

Third Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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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

Tuesday, May 3, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: If I could just have the attention of all honourable members, I did meet with the respective leaders and the leaders had agreed to allow the veterans to be on the floor in this Chamber, but, as our custom, I have to put the question to the House.

Is it agreed upon by all members for the veterans to be on the floor of the Chamber? *[Agreed]*

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I would like to table the following Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, the '05-06 Departmental Estimates for the Manitoba Civil Service Commission, Manitoba Employee Pensions and Other Costs and Manitoba Enabling Appropriations and other Appropriations.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a written report to the House, a written answer to the House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

V-E Day

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe, a pivotal event in the history of the 20th century. Over one million courageous Canadians served in the Second World War. More than 45 000 gave their lives and another 55 000 were wounded.

It is important that we remember the sacrifices our veterans have made on our behalf. Many brave men and women laid down their lives fighting totalitarian regimes so that we could have the freedoms we enjoy today.

Not only did our veterans confront horrors in the battlefield which most of us can only imagine, but they also helped to re-establish democracy and rebuild the economies of war-torn nations.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon, members of this Assembly had a chance to meet with many veterans from all disciplines of the Canadian Armed Forces as part of our ongoing celebration of the Year of the Veteran. Some of them and their family members are here with us today. On behalf of all members, I am pleased to welcome you to your Chamber.

As we acknowledge the 60th anniversary of V-E Day and the Second World War, we also celebrate the legacy of our veterans. At the Legislature, we have a book of thanks to the veterans that was launched last month with the Minister of Veteran Affairs and the mayor of Winnipeg. In addition, we are proud to showcase the war medal display that was with us throughout April and will remain on display in this building throughout May.

On Sunday at 1 p.m., V-E Day will feature a veterans' parade. At this time, we will be honoured to give the veterans the ceremonial Freedom of the Province. This will be followed by a special reception for veterans at the VIA Rail Station. The railway station was a special place for veterans as many said goodbye to their loved ones at that station. It is also where families and loved ones stood 60 years ago to welcome them home.

I would like to encourage all Manitobans to take a moment this weekend and celebrate this important anniversary to honour those who served. I would also like to encourage Manitobans to reacquaint themselves with the significance of World War II, one of the most influential events of the 20th century.

On behalf of the members of this Chamber and all the citizens of Manitoba, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all of Canada's veterans. We will never forget the sacrifices you have made, nor will we ever relinquish the freedom you have fought to preserve.

After my colleagues have had the opportunity to reply, I would ask that all members stand for a

moment of silence in the Chamber to honour those who fought for freedom and all those that paid the ultimate price.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): I would like to congratulate the First Minister for his words and would like to add a few words on this day, Mr. Speaker.

Noting that this Sunday, May 8, will mark the 60th anniversary of V-E Day, coinciding with commemorative events across Canada and throughout Europe, a parade will be held at the Manitoba Legislature at 12:15 p.m., as well as a welcome-home ceremony held at the VIA Rail Station beginning at 4:30.

In six years of bloody conflict, Canada enlisted more than one million men and women in her armed forces, approximately one in ten of every Canadian. During these trying times, Canadians played an important role both on the home front and overseas.

*(13:35)

Here in Manitoba, countless airmen received their training in Brandon and Manitoba's rural areas under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. In fact, because of the overwhelming number of allied forces who trained in our province and other parts of the country, President Roosevelt referred to Canada as the aerodrome of democracy.

In *The London Gazette* dated October 11, 1946, it is quoted that Andrew Minarski, a Winnipegger and the first member of the RCAF to be awarded the Victoria Cross in World War II, "lost his life by a most conspicuous act of heroism which called for the valour of the highest order."

In fact, all Manitobans who heeded the call to arms, whether enlisting under the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, the Winnipeg Grenadiers, the Manitoba Dragoons or the Fort Garry Horse or any other regiment who were willing to risk their lives for freedom, were heroic in their own right and to them we owe a great deal of thanks. It is their valour that we must all remember.

The cost, however, was great. More than 45 000 Canadians were killed during the Second World War and more than 50 000 were wounded. The allies liberated the Netherlands on May 5, 1945. More than

100 000 troops fought in the Netherlands and 7600 Canadians were killed in the effort to liberate her from Nazi rule.

As we commemorate V-E Day this week, we must not forget that it was through the ultimate sacrifice and extreme hardships endured by our country and its previous generations during both the First and Second World Wars, Korea and other conflicts, that Canada has become the strong, proud nation that it is today. It is they who fought to bring honour and respect to our country and help with the struggle against tyranny and oppression that threaten to engulf the world.

For this we owe many thanks to the veterans here with us today. We owe thanks to the more than 110 000 Canadian men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice and are thus commemorated in cemeteries in over 70 countries across the world. As it is said in the poem, *For the Fallen*: "At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them."

All Canadians owe the nation's war dead this debt of remembrance. Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask leave to speak to the Premier's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join with the leaders of the other two parties and the other MLAs who are assembled here in honouring the veterans of our country and of our province. This year is the Year of the Veteran, marking 60 years after the end of the Second World War. This year is 60 years after the liberation of Holland and, certainly, we remember those battles from the history books. I was not quite old enough to be around at that time, but some of the veterans who are here, in fact, fought in Holland and remember it all too well.

I think the battles, the heroism and the people who did not survive, all these things are part of what was the battle in Holland in the Second World War. All of these things are part of the reason why we are here today to say thank you to the veterans. Thank you for the democracy which we so cherish, the ability to speak up, to ask questions, to demand answers at times from government. We want to

acknowledge the veterans for their contributions because they play a very special role in all of our hearts. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Would members please rise for a moment of silence?

A moment of silence was observed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 208—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Grandparent Access)

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I move, seconded by the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), that Bill 208, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Grandparent Access), be read now for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Rowat: This bill provides for the court to recognize the significant relationship that exists between grandparents and their grandchildren. If a grandparent does make an application for access, the court is obligated to consider the love, affection and similar ties that exist between the child and the grandparent.

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

* (13:40)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today veterans from many different regiments covering all disciplines of Army, Navy and Air Force. These veterans are with us today as we recognize the upcoming 60th anniversary of V-E Day on Sunday, May 8, marking the end of World War II.

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

Also we have seated in the public gallery from Springfield Recreation Commission 17 visitors under the direction of Mr. Tony Zerucha. This group is

located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

I also welcome you all here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Livestock Industry Carcass Disposal

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it has been almost two years to the day since a cow with BSE was discovered in Alberta. When this happened two years ago, the Rothsay Rendering Plant in Winnipeg stopped rendering cow carcasses. I would like to quote from a May 31, 2003, news article that said, "Dead cows in city dump."

The Rothsay Rendering Plant, the only big commercial rendering operation in Manitoba, has trucked eight loads a day since Monday when the plant voluntarily decided to stop processing cattle carcasses. That is 80 tonnes a day of carcasses and rendered waste by-products that include livestock heads, spinal cords and whatever else cannot be ground into animal feed.

Mr. Speaker, the Brady Landfill was supposed to be a short-term solution. Can the Premier explain why, two years later, his government has failed to produce a long-term plan?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, there has been a cattle pickup program that we have approved. In fact, I think we were one of the first jurisdictions dealing with the pressure of the closure of the border with BSE. Our long-term plan does include increased slaughter capacity. We have gone from 17 000 to 29 000 cattle. We will be well over 30 000 this year. Our long-term plan continues to be our desire, and our goal to not only have boxed beef now move across the border as it was in the fall of 2003, but rather, also, the under-30-month animals and other cattle products that eventually we believe will go ahead.

We believe the U.S. administration is now very consistent on their view that the border has to be open for live cattle under 30 months. We believe that is very important. We also believe that even with that decision older cattle have to be slaughtered and

processed here in Manitoba, and that is our long-term plan.

Mr. Murray: What the First Minister fails to say is that they are still being landfilled, Mr. Speaker. I think that is the issue, and I would hope he would address my specific question.

According to the official at the Brady Road Landfill, a landfill which is not too far from the future development of Waverley West, some 16 650 tonnes of dead stock and rendered waste by-products such as cow heads and spinal cords are being buried in this landfill on an annual basis. This amount is a significant increase over what was being buried there prior to this BSE crisis. It is being buried there because, despite the fact they have had two years, this NDP government has failed to implement a long-term plan. To quote a May 27, 2003, *Canadian Press* news story, the Province says, "The Brady Landfill near Winnipeg may serve as a short-term solution, but officials admit a long-term plan is needed."

Mr. Speaker, the Brady Landfill was supposed to be a short-term solution. Can the Premier explain why two years later under his watch this NDP government has failed to put in a long-term plan?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the issue of SRMs, the spinal cords, it has been very important for Manitoba to urge the national and American governments to agree to the position, the scientific report dealing with SRMs in the feed supply. We very much wanted that out of the feed supply because we believe that was an impediment for opening the border for cattle under 30 months.

We are composting some beef carcasses. We are having a pickup program rather than having this material be deposited in a scattered way. Our pickup program was the first in Canada. We recognize that in the long run we are working with the industry on the appropriate use of SRMs, but absolutely, we want to keep the SRMs out of feed. That is one of the things we have been trying to do.

* (13:45)

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the Premier does not understand the question or is just unable to answer it. The question has to do with the Brady Landfill site.

If he does not have another option, we do. One of the options available is incineration, a method that would obviously significantly reduce the load on local landfills. We know Brandon's Cando Contracting has had the same type of incinerator that was used to get rid of the carcasses in Britain that had contracted BSE and foot and mouth disease. We also know Cando has been trying to get answers from this government regarding the air curtain incinerator to no avail. If this government ever gets around to increasing slaughter capacity in Manitoba, there is going to be an even greater need for a waste disposal plant.

When will this Premier plan to increase the options for carcass disposal, or is he just going to continue to rely on the Brady Landfill site? When is he going to come up with a long-term plan for disposal?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, again we were the first province in Canada to work with the AMM and other municipalities on not having the materials deposited all across the province, but rather to have a pickup plan that was put in place.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we have had a pilot testing of incineration. We are evaluating the results and effectiveness of that program, and we will be making a decision forthwith. We have expanded, in May of 2003, the number of cattle being slaughtered in Manitoba was down to 17 000. We will be over 30 000 this year, but incineration is definitely one of our options.

Poultry Industry Carcass Disposal

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): This past Saturday, I visited a site in southeast Manitoba where there were 40 000 dead chickens dumped in the bush and covered with straw. This location is within a couple of hundred metres of a 16-foot-deep well which is used by the community for drinking water. This area also has very porous soil and rocky soil conditions.

Will the Minister of Conservation tell this House if this dump site of 40 000 chickens has been licensed for composting, and, if so, why a location such as this has been chosen in the first place?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): First of all, let members opposite not try to inject

doubt in the way in which people in our province, whether it be at the Brady Landfill or farmers in general, handle these types of carcasses and handle this very delicate issue.

Mr. Speaker, my department works very diligently with farm groups, with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and, most importantly, with producers themselves to make sure that we dispose of in a safe and proper way the carcasses we deal with on a day-to-day basis, heightened by the crisis that we find ourselves in because of decisions made south of our border. So, we are working, and working together with farmers to make sure we handle these carcasses safely.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, 40 000 chickens dumped out in the bush covered with straw within 200 metres of a drinking water well, within 100 metres of the Roseau River which is rocky and porous soil, that is the issue. This is not how farmers take care. This is how the minister licenses or does not license, but permits the dumping of these kinds of materials within close proximity of our rivers, our streams and our drinking water wells. Will the minister today tell us has he licensed this dump site?

Mr. Struthers: I am very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that this member has come to the floor of the Legislature with this information. I want to make sure he understands that my department works with producers to make sure they have proper disposal of chickens or other carcasses that do pose a health risk to people living in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member the approach that my department takes is not to hide behind trees and rocks and jump out to nab farmers. It is to work co-operatively with farmers to make sure that the practices they employ are indeed environmentally friendly.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, it is very evident that the 40 000 chickens dumped in the bush and covered with straw are in danger of contaminating a drinking water site which is within close proximity of the Trans-Canada Trail which is in close proximity of the Roseau River.

Can this minister tell us whether he licensed his department or he licensed this dump facility as being an official composting site?

* (13:50)

Mr. Struthers: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that the opposite member took this opportunity here on the floor of the Chamber to bring forward this particular issue. I want to make sure that members opposite, including the Member for Emerson, understand that our department is taking every step necessary to make sure these incidents are not happening out there in rural Manitoba. If they are then we very diligently follow up to make sure that we work with the farmer to make sure these carcasses are properly taken care of, properly handled and, hence, pose no threat to human health.

Veterans' Licence Plates Eligibility Criteria

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I stand today as a very proud Canadian and a proud son of a veteran. I would like to say that I am most thankful to the dedication, the sacrifice and the commitment so that I can participate in the democracy we all enjoy here today. I also want to recognize the efforts of the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) in his private members' bill to draw recognition to the veterans in Manitoba through the special minting of a driver's licence.

I would like to ask the government why they chose to put in the criteria as eligibility to display this licence plate that we are so proud to recognize our veterans, why they limited to at least three years of service in the Canadian Armed Forces before they qualify, a clear contravention of the existing criteria as we here in Canada recognize as being a veteran.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, in this the Year of the Veteran, this government has been working very closely with the Legion and many other people involved in the Armed Forces. We are very proud of the fact that we, as a government, were able to introduce last November the veterans' licence plates. Now there are some 2827 plates that have been asked for and we are very proud of that fact. Our government continues to work with all the veterans.

Mr. Faurshou: Mr. Speaker, I am very dismayed at the answer from this government in this regard, because if they were truly working with the Legion

in Manitoba they would have adopted the Legion's criteria which is the same criteria as the federal government in recognizing a veteran as serving two years in military service. This government has frustrated the Legion organization in this province by not listening to them and not adopting what the Legion here in Manitoba recommended to this government. I want to know why this government has chosen not to acknowledge the Legion in their request.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, I, too, am a son of a veteran since deceased, God bless his soul, who fought in the Second World War. I am dismayed the member opposite would try to politicize a very important event.

This government has worked very, very closely with the Legion and veterans to introduce the legislation in order to pass these licence plates. I am disappointed in the member opposite that he would stoop so low to try to politicize this event.

Mr. Faurschou: Mr. Speaker, this is extraordinarily disgraceful. It is not I that has chosen to make this political. It is this government that turned their back on the Legion in not again accepting their recommendation to make it two years as qualifying for this licence plate so veterans that served this country with honour and distinction are able to get the licence plates.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) today to listen to those persons who have served our country and to change the criteria and acknowledge after two years of service that they will be eligible for this licence plate.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, we worked very closely with the Legion and the veterans, as I mentioned before, and we continue to work with them in consultation with them. This is very, very important. Many of these issues for them and any changes or alternatives will be worked out with the Legion.

We continue to work with them, and the door is always open to the many suggestions that they have. In fact, Mr. Speaker, today we are working with the Legion and many of the veterans on looking forward to announcing a veterans' memorial highway in weeks to come. We work with them very, very closely on many of these issues.

Seven Oaks School Division Land Acquisition and Development

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, today we learned the Seven Oaks School Division, Winnipeg's latest developer, spent around \$2-million worth of taxpayers' money, not on more teachers, not on new textbooks and not on better programs for children, but spent it on sewers, concrete and \$23,000-fences.

