2005, at 9:30 a.m. and Friday, March 11, 2005, at 1:30 p.m.

The sub-committee reported that thirty-three applications were received for the position of the Children's Advocate, and from these applications, interviews were held with seven (7) candidates. Interviews were held on March 4, 7 and 8. Following from these interviews, on March 11, the sub-committee agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee of Legislative Affairs that Billie Schibler be the nominee for the position of the Children's Advocate in Manitoba.

Items agreed to at the March 22, 2005, Meeting

Your committee has unanimously agreed to make its report to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council with the recommendation that Billie Schibler be appointed as the Children's Advocate for the Province of Manitoba.

* (13:45)

Mr. Reid: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 24—The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Cost of Credit Disclosure and Miscellaneous Amendments)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (Ms. McGifford), that Bill 24, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Cost of Credit Disclosure and Miscellaneous Amendments); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection des consommateurs (communication du coût du crédit et modifications diverses), be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Training, that Bill 24, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Cost of Credit Disclosure and Miscellaneous Amendments), be now read a first time.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this bill will allow consumers to have a common rate of interest expressed in transactions they engage in, so they can make proper consumer choices about the credit instruments they choose.

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Marion and Jack Kostuik who are the parents of the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat). They live in the constituency of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

Also in the public gallery we have from Valley Gardens Junior High 17 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Marek Kutka. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer).

Also in the public gallery we have from Alhijra Islamic School 23 Grade 4 students under the direction of Ms. Michele Rouleau. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan).

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): According to the numbers being crunched by the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, based on a conservative estimate that 15 percent of the \$660-million expansion project cost is for wages, this NDP government's policy of forcing non-unionized workers to pay union dues will take about a million dollars out of their pockets.

Mr. Speaker, this is a union scam. This is forced payment to the NDP's union bosses. It is fundamentally unfair to hardworking Manitobans who have democratically chosen to not be part of a union.

Mr. Speaker, when will the member from Concordia wake up and realize that he should be the Premier for all Manitobans, not a union boss lackey that simply thinks he can use taxpayers' dollars to support his union boss friends? When will he wake up?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I believe the Rand formula was implemented by Duff Roblin in the civil service some 40 years ago.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, memo to the NDP, the floodway is already built. It was a Progressive Conservative government that built the floodway. Memo to the NDP, that Progressive Conservative Premier did not force unionized workers to pay union dues.

Mr. Speaker, the public, all non-unionized workers throughout Manitoba, people outside of the province of Manitoba, see this colossal NDP blunder for what it is. It is an NDP union scam that wastes taxpayers' dollars. It funnels hardworking Manitobans' money to the NDP union boss friends, and it is nothing short of a blatant attempt to force unionization in an industry that has chosen to be non-unionized.

* (13:50)

Mr. Speaker, aside from the million dollars of forced union dues, this NDP government is also going to force each contractor to submit to unions

just under \$3 per non-unionized worker to a trust fund. The industry calculates that will add an additional 10 to \$15 million to the cost. For a worker who works some 3000 hours, that is an additional \$9,000. The only way that non-unionized workers can get access to the benefits is if he or she joins the union. This is forced unionization all over again.

Why is this NDP government forcing non-unionized workers to do this? It is NDP forced unionization at its worst. Do the right thing and scrap this agreement.

Mr. Doer: I noticed, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Rajotte was at the press conference, an owner of a construction company, along with other individuals. We could have gone to one big management company, one big tender. It was the advice I received from companies to try to take the more difficult, but important route for businesses. I have talked to businesses on either side of this issue and there are differences. Most of them, if not all of them, will be tendering for all the work.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, this Premier is trying to pull the wool over Manitobans' eyes, and he is going to fail because what he is saying is this is like the NHL trying to solve their talks with the owners there but the players not at the table.

It is very, very clear that this government is going to force Manitoban non-unionized workers to put a million dollars out of their pockets to add 10 to \$15 million into a pension fund which they cannot access unless they become part of that union. While the cost is not yet known, the industry expects millions more will be handed out over special fees, project fees, union initiation fees once that is taken into account.

Mr. Speaker, Bill Fisher who was one of the original floodway workers and led the drive in coordinating the work on the Z-dike said, "Government needs to get out of the way and let us get on with the job of redigging Duff's Ditch."

Mr. Speaker, we did it before without having forced unionization and we can do it again. We deserve the opportunity. Why will this First Minister, this former union boss, not listen to someone like Bill Fisher? Do the right thing and scrap this arrangement.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite worked for the former Prime Minister, who put in place a Treasury Board regulation dealing with the Confederation Bridge. Why did the former Prime Minister do that? He did that because any disruption through strikes or lockouts with any part of that bridge would have a dramatic impact on the economics of that project. The former Conservative government, in the 1960s, brought in the first labour-management agreement. Why did they do that? Because any disruption on the building of, I think it was the Kelsey project, would have a negative impact on the economics of that project.

Mr. Speaker, we have a considerable amount of bridge work to do on the floodway project. No strike or no lockout with many of those workers means that there will not be any disruptions to ensure the flood protection is there on time and on budget. The owners of this project are the federal and provincial governments that are funding this project, but if members opposite want to talk about hockey, he was a failure trying to build a new arena. He voted against this arena. We have got it built.

Red River Floodway Expansion Master Labour Agreement

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the NDP government of Manitoba has signed a labour agreement which the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce says, and I quote, "is a rogues gallery of union perks." The Canadian Chamber of Commerce said, "The NDP's floodway agreement looks like a forced unionization." The *Brandon Sun* says, and I quote, "In short, it stinks."

Will the NDP today scrap this forced union agreement?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that, going back over the last several months, the members opposite were opposed to any kind of agreement. In fact, they have got both feet firmly planted in the 1950s. They oppose employment equity, and they are opposing in this case an agreement that ensures that both unionized and non-unionized companies and workers will have the opportunity to benefit from great economic opportunities. They are even opposed to the provisions that allow for deductions for pensions and benefits. This is not the 1950s. It is the year 2005.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Interim Supply questioning, the Minister of Water Stewardship applied again and again, that the Winnipeg Construction Association approved the labour agreement. However, in a letter dated March 16, the Winnipeg Construction Association categorically states, and I quote, "WCA is not a signatory to the final flood labour agreement."

Will the NDP government now scrap this forced unionization agreement?

* (13:55)

Mr. Ashton: You know, once again, Mr. Speaker, and I put on the record, I think in the last session of the Legislature, they asked more questions on this than virtually any other issue. By the way, never a question about the building of the floodway expansion that is going to protect 450 000 Manitobans against the 1-in-700-year flood. That is what is the most important aspect of this agreement. This agreement will ensure no strike, no lockout and we, on this side, are looking into the future, the tremendous economic benefit and the flood protection for the people of Manitoba.

Manitoba Hydro Office Tower Master Labour Agreement

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, in February we learned that the cost of constructing a new Hydro office building in downtown Winnipeg had doubled from \$75 million to \$150 million. This is an expense that will be borne by the ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro. The construction industry is now being told that anybody involved in construction on the new Hydro tower is going to have to deal with the forced master labour agreement from this NDP government. This could add another \$7 million to \$10 million to the cost of the building.

I would ask the Minister responsible for Hydro if he would today stand up and give his absolute assurance that the NDP government will not force a master labour agreement on those involved in constructing Manitoba Hydro's new office tower.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that we are very close to final design of a building that will be a signature building in downtown Winnipeg. It will be

the most energy-efficient building probably in North America, a bigger size than originally envisioned that will see 2000 full-time employees moving to downtown Winnipeg to help revitalize downtown Winnipeg, and bring back even more, in addition to the MTS Centre, in addition to Red River College, in addition to the library project, in addition to Waterfront Drive and in addition to the Health Sciences Centre that is being rebuilt and will be also reinvigorating to downtown Winnipeg. We are very pleased that we are very close to a final design.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, once again the question was very straightforward and one that the minister absolutely refuses to answer. We understand now that the reason why he will not answer is because, indeed, the NDP government intends to force, for the first time in the history of this province, contractors who are involved in building an office tower, to work under a master labour agreement.

I would ask the minister a very simple and very straightforward question. Sir, stand up today, give your assurance to the ratepayers who could be on the hook for another \$10 million, give your assurance to the construction industry who is looking at alternatives to investing in Manitoba, give them your assurance, sir, that under your NDP government they will not be forced to construct the new Hydro tower under a master labour agreement. Yes or no, a simple question, a simple answer.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be part of a government that said we are going to move the Red River College downtown, and it is built. It is open; it is running, 2002. I am very proud of the government that said we are going to rebuild Brandon general hospital, \$56 million and it is built. I am very proud of the government that said we are going to be rebuilding the largest health capital project in the history and that is the rebuilding of Health Sciences Centre. It is under construction and close to completion.

I am very pleased that we will be building downtown, not yet finished, gone to design, of which tenders will be let, and which construction will be built of the Hydro signature building in downtown Winnipeg that will move 2000 employees into the downtown area. I think something all members of this Chamber, I would have presumed, would support.

Children in Care Safety Concerns

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we raised the issue of a child that died while in the care of Family Services. Can the Minister of Family Services tell us why she placed another child in this home shortly after one child died under horrific circumstances and while an investigation was ongoing?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table two documents today. The first document I am tabling is Part VI, Confidentiality of The Child and Family Services Act. I draw the House's attention, in particular, to section 76(3), "Records are confidential. Subject to this section, a record made under this Act is confidential and no person shall disclose or communicate information from the record in any form to any other person." There are lists of exceptions.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are not asking her to share the specifics of the lawsuit against this NDP government. We are simply asking about another child that was placed in the same environment as another child. There are allegations that this home was not registered and not licensed as a foster home. Why did she place another child at risk?

* (14:00)

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, the other document that I just tabled is The Fatality Inquiries Act. These are the two acts under which I was speaking to the House yesterday on questions asked. These are the two documents that I will continue to speak under when questions come from across the House on specific cases.

Children in Care Safety Concerns

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the same minister but given the stance that she has just taken, she is telling the people of this province she knows nothing, she will say nothing, she will not share responsibility for what happened to this child and what happened to the other children who were placed in that home.

Just for the record, let me ask this minister this. During an election campaign, a child passed away under horrific circumstances in the home we are referring to that was not divulged immediately that that child was in care. We could easily say there was a cover-up at that time, and it appears there is another cover-up. We ask this minister this: Will she share the recommendations that came from the review of this case?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, again, I have referred to the two laws of this province which protect the confidentiality of circumstances surrounding concerning events. I will respect those laws. I will respect the laws of Manitoba. I hope members opposite will do the same.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, we did not ask the name of the child. We asked was another child placed in this home. Now, will this minister stand up, do her duty and answer the question?

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, again, I cannot speak to specifics. I can assure the House that when children are placed in homes, foster care support workers from agencies and organizations are put in place. Ongoing involvement from parents can be put in place if requested. Daily involvement and supervision can be put in place. The Foster Family Network works with foster families. The funding was cut in 1993. We brought funding back in 1999, and have since doubled that funding. The branch provides ongoing reviews and training for all individuals who are involved in the care of children in our province.

Safe Schools Legislation Codes of Conduct

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, when asked how many schools had a Safe Schools Charter in place to address the issue of bullying, the Minister of Education said that 23 out of 24 school divisions have replied with their codes of conduct. The next day the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province said that 24 out of 25 school divisions have so far responded. But, there are actually 38 school divisions in Manitoba, so 15 school divisions appear to not have submitted or done anything about their codes of conduct to address bullying. A senior department official said that these should all be in place.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education this: Why are all of these school divisions not in compliance with the legislation?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): The number that have replied, the 23 of 24, were in compliance with the codes of conduct. That was the context in which those comments were made. As the number had been given last week, even while we sat in the House, what I had been advised of the numbers that were in compliance and the number that had replied, the number had grown. More school divisions are submitting the information with respect to the status of the codes of conduct and how close they are to complying. More school divisions are submitting information with respect to how many schools in their division do have codes of conduct. They are doing their job, and we are going to move forward with the safe schools legislation and the charter.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, The Safe Schools Charter does require that individual schools all have a Safe Schools Charter in place. When asked this the other day, the minister chose to answer this question by talking about school divisions, when in fact, his own legislation says that all 698 schools in Manitoba should have a Safe Schools Charter in place.

I would like to ask the minister this today: Can he guarantee that his legislation is being followed and that all 698 schools in Manitoba have a Safe Schools Charter in place to protect our school children against bullying?

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Speaker, the consultation process we have been engaged in with all the stakeholders, including parents, including teachers, including trustees has been ongoing around this legislation. They agree with the need for a Safe Schools Charter. They agree with the need for codes of conduct. They are all working towards the objectives of the Safe Schools Charter and the codes of conduct are a big part of that equation.

As stakeholders who have been involved in this process, they are going to comply. They are advocates, teachers are advocates, for this legislation. Parents are advocates for this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I know my previous critic was talking about the need to consult and she spoke to the need to consult during the debate on the bill. The

member from Charleswood got up and said, "Why are we dumping this on the school divisions?" We are not dumping it on anybody. We are working with our partners.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the condescending and arrogant attitude of this minister is going to do absolutely nothing to protect school children against bullying. The Minister of Education seems to forget why we are asking these questions about bullying. It is such a serious issue. A young boy in this province just committed suicide because of bullying. The minister instead tried to go off on a bunch of rhetoric and rant in this House. It is more important than that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask him this again: How many of those 698 schools are in compliance with his own legislation that they should all have a Safe Schools Charter in place to protect children against bullying?

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Speaker, the member makes some allegations about the commitment of this government. Every single person on this side of the House is committed to address this issue, and we have—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bjornson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member from Fort Whyte during the debate said that we should be listening to teachers. Well, perhaps they should listen to teachers who have said through the Manitoba Teachers' Society the other day, they issued a release saying that it is this government that has done more in the past five years to address the issue of bullying—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bjornson: It is this government that has done more in the past five years to address the issue whether it is has been through the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet and their initiatives, whether it has been through Justice and the Lighthouses offering alternatives for children, whether it has been through the Department of Education addressing curricular issues which try to educate children on the behaviours and the consequences of those behaviours. Everyone on this side is committed to address this issue.

Orthopedic Surgical Procedures Wait List Reduction Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the government has done very poorly when it comes to planning on health care. My question concerns the very long waiting times for surgical procedures like hip and knee replacements. I have received many letters and calls from people who are waiting in pain, in discomfort or in agony because of the government's failures.

I quote from a letter from a man who says he received this reply from the NDP, "Our government recognizes that wait times for hip and knee surgeries are longer than ideal." My correspondent says, "I take this as code that they are admitting to having screwed up."

Will the Minister of Health admit that his government has made a mess of the situation with knee and hip surgeries and that this mess has given rise to very long waiting times for these procedures?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, last year and this current, we will do about 2800 hip and knee procedures. That is a 20% increase since we formed government. The Canadian Orthopedic Association said that Manitoba had done more than any other province in Canada on hips and knees during the last five years. I take that as an endorsement. The CIHI data that was released recently showed that more than half of Manitobans had their hip or knee surgery in less than 20 weeks. That is also very close to the best in Canada.

* (14:10)

All that said, Mr. Speaker, my letter is correct. It is not acceptable to have the number of people waiting on the list, and that is obviously why we just committed \$10 million to put an additional 1000 procedures in place. We will track those procedures month by month. We will do that job.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about numbers and procedures when people are interested in waiting times and getting access to good care quickly.

The CBC quoted a government figure of 10 months average wait time for knee replacement surgery in Manitoba, but it turns out that the NDP

uses waiting times for emergency procedures in its calculation of this number. The government can then say that wait lists are, on average, only 10 months in this instance because the emergency ones are included. However, for somebody who has got an elective procedure, in actuality it often takes six months just to get on the waiting list. People then have to wait one or even two years for the actual knee surgery.

My question to the Minister of Health is this: Why is he using deceptive propaganda to mislead people who are waiting in pain and discomfort for knee surgeries?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, I doubt that the orthopedic surgeons of Canada would take kindly to a doctor calling them down for using deceptive propaganda. These are their numbers. I rather doubt that the Canadian Institute for Health Information, which is a national non-partisan body, would take kindly to a doctor saying to CIHI that they were using deceptive numbers.

Mr. Speaker, these are the national numbers. We have agreed on using those numbers, publishing them, putting them out on the Web, which no government has ever done before. We are accountable. We will be accountable for 1000 additional procedures. We agree we need to do more to bring down that waiting list, and we are doing it. That is why Concordia Hospital has two new state-of-the-art operating theatres and why we have more orthopods practising today in Manitoba than we had in 1999.

Victoria General Hospital Maternity Ward Closure

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the minister should be accountable for providing accurate and reasonable waiting times. The minister's government is known already, and all over the place, for its poor planning. The NDP have misled Manitobans on knee surgery. They have misled Manitobans recently in saying they would keep the Victoria Hospital maternity ward open, and now they are closing it.

I ask the minister this: What would happen if there were an unexpected infectious problem or a burst water pipe on the maternity ward at Health Sciences Centre or St. Boniface? What will the minister do if for any reason either Health Sciences

Centre or St. Boniface maternity ward has to close temporarily? Will the minister tell this Legislature today where he will be sending mothers if there had to be a temporary closure of either St. Boniface or Health Sciences Centre maternity ward?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I do not indulge in hypothetical scare stories that any member wants to raise. Our health system is managed by very professional and competent people who plan for emergencies, who have plans in place should unforeseen things happen, but indulging in that kind of scare tactics should not be something that is underdone by any member of this House and especially by a physician.

Seven Oaks General Hospital Services

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, this is a question for the Minister of Health. Yesterday I saw a major announcement for the northwest part of Winnipeg. Can the Minister of Health inform the House what steps he has taken to improve the services at Seven Oaks General Hospital?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, Seven Oaks is one of our finest community hospitals. It sees on average more people in their emergency department than any other community hospital in Manitoba, in fact, twice the number for which it was designed. So, we were delighted to partner with the foundation of Seven Oaks General Hospital who are raising about \$2 million, and with our contribution of \$5 million, we will double the number of examining rooms. We will put state-of-the-art information technology, new ambulance-covered structures and other high tech diagnostic equipment so that that facility will be able to more than meet the demands of the 35 000 citizens of Manitoba who call on it for emergency services. They recently won the award for one of the best managed hospitals in Canada, as well. It is a fine structure.

Interprovincial Trade Barriers Cattle Industry

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken with a beef producer and business owner of a small slaughter plant who wants to promote a bull sale in Manitoba by giving away Manitoba grown hamburgers that were processed in Saskatchewan, but he cannot do that. The NDP government said no.

Interprovincial trade barriers prevent Manitoba meat that is slaughtered and processed in a federally processed plant from crossing Manitoba borders. Rather than making it easier for trade within Canada, the minister prefers to keep red tape in place from preventing outside beef from coming into Manitoba and beef from being purchased for other provinces.

Will this NDP government move to remove those trade barriers that prevent the government from moving on with the meat products?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I had this discussion with the member opposite before, and he is well aware that this is a federal regulation. It is a federal regulation that sets the standards of how meat can move interprovincially. For meat to move interprovincially it has to come from a federally inspected plant. Those are the rules.

As I have told members opposite, we have talked to people in other provinces and the federal government about how we might be able to get the standards changed in plants so that we could, by adopting a national meat code, move meat interprovincially by bringing a different standard. We have not been able to get that commitment, Mr. Speaker, and under the standards that we have this will not happen.

I have raised the issue. We have to continue to work to increase our slaughter capacity so that we can produce the meat that we need in this province.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, this minister cannot take the leadership role and negotiate that with the other provinces. That is what she should be doing.

With an established shortage of federally inspected processing facilities in Manitoba, it is time to address the interprovincial trade barriers, especially as it pertains to processing beef. Will the minister finally get on with the job and begin negotiating an interprovincial meat program which would make it easier and safe for meat products to cross provincial boundaries?

Mr. Premier (Mr. Doer), tear down that wall.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the standards that we have for plants is a standard that applies across the country. Across the country you have to have product coming from a federally inspected plant

before it can move out of the province. I have told members opposite that since I have become minister, I have asked other ministers and the federal government to co-operate with us to adopt a national meat code. There is no desire on the part of other provinces or the federal government to adopt the national meat code that would allow for meat to move between provinces.

Mr. Speaker, the rules that we have in place right now are that meat has to come from a federally inspected plant before it can work interprovincially. That is why we have federally inspected plants in this province so we can expand the trade for our producers.

Plan Winnipeg Amendment Proposals Oak Point Transit Corridor, Waverley West

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Smith) has two very important amendments to Plan Winnipeg sitting on his desk. The first is the deletion of the Oak Point Transit Corridor which would allow for the condos on the bridge project to proceed.

The second is the amendment which would allow for the go-forward on Waverley West. I would ask the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs if he could tell us how many letters of objection he has received to these two Plan Winnipeg amendments, firstly to the deletion of the Oak Point Transit Corridor and secondly to Waverley West. How many letters of objection have been received?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Acting Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question on notice for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade.

* (14:20)

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, the minister's office has been in contact with one of the objectors to the deletion of the Oak Point Transit Corridor. As a matter of fact, this individual is working under contract to the New Democratic caucus and she was called by the minister's office to assure her that the Oak Point Transit Corridor deletion would be referred to the Municipal Board.

I would ask the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to please indicate to the House today if he

intends to refer both the Oak Point Transit Corridor deletion and the Waverley West Plan Winnipeg amendments to the municipal board.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I will take that question as notice for the Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs.

Children in Care Safety Concerns

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I quote from the Children's Advocate report that a supervisor once said, "The children do not have rights. They have needs and desires." Obviously a statement that the Children's Advocate was appalled by.

I would like this minister today to stand up and prove that she believes children have rights. Will you stand up on behalf of the children of this province who are in care and assure us the second child that was placed in the home we referenced earlier, that she was in fact satisfied, and that she will share the information that was used to make the decision about the safety of that home? The recommendations she had, will she share them with us?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I sense there are actually two questions. The second question, I will refer back to the laws of Manitoba which will be respected on this side of the House, hopefully on the other side. In regard to children's rights, this is a government that has put our children first, time and time again, Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, the first prenatal benefit in the history of this province, I believe, in the western world.

We have more than doubled the budget of the Children's Advocate since 1999. There have been two, the child welfare initiative, devolving child welfare to the northern, southern First Nations, Métis and the general—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Russell.

Safe Schools Legislation Codes of Conduct

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, families on the west side of the province, namely Roblin, Inglis, Russell, have gone through their first

phase of mourning, and now there is some anger. There are questions being asked about the leadership of this government and specifically, the Minister of Education, when it comes to bullying in our schools.

Mr. Speaker, over a year ago, legislation in this House was passed. No regulations have yet been written. Today parents are asking how many more of these types of incidents will occur in this province before this minister gets serious about his responsibility in terms of showing leadership with regard to bullying and stopping the bullying that goes on in our school system.

I want to ask this minister this: When will he consider this matter seriously and move ahead in a proactive way?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): I considered this matter very serious in the 13 years that I was in the classroom. I consider this matter very serious when the Teachers' Society, in 1993, started to lobby the government about some changes around safety in the classroom. I consider this a very serious matter as do all members on this side of the House. That is why we are engaged in a number of initiatives. We are engaged in a number of initiatives with Family Services, with Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Justice, with Healthy Child. We are all engaged in trying to make our schools a safer place.

I will remind the members opposite that the Teachers' Society and a teacher on the radio today, on CBC radio, also mentioned that more has been done on this issue in the last five years than ever before. I will remind the House—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, the evidence is before us. The evidence is before this minister. The evidence is clear. Today children are still taking their own lives because of bullying in our schools. That says collectively we have not done our job. We look at the Minister of Education whose responsibility is to take a leadership role in setting the direction and ensuring this problem is curbed once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for those citizens in Roblin, Inglis and Russell who are going through mourning today, will this minister show some proactive leadership and make sure that he calls, as his Premier

(Mr. Doer) had committed to yesterday, a collection of people together to deal with this problem, to share their ideas. At least show that much leadership so that people in this province will be able to feel comfortable in sending their children to school without having them being bullied.

Mr. Bjornson: I will let the member from Russell know that when this incident occurred, I immediately contacted Safe Schools Manitoba which had been working very hard on this issue. We talked about a number of different strategies that we need to engage in to address this issue.

We were also reminded, Mr. Speaker, of the number of initiatives that have been ongoing in the last three years. Particularly, we have been reminded about the work of Safe Schools, the Healthy Child, Roots of Empathy program, the multi-interjurisdictional team working to prevent sexual exploitation, the buddy support system, the gang awareness curriculum, the initiatives that we are taking in curriculum to talk about positive relationships, the consequences of bullying behaviour, to talk about safe communities.

Yet the members opposite during the debate said that this was a waste of time. Protecting children is not a waste of time for this government. We are all committed to that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

During Oral Questions on March 10, 2005, the honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) rose on a matter of privilege concerning comments made by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), in a newspaper article dated December 26, 2004, in which the honourable Minister of Health was quoted as stating that "the Health budget had been purposely underfunded." The honourable Member for Fort Whyte indicated that he had given the honourable Minister of Health several opportunities during Oral Questions to indicate whether the newspaper quote was inaccurate, but the honourable minister had not done so.