Now that the Minister of Education, who claimed to know nothing about this development yesterday, has had a chance to look into it, can he tell hardworking Manitoba taxpayers where the \$2 million came from?

* (13:55)

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Well, Mr. Speaker, with regard to this process that has been undertaken, just as there is a process in place for the acquisition of property, there is a process in place for the disposition of property.

With respect to this disposition, the proposal has to be brought forward by the school board to the Public Schools Finance Board, at which point the PSFB will approve or reject the disposition proposal. With regard to this particular disposition, we know if the disposition process failed, we would like to explore why, where and when this disposition process has failed. That is what we are committed to do.

Mr. Schuler: Former NDP campaign manager and now Seven Oaks School Division superintendent Brian O'Leary was quoted in February this year as saying that we do not have a lot of expenditure we can reduce. This was at a time when the school division was paying for roads, installing sewers and building \$23,000 fences.

I ask the minister again where did the division get the \$2 million needed to fund this complex and convoluted development scheme when they did not have a lot of expenditure which they could reduce.

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Speaker, as part of this disposition process, I have asked that we would take a full review of the decisions made around this disposition. We are committed to do that and we will

have the review completed within 30 days. No taxpayer dollars will be lost.

Mr. Schuler: Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this minister does not have the answers. I will ask again. Former NDP party president and now superintendent of the Seven Oaks School Division indicated yesterday that \$2 million was spent on sewers, concrete and \$23,000 fences, and, yet, the Seven Oaks School Division spent well below the provincial average on each student.

I ask the minister who supplied the \$2 million needed for this scheme and more importantly who gave the seal of approval.

Mr. Bjornson: Again, Mr. Speaker, he is referring to a particular process with regard to the disposition of the property. As I said, if the land disposition process failed, we would like to find out when, where and why. We are committed to do that. We will do so within 30 days from now. I have instructed the department to do so.

Seven Oaks School Division Land Acquisition and Development

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, Mr. O'Leary, the superintendent of the Seven Oaks School Division and the NDP campaign manager, said they sold off 70 residential units of the Swinford Park Development. As there are 106 properties in this development, they sold only 70. I would like to ask the Minister of Education what happened to the other 36.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): I would like to assure the member that no taxpayer dollars will be lost in this process.

Mrs. Driedger: Just like Crocus, Mr. Speaker.

The superintendent only accounted for 70 of the properties being sold, and there seemed to be 36 in dispute here. Mr. O'Leary also said these residential lots were sold to builders. We have done a random check of 29 of these properties and nine of these were sold directly by the school division to the public. Under what authority is the school division selling residential property directly to the public?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, as I said, just as there is a process for the acquisition of land, there is a process for the disposition of land.

Within that process, it has to be approved. Once it is submitted by the school board, it must be approved by the Public Schools Finance Board. Now the Public Schools Finance Board could accept or reject that submission.

Now, with respect to this particular disposition of property, the school boards assess their need with respect to the amount of property that is required or disposed. In this particular process, we are committed to review this and we will review it very thoroughly. We will have that review completed within 30 days.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the Minister of Education that yesterday he said this whole process is unlawful according to his own legislation. Of these nine properties that have been sold, six were valued between \$150,000 to \$200,000, but all six of these were sold for only \$1.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education to please explain to Manitoba taxpayers how six properties of this division sold directly from the division to individuals and were sold for a dollar for each property when all of these properties were valued between \$150,000 and \$200,000.

* (14:00)

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we are going to undertake a full review of this particular disposition process. In addition, I have also asked that all school divisions be informed of—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bjornson: In addition to committing to a 30-day review and a report within 30 days, Mr. Speaker, I have asked that all school divisions be reminded of the appropriate disposition process.

Seven Oaks School Division Land Acquisition and Development

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, there definitely seems the primary prerequisite to be a Cabinet member in this NDP government is to be able to stand up and say you know nothing and be convincing about it, something that these ministers are very good at.

The question remains land titles searches, certificates of title indicate that we have six properties valued between \$150,000 and \$200,000, all within this development which the minister has indicated was done in an unlawful manner, have been transferred for consideration of \$1. It is on the public record. I would ask the minister to stand up in the House today and explain how these transactions came about.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Once again, Mr. Speaker, there is a process for disposition of properties. There is a process to acquire. There is a process to dispose of those properties and having gone through this process, if indeed this process failed, we are going to explore and find out why, when and where this process failed.

Mr. Loewen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am very sure that there are very many Manitobans, myself included, who would like to know a little more detail about a process that allows properties valued at 150 to \$200,000 to be sold for a consideration of \$1, and yet the minister tries to tell us that he knows nothing. It is his former party president that is the superintendent. The former chair of the Public Schools Finance Board is a member of this party.

The question is simple and the minister should have the courage and the decency to stand up and answer it. How could it be that property valued between \$150,000 and \$200,000 gets sold for a consideration of \$1? How is that possible, and how do the rest of Manitobans find out about it?

Mr. Bjornson: That is why, as I have said, we are committed to review this particular disposition. We intend to undertake a full review of this particular disposition. As I said, if the disposition process failed, we will find out when, where and why. I have also committed to do this within 30 days, Mr. Speaker. I have also advised other school boards and divisions of the proper procedures that are currently in place around the disposition of property.

Mr. Loewen: Again, a display of incredible ineptitude by this minister. He has no idea what is going on within the school divisions. He has no idea what is going on within the Public Schools Finance Board, who I would remind the Premier (Mr. Doer), who wants to chirp from his seat, that it is his

government that appointed the chair of the Public Schools Finance Board.

The question is simple. Why is the minister so ignorant of the fact that this school division is conducting its affairs in an unlawful and possibly illegal way? How is it that properties can get transferred for \$1 when their sworn value is somewhere between 150,000 and \$200,000? How can this all take place under the extremely watchful eye of this NDP government?

Mr. Bjornson: Once again, Mr. Speaker, we are examining the process. There will be a full review. We have committed to do so within 30 days, and we will have that review completed within 30 days. In the event that this land disposition process failed, we will find out where it failed, when it failed and why it failed.

Health Care System Obstetrics Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, for five and a half years, this NDP government has had consistently long waiting times for knee and hip replacement surgery. While the government tries to spin the impression that health care is improving, I hear we now have mothers waiting in line to deliver their babies.

For those who arrive at St. Boniface Hospital to have labour induced, it is just like the line at Home Depot; you takes your number and you takes your chances. I understand a mother who went in recently to have labour induced found she was No. 21 on the waiting list. Another woman, whose water broke, was told there were no beds and she would just have to wait. We have moved from hallway medicine, Mr. Speaker, to hallway obstetrics.

Will the Minister of Health please tell the House and expectant mothers what his plans are to deal with hallway obstetrics?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): First, I would ask the honourable member if he has specific information to make it available to me so that I am in a position to actually find out the facts in regard to the allegations he has made in the House.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we continue to have more than enough capacity in the two birthing

centres, both of which have additional beds and additional staff to accommodate more than the number of births there are in Winnipeg currently, or that there have been in the last few years.

There are always times in any hospital, including Victoria Hospital, the Grace or Misericordia, when it was delivering children, when it is less crowded and times when it is more crowded. That is the nature of the health care system. I would be delighted to look into the allegations the member has made if he will provide me with the information.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day when the Minister of Health does not know what is going on. Only last week the minister was saying that all is well in obstetrics in Manitoba. The minister and his government appear to be working very hard to turn what should be a positive experience of childbirth into a negative checkout line experience under his ministry.

Why is it that under his watch some mothers are being called to be induced at 11:30 at night when they are tired and certainly not rested in the way one would normally hope before giving birth? Can the minister tell this Legislature and expectant moms why his crowing about maternity wards in this city is such a far cry from the experience of many women who are practically standing in line waiting to have their babies?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, it is very easy for the member to make broad, sweeping allegations. I have asked him, and obviously he is not prepared to provide the actual detailed information that would allow us to ascertain whether he is simply fearmongering or whether he is speaking from actual fact.

Again, I invite him to provide the information to my office. We will look into the information and we will ascertain—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very difficult for me to hear the answer. We have guests up in the gallery and we have the viewing public. I am going to once again ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please. We need to be able to hear the questions and we need to be able to hear the answers.

Mr. Sale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I will do my best to ascertain whether or not there is an issue in the sweeping allegations that the member has made, and we will deal with that problem. I am assured, and I think the member knows from the numbers, we have more than enough capacity in the two existing birthing centres with their additional beds and additional staff to accommodate all women with appropriate respect and with appropriate dignity in that very vital process of giving birth to their children.

Provincial Debt Reduction Strategy

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, this government really and truly is failing Manitobans. We can talk about health care and the promise of getting rid of hallway medicine. We can talk about crime and the promises to deal with crime. We have 13 000-plus vehicles stolen last year.

We have a burgeoning industry known as the grow-op industry, Mr. Speaker, but let us look at the economy, the overall economy. In Manitoba, we are the worst in terms of the highest debt in western Canada. We are going to be the only province in western Canada that is going to continue to be a have-not province.

Mr. Speaker, this government is failing and failing big time all Manitobans. My question to the government is does it really have a plan. Does it have an agenda that is going to address the issues Manitobans are concerned about? Do you feel it is appropriate that Manitoba has the highest debt in western Canada? Do you feel it is appropriate that Manitoba is the only have-not province in western Canada?

* (14:10)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Well, I appreciate the member's question because, once again, we can educate him about the economic growth plan we have for the province. We have a growth plan centred around education, safe communities, energy development, research and development, investing in businesses, keeping government affordable, increasing immigration in the province.

As a matter of fact, our debt to GDP ratio is going down under this government, but our

investments are going up in schools, hospitals and infrastructure. As a result, we have had a \$10-billion growth in this economy in the last six years, 31 percent, and personal disposable income is higher now than it was during the entire period of the 1990s.

Immigration Refugee Housing

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Speaker, many parts of Manitoba, including the west end of Winnipeg, are being enriched with new Canadians coming from many lands. Those arriving as refugees from countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia receive settlement services through Welcome Place in the city of Winnipeg.

I would ask the Minister of Labour and Immigration to inform the House of recent developments regarding housing opportunities for those refugees arriving to create a new life in Manitoba.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure on Friday afternoon of joining my colleague, the MLA for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), in opening up a new 28-unit housing facility for refugees here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very, very unique place because it was built in consultation with a lot of stakeholders. The Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council has a long tradition of welcoming refugees and continues to open new doors. They have played a huge role with the stakeholders in opening this 28-unit housing structure.

I want to pay particular recognition to Maureen Pendergast from Kinkora Developments Limited. It was her vision. She is also nominated for a Woman of the Year award tomorrow night. I hope that she has a lot of success and continues to work with partners so that we can see more of these opening.

Dakota Tipi First Nation Smoke-Free Gaming Facilities

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, the Dakota Tipi Indian Reserve has recently been re-issued a licence to hold bingos on Indian reserve land. Chief Cornell Pashe would also like to see VLTs return to his community. Manitoba Lotteries

and the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission will set out the conditions by which any or all of the 25 VLTs will be returned.

Why will the minister responsible for lotteries and gaming not make as one of the conditions that the enclosure where the VLTs are situated would have to be smoke-free, as per legislation passed unanimously in this House banning smoking in all enclosed public places in the province of Manitoba.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the conditions that have been laid out, certainly there have been bingos back into the community and certainly conditions for VLTs, once those conditions are met and approved, will be reintroduced back into the community.

Mr. Speaker, those conditions are continuing to be worked on by the First Nations community. It is going to continue to be reviewed. Many times, as we have mentioned in this House before, certainly jurisdictional issues are at play. Where it is clear said jurisdiction, where the Province of Manitoba has jurisdiction, it has been adhered to. Where it is federal jurisdiction, that is taken under consideration as well. The member opposite was certainly on the review committee as we went across the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Rocan: The minister responsible for lotteries and gaming is well aware that, as one of the conditions for the licence to operate VLTs in a VLT lounge, he can prohibit smoking. He has the jurisdiction. Why will the minister not create a level playing field across the province and prohibit smoking in the Dakota Tipi First Nation VLT lounge?

Mr. Smith: When you look at when Brandon first introduced no smoking into their community some length ago, Mr. Speaker, it was approved, and certainly done by city council within that jurisdiction. When you looked at Winnipeg enacting that, certainly that was done by by-law within their community.

Mr. Speaker, as we went across the province of Manitoba, we were informed by many members of a lot of communities across Manitoba that, in fact, they would like to see that introduced into the rest of Manitoba. That has been done.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the member. Obviously the bingos have been introduced back into the community. The VLTs have not been introduced back into that community at this time. When those conditions are met that will be addressed at that time. I believe the community is working toward doing just that.

Mr. Rocan: The minister responsible for lotteries and gaming, even though he has the authority to prohibit smoking in First Nation-run casinos, he refuses to do so.

I would ask the minister again to create a level playing field between businesses operating VLTs. By refusing to exercise his authority with respect to First Nation-run casinos, he is putting all of our Legions and bars at a disadvantage. Why does this minister refuse to create a level playing field between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal casinos?

Mr. Smith: It is of interest to note, certainly, as we have worked with the Manitoba Hotel Association and the Manitoba Restaurant Association over a period of time, when we have introduced the no-smoking rule into the province of Manitoba, we have worked on many different initiatives with both those associations.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction through some of the changes in legislation that we have made here to address some of the issues of non-smoking in the province of Manitoba have been very substantial. Those have been well recognized by the industry. We have worked with AMM on this issue very extensively as well. As we look at moving ahead, working with the industry and working with the communities, it has been well received. On the Sunday, the opening of The Liquor Control Act, that was not done throughout the nineties by members opposite, has been done. We continue to look at working with AMM, working with municipalities for all municipalities.

Hip and Knee Replacement Surgery Services for Veterans

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, 84-year-old World War II veteran Don Dundas of Melita was told 14 months ago that he needed his hip replaced to alleviate his pain. As of the Melita Legion's 60th anniversary commemoration service on Sunday, this veteran

had heard no word as to when he could expect his hip replaced.

In this Year of the Veteran, can this calloused Minister of Health not even care for our veterans? Will he provide funding for veteran Dundas' replacement operation and the operations for all soldiers who have fought for his freedom?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): The waiting lists in Boundary Trails and Brandon have consistently been less than six months, so I hope the member has his friend or colleague on a waiting list in Brandon or Boundary Trails, Mr. Speaker. Having committed to an additional 200 procedures in the next two years between those two fine facilities, I would hope that we would very quickly see an even shorter list in those areas as I expect we will in Winnipeg when the additional 800 procedures are done in Concordia and Grace hospitals. I am absolutely committed to seeing these waiting lists come down to a reasonable length of time, and we are working very hard to achieve that goal.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dundas just indicated to me this morning that he would have gladly accepted a position in Brandon or Boundary Trails if they would have been available, but he still has not been contacted. Is this Minister of Health not listening or does he just not care? This minister could relieve Mr. Dundas' pain and others.

Will he put his ideology aside and provide funding for Mr. Dundas' hip operation and indeed all other veterans in this painful position?

Mr. Sale: All Manitobans who require a hip or knee or other medical procedures are assessed by their physicians and are appropriately placed on whatever lists, short or long, there are. It is not for a Minister of Health to interfere with health decisions of that kind.

However, that being said, we accept the challenge of reducing our wait lists for hip and knee surgery. We have put in place wait-list co-ordinators. There is a wait-list co-ordinator available to the patient in question. If he would like to call, I would be glad to see that the member has the wait-list co-ordinator's number so he can pass it along. The member can ask his constituent if the constituent would like to choose a different surgeon who has a shorter wait time, or a different location with a

shorter wait time, Mr. Speaker. That is why we are actively managing our wait lists.

* (14:20)

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Pembina Constituency Events

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): This was a busy weekend for the city of Winkler. On Friday, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Gateway Resources Incorporated had their open house where they gave the people in the community the opportunity to visit with their clients and to view their work. I thank the board chair, Ken Wiebe and Wayne Benedet for their continued leadership.

At 5 p.m., the Pembina Threshermen's Museum had a perogy fundraiser. The funds raised at this event went to the refurbishing of the steamer. Friday, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., the Winkler Fire Department volunteers had a fundraiser. They used these funds to purchase much-needed equipment to assist the volunteer firefighters as they continue to provide protection for the city of Winkler and surrounding area. Thank you to Chief Gary Klassen and all the volunteers for their service in our community.

On Saturday, I had the opportunity to attend and bring greetings at a church that had been newly constructed and now is home to German immigrants. These families have recently moved to the area and are excited to have their own place of worship. They would also like to thank the community for the warm welcome they have received.

Sunday, Irene and I had the opportunity, at 10, to bring greetings at the official opening of the newly constructed \$3.5-million Mennonite church. They had a wonderful service with a mix of greetings, messages and music. The sanctuary seats approximately 800 people with an adjoining banquet hall and education wing, a most beautiful facility. I want to thank Pastor Bernie Thiessen and Reverend Klassen for their leadership within our community.

In the evening, a musical night called *This is My Story* led and organized by John Zacharias, gave local musicians a venue to share their talents. Jake Friesen, Dave Penner and I played our trumpets at this event. This is a long-standing tradition and gave

me the incentive to brush up on my skills on the trumpet.

Monday morning, I, together with the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), Mayor Schmidt, board chair Hilda Froese, Principal Garth Doerksen and student, Daniel Schneider, did the official sod turning for a new middle school being constructed in the city of Winkler. This \$9.5-million school will be home to 400 residents.

I want to thank the Garden Valley School Division board chair Hilda Froese and Superintendent Dom Wilkins for the vision they had and for working together with Mayor Schmidt and his council to find an appropriate space for the new Emerado School.

Mr. Speaker, it was a wonderful, busy weekend and I want to thank the volunteers and the leaders of the city of Winkler for their continued hard work. I am proud to represent an area that has the distinction of being the fastest growing area in rural Manitoba. Thank you.

* (14:30)

Jail and Bail Fundraising Event

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, on April 9, I was pleased to attend the Winnipeg Police Victim Service Section's Jail and Bail fundraising event at the Kildare Safeway store. The goal of this event was to offer information on crime prevention and raise public awareness about the Winnipeg Police Victim Service Section and the services they provide.

In order to add some light-hearted fun to what was otherwise a very serious issue, the event organizers raised funds through a Jail and Bail, which I gladly participated in. Participants in Jail and Bail were locked up in a cell made out of cardboard crates and then released once the bail was raised from donations. Not only was this exercise very entertaining, but it also helped Safeway staff and Victim Service Section volunteers raise over \$1,200.

Mr. Speaker, this money will go a long way to help provide in-depth education and training to police volunteers enabling them to better assist victims of crime. It is my understanding that the planning of a two-day training seminar is already underway and is scheduled for this fall.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our government, I ask my colleagues here in this Chamber to join me in thanking the staff of the Kildare Safeway, who donated generous amounts of time and effort to this event. Let us also thank the wonderful volunteers from the Winnipeg Fire Department and Paramedic Services, as well as the Victim Service Section of the Winnipeg Police. These volunteers have seen a need in society and have stepped in to answer this need giving freely of their time to do a wonderful job of raising public awareness on a very, very important issue. Thank you.

Travel Manitoba Tourism Awards

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is home to unique multicultural heritage, numerous beautiful attractions and countless dedicated individuals. Our province's tourism industry plays a vital role in showcasing these attractions while simultaneously generating innumerable economic spinoffs. That is why it gives me great pleasure to rise today to recognize individuals from the great constituency of Carman who have excelled in Manitoba's tourism industry and were recently honoured at the annual Travel Manitoba Tourism Awards gala that was held at the Rural Forum in Brandon this past weekend.

I would like to commend all the individuals and communities of south-central Manitoba involved in the Gathering of Nations multicultural summer festival. Since 1987, this annual two-day event has showcased the heritage and unique traditions of Belgian, British, Dutch, First Nations, French, Hutterite and Ukrainian Slavic cultures through exciting dances, unique foods and activities for the whole family. For acting as tremendous ambassadors, attracting countless visitors to south-central Manitoba and for showcasing our towns and great people, this festival was awarded the Tourism Partnership Award.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, it is largely thanks to the efforts of the president of the St. Claude Historical Society, Mr. Raymond Philippot, that St. Claude is home to the Dairy Museum of Manitoba. Mr. Philippot, a retired expert dairy farmer, was able to use his years of experience in the dairy industry and his pride in our province's history as the catalyst for developing this museum that showcases local dairying from early practices to modern processing, and agricultural exhibits and artifacts that tell the story of St. Claude at the turn of the century. For

his efforts, Mr. Philippot was recognized with the Tourism Ambassador Volunteer Award.

Again, I would like to congratulate the Gathering of Nations Festival, Mr. Philippot and all other award recipients for their dedication towards Manitoba's tourism industry. I invite all honourable members to join me in wishing them all continued success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Whirlaway Westerners Square Dance Club

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): On April 30, I had the pleasure of attending a celebration at the St. James Civic Centre to commemorate the Whirlaway Westerners Square Dance Club's 50th anniversary.

The Whirlaway Westerners have a rich history in St. James, during which they have touched lives of many people and have called a number of different community clubs, schools and churches home. Over the past 50 years, they have spread energy and enthusiasm throughout the community, organizing wonderful events and collaborating with other dance groups in St. James.

I have experienced the joy of attending several events organized by the Whirlaway Westerners, and I am always impressed by the warm atmosphere and the imagination that fills the room. From the complex dance calls and moves to the vibrant outfits, creativity is everywhere. Mr. Speaker, the Whirlaway Westerners Dance Club is a prime example of how seniors are using physical activity to maintain healthy, independent lives, and 90-year-old, 90-year-young I should say, Alf Lye is living proof of this.

St. James seniors have established a way to stay physically and mentally active while also enjoying a chance to socialize with others who share similar interests. These social connections are invaluable. They foster a sense of community among the members and enhance their quality of life.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend all past and present members who have volunteered to keep the Whirlaway Westerners Square Dance Club alive all these years. On behalf of our government, I would like to congratulate the Whirlaway Westerners on celebrating 50 years as a dance club. We wish you continued success in the future. Thank you.

Portage Terriers

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, recently I shared with my fellow members the victory of the Portage Terriers as Manitoba Junior Hockey League champions. Today I am extraordinarily pleased to share with all my colleagues of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly that the Portage Terriers clinched the ANAVET Cup with a 4-2 series triumph over the Yorkton Terriers this past weekend.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Portage Terriers will challenge the best in junior hockey this nation has to offer at the Royal Bank tournament starting in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, on May 7. The 2004-2005 season marks 32 years since the Terriers have been crowned national champions. Through those years though, I have watched this team maintain close ties with the community.

I would like to thank all the past and present members of the Portage Terriers organization providing our community with years of crowd-pleasing entertainment. Former Portage Terriers have gone on to become notable Manitobans, including a former colleague of ours, the Honourable Merv Tweed. I am proud of the players who have volunteered and worked in the community while continuing their education.

Mr. Speaker, the 2004-2005 team deserves special recognition, not only as Turnbull Cup and ANAVET Cup winners, but for demonstrating to all of us the true meaning of teamwork and dedication to a goal. May I express on behalf of all honourable members the very best of luck in bringing home to Manitoba the national championship, the Royal Bank Cup, something that has not been achieved here in Manitoba since 1974.

Mr. Speaker, may I also express an appreciation to those talented athletes for being exceptional examples to their peers and leaving an unforgettable legacy in Manitoba and especially Portage la Prairie. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to change the

Estimates sequence to move Conservation from 254 to the Chamber to appear after Transportation and Government Services, with the change to apply permanently? Also, would you please canvass the House to see if there is agreement for the Estimates for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs to be considered in 255 on Thursday afternoon?

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to change the Estimates sequence to move the Estimates for Conservation from Room 254 into the Chamber to appear after the Estimates for Transportation and Government, with the change to apply permanently? Is there also agreement for the Estimates for the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs to be considered in Room 255 on Thursday afternoon? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

INDUSTRY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MINES

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Good afternoon. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Industry, Economic Development and Mines.

We have one last item of business to complete for this department.

Member for Fort Whyte, you have the floor.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I wonder if I could ask the minister to table the department's economic plan.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): We can provide you with the Estimates for next year, and what you have is the Estimates of the next year. I think that is what we have. I do not know exactly what the honourable member is requesting, but we do provide the Estimates. We do have an economic plan which is based on education, on a number of different factors.

Actually, if you read, it is in the budget where what we are trying to do is build the economy, so I can provide you with the information in the budget, I can provide you with tying education into work and training and the economy, and I can talk to you about all the different competitive factors if you wish, but it is in the budget documents.

I can tell you how we fit into it as far as an economic plan if you wish, but what it is has to do with using our energy resources, using education and trying to keep a competitive advantage to grow the economy.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Chair, I was under the understanding that within the department there existed an economic development plan. Is the minister saying that there is no specific development plan within his department?

Mr. Rondeau: The department has a long-term plan in different areas that fits within the budget. It fits within all the priorities of the government. Part of it is to grow the economy; part of it is to move things forward. If you want, I can provide the overall government plan which is in the budget papers and that is what I can provide to you.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I have read the budget papers. What I am specifically looking for is an economic plan that I understand has been developed with the assistance of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council and resides within the Department of Industry.

Mr. Rondeau: There has been information provided by numbers of sources which is incorporated in the budget papers which is incorporated in the long-term plans and policies of government. What I do on a regular basis, I meet with lots of different organizations, I have gone on multiple tours, had lots of meetings with different organizations, and what we do is we put that in as part of the ongoing budget consultations and discussions and part of the whole economic plan of government.

We do not immediately adopt any one proposal or one discussion from any one group. What we do is we ensure that we get feedback from multiple groups, multiple sources and put that into our budget papers and into our long-term plans.

Mr. Loewen: Well, if such a plan does not exist, then, if the minister could just tell us plain and

simply that his department does not have a written document that they look at as their document which describes their economic plan, then that is fine, just say it, but I understand there is one within the department.

As I have said, I have read the budget papers. I am just asking specifically for this department if the minister would be willing to table their economic development plan that I understand resides within the department. If there is no such document, no is a simple answer.

Mr. Rondeau: I think the department has multiple discussion papers and long-term projections and myself as minister work with the different industries, with the different departments to make sure that the economic plan moves forward.

Part of that economic plan is tying education into industry and the economic activities we want to push, part of it is to help facilitate businesses and help them out where we can, and part of it is a multifaceted approach. It is written in the budget papers. Each part of my department has a long-term plan, which, again, depends on economic circumstances where things are headed.

So mining has a plan, and what will happen is, depending on the price of metals, the amount of exploration, they move forward on that. They talk to me on a regular basis about education, their staffing, their long-term capital. So we have the discussions. Each part of the department has both short-range and long-range goals, and they are incorporated as part of the budget discussions and as part of the whole way we are going to move forward in co-operation with business and industry and people in Manitoba.

* (14:50)

Mr. Loewen: So we will just put the Mines segment aside for a minute because it is a little bit different. What I am really looking for is if there is an economic development plan specifically around Industry and Economic Development that the minister or anyone in the minister's department or through the Premier's (Mr. Doer) Advisory Council, which resides within this department, has prepared.

If no such plan exists, then if the minister can just indicate that they do not have one specific plan, that is fine, but I would like to know if it does exist. If it does exist, I would appreciate a copy of it.

Mr. Rondeau: What I will endeavour to do is establish whether we have a public plan that we can provide to the member, and if there is a public plan that I can provide to the member, I will endeavour to do that.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I appreciate that. I guess I am just looking, not to split hairs too much, but is the minister indicating that perhaps there might be a confidential plan that is confidential to the department?

Mr. Rondeau: I believe that there is some discussion always about where we are going economically, what different companies we are dealing with. The public document is the budget documents which talk about a long-range plan and talk about the education, talk about using our competitive skills and our advantages in Manitoba. The Manitoba Advantage, as it got classified and what it is, is a series of discussions as to how we are going to move forward in conjunction with business.

I think it is interesting that I think it is the Manitoba federation of business, the Taxpayers' Association has mentioned, I forget which one has mentioned, that the most important competition is going to be in people and in trained people, and that is why we have used education as a major platform for economic development.

Again, I would say that we are working in multi areas. So it is not just Industry. It is not Industry, Economic Development and Mines that pushes the economy. We believe that post-secondary education has a component in it. We think that Trade, because 76 percent of our products go out of Manitoba, has a deal with it, so Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade becomes an important component of it. There are lots of things. It is also in branding and other things. It is a multi-faceted approach. It is put in the Manitoba Advantage and the budget papers. If the member wants something else, I will endeavour to look for it. If there is something that is public, then I will provide it to you.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I thank the minister for that. Just one last question. I see that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Smith), the former Minister of Industry, is at the table. I wonder if the current Minister of Industry would be willing to confer with him and ask him when he first became aware of any problems that might be raising their

ugly head with regard to valuations at the Crocus Fund.

Mr. Rondeau: I understand that Mr. Bernard Wilson has mentioned many a time that the fiduciary responsibility of all board members was to the board and to the shareholders, and I think what was past practice has always continued, which was appropriate behaviour of the board members. So I believe, as has happened under my watch, that government has behaved appropriately, board members have behaved and acted appropriately, and I would assume that that will continue in the future as it has happened in the past.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I will just close by indicating to both ministers at the table, the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, that they would be well advised to keep their notes because one day they may well be in front of a tribunal that has judicial powers and rules of evidence in place. At that point, I guess, I am hopeful for the unit members of Crocus and the taxpayers of Manitoba that the truth will prevail.

Having said that, we are prepared to cast a vote on the Minister's Salary.

Mr. Chairperson: I will read Resolution 10.1.

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,607,600 for Industry, Economic Development and Mines, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Industry, Economic Development and Mines.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section is for the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and the critic the opportunity to prepare for the next set of Estimates, or are we ready to proceed now?

An Honourable Member: I propose that we take a five-minute break, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. It is agreed we will take a short break. Agreed and so ordered.

The committee recessed at 2:56 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:08 p.m.

EDUCATION, CITIZENSHIP AND YOUTH

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now be considering the Estimates of the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Then the floor is yours.

Mr. Bjornson: Well, thank you for this opportunity. I take great pleasure in representing Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth as minister for the second time in this process. In many ways, what I say today will sound familiar to those of you who participated last year.

As a shared governance system, education functions best in a context of stability where long-term plans can be made. Local boards and schools must be able to make judicious decisions with a certainty that supports will be delivered by the Province. This government has tried to foster that stability and we are instituting some changes in 2005 that will enhance it.