The honourable Member for Fort Whyte asserted that his rights and privileges as a member had been

breached, that obstruction and interference had occurred and that an improper reflection on the House as a whole had occurred. He concluded his comments by moving THAT "as a result of the seriousness of this breach of privilege that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs. Furthermore, I move that the Minister of Health be requested to apologize to Manitobans and to all honourable members of this Chamber for purposely and knowingly misleading Manitobans and the honourable members of this Chamber."

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader (Mr. Ashton), the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) also offered advice to the Chair. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity, and second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House have been breached in order to warrant putting the matter to the House.

* (14:30)

Regarding the first condition, the honourable member for Fort Whyte asserted that he was raising the matter at the earliest opportunity. The remarks in question were made outside of the House in December 2004, during a period of time when the Assembly was not in session. However, the matter was not raised until the fourth day that the House resumed sitting in March. Therefore, I have difficulty accepting that the issue was raised at the earliest opportunity.

Regarding the second condition, whether there is sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached, it is important to determine whether parliamentary privilege has been breached in the actions complained of.

Joseph Maingot advises on page 241 of the 2nd Edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* that "to allege that a Member has misled the House is a matter of order rather than privilege." Maingot also

advises on page 224 of the same volume that "an admission that a Member had intentionally misled the House would be required in order to establish a prima facie case of privilege."

This concept is supported by Manitoba precedents by a ruling from Speaker Walding in 1985, a ruling from Speaker Phillips in 1987, by seven rulings from Speaker Rocan from the period 1988 to 1995, by nine rulings from Speaker Dacquay from the period 1995 to 1999, and by four rulings from the current Speaker from the period 1999 to the present.

In a ruling delivered on April 20, 1999, Speaker Dacquay ruled that "short of a Member acknowledging to the House that he or she deliberately, and with intent, set out to mislead, it is virtually impossible to prove that a Member deliberately misled the House." I carefully read over the comments of the honourable Minister of Health from March 10, and there was no such admission.

Also, Citation 31(3) of the 6th Edition of *Beauchesne* states that "Statements made outside by the House by a Member may not be used as the basis for privilege." This is supported by rulings from Speaker Walding in 1983, by two rulings from Speaker Phillips in 1986 and 1987, by six rulings from Speaker Rocan from 1988 to 1995, by a ruling from Speaker Dacquay in 1995, and by a ruling that I had made to the House in 2004.

I would also like to share with the House portions of the *50th Report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs* from 2002, which conducted an examination into the issue of allegations that the former Minister of Defence had misled the House. The committee dealt exclusively with the topics of intent to mislead and incorrect statements and had the following to say: "Intent is always a difficult element to establish in the absence of an admission or a confession. It is necessary to carefully review the context surrounding the incident involved and to attempt to draw inferences based on the nature of the circumstances. Any findings must however be grounded in facts and have an evidentiary basis. Parliamentary committees charged with examining questions of privilege must exercise caution and act responsibly in drawing conclusions. They must guard against allowing partisanship to colour their judgment. The power to punish for contempt must

not be exercised lightly. Incorrect statements in the House of Commons cannot be condoned. It is essential that members have accurate and timely information and that the integrity of the information provided by the government to the House is ensured. Mistakes are made from time to time, and they must be corrected promptly. It is only a deliberately incorrect statement that comes within the meaning of contempt."

In the words of *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, "It must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was made that it was incorrect, and that in making it, the Member intended to mislead the House."

With the greatest of respect, I must rule that the matter is not in order as a prima facie case of privilege.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Royal Manitoba Winter Fair

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to inform the House that the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair will take place at the Keystone Centre in Brandon this coming week between March 28 and April 2. The Royal Manitoba Winter Fair has a rich and lengthy history in Brandon. The Winter Fair was established in 1908, and it was granted royal patronage by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on July 12, 1970. The Royal Manitoba Winter Fair is known as one of Canada's largest agricultural events and, since its inception, has attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world.

The Royal Manitoba Winter Fair is a week of continuous excitement. It continues to feature many of its original western traditions which are always major attractions to both urban and rural visitors. The fair also includes over 300 commercial exhibits, world-class equestrian events, children's shows, auctions, hawking demonstrations, fiddlers' contests and, my personal favourite, the calf scramble.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot stress enough how important the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair is to our province and to Brandon in particular. It is an event where many families spend quality time together and make many lasting memories. The fair also educates the public about the vital contributions of the

agricultural sector. By attracting thousands of international visitors, the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair benefits the tourist industry in Manitoba and puts Brandon on the world stage annually.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the staff, board and hundreds of volunteers who will help make this year's fair a huge success. I would also like to thank the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba, a fantastic charitable organization, for sponsoring the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair. I encourage all members to attend this year's fair and to enjoy the wonderful atmosphere of my home city, Brandon.

Hartney School

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Lest we forget. Mr. Speaker, these are strong words that reverberate on Remembrance Day throughout Canada, however, the sacrifices commemorated on that day should not be restricted to November 11. It is with this conviction in mind that I rise today to acknowledge the efforts of Senior 3 and 4 students at Hartney School.

Hartney School currently houses 165 students from kindergarten to Senior 4 and 27 students in the Senior 3 and 4 class. These students and their teachers are a prime example of how quality education and commitment to learning exists in rural Manitoba communities.

The Senior 3 and 4 class was recently awarded a grant for innovation and citizenship education. Crossing generational boundaries, these students will construct a video archive of local Legion history. Their project numbered among the 76 applications submitted and 1 of 10 final grants awarded. Their innovative creation will not only affect their lives but will also reach out to others as it will be played at future Remembrance Day ceremonies.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Senior 3 and 4 students from Hartney for their efforts for observing Canadian history and honouring citizenship. These young adults set forth an example for young students in their community and throughout Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also praise their teachers, parents and the Horizon School Division for encouraging the quest for knowledge.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Basketball Champions

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the players and coaches of the John Taylor Pipers girls' basketball team. This past weekend, the Pipers won the provincial AAAA High School Championship with a hard fought 69 to 64 victory over a very worthy opponent, the Fort Richmond Centurions. This year's championship team has added yet another chapter to John Taylor's already notable history of excellence in team athletics and fair play.

I would like to congratulate the members of the team: Tanysha Robinson, Carly Muth, De Nel Johnson, Sandra Morton, Tremaine Francis, Krystal Hathaway, Chelsea Breland, Hayley Baker, Sara MacDonald, Brenna Philp and Katryna Robinson. I would also like to mention Ashley Morris who scored 33 points and was awarded the MVP for the tournament.

The coaches, Susie Laping and Jana Taylor, showed excellent commitment to the team, and I would like to say that your fans, relatives, friends, school and myself, a former grad from JT, are very proud of you.

Congratulations on a great team and keeping up a great tradition.

* (14:40)

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate both the Jeanne Sauvé Olympiens and the John Taylor Pipers girls basketball teams who both were victorious in last weekend's AAAA Provincial High School Basketball Championships held at the Investors Centre at the University of Manitoba.

Schools from all across the province had competed for these two championships. The Jeanne Sauvé Olympiens were able to defeat the Neelin Spartans from Brandon in an exciting and thrilling final game.

In the boys' section, the Olympiens were led by twins Dan and Nick Lothar, both who scored 25 and 21 points respectively for the Olympiens.

In addition, Nick Lothar was named the MVP of the boys' section of the AAAA High School championships. My congratulations to their coaches Irv Hanec and Frank Clark, who guided their team to victory.

Also, special mention and congratulations to the John Taylor Pipers girls who defeated the Fort Richmond Centurions in the girls' section of this tournament. MVP of the tournament, Ashley Morris, scored 33 points in leading the John Taylor girls' team to victory over the Fort Richmond Centurions. It was indeed an exciting game that went back and forth until John Taylor was finally able to emerge victorious in the last part of the game.

Special congratulations to individuals who performed in a superior fashion throughout the tournament: in the men's sections, in the boys' sections, MVP Nick Lothar, as well as All Stars Cam Hornby from Glenlawn, Oak Park's Dallas Bosko, Mr. Jacobson from Brandon, Byron Cob and Dan Lothar. I would also like to congratulate the girls' All Stars. Thank you.

Victoria Hospital Maternity Ward Closure

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise to speak to the NDP government's recent announcement of the closure of the maternity ward of Victoria Hospital. The closure illustrates clearly the failure of the government to develop and implement reasonable plans when it comes to health care.

In this instance, we know what the NDP government's plan was. As we have heard clearly stated in this Chamber, the NDP government's plan was to keep the maternity ward of Victoria Hospital open and functional. We must now ask how did it happen that the NDP plan to keep the maternity ward open at Victoria Hospital failed so miserably. The NDP, as usual, are trying to blame external forces. The NDP are saying, "Don't blame us."

The trend for fewer babies in Manitoba has been there for some years, and was well-known at the time that the NDP were talking proudly of their promise, their commitment and their plan. A reasonable plan would have taken the changing demographics into account in developing an approach to keep the Victoria Hospital maternity ward open and functioning. A reasonable planning process would have involved consultations and

community members to ensure everyone was working together. Clearly, a reasonable planning process would have ensured the goal of the plan was achieved. We can only conclude that the NDP have engaged in a most unreasonable planning and implementation process.

What is the result of the failures in NDP planning?

The Victoria Hospital maternity ward closure will leave a large community in south Winnipeg and southern Manitoba without a community-based maternity ward. The Victoria Hospital maternity ward closure will put the whole system in peril if there were to be a problem with an infection or a burst water pipe in St. Boniface or the Health Sciences maternity ward which closed one of these.

The Victoria Hospital closure will unfortunately be a sad testament to the failure of NDP planning.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Would you please call Interim Supply, Mr. Speaker?

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

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Interim Supply

* (14:50)

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski): Good afternoon. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This afternoon the committee will resume consideration of the two resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

Opening statements were given yesterday, so we shall proceed with questions. Are there any questions?

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I have a question for the Minister of Aboriginal and

Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin). Nine hundred people live in South Indian Lake, and they have been waiting and asking for band recognition status for decades. The minister appears now to be in a panic to give them status as early as April 1 of this year. To give them band recognition status by April 1 would exclude them from a vote on Wuskwatim, which is scheduled for June 1, because they would no longer be members of Nelson House First Nation.

Is the minister pushing ahead with reserve status early because he is being forced by the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister responsible for Hydro to exclude them from the Wuskwatim dam vote?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): I am happy to answer the question from the member. The situation in South Indian Lake could hardly be characterized as, or at least the creation of a reserve could hardly be characterized as moving too fast. This issue has been there, I am told, over 70 years. Some people are saying that it goes back even further than that. Some people say it has been there for a hundred years.

The majority of people living in South Indian are former members of Nisichawayasihk First Nation, formerly known as the Nelson House Indian Band. They have been lobbying the federal government for about seventy years now to get reserve status, for the community to be converted to a reserve by the Minister of Indian Affairs federally. So now it has finally reached that stage where the federal minister has agreed that he will, once certain conditions have been met, in fact, convert South Indian into a reserve.

So I myself applaud the federal minister for taking such action because that is what so many people, the majority of people living in South Indian, have wanted for a long time.

Mr. Hawranik: I ask the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs again. The people of South Indian Lake have waited for decades, and he states 70 years and I believe that is so, to have a reserve of their own. The minister knows that most of the Status Aboriginals in South Indian Lake would vote against Wuskwatim. He knows that. They have been members of Nelson House First Nation for decades. They voted for council and chief.

I ask the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs if he would delay band recognition status for at least two more months or until the Manitoba Hydro vote is held for Wuskwatim. Surely a delay of a couple of months is minimal when compared to the decades of time that they have been waiting already, because to force band recognition status on these people, on South Indian Lake now, would disenfranchise 900 people who should have the right to vote with respect to Wuskwatim.

Mr. Lathlin: I do not agree with the member across the way that people are in fact being forced for their community to become a reserve. As I indicated earlier, this situation did not come about yesterday. It has been there for a long time. I said I support the federal minister, I support those people in South Indian who have been lobbying for a long time to be recognized as a First Nation, and finally they are going to get it. Who am I to, all of a sudden, stand in the way of them realizing their, you know, long, long-standing dream?

As I said earlier, most of those residents living in South Indian are former Nelson House Band people, and I will do everything on my part to support them so that they realize their lifelong dream. The member was alluding earlier to the notion that if we agree for them to become a reserve right away, that somehow can be construed to mean that we are forcing them to become a reserve so that they cannot vote on the Nelson House side because of Hydro-related issues. I myself do not see a connection between the two. I just want to make sure that I do everything in my part to help South Indian residents realize their dream, and that is to become a reserve.

* (15:00)

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I think that there are many on South Indian Lake that would like that independence.

I guess my question for the Minister of Northern Affairs is there are a considerable number of Métis and non-Status residents, as well as others at South Indian Lake, and my question would be what plans does he have to protect the rights of non-Status individuals and the Métis in South Indian Lake. Can he assure them today that their interests are going to be looked after, that houses that they have invested in will be protected as they move forward with reserve status? I think there are many issues and

many people that the minister, after a reserve is created, will have direct responsibility for through his portfolio. I would like some clear indication of what assurance he is going to give those individuals as they move forward to reserve status.