On the other hand, as the senior partner in that governance system, we take seriously our responsibility to lead. Our 2005-2006 Estimates include new or redirected funds that begin to address areas of greatest need. In every case, those are choices. There are many more needs than any government could hope to address. We have identified the real priorities and directed the available resources towards them. I will provide some context to our budget and mention highlights that indicate how effectively education funding has been spent in the recent past and as budgeted for the coming year.

Education, Citizenship and Youth has responsibility for primary, elementary and secondary

English and French education, enhancing citizenship and a youth portfolio. We work collaboratively with other departments in many areas, especially with Advanced Education and Training.

* (15:10)

Our mission is, and I quote, "To provide access to relevant education that is of high quality, affordable, available and responsive." An educated citizenry and a skilled and adaptable workforce are key components of this government's economic development agenda.

On September 30, 2004, public schools served 186 668 pupils; 122 094 in kindergarten to Grade 8; 60 897 in Senior 1 to Senior 4; 2316 nursery pupils and 1361 pupils in ungraded programs. There were 13 127 pupils attending funded independent schools. Funding to independent schools is available for instruction and services special needs and curricular materials.

To meet our commitments in 2005-2006 fiscal year, which is different from the school year, \$951.4 million will be provided to support school divisions and districts, independent schools, educational organizations, and the government's contribution to the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund; \$898.8 is included to support schools and \$52.6 million in capital grants for school divisions. In addition, \$145.1 million is provided for public schools by funding raised through the education support levy.

The budget for 2005-2006 includes funding for an increase of \$25 million for the 2005-2006 school year. This is an increase of 2.8 percent over 2004-2005 and brings the total increase since 1999 to \$129.8 million. This government is meeting its commitment to increase education funding at or above the rate of economic growth in the province, the key strategy in our intention to provide stability in the education system.

The average per people support has increased 18.3 percent in six years compared to 2.3 percent in the five years prior to 1999. It demonstrates the value that we place on education and assures school divisions and schools that this government will do its part to address their increasing costs.

The elementary and secondary school system is supported primarily through two divisions of the

department, School Programs and Bureau de l'éducation française, and their priorities are articulated in the kindergarten to Senior 4 agenda. We conducted a midterm review of that agenda last fall when it hosted three regional forums, and I am proud to say that, for the most part, the feedback was positive and the agenda continues to reflect the real priorities in Manitoba's schools.

Our budget for 2005-2006 continues to focus on those continuing priorities, including areas such as Aboriginal education with an increase of 0.7 million, students with special needs with an increase of 6.5 million, support for immigrant youth, including English as a second language, focus on literacy and numeracy, working effectively with parents, educational planning with targets learning outcomes and office accountability at a local level, technical vocational education, transition from K-to-S4 education to post-secondary education and work, and making the connection between research and the practices in our schools.

On the other hand, our midterm review allowed me to hear the re-emerging issues that Manitobans have concerns about. We have to address the problems of vulnerable youth, especially those related to socio-economic disparities. We have to address sustainable development as both the curricular focus and the management practice. We have to address rural education, especially where declining enrolment threatens the viability of schools. While the K-to-S4 education system remains the largest financial commitment in our budget, I am just as proud of what we have accomplished and intend to pursue in the areas of Citizenship and Youth.

Our Citizenship agenda is taking shape and we are just beginning to see how much can be achieved when we focus on such an important issue. Manitoba schools are responding with enthusiasm to our initial activities of 2004-2005, and our budget reflects our intention to take this further.

Co-ordinating provincial youth activities still feels like a new role for the department, but the reality is that we are well past the stage of integrating existing activities into the education system. Our department is providing the leadership across government to co-ordinate supports to youth and enhance the transition process from school to post-secondary education and work.

This co-ordination is being operationalized and is evident to the public through our recent move of three branches to two government departments to the street level location at 510 Selkirk Avenue. The location houses the Aboriginal Education Directorate now, which is a research and policy office focussed on implementing the government's Aboriginal Education Action Plan, Partners for Careers, Aboriginal programs' information centre, and employment and training services. The staff will deliver services from that location and work to engage community directly in the provision of those services.

As the location evolves, other government departments will deliver services and provide information on an itinerant basis. Thus, our 2005-2006 budget is directed to both continuing these emphases that Manitobans have come to depend on and establishing supports in areas where new priorities are emerging. Let me highlight just some of those areas.

The citizenship agenda: We are working on the creation of a teachers' institute at the Legislature that will give social studies teachers an immersion in the workings of parliamentary democracy. We are well into the introduction and implementation of our new social studies curriculum. We provide ten grants of \$1,000 to schools to recognize innovations in citizenship education. We continue to support a community service credit option for secondary students, \$500 post-secondary bursaries through Youth Serves Manitoba, and student exchanges.

We encourage youth participation in democracy through the MB4Youth Advisory Council and the annual youth town hall meetings with ministers. Once again, a very successful Youth Town Hall was held just recently, last Friday, in fact, in Brandon.

Education of Aboriginal students is another priority. We have a particular concern for Aboriginal students. While results have improved, their high school graduation rates continue to concern us. Our Action Plan for Aboriginal Education focuses on increasing high school graduation rates, increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers, and parental and community involvement in education, improving access to post-secondary education and training, and working to ensure a smooth transition to the labour market.

While there is a lot of work going on under this action plan, I particularly want to point out that one

of the planned initiatives that I mentioned last year has come to fruition. We have signed a memorandum of understanding and begun work on the Making Education Work research project. This is a multi-year collaboration on effective Aboriginal education with the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. The Province of Manitoba is contributing \$1 million towards implementation costs over five years, with the foundation contributing the remaining \$2 million and all of the evaluation costs. As a province, we are implementing many best practices in Aboriginal education, but this project looks ahead to the next generation of best practice. As the project progresses, we will learn what more we can do to enhance educational outcomes for this important segment of our population.

Next, the Technical Vocational Education initiative: The Technical Vocational initiative is a \$4.5-million joint project of my department and Manitoba Advanced Education and Training over three years. We are coming to the end of year one and have included funds in the '05-06 budget. The initiative will improve high school programming and upgrade technical vocational equipment in high schools. It will strengthen the links between high school, apprenticeship and college programs. It provides grants for demonstration projects to increase their number and variety.

This initiative will make technical vocational education more responsive to labour market needs, help prepare Manitobans for the highly skilled occupations that are so important to our economy, and improve Manitoba's economic growth and competitiveness over the long term. It will also encourage new teachers to enter this field and increase students' awareness of technical vocational career choices.

Supporting links among schools, families and communities, both the K-to-S4 agenda and the Aboriginal Education Action Plan include a commitment to improving the connections that schools have with families and their communities. In 2004-2005, we funded 38 demonstration projects across the province that engage Aboriginal parents and families in the educational life of their children. The 2005-2006 Funding of Schools program announcement included \$750,000 for the first steps towards improved community and school collaboration.

The community-schools partnership initiative will support 15 schools to develop effective partnerships with families and community agencies, businesses and residents. The community-school partnerships will then develop local strategic plans for supporting families with children. In the longer run, we anticipate that this will result in schools being better prepared for children and children being better prepared for schools. This initial project is focussing on schools from the lowest socio-economic strata in our province because we have evidence that the school achievement gap is the greatest there. Last June, the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy published a report that showed just how strong the connection between socio-economic status and school achievement is. With our commitment to making policy that is connected to evidence, we knew that we had to make it a priority to encourage better practice in the neediest communities. Our commitment is to the success for all students.

* (15:20)

Youth initiatives. My department co-ordinates over 200 government programs for youth, including Green Teams, CareerFocus, Youth NOW, Partners for Careers, STEP and the Young Entrepreneurs program.

We have entered the implementation phase of Future to Discover, a four-year Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation research project that will track 1000 students across the province from Senior Two to the first year after graduation. All operating costs are covered by the foundation. The project will enhance our knowledge about career development in the paths to post-secondary education for young Manitobans.

Assessment. Voluntary Grade 6 and Senior 1 standards tests have not served the purpose of providing a provincial picture of student performance. We worked this past year to develop an assessment approach that will have the greatest positive impact on student learning while being cost-effective and sustainable into the future. For 2005-2006, we will finalize and implement a renewed assessment approach in the middle years.

Tax Relief. Since this government was elected, we have been committed to prudent but steady reduction of the education support levy on residential property. That commitment continues into 2005-

2006 with a further \$30-million reduction, bringing the total reduction to \$64 million. In addition, as recognition of the economic burden faced by farmers, in 2004-2005 we implemented new tax-relief measures reducing farm property taxes by 33 percent. This reduction will increase to 50 percent in 2005-2006. These measures combined with previous increases to the \$400 Education Property Tax Credit, result in total property tax savings of \$142 million since 1999.

Capital Funding. We also continued a major commitment to capital funding for schools. This is an area where we are bringing increased stability. This past February I announced the capital funding strategy for the next three years, with a commitment of \$135 million over that time, or \$45 million per year. This longer-term commitment has many benefits. It provides greater certainty for school divisions so they can engage in longer-term planning. It also allows school divisions and the department to be more strategic in their planning processes. It allows for more accurate cost estimates in tendering, better communications with parents and communities and opportunities to take advantage of potential efficiencies in purchasing.

The \$45 million allocated for 2005-2006, includes \$25.5 million for new schools, addition and renovation projects, and additional funding for nine previously approved major capital projects. It also includes \$14.75 million for the infrastructure programs and over \$4 million for the ACCESS and pre-designed classroom and portables programs. Since 2000, the government has provided more than \$333 million in capital program funding for public schools. This is an increase of almost \$161 million from the previous six-year period.

Members of the committee, those are my opening comments. I trust that you share my pride in what our province's education system has accomplished and its vision for the future.

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

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Charleswood have any opening comments? *[interjection]* The floor is yours.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I do have a few comments to put on the record. I will start by

saying that I believe education is the key for the future success of this province. I believe education fights ignorance, battles crime, enriches our culture and drives the economy. I am indeed honoured to have this opportunity for the first time to be the Education critic for the PC caucus.

I have to tell you that when I was a little girl, it was either be a nurse or be a teacher, and the nurse won out, but I always loved to teach when I was young. I would bring all my friends into my basement, build this classroom out of cardboard boxes, and we would spend a lot of time down there playing school.

An Honourable Member: You could have been playing doctor.

Mrs. Driedger: I am not going to comment on that. I went on to teach Sunday school. I taught figure skating. I spent 10 years in continuing education in nursing. I do have a love for teaching. I do not always see teaching just in the formal way of being a school teacher. There certainly are a lot of opportunities for teaching in many ways in this world.

I loved school. I loved doing homework. I used to drag home armfuls of books every day of my school life. I have to—and I am appreciating this opportunity right now—acknowledge a teacher who was one of the biggest influences in my life, and this goes back to my days of the Benito School. It was my Grade 3-4 teacher. Her name was Shirley Mazur *[phonetic]* at the time. She later went on to become Shirley Koroluk *[phonetic]*. I have to give her an awful lot of credit for being one of the biggest influences in my life and to thank her, because I think, in large part, it was her influence on me as one of the reasons I am probably here today as an MLA.

She was an extremely innovative teacher. She loved her work. She came to school every day with new ideas about how to teach. She had such innovative ways, and when we were in Grade 3 and 4, she let us carve soap with knives. We could not even use knives at home, and she gave us these sharp little knives to carve Dove soap figurines out of. She allowed us to use saws to build these lawn ornaments or these ornaments in our house for our parents for Mother's Day or Father's Day.

She was one of those remarkable teachers that inspired a lot of us. She became a friend, too,

as I grew older, and when I got married, my bridesmaids and I dressed in her home. She has always been somebody that I looked up to and somebody I want to publicly acknowledge for having such a significant impact on my life. I think that says a lot about the teaching profession, the enormous contributions a teacher can make to the moulding of an individual child. I just want to thank Shirley Koroluk [*phonetic*] very much for what she did for me.

Another person from my schooldays that was very important in my life was my high school principal, John Khadekin. He has since passed away, but here was a man who had enough faith and belief in me that, when I was the high school president, he basically let me have the run of the school and allowed all of us to sort of spread our wings in the school environment and to try all kinds of things to grow into the kind of people that we could be, based on the kind of experiences that we have.

Another person from my schooldays, and as I was thinking about this last night, who had an enormous effect on my life as a very young student was our custodian at school, our caretaker, Tom Findlay [*phonetic*]. He affected absolutely everybody, and he was a friend to all the schoolchildren. We all went to school in this very old school and Mr. Findlay's office was down in the basement, and kids were always stopping by to talk to him. When he died, all of us in our school were part of huge, huge funeral procession during the time of his funeral. He had an enormous impact on kids.

There are certainly a lot of people in schools that affect children and I just, you know, from my days, I feel I owe a lot of gratitude to those people.

As an MLA right now, I spend a lot of time in my schools. I think their schools are absolutely vital to the development of children's minds, bodies and spirits, and I think there are a lot of great things going on in schools. I can only speak from my own schools at this point because those are the ones that I know best, but Beaumont Elementary School, their Grade 4 classes of Marsha Wildeman and David Van Bentham were honoured recently at the Charleswood Heart of the Community Volunteer Awards that I sponsor. They were nominated by the Charleswood Care Centre, a personal care home in Charleswood,

where these children do monthly visits to the residents in the personal care home.

* (15:30)

Some of the exchanges that go on between the seniors and the students are absolutely priceless. These students love their trek to the personal care home every month, and it appears that the personal care home, in turn, also appreciates what the students have brought to them in recognizing them for a community volunteer award.

The Grade 5 classes have held a successful empty bowl program where they make a bowl in art class and then feed soup and a bun to 100 people with the proceeds going to hunger fighting organizations. The Beaumont Elementary School is also always very busy on their green school activities always striving higher and higher, very, very aware of environmental issues.

École Dieppe School, you know, congratulations to that school. Staff and students recently held various charity events which raised almost \$1,000 in aid of the tsunami relief. The Grade 4 to 6 choir was honoured recently to sign with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. I mean, could you imagine being in that grade and having a chance to sing along with the Winnipeg Symphony.

Westgrove Elementary School, well, I basically believe that the principal of this school, Susan Schmidt and the staff at this school all walk on water. The staff at this school continue in their pilot program called Together We Light the Way, and this program is designed to create safe and caring learning communities. It is one of three schools in Winnipeg and one of only two groups of schools in Canada that are together looking at this project under a Justice Canada grant to find ways to create safer and caring communities. The four pillars of this program are academics, respect, teamwork and leadership. I am honoured that they have included me as an advisory member on that particular committee because of the involvement I have in my community and they wanted to tap into what I could offer them as they carry on this program in the school, but it is definitely the principal and the teachers of this school that have made this such an unbelievable success and a program definitely to emulate. The whole paradigm of teaching in this school is based every hour of the day on academics,

respect, teamwork and leadership. It is an excellent model for educating children.

Not only is this happening at the Westgrove school, but there are two other schools in Charleswood that are also involved in it, at Royal School and Beaverlodge. I would like to acknowledge the work in those two schools as well because all three schools are demonstrating phenomenal success with this program. They are going to be leaders in Canada in terms of the success of this particular program.

Beaverlodge Elementary School, right now, there is a Mrs. Juchnowski, who is a physical education teacher, and she was recently awarded the Teacher of the Year award by both the Manitoba Physical Education Teachers Association and the Canadian Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. You know, congratulations to Mrs. Juchnowski for this incredible award. I guess what I would like to say is just thank you on behalf of the community to her for what she is doing for the children in Charleswood.

River West Park School, there is another school that was very successful in having a fundraising drive to raise money for the tsunami relief. Here, too, we had a group of students very concerned about what was happening across the world and taking the initiative to raise money for the tsunami relief.

Charleswood Junior High, Mrs. Hodgkinson's staff and students raised \$2,400 for cancer research. The Charleswood's boys Senior 1 basketball team played an exciting benefit game for over 400 spectators who bought the Never Alone bracelets, and the Never Alone bracelets are part of the fundraising effort right now being carried out by CancerCare with the support of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and their general manager, Lyle Bauer who, right now, is fighting cancer.

The band at Charleswood Junior High is also very active participating in the Brandon Jazz Fest. They are also playing in Minneapolis and Chicago. The Senior 1 team of staff, students and parents recently hosted a very, very moving citizenship ceremony where 37 people became Canadian citizens. The school just rolled up their sleeves and got very, very involved and spent the morning discussing citizenship, and, in the afternoon, were part of a citizenship ceremony where 37 people became Canadian citizens.

Westdale Junior High, again, we have the band here participating in the Brandon Jazz Fest and a trip to Edmonton. Cheerleaders at this school came back with two first-place and one third-place finish at the sweetheart competition at the University of Manitoba. This is not the first time that the cheerleaders from Westdale Junior High have won awards at competitions. A lot of students in this school are just working very, very hard, whether it is fundraising or whether it is being involved in music or whether it is cheerleading or sports or academics, you know, involved at every level in doing something to contribute to either the community or to others and working hard to improve themselves.

Oak Park High School, they have a campaign going on right now, the Oak Park Project, where they are looking at adding a 3000 square foot addition of a fitness centre and dance studio at a projected cost of \$480,000. They have reached over \$160,000 in their fundraising, and this addition will be open to the community in the evening as well as being used by the school during the day. What a great partnership between community and school to—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. A recorded vote has been requested in another section of the Committee of Supply. I am therefore recessing this section of the Committee of Supply in order for members to proceed to the Chamber for a formal vote.

The committee recessed at 3:36 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:49 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. The honourable Member for Charleswood may conclude her opening statement.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I was indicating, certainly, this project in our community sounds like it is going to be incredibly innovative, this partnership between school and community, and I look forward to a very successful campaign.

The Community Service Committee at the Oak Park High School is absolutely phenomenal. Again, there are some very energetic committed teachers working with the students. This group is always active, and in the past, their UNICEF fundraiser held at Halloween has raised the most money of any high

school in Manitoba, and they are one of the top fundraisers in Canada as well. I am very pleased to support this group every year on Halloween by taking a pie in the face for UNICEF. It is great to watch all of these students in action, and I commend the work of these students at Oak Park High School.

* (15:50)

Their Youth in Philanthropy Group also continues to be very active. They have a school musical this spring called *Grease*, and a very active school involved in many, many great aspects of education.

I have to also just take a moment to mention the Oak Park Raiders. Certainly, the football team and our hockey team and our girls' hockey team at that school have done very well.

The Pembina Trails Voices, this award-winning choir, is celebrating 25 years of choral excellence with the addition of two new and exciting programs, and we congratulate them for what they do and for what they are contributing to our community.

So, certainly, Mr. Chair, the schools in Charleswood, I congratulate them on their efforts, and the teachers that give so much of themselves to the students need to be commended as well. It is those front-line workers at many levels of the front lines, whether it is the teachers, the support staff, the teachers' aides, all of them are to be commended for the good work they do and the many challenges they face. I recognize that schools nowadays do face many challenges in educating students, and I commend those on the front lines for what they do.

I also would like to take a moment to commend the school division staff, the trustees, also, for all of their time and effort. I know that the superintendents and the trustees have worked extremely hard to try to provide quality education for students in this province, and I want to particularly commend those school divisions that were forced to be amalgamated because I know what they went through, and they did it with good grace to try to make it work. They worked extremely hard, and they deserve a lot of credit for their efforts in making a very difficult situation work.

I want to take a moment to also say a thank you to the Education Department staff because, you know, there is a lot involved in running a

multimillion-dollar department and in the decisions that have to be made and in the money that has to be dealt with and addressed and the decisions made as to where best to put it. They have to face some tough decisions, too, and I know that they work very hard at what they do and, again, a great deal of gratitude goes to them.

Parent councils and parents, I am always amazed because I see what my parent councils are doing and the parents in the community of Charleswood. I know that this happens more than just in Charleswood, but these are the ones that I know about and can speak to. I know that they put an awful lot of work into being volunteers and working hard to improve and add to whatever they can, in any way they can, to making our education system stronger. I am aware that research shows that if parents are involved in their children's education, children tend to do much better. I just see a huge effort coming from a lot of parents, parent councils and parent advisory groups and in the efforts they put forward to strengthen our education system, and I think they are to be commended because they do not have to do it, they do it on their time, and I just want to say thank you to all of them.

I would like to take a moment, also, to commend the minister for his efforts as the Minister of Education. Always, I think, ministers try their best, put their best efforts forward. There is a lot on their plates, a lot for them to deal with, and certainly I appreciate the efforts of the Minister of Education in the attempts he is making to understand his department and to work toward strengthening the education system, and I do appreciate the difficulties of his job.

With those brief comments, I would just say I am prepared and look forward to proceeding with the Estimates process. I understand past practice has been to have a global discussion to accommodate everybody that is involved in Estimates throughout the building.

Certainly, I am prepared to be flexible too in terms of making it easy for the staff to be here when the minister needs them to be here. As I have been reviewing the Estimates for the past few years, I have noted that it has begun at least in a global manner.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the Member for Charleswood for those comments.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 16.1.(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in Resolution 16.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce his staff in attendance. Will the staff please come forward. Would the minister like to introduce his staff.

Mr. Bjornson: Certainly. Today we have Acting Deputy Minister, Gerald Farthing, Doctor Farthing. We have director of admin and finance, Claude Fortier, and the director of the Public Schools Finance Board, Mr. Bob Goluch.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the minister for that.

Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of the department in a chronological manner or have a global discussion?

An Honourable Member: Global would be fine.

Mr. Chairperson: Is that agreed that we do a global discussion? *[Agreed]*

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us how much land a school division can acquire and for what purpose?

Mr. Bjornson: That amount of land can vary depending on anticipated need, depending on the five-year capital plan and anticipated growth. That amount can vary. It can also vary depending on the type of school which the school board is pursuing, whether it is a early-years school, a middle-years school or a senior-years school.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate, and I do understand, I believe that for high schools you can acquire more land, and there is generally a certain acreage. I have heard, anywhere from 12 to 16 acres on a high school, and I have heard various acreages for elementary schools.

* (16:00)

Mr. Bjornson: The space guidelines are very clear with respect to the different schools. Again, with a high school, the needs are considerably different than they would be for an early-years or a middle-years school as such. With high schools they are typically approximately 10 acres.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the minister tell us how many acres would be purchased normally, then, for a K-to-8 school?

Mr. Bjornson: With respect to K to 8, that is driven essentially on the basis of population within the school, the anticipated population of that school. If the school is to accommodate approximately 500 students, you can expect the allocation to be approximately 6 acres.

Mrs. Driedger: Would a school division need approval for a school? Would an approval have to already be in place either through the Public Schools Finance Board or the Minister of Education before they would go out and actually buy the land? Would they go out and just buy land unless they had a guarantee that they could build a school?

Mr. Bjornson: The process currently is they can acquire land on speculation, and they have been doing that for a number of years now. That has been the process. Certainly, acquiring land on speculation is a way in which they can address issues of anticipated costs as in increased land values and such, so purchasing on speculation is very prudent management. That speculation, of course, is based on long-range capital planning and anticipated growth.

Mrs. Driedger: Does the Public Schools Finance Board have to approve purchases of land?

Mr. Bjornson: No, the PSFB does not.

Mrs. Driedger: So a school division could just decide that they want to build a new school. They do not need approval for it, but based on speculation that they might get one down the road, they can actually go out and buy whatever land they determine they need and nobody has to approve it. Is that accurate?

Mr. Bjornson: Again, school boards can purchase property in anticipation of need, and school boards do submit five-year capital plans on an ongoing basis with the Public Schools Finance Board that reflect

that need. They submit these capital plans on the basis that they reflect anticipated growth, and they can purchase that land on speculation without approval from the Public Schools Finance Board.

When a school is awarded, a ministerial award is brought forth. That is when the school board would be compensated for the value of the land.

Mrs. Driedger: When the school division acquires land, does that show up in their budget? Would the minister, for instance, if a school division decided they were going to purchase some land and they figured maybe they needed it next year, would they put that in the budget and then would the minister be aware of it via the budget?

Mr. Bjornson: The purchase of land would not necessarily show up in the budget, but it would show up in the actual expenditures.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, considering that the land could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, why would that not be in a budget?

Mr. Bjornson: The expenditure does not show up under capital reporting. It may show up in the budget, but it will show up in the expenditure, as an expenditure. The budget reflects operational costs, but the costs of acquiring property may show up in the budget but it will show up in expenditures.

Mrs. Driedger: Does the Public Schools Finance Board operate via a budget?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, it does have an operating administration budget of \$1.3 million.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate what that \$1.3 million would be allocated for? Is it actually allocated for capital or are there administrative costs in there? What is the breakdown of the \$1.3 million?

Mr. Bjornson: The admin budget addresses staff salaries, board stipend, travel fees, software and hardware and upgrades, rent of space, audit and legal fees, furnishings, things of that nature.

Mrs. Driedger: So can the minister just clarify for me that the \$1.3 million of the capital budget that is related to, you know, staffing and administration and, then, it does not have anything to do, then, with the actual purchase of land or buildings?

Mr. Bjornson: It is strictly for the administration of the Public Schools Finance Board. It has nothing to do with the purchase of land.

Mrs. Driedger: So, when it comes to purchases of schools, you know, buildings, property, does that show up on a budget anywhere or is that just a list that is put forward in a five-year plan by each of the school divisions, and then somebody approves it and then somebody adds it up at the end of the year? Is that where we get the total amount at the end of the year?

* (16:10)

Mr. Bjornson: The \$45 million that we announced for capital this year in that three-year plan, the \$135 million, that \$45 million is absolutely separate from the \$1.3 million that I have referred to so far with respect to the administration budget for the Public Schools Finance Board.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister explain to us how the decisions are reached where they would come up with a \$45-million capital program? What process is followed in determining who gets the money, who gets the new schools?

Mr. Bjornson: We work with our partners in the local school boards who develop those five-year capital plans. It is based on need. It is based on a number of different criteria. We have had issues with schools that have been filled with moulds that have had to be addressed and given a priority. I can advise the member of a couple of the new schools that the Public Schools Finance Board has approved, Carberry Collegiate in Carman constituency, Garden Valley School Division.

In fact, I had the pleasure of travelling out to Winkler on Monday morning and stood in a very cold, driving wind, but I was there to turn the sod with the MLA from Pembina (Mr. Dyck) as this project is now underway, Island Lakes in the constituency of Southdale, Mitchell School in Hanover, the school in the constituency of Steinbach where I had the privilege of cutting a ribbon, Christine Lespérance, constructed and opened in October of 2004.

Replacement schools have included Deloraine and Arthur-Virden, Gillis and Beausejour Elementary, both in Lac du Bonnet constituency,

Jours de Plaine, DSFM School, in Ste. Rose, and Kleefeld School constructed in Steinbach. These are some of the schools that have been new or replacement schools since 1999, and the decision-making process is at the arm's length of the Public Schools Finance Board where they assess the five-year capital plans that are brought forward.

Mr. Chairperson: Excuse me, Minister, I have to interrupt you. There is too much noise here. I would like to take a moment and remind all honourable members to please provide the courtesy of your attention to the member who has the floor. You will have the opportunity to get the floor. It is acceptable to carry on a conversation at the committee table as long as it does not disrupt the proceedings. I ask your co-operation.

Excuse me, honourable Minister, I had to interrupt you. You have the floor now.

Mr. Bjornson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I was saying, the process involves submission of five-year capital plans from all school divisions. They are addressed based on need, and the need is assessed, as I said, on a number of different criteria. In fact, the school in Winkler was due to incredible growth in that area. That school is underway, and it will accommodate approximately 400 students with the capacity to be expanded to accommodate 500 students. That was a very important decision that the PSFB made.

The board also decides on major capital renovations based on need. There have been a number of those renovations conducted since 1999 including new gymnasiums and things of that nature. The PSFB takes all the five-year capital plans that are submitted. They assess what would be a priority for construction. I know there is also a submission by Pembina Trails School Division for a high school in 2009. They have submitted that as part of their capital plan. Certainly, with some of the challenges that lie ahead with respect to anticipated growth in that area, we are very cognizant of that and will continue to work with the school divisions as we see the trends shift; and, in response to that, certainly we have made some measures in additions to schools in the catchment area to provide as much opportunities for students, including a major renovation of Vincent Massey Collegiate, which was announced to try and address the issue of overcrowding in that catchment area.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us how West Kildonan Collegiate came to be approved for a new school when they were not even on any list for a school? There was no request by that school division for a new school, so how was it that they got a new school, while other schools who were on five-year capital plans, other school divisions' capital plans put forward, West Kildonan was never on anybody's request list?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, the process of the Public Schools Finance Board, in the event that a project, a renovation project, exceeds 50 percent of the cost of new, then the project is revisited, and in the case of West Kildonan Collegiate, the capital request to renovate that school indicated that the cost would be significantly more than 50 percent, at which point it was referred back to the Public Schools Finance Board and at which point that decision was made to proceed with the replacement construction.

The existing West Kildonan school is also potentially going to be renovated to be a middle-years school, I believe, as well. That school is approved through the same process that we approved the school in Carmen constituency and Pembina constituency and Southdale constituency and Steinbach and Arthur-Virden, Lac du Bonnet, Ste. Rose, as well as major capital improvements to schools in River East, Ste. Rose, Minnedosa and Lakeside. It is the same process for all schools.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, if the school is too expensive to renovate for the West Kildonan Collegiate and, therefore, they need a new one, why would they be going ahead right now in renovating it for a middle years and an elementary school?

Mr. Bjornson: They are not renovating it right now. The proposal is that that particular building would be suitable for renovation to meet the needs of a middle-year school. So that is one of the anticipated projects recognizing the needs within that region. But as I said, the initial proposal was a renovation and that renovation exceeded 50 percent of the cost of new and, as a matter of process, was referred back to the Public Schools Finance Board when it was recognized that that was the case and, as such, the recommendation came forward that there be a replacement school.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us who the appointed members are of the Public Schools Finance Board?

Mr. Bjornson: The members of the Public Schools Finance Board are Glenn Nicholls, Howard Mathieson, George Druwé, Mary Annes and Douglas Kozlowski.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister please spell the name of the last one he put forward, Douglas, could he spell that last name?

* (16:20)

Mr. Bjornson: I will give it my best college try. I believe it is K-o-z-l-o-w-s-k-i.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the minister tell us what happened with Mr. Zaidman, who, I understand, has been the chair?

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Zaidman's re-appointment had come up and he had not been re-appointed. In fact, when he was not re-appointed, he had been appointed to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority a couple of months after his term on the Public Schools Finance Board was over.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the minister tell us when his term was over, and then who was appointed as the new chair?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes. Though his term had expired in May, he continued to serve until he was advised that he was not being re-appointed in February, and at that time Mr. Glenn Nicholls was appointed as the chair and Mary Annes was appointed as the vice-chair.