Mr. Lathlin: I do not see myself as protecting those Métis people who are going to be living in South Indian. Rather, I see, once the community has been designated as a reserve, it will be not unlike any other community. For example, at OCN, we have about 3500 people, I guess, living on the reserve, and I would say a good number of those are, I do not have the exact numbers, but recently I was told we had about 100 people living at OCN who are Métis people. But then again some of them are people who have been reinstated under Bill C-31, federal legislation. Many of these people, for example, living at OCN are Métis people who have been married into the reserve but who maintain their Métis status. There are a lot of family members who live in the community, and so South Indian is not much different from what exists in other reserves.

At South Indian Lake, for example, once it becomes a reserve, and I do not want to go ahead of any planning that the new reserve may be doing, but there are other arrangements that could be made with the new chief and council. Land might be set aside. That is one option, or land can be leased from the band like what is done right now on many Indian reserves. I myself, personally, I do not see the Métis people suffering in that respect. I have heard some people saying, even, that these people will be asked to leave the reserve once it becomes a reserve. I do not believe that is going to happen because many of these people, in fact, have properties in the community right now, and it would be incumbent upon the newly created chief and council.

Mrs. Mitchelson: There have been significant issues that have been raised at Nelson House regarding inappropriate activity by the band and the leadership. We do know that one of the council members, I believe, has been charged and is going through some criminal proceedings up in Thompson, as we speak. There are over 800 signatures from NCN, from Nelson House on a petition that has asked the federal government for a forensic audit of the books of Nelson House. I know the minister has received copies of all the correspondence, as we have as members of the opposition, of concerns raised by many members of that community.

I wonder whether the minister could indicate to me, because these are very serious allegations, whether, in fact, he has satisfied himself that there is no inappropriate activity because I do know that there are negotiations ongoing between the government and Manitoba Hydro and NCN. I would hope that any negotiations around funding would certainly want to ensure that serious allegations that 800 members of the community are raising are addressed before negotiations continue or before there is any vote on whether the Wuskwatim agreement should go forward.

I am asking the minister to confirm today that he has looked into these issues, because they are serious, and has assured himself that things are all aboveboard before any final negotiations are done with Nelson House regarding Wuskwatim.

Mr. Lathlin: I guess, first of all, I would like to indicate to the member that, under The Northern Affairs Act, my responsibility is limited to the Métis communities, the Northern Association of Community Councils. I am, under The Northern Affairs Act, responsible for those communities. I do not have any direct responsibility or jurisdiction on the Indian reserves.

I believe, at least in my view, what goes on at Nelson House, Nisichawayasihk, is an internal matter. I am satisfied that the chief and council at Nelson House are, indeed, managing their affairs appropriately, at least from where I am sitting. I believe the affairs over at Nelson House are being managed appropriately by their chief and council, but I do not have any direct jurisdiction over Indian reserves.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I would like to ask a question of the Minister responsible for Hydro because I do know that there are ongoing negotiations with NCN, Manitoba Hydro and his ministry.

These are, indeed, very serious allegations that 800 individuals have raised, expressing lack of confidence in the ability of the band and council to manage the financial affairs, and they have asked for a forensic audit. Given that there are ongoing negotiations and that NCN is going to be part of any agreement around the building of the Wuskwatim dam, can the minister of Hydro tell us whether he has taken these allegations seriously? I know that he has been made aware of the allegations. He has copies of

all of the letters that have gone to the federal government?

Has he assured himself that the financial issues and the expenditure of dollars at Nelson House have all been appropriately handled given that there are ongoing negotiations? There will be a fair amount of both Manitoba Hydro and provincial money going into Wuskwatim and the arrangements that will be made with the band. Is he assured and has he satisfied himself that the finances are aboveboard and sound through these negotiations?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Madam Chairperson, the control and governorship of First Nations are in the control of First Nations, and the methodology and the approach that they take to their affairs are governed by their appropriate democratic principles and the conduct of their affairs. It is within their jurisdiction and within the jurisdiction of the federal government to conduct those affairs appropriately.

*(15:10)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, the reality is, as Wuskwatim is built, Nelson House is going to benefit by 25 percent of the profits of hydro generation, and 800 members of that band are indicating that they do not have any confidence in the leadership of their band in negotiating that agreement. Now those are direct negotiations with the Province and with Manitoba Hydro. So the minister has to stand up, be accountable and ask whether he is satisfied with the financial accountability, or is he signing an agreement blindly with the leadership at Nelson House without assuring himself that there is transparency and financial accountability when many members of the band are asking for a forensic audit because they do not believe there is transparency and accountability?

Can he tell me today, unequivocally, that he knows that things are financially sound and that any agreement that he negotiates with the band is one that can stand the test of transparency and accountability?

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, that community in question will be exercising their democratic right through a referendum with respect to the agreement in question.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Chair, I have a few questions that I will try to be as brief as I can in regard to them. First off, it is going to be probably with two ministers. The first one was the minister responsible for municipal affairs or the acting minister. I have had a great deal of interest expressed in terms of Waverley West and what was actually happening there. One did a fabulous job in terms of presentation. It was with the Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba and the Council of Women of Winnipeg.

The questions that I had are in regard more so, I guess, to process. There seems to be a considerable amount of interest that this particular project in fact be referred to the Municipal Board. I would ask if the acting minister is in a position in which he can indicate whether or not the government is looking at referring it to the Municipal Board.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Acting Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): Madam Chairperson, I will take that question as notice for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Smith). Once we have finished this process, we will be going to the Estimates process, and I would suggest that the member raise that issue when we get into the Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade section.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Chair, that particular answer could be applied to any question that is put forward during this particular question and answer session. Having said that, I would ask for the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) to give indication whether or not a decision has been made, whether it is going to be going to the Municipal Board or not.

Ms. Wowchuk: That question was raised during Question Period today, and I indicated to the House that I would take it as notice for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. I say again, I will take that question as notice for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Mr. Lamoureux: What I will do, Madam Chairperson, is suggest to the deputy minister that we do have a very strong interest in terms of what is happening with this file. I think it is important to note that it was back in March of 2004 when EPC, in essence, recommended it and then ultimately council gave first reading to it.

Public hearings regarding this issue were in January of 2005 and second reading was given to it. At the end of January the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs was sent a letter to that effect making reference to representations, both pro and against. I think what is important to note, Madam Chair, is that we did have a Plan Winnipeg approval for 2020 back in December of 2001 in which there was a wide spectrum of support.

The concern is that this government does not make a decision on this file prematurely without allowing us to go into the Estimates or to ensure that the proper feedback or that the government, and in particular this minister, is looking and listening to what people are actually saying on this file. I would be very much interested in the Deputy Premier passing on to her colleague, or expressing to her colleague, our interest in this file and would request that before any decision be made, we be afforded the opportunity to pursue this discussion.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I can assure the member that we would look at this as a very important file, and we are reviewing it very carefully. I will pass these comments on to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, my next few questions are for the Minister of Immigration. I have asked the minister during Question Period in the past in regard to the restricted occupations list and to what degree the government would be prepared to allow family members, in specific what I am referring to are brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles, for being able to be exempt from that particular restricted occupation list. I wonder if the minister can indicate what her opinions are on this issue today.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I would just like to inform the member that unfortunately my answer to the question has not changed since the last time he asked this question.

The Provincial Nominee Program is an economic program linked to labour market demand. It is governed by an agreement, a bilateral agreement, that is signed off on with the federal government. He has to understand that our responsibility is to work within the parameters in regard to providing employment for the people that come into Manitoba through this program. We have

to link it to labour market demand, and that is the agreement we have with the federal government.

Mr. Lamoureux: Would the minister then indicate to the House that there is no demand for nurses or doctors in our province?

Ms. Allan: The Provincial Nominee Program's primary focus is economic and labour market driven, once again. Actually, the restricted list that he is talking about, we are actually going to be announcing that we are going to change the restricted list to the occupational requirements list. The occupational requirements list is developed with extensive consultation with the Settlement and Labour Market Services Branch, professional regulatory bodies. There are 30 of them that we work with and Manitoba Advanced Education and Training. It provides the widest range of eligible occupations of any nominee or skilled worker program in Canada. I think it is very, very important that the member understands that.

* (15:20)

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, would the minister indicate whether or not there is a shortage of nurses or doctors in the province?

Ms. Allan: I think it is very important for the member to understand—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski): Order.

Ms. Allan: It is very important that both Manitoba and Human Resources Development Canada use the same processing criteria for jobs offered. It is a Labour Market opinion that no Canadian or landed immigrant can fill the position. So if there is a position here, the labour market demand determines that, right? So, quite frankly, I have to tell you, if nurses and doctors are not on the list, it is because, particularly around nurses, we have put the training program in at Red River. There are 98 seats in Red River. So we certainly would not want to bring a nurse in from some other country if we are training them here in Manitoba through the Provincial Nominee Program. They can come through the federal stream.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, if you are a nurse or a doctor, do not come through the PNP program. That is what the minister is saying, in a nutshell.

Ms. Allan: No, that is not what I am saying. On the occupation requirements list, we actually work with the licensing bodies. There are licensing requirements. If an applicant is coming from another country, what we do is we ask the applicant to get in touch with the licensing body to ensure that that individual who is applying to come to Manitoba has the exact requirements. If that individual had the requirements, they would be able to come to Manitoba. *[interjection]*

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski): Order, please. Has the Member for Inkster concluded?

Mr. Lamoureux: I understand that there is a sense that we should continue passing on and go through some other steps, so I am prepared to pass on. But I will give notice that I will continue once we get into second reading.

Madam Chair, having said that, I do have some more questions. I must apologize to the minister. I did not quite hear all of her response to the last question.

The minister has stated, and I am quoting from an article in which the provincial Labour and Immigration Minister said that "the reason doctors and nurses are on the restricted list is because the program is linked to labour market demand," which is fairly consistent with what she is saying currently. She makes reference to another list that is not the restricted list, and I am asking what page that is on in the Manitoba Provincial Nominee skill booklet that she provides.

Ms. Allan: It is unfortunate that the member jumped up from his seat and did not hear what I said. I said that what we are going to be doing is we are going to be giving the restricted list a new name, and the new name is going to be the Occupational Requirements List.

Mr. Lamoureux: Under that new name, I take it, then, you are redesigning the PNP book. When would we anticipate receiving the next edition of that booklet?

Ms. Allan: I do not know, but I can get those details from my department. But the list is not going to change. I want the member to know that. The list is not going to change. It is just the name of the list. We are going to call it the Occupational Requirements List so that it sounds less negative.

Mr. Lamoureux: So, if it is just a name change, the real impact it is going to have in terms of individuals who happen to be a nurse or a doctor or other professions that are on that list, in essence, there is no change in government policy.

Ms. Allan: I think it is important that the member understand that the occupations on the list are linked to labour market demand. Both Manitoba and Human Resources Development Canada use the same processing criteria for job offers, the Labour Market Opinion. The Provincial Nominee Program in Manitoba is an economic program linked to labour market demand and the Labour Market opinion. The opinion is, used by both the provincial government and the federal government, that no Canadian or landed immigrant, if they are here and they can fill the position, then they have the priority over that labour market.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, would the minister then concede that it is not within her ability to be able to change occupations that are on that list or not on that list? Does she not . . . that change, to take one off the list or on the list?

Ms. Allan: Once again, the list is determined, the Provincial Nominee Program is an economic program linked to labour market demand. It is governed by a bilateral agreement with the federal government. The Manitoba and Human Resources Development Canada worked together to develop the list.

Mr. Lamoureux: So, then, the minister does not have the authority to say that we want to drop a particular—I will use the example of dentists. This government does not have the authority to say that we want the dentists off today's restricted occupations list.

Ms. Allan: That is my understanding, that we do not have the legislative authority.

Mr. Lamoureux: Whose responsibility is it to take the initiative if they want to see something dropped?

Ms. Allan: Maybe the MLA for Inkster would like to talk to his federal counterparts in Ottawa.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, I do talk to my federal counterparts, but I choose to talk to the Minister of Labour and Immigration today, who has a responsibility in this area. I do not, for the life of me, understand why it is she has taken the position that she does not have any influence in what is on that list. I do not think that is accurate.

I believe that the Minister of Labour and Immigration, provincially, does have influence on what is on that list and what is not on that list. We have seen, this is a program that was brought in back in 1998, before her party was even in government here in the province, and there have been many changes to the program. I will suggest to you that some of those changes have happened because this provincial government requested changes. Some of those changes that have happened have happened arbitrarily from this government.

My question to the current minister is this: Would she concur with me that this government, former ministers of this government have made changes to this program, and, in fact, have led on some of those changes?