Mrs. Driedger: Are all of these appointments made by the government?

Mr. Bjornson: As they are made through all the ABC's process, yes.

Mrs. Driedger: Does the minister have any idea in terms of what position Mr. Zaidman got on the WRHA?

Mr. Bjornson: I am not aware of the specifics. I believe he is a board member, member at large. It was in the newspaper not too long ago, I believe, but I believe he is a board member.

Mrs. Driedger: The minister today indicated in the hall after Question Period that he has called for a

review of what is happening with the Swinford Park Development and Seven Oaks School Division. Can the minister give us the terms of reference of that review and who will be doing that review?

Mr. Bjornson: The terms of reference, we are developing them as we speak, but they do reflect what transactions took place, when those transactions took place, whether or not they were indeed authorized to do so, and we are assembling staff to act on this review.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate specifically who those staff will be?

Mr. Bjornson: At this point we have not determined who the staff will be, but the deputy minister will be heading up this review.

Mrs. Driedger: The minister was questioned today about when he knew about the—

An Honourable Member: Shenanigans.

Mrs. Driedger: Shenanigans, yes, taking place with the Seven Oaks School Division acquiring land. He indicated in the hallway that he had heard about this at an earlier time, prior to this coming forward in the House yesterday. Can the minister tell us when he first heard about some of this land purchase and development going on by the Seven Oaks School Division?

Mr. Bjornson: Part of the question asks about when I was advised of the land purchase, and I am not actually advised of land purchases, per se. With respect to the allegations on May 2, I did receive a query from a private citizen—pardon me, May 2 of '04—making some allegations about the expenditures that were being incurred by the school board for development purposes. That was the allegation that was made, and I referred that to the Public Schools Finance Board for information.

Mrs. Driedger: What follow-up did the minister have after he passed that forward? I am sure that allegations like that certainly would have put up some red flags. What follow-up did he do to ensure that things were all above board?

Mr. Bjornson: I was never informed that this actually was outside the existing regulations or existing policy around the disposition of land, and as

such, had advised the individual that inquired that this was a local development issue.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): So the minister sent this complaint to the chair of the Public Schools Finance Board?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, I forwarded the complaint or the allegations to the Public Schools Finance Board for their response.

Mr. Schuler: The Public Schools Finance Board indicated back to the minister that there was no real issue with this?

Mr. Bjornson: I did send it to the Public Schools Finance Board, intending if there was any need to take action at the time, that we certainly would have taken action, but I was not advised that this was the case. I was never informed that this was not inconsistent with the disposition of property.

Mr. Schuler: Who was the chair of the Public Schools Finance Board at that time?

Mr. Bjornson: As I have indicated earlier, at the time that would have been Mr. Ben Zaidman.

Mr. Schuler: Can the minister help me with that? Is Mr. Ben Zaidman not a former school trustee of Seven Oaks School Division?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, at one time he was the chairman of the board.

Mr. Schuler: Just to make sure I heard that correctly, Mr. Ben Zaidman, is he not one of the longest-serving trustees in the province's history, if not the longest? He is certainly one of the longest-serving trustees. In fact, I think he has got the most years in it, just he had an interruption halfway through his career. As the minister mentions, he was chair of the board of Seven Oaks School Division. So, sending a complaint about the Seven Oaks School Division to the former chair of the Seven Oaks School Division, is that not akin to sort of throwing the fox into the hen house?

* (16:30)

Mr. Bjornson: First of all, for the record, I believe the longest-serving trustee is Jim Schreyer. I believe he was the longest-continuing-serving-trustee. With

respect to your question, Mr. Zaidman would not have been the only individual who would have seen those allegations. That would have gone through the staff at the Public Schools Finance Board.

Mr. Schuler: The difficulty, I think, the committee has in this is that, again, the chair of the board, and a chair has a significant amount of clout on a board like that, that a complaint comes forward from an individual to the minister and goes to a former chair of the same school division where the complaint is being levelled at. Does the minister think that that was an appropriate mechanism to investigate a complaint or an allegation in regard to a school division? Again, it is throwing the fox in the hen house. The individual who is supposed to look into wrongdoings is himself the individual who chaired the school division for a long period of time and would have all kinds of connections in there. Was the minister satisfied that that was an appropriate way to look into the allegation?

Mr. Bjornson: Again, as I said in my previous answer, this is something that was also dealt with by staff in the Public Schools Finance Board, and when any allegations or complaints are forwarded to individuals such as Mr. Zaidman, who was the chair at the time, he was acting as the chair of the Public Schools Finance Board. That was his job. He was not acting as the former chair of the Seven Oaks School Division.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us what the specific allegations were of that May 2, '04, letter?

Mr. Bjornson: The specific allegations were that the school board was acting as a developer.

Mrs. Driedger: Does the minister have a copy of the letter that he is prepared to table?

Mr. Bjornson: On May 5, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) as well as my critic at the time was copied on that letter.

Mrs. Driedger: Would the minister be prepared to make a copy for me?

Mr. Bjornson: Certainly, we can do so, and it has already been, as I said, it was brought to the attention of the Leader of the Official Opposition, as it had been brought to the attention of my critic at the time. So we will certainly provide you with a copy of the letter.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you. I appreciate the minister doing that.

When the minister had those allegations, and they sound fairly serious, I am somewhat surprised that he did not himself follow up with that, and I would like to ask him, why not?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, as a matter of process, when allegations are raised to take them forward to the appropriate personnel within the department and request the information. The information that I received was that this was a local development issue, and I was never informed that this was not consistent with past practice with respect to the disposition of schools. That was the information that I had received at the time.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, I guess I struggle with the minister's answer because I have only been the critic for a few months. The minister has been in his job for, I think, a couple of years, plus he has been a teacher in the system for a long time. Certainly, when I had heard that there was this issue of land speculation, I did a lot of research into this because it did not seem appropriate to me, and the minister has also indicated yesterday that, in fact, what happened was unlawful. Why, then, would he have not realized when he got this back in May, especially with his knowledge of education, why would he not have known then that the allegations themselves were serious enough to investigate very, very fully, and why would he not have pursued that?

Mr. Bjornson: Once again, I had forwarded the allegations to the Public Schools Finance Board and when I was advised by the PSFB that this was an issue for local developers and locally elected politicians there was nothing to indicate to me at the time that this was at all inconsistent with past practices in the disposition of property. As such, with what has come to light, we have committed to a review and we are going to conduct a review and we will do that within the next 30 days. We are going to request information from the PSFB, the independent board. We are going to request information from the duly elected officials of the Seven Oaks School Division, and we have also taken it upon ourselves to remind school boards and school divisions throughout the province of what is the appropriate mechanism for disposition of school property.

So we are going to find out if, when and how this transpired if, indeed, as I said before, what

transactions took place, when they took place and if they were, indeed, authorized to do so. We are committed to addressing this issue and we will do so within the next 30 days.

Mrs. Driedger: There are not a lot of "ifs" here because the legislation itself is pretty clear as to what school boards, school divisions, can or cannot do in terms of surplus money or acquisitions of land.

The minister indicated that, when we sent the allegation forward to the Public Schools Finance Board, he was told it was an issue for local developers. Who told him that?

Mr. Bjornson: Once again, once the allegations were brought forward, it was referred to the Public Schools Finance Board for information, and I was advised at the time that this was not inconsistent with past practices, that this is an issue for local developers, local politicians. Those conclusions are based on the information that the staff had at the time.

Mrs. Driedger: But who brought that information back to the minister? Was it Mr. Zaidman?

* (16:40)

Mr. Bjornson: My understanding is that the staff, of course, were aware of the response, as was the board chair.

Mrs. Driedger: Did the board chair put that information in writing back to the minister?

Mr. Bjornson: I did not receive anything in writing. I was just advised of their response.

Mrs. Driedger: So it was Mr. Zaidman that passed information back to the minister saying that this was an issue for local developers, and also said that it was not inconsistent with past practice. Is that an accurate understanding of what happened?

Mr. Bjornson: No, it is not. As I said, this is something that went through the staff at the Public Schools Finance Board. Mr. Zaidman was aware of the advice, but this was something that went through the staff at the Public Schools Finance Board.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the minister indicate which staffperson might have then passed this information on to him?

Mr. Bjornson: The process would involve a staff member doing the research. It would be seen by the executive director of the PSFB and be seen by the chair of the PSFB as that is a process for all issues of concern that are raised with the Public Schools Finance Board.

Mrs. Driedger: I am a little bit concerned because of the advice he was given in that it was an issue for local developers and it was not inconsistent with past practice when, in fact, it is very inconsistent with past practice because, as far as anybody I have spoken to, something like this has never happened before and it is also unlawful and a contravention of the act. So how could it be not inconsistent then with past practice?

Mr. Bjornson: As I said, there was nothing indicating to me that this was, indeed, inconsistent. I was never informed that this was inconsistent with past practice.

Mr. Schuler: Well, then, the question has to be what was not inconsistent: the fact that land was being purchased, or the fact that a school division was setting itself up as a developer.

Mr. Bjornson: The decision for the disposition of the land, there was nothing indicated to me that this was—well, it was indicated in the House. There is a process in place for the acquisition of land, there is a process in place for the disposition of land, and in that process a proposal is brought forward to the Public Schools Finance Board by the school board in question and the PSFB has the authority to approve or reject that proposal for disposition. So, that proposal being recommended, it was never indicated to me that that particular process for disposition was inconsistent.

Mr. Schuler: So, and I am listening very carefully to the minister's words, what he says is, "Nothing was indicated to me that there was anything that was out of the ordinary." So Ben Zaidman calls Brian O'Leary, and he says, "You guys doing something out of the ordinary?" and they say, "No, we have got surplus land and we are getting rid of it." And that was it? Is that how far it went?

We are not talking about disposition or whatever term the minister would like to cloak that with. Let us cut to the chase. Was it asked, are you guys placing yourselves in the position as developer, and is there a precedent for that? Are there other school divisions that have placed themselves into a position

of developer where the school division would have said, we are going to become developers as per school division such and such, so there is precedent setting, or did the school board indicate to the PSFB that they were disposing of the land and nothing further was asked?

Mr. Bjornson: Once again, the process involves a submission to the PSFB for the disposition of property. They brought forward their proposal, and when the allegations were raised, we simply raised those allegations with the Public Schools Finance Board. I was advised there was nothing untoward, that this is an issue for a local developer. That is what I was told, and as such that is how we responded to the individual who raised those concerns. The process is a process that has been in place for a number of years, and all school boards go through that process for the disposition of land with the PSFB having the ability to accept or reject those proposals that are submitted.

Mr. Schuler: So Ben Zaidman meets the minister at one of the NDP fundraisers and says, "Minister, do not worry, be happy," and the minister is happy because he heard it from Ben himself. Nothing to worry about. This is a local, little dispute between friends. It is nothing really. It is a disposition issue. It is a mere moving of lands from one page to another and that is it. Do not worry. It is fine, and the minister walks away. Ben says it is so. It must be true. Clearly, the minister has his lines, and Riva Harrison is back doing her work. I think we want to leave that issue, and at a later date we will probably want to come back to that.

The question I have for the minister is seeing as he and his department get all the budgets first of all, the land had to show somewhere. It has to show somewhere as a property owned by the division. The department would have had to be notified for that, and within the budget would have to be the monies to do the development. That is a substantial amount of money considering that it is total capital outlay. I know that, over the summer, school divisions who cannot get all the money from PSFB to upgrade a washroom or paint a hallway, whatever, that shows and that is part of the capital project within the school board budget. But this is \$2 million that you would have to put somewhere. They cannot exactly write it into the budget as being fixing of schools. Where does this \$2 million come from?

* (16:50)

Mr. Bjornson: Well, first of all, I must say, as a former English teacher, that I was quite impressed with the storytelling of the member opposite, with the accusations. It is a very active imagination. With respect to the question about where the money shows up, this was addressed earlier. As I said, it does not show up in the division budget because that is an operating budget. It will show up in the division's capital expenditure of the capital budget—pardon me, capital fund, or it will show up in the expenditures of the division. The budget that you were referring to, with respect to the Seven Oaks School Division, is a \$67-million budget.

Mr. Schuler: And this would not have been picked up by the minister?

Mr. Bjornson: Certainly, staff reviews the budgets, and, as I said, we were not aware this was happening, so we were not looking for that particular expenditure in that context.

Mr. Schuler: The minister did know that something was going on. It is just that Ben Zaidman told him, "Don't worry, be happy," and the minister went under the premise that ignorance is bliss.

Within the budget is hidden \$2 million of capital projects, and the beauty is it is in all the school board minutes, which you can get online. In a sense, I guess it is not even fair to the school division to say they hid it. Actually, they were quite public with it and nobody picked up on it, especially since there was a concern raised over a year ago. I mean, Cambrian Excavators has done magnificent work and so have many others, and nobody picked up on the fact that it was not a disposition of property. This was property development, which is far out of the scope of the school division.

Mr. Bjornson: Well, actually, someone on staff did pick up on it, as I indicated in the media scrum, as it was identified that this should be looked into and receive a legal opinion on this issue. With respect to the open forum of the school board minutes, we do not have the capacity to be monitoring all the minutes of the school boards. It is not something that we do. We respect that the school boards do have the capacity to display them publicly, but we do not have the capacity to be monitoring and reviewing all the school board minutes. As I said in the media scrum, there was a recognition of staff that we would have to get a legal opinion on whether or not this was, indeed, consistent with the disposition process.

Mr. Schuler: When did the minister ask for that legal opinion?

Mr. Bjornson: I myself did not ask for that legal opinion. I was advised that one had been sought on this issue, and I was advised of that yesterday.

Mr. Schuler: Okay, the "don't worry, be happy" minister was advised yesterday, but when was the opinion actually asked for?

Mr. Bjornson: I believe it would have been either late November or early December, and the opinion was brought forward in March or April. We could find out.

Mr. Schuler: Just for the record, November, December it was asked for. That would have been of 2004, and then it would have been received March or April of 2005.

Mr. Bjornson: Thereabouts, that is correct.

Mr. Schuler: So, if the minister had known somewhere in November, December that an opinion was asked for and he would have received it sometime in March, April, why did the minister indicate that he knew nothing about this?

Mr. Bjornson: As I said, the request came through staff, and I was not advised at all that an opinion had been asked for, nor was I advised that an opinion had been brought forward. What I had been advised was that the opinion was being reviewed.

Mr. Schuler: There is a rogue school division that has decided to take upon itself the mandate of being a developer. The department asks for a legal opinion, gets a legal opinion and the minister knows nothing? This is a bad routine of "Hogan's Heroes," colonel Schultz, "I know nottink, Minister."

An Honourable Member: Sergeant Schultz.

Mr. Schuler: Sergeant Schultz. I stand corrected.

Minister, that is appalling. That is absolutely appalling. There is a complaint that is brought forward, and it is sent to Ben Zaidman, the former chair of the school division, who tells the minister do not worry, be happy. Then the department asks for a legal opinion, gets a legal opinion, and the minister is not informed because the minister should not worry, just be happy. Who is running the department?

Minister, how could you not know any of this? In the meantime, it is being discussed out there. We, as the opposition, clearly do not have the same kind of ability to investigate. Yet we were able to find out some of the things that were going on. Minister, how could you not know that this was going on? It sends such a bad message out to school boards.