* (15:30)

Ms. Allan: Well, first of all, there is absolutely no question that the Provincial Nominee Program in Manitoba is the best of any jurisdiction in Canada and that we have, without question, raised the bar in regard to a very flexible program, and we have made many changes. We have incredible staff in our department. If there is a pilot project to be launched in Manitoba, you know, the student foreign-trained program, that was launched in Manitoba and we are very fortunate that Mr. Gerry Clement, our Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for Immigration, sits at the table. He is the co-chair of the federal bureaucrats table. So we have had a lot of opportunity to make change, Madam Deputy Speaker, and we are very proud of our record in regard to immigration.

The specific question that the member continues to ask in regard to the occupational requirements list, for some reason he does not seem to understand that it is a labour market program, an economic program linked to labour market demand. I have explained the criteria that HRDC and the Manitoba government,

they work together. They work as well with the licensing bodies and Labour Market Services Branch and Manitoba Advanced Education and Training. They work together with the federal government to identify what the labour market demand here is in Canada and in Manitoba. There are criteria.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, now we are starting to get somewhere. Now we have a minister who says, yes, the Province can take a leadership role and implement changes within the Provincial Nominee Program, and she has actually cited some examples.

So, then, the question becomes why does this minister not see the merit, and there are two issues here. One is the restricted list and making modifications to it. The other issue is exempting family members from being held to the restricted list. Why, then, would the minister not champion one of the two of them? Is it because she does not support that change, so that is the reason why we are not seeing any movement in that area?

Ms. Allan: Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, the occupations that are on the occupational requirements list are those that are regulated, licensed, high-turnover occupations and entry-level jobs. The regulated, licensed are health professionals and teachers. The high-turnover occupations are sewing machine operators, and the entry-level jobs are labourers and production workers in certain sectors. The list was developed to demonstrate employability and to better serve the applicant with accurate information on labour market preparation and entry.

Now, in regard to the specific case, in regard to doctors and nurses, there are licensing requirements, Madam Deputy Speaker, and we have to work with the licensing bodies to ensure that when applicants come in, that they have met the licensing requirements. That is our public responsibility in regard to our immigration program.

Mr. Lamoureux: Could the minister give some sort of a guesstimate in terms of how many people that would be coming to the province through the PN Program that would be computer, not necessarily consultants, computer data, mainframe type of occupations under the program?

Ms. Allan: I do not have those specifics off the top of my head. No.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, my experience is that there has been a considerable number. I do not know the numbers, obviously, other than what I receive through my office and get a bit of a sense of it, but what I have found is that we do get some health care professionals who are married to those other occupations that are coming in. It seems to me that the government is being very selective, and some, including myself, would argue, discriminatory with the types of jobs that are being put on this list and preventing someone from being able to come to Canada.

A good example of that would be someone that would be, let us say, from the Philippines, who has been a computer data-bank builder for a number of years. They happen to be a brother of someone that lives in the province of Manitoba. That individual will not have a problem. There is no guarantee that person is going to be working on a computer when they get here.

Then you have another situation where it is maybe another Manitoban's brother who happens to be a doctor or a nurse. All we can tell them is, no, not through this program because of the occupation they were doing.

It seems to me the most successful immigrants that we have had to our province have been through families where we have family members living in the province and immigrants are coming to Manitoba because they happen to have family here. They have been exceptionally successful at staying in our province, at living in our province and contributing in a very real, tangible way.

I guess the question that I have to ask the minister is this: Does she not feel that there are many occupations, or many people, I should say, that we are turning down that would in fact make wonderful residents and be able to contribute significantly to our province if the government were to be a little bit more open-minded on their restricted occupations list?

Ms. Allan: We do recognize fully how important it is if an immigrant coming to Manitoba has family support because, of course, that helps newcomers to Manitoba settle in better and we have higher retention rates. That is why when we redesigned our Provincial Nominee Program in April of 2004, family support became one of the major criteria in our redesign for our program.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, let me give a very specific example and ask the minister what she would recommend to her constituent.

If a constituent approached her and said, "I have a sister who lives in the Philippines, who is a nurse and has been working in an emergency section of the hospital for the last five or six years, and she would like to be able to come to the province under the Provincial Nominee Program. Her boyfriend happens to be a computer technologist." On the surface, what would the minister recommend for that particular constituent if she had such a constituent?

*(15:40)

Ms. Allan: When anyone approaches me in regard to immigration matters, particularly constituents, what I do, Madam Deputy Speaker, is I ask them to call our Immigration Branch and work directly with the Immigration Branch. This is a very important program in Manitoba. It is about the movement of people. I, as Minister of Immigration, must make sure that I am not giving out advice to anyone in regard to this program.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski): Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski): The resolution reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$2,747,125,010, being 35 percent of the total amount to be voted as set forth in Part A (Operating Expenditure) of the Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

The second resolution respecting Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$79,146,515, being 35 percent of the total amount to be voted as set out in Part B (Capital Investment) of the Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

That concludes the business currently before us.
Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (Acting Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted two resolutions respecting Interim Supply.

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your patience.

I move that Bill 19, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005; Loi de 2005 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, be now read a first time and be ordered for a second reading immediately.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Finance.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, out of the Consolidated Fund, the sums of \$2,747,125,010, being 35 percent of the total amount to be voted as set out in Part A (Operating Expenditure) and \$79,146,515, being 35 percent of the total amount to be voted as set out in Part B (Capital Investment) of the Estimates, laid before the House at the present session of the Legislature.

Motion agreed to.

* (15:50)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 19—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that Bill 19, The Interim—

An Honourable Member: Seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh).

Mr. Selinger: Yes, the Minister of Justice. The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005; Loi de 2005 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, be now read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice, that Bill 19, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005, be now read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

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

SECOND READINGS

Bill 19—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I move, once again, seconded by the Minister of Justice—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Selinger: Moved by the ever-present Minister of Justice, that Bill 19, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005; Loi de 2005 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, be now read a second time and be referred to a Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice, that Bill 19, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005, be now read a second time and be referred to Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I am pleased to put a few words on the record about this bill. I am very pleased to put some comments on the record about the bill because it really is related to the budget that was passed last Thursday and was voted on last Thursday.

I have to start with the comment that, in fact, I have listened to much of the budget debate, and I listened to what the Premier (Mr. Doer) had to say just before my debate last Thursday. I have to say that I was really quite surprised that the Premier rudely interrupted my debate on Thursday when it came time for the budget, especially since he knew well before I stood up, in fact, the Deputy Speaker at the time even before, once I stood up to deliver my debate, the Deputy Speaker in fact prefaced his comments with the fact that I had unlimited time.

I was really quite surprised when the Premier stood up on a point of order, but I was very pleased to see that the Chair, the Speaker, ruled in favour of me in terms of the Premier losing the point of order. The Interim Appropriation Act, as presented by the Finance Minister, authorizes up to 35 percent of the operating expenditures that are budgeted by government and up to 35 percent of capital expenditures that are budgeted that were included within the budget numbers that were presented a couple weeks ago by the Finance Minister.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

It is allowing the Finance Minister to spend up to 35 percent of both operating and capital expenditures before June 10. I raised that issue with the Finance Minister in Committee. I raised that issue with him because I am concerned about the fact that we have about 20 percent of time between now, April 1 and June 10, 20 percent of the budget year, and yet he is asking us to approve 35 percent of the expenditures under the budget. The explanation I received from the Minister of Finance was, in my view, less than satisfactory.

Certainly, you should not have to obtain 35 percent of authorized expenditures under the budget in 20 percent of the time, unless of course, perhaps maybe even the budget numbers are fudged, as they were in '03-04. That was my concern. On June 10, we rise and by that time, certainly the Estimates process would be complete. In fact, they will likely be complete about the middle of May. I was not sure about why the government, why the Finance Minister, is in fact asking for 35 percent of expenditures except for the fact that he is so anxious to spend our money that he really needed to overshoot the mark when it comes time for the amount of expenditures that he wanted authorized in his department.

There are two ways to increase taxes by the NDP, and they have shown us both ways over the last number of budgets and over the last number of years. They have shown us two ways they can increase taxes. First of all, they can increase taxes within the budget itself, and they have done that in the past. They have increased the scope and the effect of the provincial sales taxes in the past. They have imposed provincial sales taxes on engineering, architecture, legal fees. They have imposed

provincial sales taxes on the labour portion of mechanical and electrical contracts in the past. They have done that, but they have done it in the budget.

This year, in spite of record high revenues, \$525 million of new revenue coming into the province, flowing into the province, largely as a result of the federal government increase in transfer payments, having nothing to do with the fact that the NDP have not grown the economy of the province the way they should have. We have been lagging behind all of western Canada. In fact, the Finance Minister last week in Question Period indicated that he and the NDP have grown the GDP in this province by more than \$10 billion since 1999.

The numbers are correct, in terms of the growth of the GDP in the province since 1999, \$10 billion, but what he really fails to mention, and he is really misleading by omission again, and the Auditor General has called him on that before. What he fails to mention is the fact that we are dead last in western Canada. We are dead last in GDP growth in western Canada, and that is clearly not acceptable. We are even behind Saskatchewan. I find it particularly disturbing that we are behind Saskatchewan in real GDP growth because of the fact that Saskatchewan has a much smaller population than Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So what we have seen is an increase in taxes a couple of ways. As I mentioned, the NDP have either put it in their budget and, in fact, this year in this budget it appears as though, even in spite of historic high revenues, they are increasing taxes in terms of increasing the Pharmacare deductible again, another 5% increase in the deductible and that came through budget approval. We voted against the budget; they voted for increasing Pharmacare deductibles.

* (16:00)

There is another way that they have been introducing taxes in this province, Mr. Speaker, and in my view it is a sneaky way of doing it, but they have done it in the past. They have done it scores of times in the past, sometimes as high as 67% increases in terms of licensing, in terms of fees, in terms of permit fees and so on. They have done it in the past without budget approval, without consultation, without Manitobans having the ability to question them in the budget, without opposition

being able to question them in concurrence or in Estimates. That is a concern of mine.

When I asked the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) while in committee, his response to whether or not they will be increasing taxes again through the back door and not through the budget approval, but increasing taxes by increasing licence fees and so on, his response was less than satisfactory. He gave me no assurance that he would not increase taxes by Order-in-Council without debate and without disclosure and without budgetary approval.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put on the record some of the comments made by the Finance Minister in that regard. I asked him point blank: Are there any plans to broaden the effect or the application of any of the taxes within a particular category of revenue that I was speaking of at the time without going budget approval? I asked him that question. His response was that he was not aware of any specific initiatives with regard to taxes on page 5 of the Revenue Estimates.

Then I asked him, Mr. Speaker, whether he can guarantee to Manitobans that the items under Finance that I was speaking of at the time would not be broadened as he did in the past with respect to the provincial sales tax, that they would not be broadened without first going through budget disclosure and without undergoing public scrutiny, and I asked him that for the '05-06 budget year. His response again was less than satisfactory. He said there are no plans that he is aware of to do that. If there is any information that he has not covered today, he says he would be happy to bring it to my attention as soon as he receives it, but he is not aware of any plans. He is not guaranteeing to Manitobans that he will not sneak in taxes through the back door as they have in the past, and this in spite of record high revenues available to the Province, incredibly high revenues, \$525 million of new revenues.

We normally receive in Manitoba between \$250 million to \$300 million in new revenues annually on a year-to-year basis. This year we received \$525 million in new revenues. In spite of those incredibly increased revenues, he could not give me the assurance or the guarantee that he would not increase taxes through the back door and not through the budgetary process. Again, he said, "I am not aware of any plans to do that. I may not be aware of the

plans that they have, but they would be reported," he tells me. He says he would report directly to me.

I ask the Minister of Finance to live up to that obligation that he gave to me in committee that he would in fact notify me, give me prior notice before they increased taxes to Manitobans through the back door instead of through the budget process, Mr. Speaker.

I also asked the Minister of Finance a question with respect to any increases in fees. Does he agree that any increases in fees or increases in permits, or the broadening of the application of any tax within the Estimates or the budget papers, anything increasing the application of those fees or licences or taxes, does he agree that they should actually go through a budgetary process and they should undergo public scrutiny through this Legislature, and whether they should withstand the tests of opposition? He agreed with that, that if there are any fee increases proposed by any department, they have to be properly scrutinized for the need and the necessity. But he went on to say, Mr. Speaker, he does not necessarily agree that they all necessarily have to come specifically through the budget process, that they are in-year measures that are both taken to reduce fees and levies and sometimes to increase them.

Mr. Speaker, I remind the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that he has had, in the past, scores—10, 20, 30. In fact, I think there were almost 100 increases in some of the permit fees and application fees and corporation taxes, in terms of incorporating new businesses, in terms of increasing the registration fees at the Winnipeg Land Titles Office, and the taxes that are associated with that, when you register a transfer of land. Some of them were increased last year as high as 67 percent. That is an increase in taxes without going through the budget. There is no comfort. I do not believe that the Finance Minister gave any comfort to any Manitobans when he replied to my questions. It all goes to show you that the NDP philosophy, of course, is to spend, spend, spend because they are addicted to spending.

I have some concerns, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned during the budget debate as well, about whether or not the budget numbers can really be believed. I know this bill, The Interim Appropriation Act, could even be labelled the interim misappropriation act because of that, not The Interim

Appropriation but the interim misappropriation act because we cannot believe the budget numbers. We cannot believe them. We have proven that, in fact, the budget numbers likely should not be believed. How can we trust the books? How can we trust the budget, when in 1984, Vic Schroeder, the Finance Minister of the NDP at that time, when he presented a budget in 1984, for the '84 fiscal year, the provincial auditor, Bill Ziprick, stated that the government, and he was talking about the NDP at that point, and his words were, "They cooked the books." Those were his exact words.

They understated the deficit of the '03-04 budget year. They understated the deficit by \$263 million. At that time, the deficit was really \$428 million which is more than three times what the then-Finance Minister, Vic Schroeder, stated they were. The auditor was so appalled at this that he did not sign off on that budget, would not sign off on those books. It is comforting now to note, Mr. Speaker, that Vic Schroeder is an appointee of this NDP. He is an appointee and he is now the chair of Manitoba Hydro. Manitoba Hydro earns a great deal of money. To put the former Finance Minister, who was accused by no less authority than the Auditor General, accused of cooking the books, is not very comforting to Manitobans. That, of course, is the history of the NDP and their Finance ministers in terms of how they have dealt with the finances of this province.

Now we fast forward, Mr. Speaker, to 2004, when the expenses of the Health Department were understated so that the '04-05 budget balanced. The Minister of Health, in fact, admitted the fact in the newspaper that, in fact, he misstated, he understated the Health Department expenses in the budget. They were worried, obviously, about political fall-out. During the '04-05 budget, you will recall that there was only forecast a \$3-million surplus in that budget. Simply put, if the Health Minister had understated the expenses in the budget of the Health Department by just over \$3 million, the budget would have revealed a deficit for that year.

Certainly, this NDP would not like to take a hit, in terms of presenting a budget to this House that would not be balanced. Obviously, the only alternative would be to ask ministers to take a look at their departments to determine whether or not their Estimates of Expenditure are accurate. The Health Minister did us all a favour, I think, and revealed the

true nature of the budget of '03-04, and stated publicly that, in fact, he understated the expenses of the Health Department. That certainly would have helped the budgetary process for the Finance Minister.

Another concern I have, of course, Mr. Speaker, is the fact the Health Minister does not do this by himself. Certainly, he would have consulted with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). Certainly, he would have consulted with the Premier (Mr. Doer). Certainly, he would have consulted with all the ministers in this House. He would have consulted with all of them when they are undergoing their budgetary process to determine whether or not they could balance the books of the Province for '04-05. Certainly, if the Health Minister knew that he was understating the expenses, then one would expect that the Premier and the Finance Minister of this province would also have known.

* (16:10)

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, is in the '03-04 audit, with respect to whether we can believe these books. In the '03-04 audit by the Auditor General, the Finance Minister insisted on a \$13-million surplus for the '03-04 fiscal year, and the Auditor General insisted there was a \$604-million deficit. How can Manitobans believe the numbers in this budget when the Auditor General and the Finance Minister are so far apart? If they were only a million or two apart, that would be understandable. But, when you are over \$600 million apart in your numbers, how can we believe what the Finance Minister presents to this House in terms of the budget? We believed them in 2004-05. We believed them then, but now those numbers prove to be inaccurate, and my belief is that they are hiding the real numbers.

The Finance Minister will stand up in this House, and he will crow that, in fact, there was a \$13-million surplus in the operating budget, in the operating financial statements, of the Province. Well, it is easy to do that, Mr. Speaker, because you can manipulate those numbers. This government has a history of manipulating numbers and certainly in the '03-04 audit, it proved that. The way they can do it is they are going to be counting income that is not really income. They count income that is, in fact, not really income at all. It is just a shuffling of numbers from one account to another, from the rainy day fund in particular.

Secondly, they do not count expenses that are really expenses. If you counted all the expenses of the Province, Mr. Speaker, you would never come up with a \$13-million surplus, and the Finance Minister knows that. He used every loophole that was available. Even if it was not available, he ensured that every excuse in the book was made as to why he did not have to count the expenses related to BSE and expenses related to forest fires in this province. My feeling is that, in fact, BSE and the forest fires would not have counted in the budgetary process, that those expenses should have been included in the Province's finances.

Mr. Speaker, just to give you some of the flavour for what the Auditor said about the Finance Minister, I could give you a couple of things, what the Auditor General said about the Finance Minister and the audit of Public Accounts for '03-04, he stated that, "The Operating Fund financial statement should not be used to assess the government's performance. Unfortunately, the government's communications continue to emphasize the Operating Fund financial statements." That is a pretty direct statement. In spite of that statement, the Finance Minister continues to quote the Operating Fund financial statement because it is to his advantage. That is the only reason.

The Auditor General also indicated that, "Communicating the Operating Fund financial statements portrays an incomplete, and misleading by omission," those are not my words, Mr. Speaker, that is the Auditor General who says, "a misleading by omission picture of the Province's financial position and operating results to the citizens of Manitoba." In spite of that statement, after the Auditor General's reports come out, the Finance Minister still continues to communicate the Operating Fund financial statements and continues to mislead Manitobans by omission in spite of the statements by the Auditor General.

The Auditor General is not a politician, Mr. Speaker. He is somebody who can be absolutely trusted. He is independent of the Legislature, and that is something that Manitobans should remember when reading some of the material that is produced by the Auditor General.

The Auditor General also indicated that the net debt of the province increased by \$1.2 billion in 2003-04. Yet members opposite have the audacity

to stand up in this House and tell everyone they paid down the debt, including the Premier (Mr. Doer). Now the Premier even thinks that they paid down the debt.

My concern is that the Finance Minister, the Premier, and members opposite are not being open and honest with Manitobans. They are not being transparent with respect to the finances of this province. They think they paid down the debt. In fact, what they have done is paid money toward the debt. What has been happening is that the debt to the province continues to climb. It continues to escalate in size. The members opposite continue to try to spin that they have paid down the debt. It is certainly not believable. If that is not believable, if they are not being open and honest with Manitobans, why should we believe the numbers in the budget? Why should we give any credence to what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) says in this House?

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General also indicated that if Generally Accepted Accounting Principles were used in the '03-04 summary financial statements, the deficit would have increased by \$292 million. This would have increased the deficit by \$292 million to \$896 million, which is the largest deficit since 1988 when those records were kept. That is a concern of ours as well. In fact, the '03-04 financial statements of this Province actually revealed that it is the highest deficit in the history of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General also indicated that shareholders of public companies would not tolerate a company that produced two different sets of audited financial statements each year. I do not think the Auditor General was speaking about necessarily that they produce the two different sets because we all know that the operating fund financial statements are produced by the Province every year to determine whether they comply with the balanced budget legislation. What he was concerned about was not necessarily that they were produced but that the government was focussing its entire public communication, almost its entire public communication of the results of the financial statements of this province on the operating fund and not on the summary financial statements.

The Auditor General also indicated that the quarterly reports of financial information are meaningless for the purpose of assessing the province's

financial performance. Yet, Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister, the Premier (Mr. Doer) continue to spin these quarterly reports as being important. All they do is report on the operating financial statements, which really are misleading by omission according to the Auditor General.

The Auditor General also indicated in his report that the government in its press release has failed to provide key information in the discussion about the '03-04 Public Accounts by omitting any reference to the annual results in the summary financial statements, again making my point that I have been making for the last 15 minutes. He also stated that the government failed in its duty to communicate accurate information to citizens to enable them to make an informed judgment of the province's fiscal performance. Government should focus communication on the summary financial statements. They failed in their duty to give accurate financial information to Manitobans.

What is the budget, Mr. Speaker? It is financial information. We want accurate financial information when we are presented with a budget in this Legislature. They failed to communicate accurate information in the '03-04 budget, so what is to say that they have not fudged the numbers in this budget? They did it in the '03-04 fiscal year. What is to say that the numbers are accurate in the budget?

The Auditor General also went on to say that the operating fund's financial statements are, by their nature, incomplete and often deviate significantly from generally acceptable accounting practices. They are not complete. That is what he said. They are not complete for understanding the government's management of its financial affairs. Yet the Finance Minister continues to emphasize them and mislead Manitobans.

* (16:20)

The Auditor General also indicated that the readers should not use Operating Fund financial statements to understand and assess the government's overall management of public financial affairs and provincial resources.

In spite of all these comments, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the unbiased, non-political comments by the Auditor General, the Finance Minister continues to spin those numbers. We are not denying that

those numbers have to be produced for balanced budget legislation. There is no denying it. The fact remains, is that the Finance Minister continues to spin those numbers to the public, and the Auditor General caught him on that and stated that they are misleading by omission, that he is misleading Manitobans on the financial resources and the financial statements of this Province, and he has an obligation to provide real numbers to this Legislature and to this budget.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that he has failed to do that, absolutely failed Manitobans. How can we have a real debate on the budget? How can we have a real debate on the financial statements of this Province when he introduces numbers in this Legislature which are misleading? The Auditor General has stated they have been misleading Manitobans since 1999.

The other comment by the Auditor General, Mr. Speaker, is that only the summary financial statement should be used to assess the government's management of the Province of Manitoba's financial affairs and resources. It is very clear. The instructions of the Auditor General in the summary financial statements saying, "The summary financial statements are the accurate statements for the purpose of assessing the financial performance of this province." It is very clear. He states that only the summary financial statements should be used and not the operating financial statements, and in spite of that very clear message to the Finance Minister of this province, in spite of that very clear message to him, he continues to ignore the advice of the Auditor General, I believe, to the detriment of Manitobans and to the detriment of this Legislature, because we cannot have a real debate with the real numbers that should be available and should be put forward in this Legislature. In fact, using a quote from the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province when he was talking about the numbers that had been given to him by the federal government, we should have a debate on the real numbers in this Legislature, not the numbers that have been put forward by this Finance Minister and this Legislature.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I believe my 30 minutes is just about to expire. I can tell you that that is why, and they continue to ask why we did not vote for the budget. Well, that is why. We cannot trust those numbers, and Manitobans should not trust those numbers, either.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to put a few words on the record regarding Interim Supply. It is an honour to follow my colleague the Member for Lac du Bonnet. I always appreciate hearing the comments that he puts on the record. It will be difficult to visualize in Hansard when this is being read at some point in the future, but the Member for Lac du Bonnet has records in front of him and a stack of papers, and he comes forward with a great deal of research—

An Honourable Member: And knowledge.

Mr. Goertzen: And knowledge, as the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) suggests, and I think it would be appropriate for the members opposite to really look back and reflect on what the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) has said regarding, not just the budget, of course, but the issue of Interim Supply that we are talking about here today.

I know that members of my caucus, my colleagues throughout the Legislature rely on his advice, rely on the words of wisdom that he puts forward, and it is free advice, really, for the government. It is something that they do not have to pay for. It is not like the spin doctors that they hire within their own departments and within their own areas to try to get a positive spin on something that is not so positive. It is something that the Member for Lac du Bonnet does as a gracious gesture, something he does not just to serve his constituents, which he does very ably, but also something he does for the benefit of the government, as a free piece of advice, and I would certainly ask that the members opposite take the time to consider what has been put forward.

There are a number of things in the budget appropriations and in the Interim Supply that we ask to provide the government that I think need to be brought forward to the attention of Manitobans. To some extent maybe I should be rephrasing that and saying it is maybe more the attention of members opposite that has to be drawn to these issues because Manitobans really are aware.

Manitobans are clearly aware of some of the difficulties that are happening in our province, but the members opposite kind of sit there in some kind of a smoke or a shade, and do not see these issues, or they do not want to hear them so they cover their ears. They do not want to see them so they cover their eyes. They do not want to talk about them so

they cover their mouths, Mr. Speaker, but Manitobans are talking about them, and they are listening about them, and they are hearing about the concerns that are out there.

It reminds me of something very recently. I talked about auto theft in the province, and we as a Conservative Party, a Progressive Conservative Party, brought forward a five-point auto theft strategy. [*interjection*]

I appreciate the comments from the Minister of Finance. I can tell him that it is quite possible to be both conservative and progressive at the same time, Mr. Speaker. We made a demonstrated effort about that last night. We will continue to be both progressive and conservative in bringing forward these ideas that we bring forward.