Frankly, I am not comfortable with school boards going so far as to somehow think that they should become developers. Minister, how could you not know that there was a legal opinion coming until the opposition happened to ask the question?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, just to clarify. As I said, when the issue was identified, the Public Schools Finance Board did ask for a legal opinion. When they did receive the legal opinion—

An Honourable Member: The Public Schools Finance Board?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, I am sorry if I said the department. It was identified in the department that this issue was flagged within the department. The Public Schools Finance Board was contacted and the Public Schools Finance Board decided to seek a legal opinion. I am sorry if I said department. I did not mean to say the department had flagged it. It went to the Public Schools Finance Board. They requested a legal opinion. They received the legal opinion.

The Public Schools Finance Board is an independent body. It is an arm's-length organization of the government, and they were in receipt of the legal advice, and I would suspect would have informed me once they had had an opportunity to review that legal opinion.

Mr. Schuler: Well, the minister keeps making this clear as mud, so let us try this again. A complaint came in May of 2004. Ben Zaidman investigates himself, finds that there are no problems and tells the minister, "Do not worry, be happy." Then, somewhere between May and November, the Public Schools Finance Board asks for a legal opinion, November, December. Between asking for the legal opinion and getting the legal opinion, Mr. Ben Zaidman is turfed by the government, then the legal opinion comes in and the minister knows nothing—colonel Schultz routine.

An Honourable Member: Sergeant Schultz.

Mr. Schuler: Sergeant routine.

Mr. Bjornson: Once again, the member is not paraphrasing accurately with respect to the answers that I have been providing. This was not, specifically the reference to Mr. Zaidman, is not accurate, that he was not the only individual that was aware of the allegations that were raised. As I said, the process involves research by staff at the Public Schools Finance Board. It is vetted through the staff at the PSFB; it is vetted through the staff at the PSFB; it is vetted through the executive director of the PSFB. It is then vetted through the chair of the Public Schools Finance Board who was acting in the capacity of chair of the Public Schools Finance Board. When I was advised that this was a local issue, as I have said, that this would not be inconsistent with past practice for disposition.

* (17:00)

Then, as I said, there was an individual on staff in the department who had taken a look at this situation and recognized that there should be further review. When they did so, they contacted the Public Schools Finance Board. The Public Schools Finance Board then sought the legal opinion on the issue and, as I said yesterday, I was not aware of the legal opinion until I was advised yesterday.

The Public Schools Finance Board is an independent board that is arm's length of the government. The locally elected officials, of course, with respect to the school boards, are locally elected officials and, as such, when engaged in this process for the disposition it was submitted, and we are going to explore the when, the what and whether or not this should have been authorized. We are going to explore that. Those are the terms of reference. We are committed to find out how this transpired and we have committed to 30 days to conduct a thorough review of this process.

Mr. Schuler: Well, that worries me, because the minister has had since May of '04, an opinion asked for in November, an opinion got in April, and now he is going to clarify it all up in 30 days. That I will not hold my breath for.

But, in the meantime, I would like to ask the minister if he could table for this committee the legal opinion that was given.

Mr. Bjornson: We cannot do that. It is a confidential matter.

Mr. Schuler: What would be so confidential in this? It basically states, I think, from the minister's word in the scrum, that this was an illegal action. It is an interpretation of the act. What would be so confidential, or does it actually bring in other issues that could be embarrassing to the minister and the government?

Mr. Bjornson: It cannot be tabled as this is a lawyer-client relationship that you are asking us to put in the public domain. The legal opinion cannot be tabled right now.

Mr. Schuler: No, that is not the case at all, Minister. Not in the least. It is taxpayer Manitoba at the provincial level, taxpayer Manitoba at the Public Schools Finance Board, taxpayer Manitoba at the school board, and Manitobans just want to know what is happening with their taxpayer dollars. This is not as if we are investigating Enron or Crocus, even though that is taxpayers' money. To bring it back into focus, this is the government asking an opinion, if another elected body was within the parameters of legislation.

This is not a state secret. We are not investigating bin Laden here or anything that we divulge what happened. This is very simple. This should be open and transparent. This legal opinion should and must be produced for the public to view. Considering that nothing was done in May, Mr. Ben Zaidman basically investigated himself and then somebody within the department, thank goodness, a career public servant, smells a rat and asks for a legal opinion.

Minister, that should be made public, because it is not client confidentiality here. This is all about the taxpayer. Every step of the way, every step, it is about the taxpayers of Manitoba, and they have a right to know what was going on and what the opinion was. Tony Blair released all kinds of legal opinions just three or four days ago relating to the Iraq war. Surely, this minister can table a legal opinion in regard to what was going on here with these shenanigans with this land.

Mr. Bjornson: We are prepared to tell the member what the legal opinion has indicated, but we are not prepared to table that as it is a legal opinion that was

provided to the Public Schools Finance Board, an independent organization that is an arm's-length organization of the government.

Mr. Schuler: I think the minister sets a dangerous precedent but, certainly, we are prepared to hear what the legal opinion was.

Mr. Bjornson: We do not have the legal opinion here, but we will take it as notice.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the minister prepared to share with us, verbally then, that legal opinion tomorrow, or in the next set of Estimates?

Mr. Bjornson: We will share it in the next set of Estimates, verbally.

Mrs. Driedger: I am sure that after hearing all of this yesterday that he has probably had some information about what is going on here.

Can he tell us how many parcels of land the Seven Oaks School Division acquired in this land development scheme?

Mr. Bjornson: The land purchased on speculation for the construction of a new school was 23.4 acres.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the minister indicate how many parcels of land were acquired by the Seven Oaks School Division?

Mr. Bjornson: When the land was purchased, it was one parcel of land for just over 23 acres.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us if that was the Novamet land that they acquired for a dollar that was valued at \$295,000?

Mr. Bjornson: That is something that the review will be looking at.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the minister aware that there have been nine parcels of land acquired to make up this particular subdivision, although Mr. O'Leary was indicating yesterday only five parcels of land? According to Land Titles, there are actually nine parcels of land.

Can the minister tell us why there might be some discrepancies in what Mr. O'Leary is choosing to say to the public versus what the Land Titles actually show?

Mr. Bjornson: This is what the review will be addressing.

Mrs. Driedger: How much information has the minister asked for from his staff in terms of this land development scheme that is going on?

Mr. Bjornson: We have asked staff to assemble all information that is relevant to the disposition of the property.

Mrs. Driedger: The minister seems to be zeroing in very much on disposition. I am asking him questions right now about acquisition because it was the acquiring of all this land, nine parcels of land that we were able to track. There could very well be more out there, but we have actually been able to track nine parcels of land, although Mr. O'Leary is only publicly commenting on five parcels of land.

* (17:10)

The minister wants to talk about disposition, but there is an acquisition of quite a large piece of land. I think the newspapers today were talking about 22 acres, were they? Was it 22 acres? The minister has now just—*[interjection]* Oh yes, Mr. O'Leary said 22 acres; the minister just said 25 and some acres.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Chair, 23.4.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Chair, 23.4. There is also a piece of land in there, 3.25 acres, the Grady Bend development. It is a cul-de-sac that is being built right now. It has 20 lots on it. It is not even accounted for in the 22 acres that Mr. O'Leary talked about yesterday. There are another 3.25 acres that maybe he has neglected to talk about in terms of this land acquisition. Is the minister comfortable in thinking there are only 23 acres that are involved in this land scheme?

Mr. Bjornson: This review will look at all pertinent questions around the acquisition of land and the disposition of land and all points in between. That is the intent of the review is to look at all issues that are related to the specific question that you are asking.

Mr. Schuler: The concern of the committee is that your department has, over a year, already investigated this. They do not know what to investigate. Every time we open the scope, Oh right, absolutely, no, no, we are going to investigate that. You do not

even know what you are investigating. Up until 24 hours ago, the minister did not even know this issue existed. Yet, all of a sudden, this is all going to be investigated. The minister does not even know what has to be investigated.

The direction comes from the minister. That is a great concern for this committee because this has to be fairly wide and broad. The fact that it is going to be done internally, we already know what internal investigations do. The Ben Zaidman "don't worry, be happy" investigation. That served the public not one iota. That was an absolute waste of time and money what happened there. The "don't worry, be happy" response.

This must be looked into because there are some serious allegations. I am asking this minister is there within the department the kind of staffing because the minister by his own admission said, "We do not have the staffing to do a lot of this." Is there enough staffing within his department to do a thorough investigation? If not, is it perhaps time to call in the Auditor and have the Auditor look at this?

Mr. Bjornson: I would like to correct the member from Springfield in his assertion that I said we do not have the staff to look at this. I was referring to the fact that we do not have the capacity to review publicly posted school board minutes on the Internet. We do not have the capacity to constantly be reviewing 38 different school divisions and their publicly posted minutes.

I will assure the member from Springfield that we are going to be, through the direction of my acting deputy minister, getting staff in place to address this issue. I will assure the member from Springfield that we will investigate all facets of this particular process. That starts with the acquisition, and it goes through to the disposition and all points in between. We are committed to do that. We have committed to do that within 30 days, and we will do that.

Mrs. Driedger: Out of the nine parcels of land, two of the parcels that were purchased by Seven Oaks School Division were purchased from individuals, and both of those were purchased for \$1. One of those properties was valued at \$88,900 and the other one was purchased again for \$1, but it was valued at almost \$76,000. Does the minister find it somewhat odd that the school division would have purchased

two parcels of land, each of those for \$1, when the value of those properties was fairly significant?

Mr. Bjornson: Once again, all of the issues that are being raised will be addressed through the review that we will be conducting. I cannot speak to the specifics as we are going to explore all issues that are pertinent to this particular process, whether it is, as I said, the acquisition, the disposition and all points in between.

As mentioned, there is a process in place for acquisition that requires school boards to purchase land on speculation and that is prudent planning as it addresses the issues of rising costs of land. So, when the ministerial award comes forward that would indicate that the school would be built on that property, that is when the school divisions are compensated for the money invested for the purpose of acquiring that land.

Mr. Schuler: But, clearly, the department cannot do any investigations until this committee is finished, so that the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) can actually lay out the parameters of what this committee is supposed to look into, because the department, as we know, and Public Schools Finance Board, has no idea what all the claims are going to be until all the claims come out.

This has to be done by individuals who know how to investigate these kinds of things, who know how to go into this. The question is, Minister, somebody selling a piece of property worth \$75,900 for a dollar, what were the considerations given. In development areas amongst private developers, and it even happens between government and developers where a land is then switched with another piece of land, basically of equal property, and they are switched for a dollar. That is acceptable.

So the question is, and this then to the committee, whoever that will be, whoever is going to look into this, whatever the parameters are that are supposed to be done in 30 days that the minister could not get done a month ago or a year ago, the question is what kind of considerations were given.

What kind of empowerment are you going to give to the department that they can go to these people and say, "You gave almost \$76,000 worth of property for a buck and got no consideration? Nothing? Really?"

How do you have career civil servants, and the minister has great civil servants, but how do you expect career civil servants to go and ask these kinds of questions? That is not within their purview. That is not within their mandate, to ask those kinds of questions. How are they going to know that they should go and ask these questions?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, we certainly do have financial expertise within the department. We do have the capacity to do the analysis that is necessary, and we have requested the co-operation of the Public Schools Finance Board and the Seven Oaks School Division and have been told that they will be co-operating with the department in submitting all the pertinent information as per the request.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us how much land was given to the Seven Oaks School Division through an Order-in-Council, because there were some Crown lands that appeared to have been a part of this deal? Can the minister, who might have been at the Cabinet table when this decision was made, please tell us how it is that Crown land came to be part of this Seven Oaks School Division acquisition and development of land?

Mr. Bjornson: We have also requested the assistance of Land Management Services and they have the expertise and the capacity to assist us in this review.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us if a school had been requested in any capital plan for this Riverbend area, this Swinford Park development. Is it on the five-year capital plan?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, the five-year capital plan did include a new school in the general area.

Mrs. Driedger: Sorry, I did not hear the minister fully. Could he please repeat that?

* (17:20)

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, the five-year capital plan did include a new school in the general area.

Mrs. Driedger: Sorry, I did not hear the minister fully. Could he please repeat that?

Mr. Bjornson: The five-year capital plan did include a new school in the general area.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the minister indicating a K-to-8 school in the Swinford Park area? Was that on a capital plan?

Mr. Bjornson: Originally, it was for high school development.

Mrs. Driedger: So can the minister confirm then that initially for this Swinford Park development, a high school had been originally in the works?

Mr. Bjornson: There was a request in the five-year capital plan to consider a high school in the general vicinity.

Mrs. Driedger: In the general vicinity of the Swinford Park development in the development itself?

Mr. Bjornson: The five-year capital plan included a new high school in the Riverbend area. That was the request in the five-year capital plan.

Mrs. Driedger: But the Riverbend area would include the current site, would it not, of where that high school is now being put on the east side of Main Street?

Mr. Bjornson: That is correct.

Mrs. Driedger: The minister then is totally waltzing around this question a little bit because we are talking specifically then about the Swinford Park development, which is what Seven Oaks School Division acquired. I am asking in the Swinford Park development area, where, according to Mr. O'Leary, in the paper today, he said initially this was the area designed for or hoped for, for the new high school. When that was rejected, they then decided they might want to go after a K-to-8 school in the Swinford Park area.

Because I do not recall seeing this high school being on a capital plan for the Swinford Park development, I am asking is there a K-to-8 school on that five-year capital plan for the Swinford Park area.

Mr. Bjornson: I believe the member from Charleswood was asking specifics of the five-year capital plan. The five-year capital plan did suggest, or it did request, that a high school be built in the general area. That was the five-year capital plan that had been submitted.

Mr. Schuler: Okay, this is, again, not clear. The five-year capital plan by a school division usually

lists a whole bunch of requests. On that would have been the renovation of West Kildonan Collegiate, and it would have listed a new high school for the new development coming up—

An Honourable Member: Swinford Park.

Mr. Schuler: Swinford Park. So they were asking for a multimillion-dollar redevelopment of West K and for a new high school.

Mr. Bjornson: The five-year capital plan previously submitted had a request for a high school. The PSFB originally said no, that we would renovate the West Kildonan Collegiate. As I explained earlier today, when a school board requests a renovation and the renovation is awarded, and it is recognized that the renovation of that school would exceed 50 percent of new construction, then the matter is referred back to the Public Schools Finance Board for consideration. At that point, it was determined there would be a new school in the capital plan once again. The schools, as I said, have the capacity to, on speculation, purchase property to address capital requests. All school boards have done that, and all school boards will continue to do that, purchasing property on speculation for capital projects.

The five-year capital plan is constantly being revised. It had been the No. 1 priority prior to the announcement that renovation would be appropriate. It had and became the No. 1 priority once it was determined that the renovation costs would exceed an appropriate level, and that the cost of new construction would make more financial sense in this case, and this is how the Public Schools Finance Board addresses the issues once it has been determined, the costs of renovations.