I would ask that the members opposite who have the word, I believe, I might be mistaken but I believe, the word "democratic" appears somewhere in their acronym. I believe the NDP, I think the "D" stands for democratic, but it does not seem to apply when it comes to labour agreements. It does not seem to apply when you talk about unions. Then we take the "D" out and it just becomes the NP party. I can probably come up with some good suggestions about what the NP stands for, Mr. Speaker, but it certainly does not stand for not practical. It does not stand for anything like that. I think it is extremely unfortunate that the members opposite have taken that kind of approach to governing in the province.

To talk about auto thefts, Mr. Speaker, we did bring forward, as a party, a five-point plan. You know it is interesting because just this afternoon I had an e-mail from somebody in Alberta who was involved with the Alberta Motor Vehicle Association, I believe. They wanted a copy of the five-point plan. I guess they were on line and they had seen the *Free Press* article and then he said, "Here is a good idea." We want to look at this good idea that was brought forward by a politician, government opposition, does not matter, in Manitoba. They called my office from Edmonton and they said, "Can we get a copy of that five-point plan?" I did not want to put the government on the hot spot, but it would have been nice to say it is interesting that I got a call from Edmonton to get a copy of this plan but not one call from members opposite.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) yesterday when he was in this House, had not even read the plan. He says, "What about immobilizers?" Well, he did not get to point five where point five talked about immobilizers. I know the Minister of Justice can read. I think the Minister of Justice can read, but I am not sure why he did not take the time to read before he made his comments about it not being involved. *[interjection]*

And now I hear the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), who has a lot of nerve talking about justice issues when his highway detachment was closed down. He sits there silently, day after day, and does not represent those constituents who voted for him in Selkirk, those constituents who said, "We put our trust in the member." Then their highway detachment closed down, and what do you hear from the Member for Selkirk? Nothing. Silence.

It reminds me a little bit about the Member for Fort Garry, or Seine River or St. Norbert, when the maternity ward was closed down. Not a peep was heard and I suspect that when they got together in their own caucus the dynamic was the same. The Premier (Mr. Doer) probably came in and slammed his hand down on the table and said, "We are going to close down the maternity ward." and the members for Seine River and St. Norbert and Fort Garry were quiet. They did not say anything because they did not want to ruffle the feathers of the Premier. They did not want to get into any kind of a controversy, but I think that is what their constituents elected them to do. *[interjection]*

The member from Selkirk laughs about this serious issue that has been brought forward in his own constituency, and we hope that people's lives are not put into danger, that there is not kind of an accident that happens on the highway where somebody is not able to get traffic control because the police are not out there.

An Honourable Member: Do not worry.

Mr. Goertzen: The Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) says, "Do not worry." He says, "Do not worry." Well, that is on the record now, Mr. Speaker, and we will see what happens. Certainly, we will hope everyday that nothing happens, but what if it does? Now the Member for Selkirk is committed to saying, "Do not worry about it. No problem." Well, we will find out.

* (16:30)

So I would challenge him to bring forward those real concerns from his own constituents. Clearly, he is not bringing them to his caucus, or he is not doing it in a very convincing way, because it does not seem to have any kind of effect. But, when he says, "You know, this five-point plan that was brought up, it was stolen from us." Well, clearly the Member for Selkirk and other members did not read the plan either. So let us help them out by going through it.

An Honourable Member: E-mail it.

Mr. Goertzen: The Member for Selkirk says that I should e-mail him the plan. I do not know that he would read it, and that is what my concern is. It is hard to trust the Member for Selkirk. When he does not do anything about a highway detachment closing, why do I think he is going to read his e-mails?

The first point of the plan, Mr. Speaker, is ensuring that we have new probation officers in Manitoba to enforce the curfews that are generally given to those individuals who are convicted of auto theft in our province. I would think that the members en masse would stand up and applaud this particular idea because it comes from a New Democratic government in Saskatchewan. You know, their brethren in arms, their solidarity forever, in the province next door have come up with this idea.

It is in a bipartisan spirit, and the members know that I am very bipartisan when I bring forward ideas to this House. It is never brought forward in a political way. It is always done in a way that is best for the province and what would be best to serve our communities and for the citizens of our great province, so I looked to the model that they have in Saskatchewan and I saw that they had a 33% reduction in auto theft. I started to wonder, well, what are they doing that we are not doing here? Well, apparently, they are doing a lot of things we are not doing here. Certainly, one of them is they have hired these probation officers, and when people are convicted of auto theft, they actually enforce curfews.

So, when I spoke to officials about this plan, they said, "We don't just go there even once a night. We don't just show up at ten o'clock and see if the offender who is convicted of auto theft is in their

home like they are supposed to be. We'll sometimes come back a second time. We'll come back at three in the morning to make sure that they're there."

Now, some of the members opposite, like the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), might say, "Oh, that seems very harsh. We shouldn't do that sort of thing. We shouldn't have that kind of an approach to anything. Offences shouldn't have those kinds of consequences."

An Honourable Member: He thinks he can read my mind.

Mr. Goertzen: The Minister of Education wants to know if I can read his mind. I can tell him it would be a very boring read. I like to read things that are challenging. I like to read things that have depth and that have a lot of intelligence. I simply do not want to be reading his mind.

The fact is that in Saskatchewan this is a model that works, because it keeps these individuals from reoffending and it breaks that pattern. Would it cost money in Manitoba? Absolutely, it would. I am not here to say that it would not cost money. I have talked to officials who have said it might cost about \$1 million a year to bring forward this particular plan; but, when you look at the cost of auto theft and the 13 500 vehicles that are stolen a year and you realize that it costs our province between \$30 million and \$40 million a year, we are making money for the government. We would be putting more money into the hands of the ratepayers of MPI. They would be keeping more, but the government does not seem to want to adopt the program, or maybe the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) will adopt that point and try to take credit for himself, and if he does that, that is fine. I certainly do not mind giving him credit. *[interjection]* Well, and the Minister of Justice says, "We have already adopted it." So I would challenge him to speak to the members of his auto theft task force.

It got really quiet in the House, Mr. Speaker, because the Minister of Justice says kind of, "Whoops, well, auto theft, oh, yeah, that is right, I put out a news release a year or two ago about an auto theft task force and I have kind of forgotten about it since then." The reality is, I think, if he talks to people who were involved in this organization and others, they will realize that that plan is not put in place, and that it would take additional resources to

make sure that it is fully put in place. So the Minister of Justice can try to spin his way out of this, but he is not fooling anybody. How do you even talk your way out of this one, when you realize that there has been a \$33-million reduction of auto theft in Saskatchewan? It has not happened here. It either means he has not put the plan in place here or he has not done it properly. So which is it? The Minister of Justice might want to stand up and say, "Okay, I either did not put the plan in properly or I have not put it in at all." I would certainly like to know the answer.

The other aspect of the plan that we brought forward, Mr. Speaker, was the issue of bait cars and the proper use of them. We have looked at other jurisdictions. In British Columbia, in particular in Surrey, B.C., there has been a reduction of auto theft by 20 percent. There is sometimes a misunderstanding. I think those who hear about bait cars sometimes think that the reduction in auto theft happens because people are stealing the cars. I appreciate the comments from the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), who wonders if this is kind of a cat-and-mouse game. In a way, it is. In a way it is in the fact that you catch some people who steal the bait cars, but that is not the primary intention of the program.

In fact, what they do in British Columbia is they advertise the Bait Car program. They have signs in parking lots that say: this parking lot has a bait car. Then they actually have one there. It is not just a hollow sign that the Minister of Justice might pop up somewhere and then not actually have that kind of enforcement. It is really a plan. They have a bait car in there, and it is a deterrence, is what it is.

I know the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) and members opposite do not like that word "deterrence." It kind of sounds legalistic, and it sort of sounds a little harsh. You know, we might offend somebody by talking about deterrence, but justice is about deterrence. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that deterrence is a better option than incarceration. Far better that we deter somebody from committing a crime or going down the path of crime than having to interfere after they have committed that offence and then having to put them through the penal system. So I would say that deterrence is actually a very compassionate, conservative model of justice, and that is the way that we need to be looking forward.

I know it is not the Jack Layton model of justice. Members opposite just came back from a convention in Brandon where they were all kind of doing the worship song to Jack Layton and the Jack Layton New Democrats. They probably heard of Jack Layton's plan to legalize grow-ops, and they probably clapped with vigour, thinking that nobody would be—well, they are clapped in certain ways. I am sure they clapped with vigour, thinking, yes, legalize grow-op, that is the way we want to follow.

Then they probably heard all of the soft-on-crime initiatives of Mr. Layton, clapped their hands and said, "That is the way we want to go." They heard about the taxing and the spending, and they clapped their hands. Then they opened the doors and hoped that nobody else had heard them, hoped that none of the media were there to see what they were really about.

Then they tried to put back on this cloak of being something other than what they are, which are socialists and Jack Layton New Democrats, Mr. Speaker. So they try to come back out of their foxhole now and try to put on a different face. But I would encourage them to look at this plan and to look at the third idea regarding judicial education. We think it is important that when individuals go before a case on auto theft that they have, that all the court has the facts in front of them about the actual cost of auto theft.

I do not think that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) liked this idea because it would be kind of revealing if you had to put that information out there. People could see what it was really costing the Province in terms of auto theft. It would bother them. You know, it would be concerning to have to hear day after day that the government was not being effective. But I would say look at it from a positive point of view, because I try to look at things on the sunny side of life. The glass is always half full when I am speaking, Mr. Speaker. I think they should look at the prospect that maybe if they included it and put in place the auto theft plan that we have put in place, they would reduce auto theft. Then they could claim it as a victory, but they do not.

So the Minister of Justice—and I heard him on the radio yesterday. He was responding to the auto theft plan, and I know he was kind of caught off-guard. I kind of feel sorry for the Minister of Justice in some ways because, after six years of doing

nothing, I think he did not really know what to do when he was confronted with a plan. He kind of scrambled to the media, and his response was in terms of what he thought of the auto theft plan that the Tories had put forward. He said, "Well, really the problem with auto theft is that manufacturers keep making cars that can get stolen." So he blamed General Motors and he blamed Ford, and he blamed all the auto manufacturers that they are making cars that can get stolen.

An Honourable Member: Right.

Mr. Goertzen: Now I hear the member from Elmwood say "right." He is onside. The same member who, of course, does not like cottages and does not like seniors to be able to have their retirement funds says "right." Well, maybe the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) wants to go to the Home Builders' Association and say, "You have got to stop making homes that can be broken into. Stop putting windows on homes because people can break into those homes." Certainly, I think that would be the wrong approach, but that is the attitude.

*(16:40)

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Elmwood, on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): On a point of order, I would like to remind the member that the car companies could install immobilizers in their cars for a fraction of the price the people have to pay in the aftermarket, so he should be chasing the car companies on this issue.

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

Mr. Goertzen: I know that I have riled the member. I know that he has kind of been outed on his stance, and he realizes the fallacy of his position. It is clearly a dispute over the facts. Even though his position is wrong, I think you need to call him to order on this point, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Elmwood, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for ruling in my favour on that. I thought that in fact, there was clearly a breach of the rules by the Member for Elmwood to stand on that. I do want to follow up on his point. He talks about that he follows along with the lead of his Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) and blames those who are making the automobiles. They are making vehicles that can be stolen.

Let us go a little bit further. Let us go to the home builders and say, "Stop putting windows on your homes because they can be broken, and people can break into the homes. You should not be building homes that can be broken into." I used to work in the retail industry, and theft was a big problem in the retail industry. People would steal a number of different things, and it was easy to pocket smaller items. The manufacturers of things that are small really are responsible now because they are easy to steal too.

The Member for Elmwood should now write a letter to all the manufacturers of things that come in less than maybe a two-foot by two-foot box and complain to them that they are manufacturing things that are too easy to steal. They are responsible for theft now in the province. That is the logic we get from members opposite. I think the trap that the member from Elmwood has fallen into is he followed the lead from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) who kind of, in a very scrambled way, tried to respond to a well-thought-out plan, and kind of got caught off guard in the hallway. He came up with this kind of crazy notion about blaming everything on those who manufacture the goods, and the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) just figures he is doing his duty by backing up his minister.

An Honourable Member: Say it with a straight face. Come on.

Mr. Goertzen: Now I hear the Minister of Conservation say, "Say it with a straight face." I think it must be difficult for the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), a relatively new member of Cabinet, to sit with a straight face through Cabinet meetings, as he hears the different things about this budget. I wonder if he sat with a straight face through Cabinet when the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) announced not too long ago that he was going to follow through on a Legal

Aid report and hire 10 new Legal Aid lawyers. Do you remember that promise? It was in all the papers, as the saying used to go.

It was in all the papers that the Minister of Justice said, "Yeah, we are going to hire 10 new lawyers in the Legal Aid department." It was in response to the pressure at that time that they were getting on the organized crime trials, because alleged gang members involved with the Hells Angels were able to pick whichever lawyer they wanted and have the public pay for it. I actually rose and brought forward the issue, along with the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), back in the fall of 2003 saying, "There must be a better way to handle this. There is not a constitutional right to have any lawyer that you choose on taxpayers' expense."

Why should an individual be able to choose any lawyer and have the taxpayers pay for it? That is not our constitutionally protected right. Our right is to have legal representation, to have that access to legal representation but not any that we choose. The Minister of Justice, as he always does, shakes it off and says, "Ah, not again, it is a bad suggestion. I do not know where the—clearly, the members have to read the Constitution." On and on he went about it and he walked down the hallway, I think, and kind of went off in his bluster and his steam.

It was not a couple months later when the Court of Appeal in Manitoba said exactly what we were saying, that there is no constitutionally protected right to be able to choose any taxpayer-funded lawyer that you want. You have the right to representation, but not any lawyer you want on taxpayer expense. So then, suddenly, the Minister of Justice did a 180 and reversed his position and started going the other way. Maybe the Minister of Conservation sat through it with a straight face through Cabinet then at that time and figured, "Well, I guess we messed up on that one, but we will just kind of try and let it go."

So the Minister of Justice, in response, decided to have a bit of a committee and to see what they were going to do with legal aid, and the recommendations were that there needed to be more staff lawyers, so that, when these organized cases came forward, if they ever come forward in our province again, there would be those resources in the Legal Aid department to handle these organized criminals. That was a promise that the Minister of

Justice made, not just to me as a member of the Legislature, but to all Manitobans. He said, "Yes, we are going to build in that additional staff, and then when we have these trials again, we will have those staff lawyers in place."

Well, was I not surprised, and other members of Manitoba and the media were surprised, when they got our Estimates books and they find out there is no additional staff coming into the department this year. Not one additional staff lawyer in Legal Aid, not one. Oops, promise made, promise broken, Mr. Speaker, another promise broken by the Minister of Justice. I know that he thought it would get him a quick headline, and to his credit it did get him a quick headline, when he said they were going to rework legal aid. I guess it took the pressure that was mounting on his shoulders off, momentarily at that time. It took kind of that sphere of pressure that was engulfing him at that time off, but now the roosters have come home. We see that he never had any intention to hire these lawyers, never had any intention to change the department.

So what is the message? The message must be that he either decided to just simply break his promise, Mr. Speaker, or he has no intention of having any more organized crime trials in the province this year. Maybe that is the true rationale. Maybe he has decided that they are not going to even try to prosecute anymore of the Hells Angels, and now the Banditos, which have been welcomed into the province by the members opposite, welcomed by people like the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), who sits around that table, welcomed by the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick), who sits around that table. We are not even going to try and prosecute these individuals anymore. We do not have the resources in the department. Then maybe we will not have to endure that embarrassing scene of the Hells Angels getting into the limo across the street in the Law Courts building and waving at the office of the Minister of Justice and toasting him with champagne as they all got into the limousine and drove back away to go ahead and commit whatever other crimes might have eventually come of that.

I guess that was probably a difficult time for the Minister of Justice to look out his window which faces the Law Courts building and see the limos being packed up with the Hells Angels and them all giving him the thumbs up and saying, "Thank you

very much, Mr. Minister, for allowing us to be existing in a province that does not have real enforcement on organized crime." Members might say, "Well, this is a political thing; it is just one politician talking about another politician." That was kind of unmasked as well when an organized crime expert, Mr. Lavigne, put forward some comments after it was announced that a new, a second organized gang, had set up under the watch of the NDP government, the Banditos. He said, "Well, I am not surprised, because the Manitoba government is soft on these issues and that we have developed a reputation throughout Canada"—a reputation throughout Canada—"as being welcoming to organized crime."

Mr. Speaker, you know you could almost scratch it on the licence plate: "Welcome to Manitoba where we bring forward organized crime." That is not the reputation any of us want as Manitobans. I do not know how the Minister of Justice can allow this to continue to go on without taking real action, and not only then taking that action, but just following his promises, the promises he made, to revamp the legal aid system, but he does not.

It is a little bit now like scenes from movies where you kind of go through a movie and at the end things are revealed. I think the Minister of Justice is probably near the end of his term as the Minister of Justice. Maybe there will be a time when he will move on to another role, or another responsibility, but, as he nears the end of his time, I think that people are starting to see what has happened in the Department of Justice. You read newspaper reports, even today, that say it is a lot of bluster, it is a lot of bluster what the Minister of Justice does.

I was on a TV show, a popular TV show last night on Global TV, and the host there was making reference to, that it seems to be a lot of bluster, a lot of announcements, but there is not a lot going on.

An Honourable Member: American Idol?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) wonders if I was on "American Idol." It was not true. It was "Adler On Line." Maybe it should have been "American Idol," Mr. Speaker, it would have been just as good a show, but whether we are singing from the songbook on "American Idol," or whether we are singing from the songbook on "Adler On Line," I can tell you it was a very clear song that

was sung to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) that it is time he stops making announcement after announcement and really gets on with the business of fighting crime. It is not all about prime time for the minister; it is about fighting crime, and that is the real issue here in Manitoba.

* (16:50)

Mr. Speaker, with those few comments particularly related to the issue of justice, I have to say that I am disappointed with how the budget responded to those serious issues within Manitoba. I would have loved to have talked about other issues like the payroll tax or the sales tax on legal fees which was brought to my attention by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and their executive director, Shannon Martin, who is doing a fine job representing that organization, but, clearly, I need to allow for other wise members of this Legislature to bring forward their ideas over the next few minutes.

I would leave with members opposite a challenge to look back on the different comments that we heard here today, and I would ask them to take them seriously. I would ask them to ensure that they read them with the spirit, the bipartisan, non-political, advice-driven spirit in which I gave them.

Mr. Speaker: Any other speakers?

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

The House will resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider and report on Bill 19, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005, for concurrence and third reading.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Harry Schellenberg): Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order to consider Bill 19, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005.

Bill 19—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Harry Schellenberg): Does the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) have an opening statement? Thank you.

Does the official opposition Finance critic, the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), have a statement? Thank you.

We shall now proceed to consider the bill clause by clause. The title and enacting clause are postponed until all other clauses have been considered.

Shall clause 1 pass? Clause 1 is accordingly passed.

Could we have a question here from the member from Russell?

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Deputy Chair, I have a question for the Minister of Finance.

One of the problems, I think, is the issues that we sometimes encounter in departmental Estimates is that appropriations that are assigned for specific areas are sometimes not met, and a budget for a particular department may be underspent significantly. When I ask this question, I am specifically referring to the department of highways and transportation and the capital budget that is allocated to the building of highways. We have seen, over the course of the last four or five years, when budgets have been underspent, even though they have been allocated, they have been underspent. Obviously, that money, then, is lapsed and goes back to the Treasury.

I am wondering whether or not the Minister of Finance could tell the House and Manitobans whether this is, in fact, going to be the practice in the coming year, or whether, in fact, budgets for such items as infrastructure and, specifically, highways will, in fact, be spent in accordance to the budget that has been passed.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): The member will know that when it comes to infrastructure projects, there are often timing issues in the expenditure of the money. The money may be fully committed but not fully spent because of weather conditions, timing conditions, when the tenders are let, et cetera, et cetera.

Usually, in the case where a budget is underspent, that actually brings it forward into the next budget if the project was agreed to. They usually set up a budget on what they think they can get done in that specific budget year, but because of issues of weather and accessibility and all the little

things that happen when you say, for example, build a road, they can delay the project or, in some cases, move it forward. There are changes in how that flows throughout the year. So there will be differences on actual expenditures versus budget expenditures.

The other thing the member will know is that the Auditor General has required a change in the treatment of infrastructure. For example, when the member was in government, we used to pay in cash for all those roads. It is no longer the case. The Auditor no longer allows for those roads to be paid in cash. They have to be amortized through debt financing over the life of that asset. In the case of a road, I believe it is 20 years. So now you have to put enough money in the budget to pay for the principal and interest with respect to the amortization and flow it that way. There are some serious, significant changes going on. The flexibility within those budgets now that it has been changed from a cash basis to an amortization and principal basis. It has to be stretched out on an accounting basis over the life of the project.

Two things happen. One, you have more debt-by-accounting rules, but you also bring the old assets on to the books at their book value. I think there will be less divergence in the future because it is not real cash spent at that time. It will be an amount that is put on the books on an accounting basis for those assets, for that specific year in question, and then stretched over the years that reflect the useful life of that asset as determined by accounting policies. I think you will see less wiggle there than you have seen in the past.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the minister for that answer. It does clear up a bit of the issue on a go-forward basis, but I still have a bit of a worry, I guess, because sometimes inclement weather or whatever conditions might be, budgets allocated are not spent and then sort of lapse and go back to Treasury.

The minister did explain that monies committed sometimes are put on a go-forward basis into the next fiscal year. Is that the minister's approach to dealing with, perhaps, lapsed budgets now? If, in fact, because of extenuating circumstances a project is not done, then that money will be allocated to another fiscal year to complete that project?

Mr. Selinger: The money will not automatically carry over. It has to be rebudgeted in the next year's appropriation, but the project, if committed to, in most cases, unless there is an exceptional circumstance, is completed, and there is an allocation for that.

The member also will know, though, that in every budget there is a number that is put in for what they call a lapse factor. There is an assumption built into budgets since long before I was here that a certain amount of expenditure will lapse every year because of the way we have structured our appropriations. You do not get much room to move around between appropriations, so some appropriations overexpend, some underexpend, and you cannot switch money between them. You have to show both the overexpenditure and the underexpenditure. There is an assumption that in every budget in a provincial government, there will be a certain amount of resources that lapse every year. It is the absolute lapse, not necessarily the net lapse because there can also be overexpenditure. So you have overexpenditure in one, underexpenditure in another, and that is netted out to a total lapse number of \$60 million to \$70 million depending on what people think is realistic.

* (17:00)

So the short answer is projects committed to are completed, usually through the existing appropriation lapses, a new appropriation is put aside, which will include the completion of that project, and then there is a global lapsed number within the wider government entity that is assumed will be met every year, and usually is.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the minister for that. Just one final question, if I may. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance this: In this 35% Interim Supply allocation, is there an assumption made here, because we do not have the line-by-line appropriation for the money, that a significant portion of this money will, indeed, be appropriated for infrastructure redevelopment across the province?

Mr. Selinger: There is a budget for infrastructure development. It will follow, for the most part, commitments made in the budget that we have passed already, and that will go forward. As you know, for example, in highways, there is usually a three-year rolling sort of plan for what they want to

do, and it will follow that until this year's budget is passed, and which allows for the new initiatives to roll out. Sometimes some of those are done by agreement and slightly in advance, but, yes, there will be an infrastructure allocation in the budget. We have a whole spring roads program we need to roll out, and we have done the tendering even before the budget is finalized, because early tendering allows you to get some better prices on some of these projects and do better planning around them. The industry itself asks for early tendering so that they can commit people and resources to that. So there are a lot of things flowing forward based on a three-year plan. The interim appropriation will follow that and allow that to happen.

Mr. Derkach: From that answer, Mr. Deputy Chair, I would take that there will be no holdup of any projects in the province on the basis that we have not concluded our business of the Legislature for the year?

Mr. Selinger: Well, my understanding of The Interim Appropriation Act, are you saying if we do pass it?

Mr. Derkach: Just to clarify, we are assuming that all of this business of the House will be concluded by June 10, as per agreement in terms of when the Legislature rises. At that time, we are assuming that, you know, all necessary bills will be passed. Passing this Interim Supply bill allows for the government then to proceed with all projects that need to be started between now and June 10. In other words, the reason for holding up projects will not be the fact that the House is still considering the Estimates and the different aspects that have to be considered in the House.

Mr. Selinger: I would stand to be corrected on this, because I do not have officials here to firm it up, but my understanding would be that this Interim Appropriation Act allows all of those things to flow forward which have previously been passed by the Legislature. It may not allow new projects, not previously agreed to by the Legislature, to start immediately. That is my understanding.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Harry Schellenberg): Are there any other questions?

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes the business currently before us.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Acting Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 19, the Interim Appropriation Act, 2005, and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), that the report of the Committee of the Whole be received.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Rossmere, seconded by the honourable Member for the Interlake, that the report of the committee be received.

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

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 19—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 19, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005, as reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Mackintosh: It is my understanding that arrangements are being made for royal assent, Mr. Speaker.

* (17:10)

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Blake Dunn): His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

His Honour John Harvard, Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the Throne, Mr. Speaker addressed His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor in the following words:

Mr. Speaker: Your Honour:

* * *

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba asks Your Honour to accept the following bill:

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Bill 19—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2005; Loi de 2005 portant affectation anticipée de crédits

In Her Majesty's name, the Lieutenant-Governor thanks the Legislative Assembly and assents to this bill.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

Mr. Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, 5:30?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5:30 p.m.? Agreed? [*Agreed*]

The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 23, 2005

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