Mr. Schuler: But the summary of capital requests signed on June 23, 2004, from the school division has Garden City Collegiate, we know, Riverbend area, which would include the Swinford Park area, says, "Acquire property and build a K-to-8 school in the Riverbend area." Nowhere here does it say "high school." So how is it that the minister is under the impression that that property was cobbled together for a high school when it says clearly here it was meant for a K-to-8 school?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, as I said, the initial capital plan request that the planning for the purchase of that property was initially for the No. 1 priority, which was a high school. I have also said five-year capital

plans change repeatedly as we address the need, and when we recognized the need to renovate, first, West Kildonan Collegiate, but determined that that would not be appropriate because the cost was in excess of 50 percent of new construction, then the land had also been acquired at Riverbend for the purpose of the construction of the new school, and, as such, the priorities changed with the recognition that there is, potentially long-term, there will be a need for a K-to-8 school and that will be why the capital plan changed. We have addressed the need by bringing forward the recommendation that a new high school be built and they have identified the lots in Riverbend as the site for that construction. So the No. 1 priority has been addressed, and now the capital plan is looking at other needs and that need includes a K-to-8 school in the area.

When you are asking me about the five-year capital plan, it takes on different dynamics as we address the needs identified in that five-year capital plan. So the new plan includes a K-to-8 school in the general vicinity of the property in question, and the capital needs are being addressed with respect to the high school and the fact that we have announced that there will be the high school constructed in the Riverbend area.

Mrs. Driedger: We phoned the Seven Oaks School Division about a month ago, and they said that they are no longer going to be putting a school in this Swinford Park area, although one has been in the master plan for the area since, oh, several years. We phoned the school division about a month ago and they said that they are no longer putting a school in that area because the Public Schools Finance Board did not approve funding for the school. Is that accurate?

Mr. Bjornson: As I mentioned earlier, once the determination have been made to construct a new high school, I mentioned that part of the planning process also included the suggestion that the existing West Kildonan Collegiate will be renovated to be a K-to-8 or a middle-years school. That is part of the plan at this point. So that might be the recommendation that would be forthcoming and, as such, that would address the needs that were identified in the revised capital plan.

Mrs. Driedger: So people have been buying houses in this Swinford Park area thinking, and being led to believe by the school division, because it is

the Seven Oaks School Division, Swinford Park development, they are all buying expensive properties, expensive homes in the area thinking there is going to be a school there. Have they all been misled, then, and are those houses priced higher than they should be because there is an anticipation of a school being there?

Mr. Bjornson: There is a process that is engaged here, and I hope that real estate agents are not advising them that there is, indeed, a school that will be built. I know that there are a number of sites that have been identified as reserved for schools that have been identified in the past, but the general public should be aware that, indeed, there is a process to be followed. The capital plans are submitted annually, and those capital plans are reviewed and considered, and the schools are constructed when the ministerial award is announced. That is the process. That is the process; that is the way it has worked for a number of years now, and that is the process that we will continue to engage in.

Mrs. Driedger: I will point out to the minister that the marketing document that the Seven Oaks School Division is putting forward to the public shows in here in the master plan a school. They are marketing this area to the public, letting everybody believe that there is a school going in the area. It is the school division that is doing this, not other developers or home builders. It is the school division themselves.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5:30 p.m., committee rise.

HEALTH

* (14:40)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Good afternoon. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be continuing with consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Health.

The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I would just like to ask the Minister of Health, based on the announcement that he made on April 25, I believe, of this year, when, along with the federal government, an announcement was made about the new Movement Disorders Clinic to be established at Deer Lodge Centre on Portage Avenue. Could the minister

indicate what role the provincial government had in working on this initiative with the federal government and when an analysis was done on what this clinic might do for the community?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Well, it is, I think, a really appropriate question to ask on a day in which we have had vets in the House and in the Rotunda. As the member knows, the tribute lodge was the realization of a project through Manitoba women following World War I to provide a lasting memorial to those men and women who died or were wounded or served in the Great War, which included my grandfather, who was killed in World War I.

This building was last occupied in the eighties and has sat empty for some years. The hard work of a number of people, most notably the colleague to my right, the Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski), with assistance from, I believe, Mr. Harvard, who was involved significantly when he was the MP for the area, a proposal to bring this building back to life and preserve it was accepted by the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program.

Manitoba committed \$350,000, I believe was the amount from that program, which, I think, as the member probably knows, all announcements that are made out of the program have to involve both partners, but the partners have the right to either fund all or part or none of any given project so long as at the end of the day the monies are dispersed and everybody has put their 50 cents in to make up a buck. In this case, I believe, Manitoba committed money from its portion of the fund, and the federal government in this case did not have specific money. Am I correct? I have to make sure that I have my member's interests correctly represented. We were pleased to do that.

* (14:50)

Doctor Hobson is a physician who has been providing some leadership in the area of movement disorders for Parkinson's disease, MS and other chronic diseases that cause musculoskeletal problems in terms of control. We will be funding through the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority the costs of the operating clinics once the building is renovated and the clinics can then move in. I am very pleased that this is going to mean that this lodge will be preserved for generations, and that a very important area where

we can make substantial improvements for veterans and others who have movement disorders that limit their enjoyment can be improved, and people can stay home longer and maintain a quality of life through the interventions of Doctor Hobson and the people that will be practising with him.

I can tell the member, I think she probably knows this, but I have friends and members of my congregation, people with Parkinson's disease, who have shown tremendous improvement with appropriate therapies. I have also witnessed the amazing, and I have to say absolutely amazing, improvement with deep-brain stimulation where people who had uncontrollable tremors, by virtue of a deep-brain implant, essentially, begin to function virtually normally to the point where you cannot really tell there is anything wrong.

At the end of the day, this will be declared a provincial heritage site, protected for all time. We will get an out-patient clinic associated with Deer Lodge, which is a great place for a Movement Disorders Clinic, and we will have rescued an old building, a tribute to all of our veterans.

Mrs. Mitchelson: What is the provincial contribution then to the bricks and mortar?

Mr. Sale: I thought I had said that, \$350,000. I mentioned that figure in my answer.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is to the infrastructure program. How much is the Regional Health Authority contributing to the operating program?

Mr. Sale: I do not have that number at the top of my head right now. I do not want to guess at the number, but it was in the press release. Perhaps I could ask staff to get the press announcement from the tribute lodge project if the member does not have it there already. I believe the number was in there or in the backgrounder.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do not have the backgrounder, but the total cost of the project is estimated at \$1.7 million. I guess my question would be is that \$1.7-million infrastructure, bricks and mortar or does that include the operating. If there is \$1.7 million there for bricks and mortar, how much is the operating grant, and does the minister have operating dollars in each budget to provide for this programming?

Mr. Sale: I cannot remember if the member was at the announcement, I do not think she was. But at the announcement, Mr. Chris Good, who is the chair of the Deer Lodge Foundation, accepted the challenge to raise the balance of the capital funds. I believe the \$1.7 million refers to the capital costs of the project.

The answer is, yes, I do have money in my budget for the balance of this year, but the renovations will not be completed in this fiscal year. My expectation is that I will need to put those funds into my budget for 2006-07 because the plans will not be renovated. But, yes, the expectation is it will be funded on an ongoing operational basis through the WRHA budget, and that is when Doctor Hobson will be joining the staff of WRHA to direct this program.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I applaud an initiative to try to ensure that veterans and seniors and those with movement disorders receive the support and service they need. I am sure the minister is aware of a movement centre located in my constituency on Henderson Highway.

This was a project that was a public-private partnership. One of those kinds of things that we have talked about many times in the House, where the private sector provides the bricks and mortar and then government should play a role in partnering with the private sector to provide the ongoing operating support for services and supports to Manitobans with disabilities and Manitobans that have a real need. The Movement Centre has been up and running for several years in North Kildonan.

We have a private-sector partner in Martin Bergen, who provided the bricks and mortar for that Movement Centre. There are many, many children, and I know the minister has talked about the other end of the spectrum when we talk about adults and veterans, but these are actual children with cerebral palsy, with movement disorders, that have very specific needs and a very high need.

The programs that are being provided at the Movement Centre have proven to be extremely successful in many, many cases. They operate that facility that was provided by the private sector and is completely funded by fundraising and by parents who pay for the service for their children, and there is absolutely no government funding.

This organization and the children that are supported and their families who spend an awful lot of time ensuring that their children get to and from the programs, Madam Chairperson, have felt for some considerable period of time, and they have talked to government for several years now, and have talked to several ministers of this administration, who have come out and visited the facility, have seen the good work that is happening there. They have come to this government and asked them to take a look at the program, and try to find some money so that they could have a bit of ongoing operating funding so that these children could be serviced.

They struggle, and I have to tell you that I know of many families, and they do not all live in my constituency. I do have some that go to the Movement Centre that live in my constituency, but many are from all across the city of Winnipeg. They have asked, time and time again. There have been ministers, and I do not know whether the present Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) has been out to visit that facility. But I know that many, many of his colleagues have been out there. When they have seen the work that is being done, they have been very encouraged and have indicated that they would come back to the government to ask for support and try to obtain support for the programming. To date, they have heard nothing.

Then I see a program that is announced for movement disorders, and I look at \$1.7 million going into bricks and mortar when we already have bricks and mortar that were provided by someone who was kind enough to donate the bricks and mortar so that children could be served. We have a government that will not even come along and partner and provide some ongoing operating funding, to provide support to these children, these children who—and I mean, we have a government that talks great about how important it is to get children off to a healthy start to life, and how early intervention is so very important.

Yet they are not putting a penny into providing support for children with movement disorders who could get off to a healthier start to life if there was a bit of government support.

These are some of the most disadvantaged children in our society. So I would like to ask the minister whether he has heard from any of his colleagues, and I know many of them have been out to visit the Movement Centre.

Have any of his colleagues brought the issue of the Movement Centre in North Kildonan to his attention? Has his government explored the opportunities? I know it is an interdepartmental initiative that would have to be undertaken, but if it is interdepartmental, there certainly is a health component. I would like to know whether his colleagues have spoken to him, whether he is aware of the services that are being provided and whether, in fact, he has looked for and asked for support for these children and where that is at.

* (15:00)

Mr. Sale: I thank the member for that passionate advocacy on behalf of this centre. I am informed by my colleague, the honourable Minister responsible for Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, that she visited the centre about 10 days ago. She and I have not had a chance to talk about that visit, and no other member of the Legislature has brought this centre to my attention directly, perhaps to my predecessor, but not to me in the six months that I have been minister.

I am happy to hear, I am aware there is such a centre, but I have not had anybody come to me and say that we should be funding this or whatever. So I am very glad that my colleague who is responsible for Healthy Child and for wellness has visited the centre. She tells me by a note that she is intending to raise this question, and as you say, or as the member says, Madam Chair, this would probably require more than one department to speak to it.

I think that probably it comes under Family Services and would likely, as the member is the former Minister of Family Services, she would know that Eleanor Chornoboy remains the director of special needs Children's Services. I think Eleanor has been there for many, many years, and I think the member knows the excellent work she and her staff do in regard to children with special needs. I thank her for the information, and I am looking forward to meeting with my colleague and discussing the needs of this centre.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chair, it is unfortunate this government has not taken the issue of the treatment and support for these families and these children a little more seriously. I do know, as far back as when the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) was the Minister of Family Services, he

was out and toured the Movement Centre and saw the good work they did and was very encouraged.

I am extremely disappointed that he never brought the issue forward to this government. It was several years ago that he was out. I do know the former Minister of Healthy Living was out to the Movement Centre, toured the facility and appeared very upbeat and praised them for the good work that they were doing. So I would encourage very strongly that this new Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Oswald), this government, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) today to get together very quickly and review the requests that have been made because I know there have been several requests that have come forward.

I do know the treatment that these children receive does, in fact, improve their movement ability to a significant degree. I do know the rent that is provided to the Movement Centre on Henderson Highway is extremely reasonable. I do know we have a wonderful private-sector partner, and I would hope that is not one of the reasons this government is dragging its feet on moving forward on supporting these children because we do know their ideology and their philosophy says that the private sector is something this government has a distaste for.

I would hope this minister could rise above that, and that he would very quickly take a look at what is happening and try to ensure that he walks the walk and not only talks the talk when he talks about how important early intervention is to the lives of children. I do know the children that receive support through the movement centre deserve this government looking very seriously at providing a little bit of support that I know will go a very long way to assist many families in need in our community.

So I am just asking that this minister look very quickly, and I would hope he and his colleagues would see fit to move forward and find some money and some support for these families, for these very young children that could have a much healthier status in the years to come as a result of the extensive and good treatment that they receive. Indicate, too, that I know that those families would continue to do fundraising to support the program. I do know that the private-sector partner would continue to give support through low rent to ensure that these children have the kind of support that they need. So I just

wanted to put that on the record, and I would ask the minister to very seriously consider analyzing and reviewing very quickly the need for some dollars for that area.

Mr. Sale: Well, I thank the member for some of those comments. The program in question is neuro-linguistic programming and patterning. As the member knows, there are some people who believe that it is a very effective treatment, and there are some people who believe that it is not medically proven as an effective treatment. It is not medically recognized as the member probably knows. That does not mean it does not work. There are lots of things that doctors do not know. So that does not mean it is not something that should be pursued.

I just think the member should perhaps recognize that during my time as a minister I had quite a bit more to do with the business community than perhaps she did as Family Services Minister over a number of years. In terms of the large business community in this community, whether it is EDS or IBM or Boeing, or any of the other major companies we have been partners with and supported the development of their strategies. For example, a \$25-million composite strategy in this city, the centre for intelligent structures, and the world conference they had here, the development of wind energy, the development of private-public partnerships in regard to wind energy.

I do not really think we need any lessons from the member on working with the private sector in very successful developments. We have not been in the habit of writing off \$25 million to Isobord or \$28 million to Faneuil because we were not careful with the public's money.

So I think that we have been very, very effective in working with the business community, and will continue to do so. I will continue through the Health Department to work with outstanding companies, whether it is Medicare or Biovail or Siemens or Philips or GE, or any of the other large organizations that are part of our business community in Winnipeg and Manitoba and serve patients in our health care system with their technology and their innovation.

We will continue to partner with the large companies who come to us with opportunities for private-public partnerships which we think very

often can be very useful to our government and our communities. So I am very glad that Mr. Bergen is a generous donor. He, certainly, has made that plain in his donations to the Health Sciences Centre and other donations which are pending, as well as ones which have been made in the past. I am sure that he will continue to support many of the good causes that he has been part of over many, many years, Madam Chair.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thanks very much, Madam Chairperson. I would just like to ask the minister whether he has had a recent update on how Access River East is doing, and whether it is meeting the expectations that were set out when the Access centre opened its doors for service.

* (15:10)

Mr. Sale: Thank you. The most recent information that I have had, I would say, is mostly anecdotal from people who work there who find that it is a very effective place because of the ease of working across different groups. Whether it is somebody who needs social assistance child care and has a primary health care need, or whether it is a senior with a housing and an income and a health need issue. It makes it ever so much easier for staff to work across departments and not within their particular silos. So what I have understood from people who work there is that it is a very positive environment, and people are delighted with the ability to have a centre in River East community which was underserved.

I think that the idea of an Access centre began prior to our forming government in the late nineties. We continued that development and brought it to fruition. It is a large centre. As the member knows, it is over 200 staff in total associated with it. I believe the medical practice is not yet full. They are still able to accept new patients, but I believe it is growing reasonably quickly. I think what we have found and have been told by our staff is that a very significant majority—I cannot give the member a percentage—but a very significant majority of people who have come for medical primary care are people who have not had a family physician. They come with multiple medical needs often, and so it takes a significant amount of time to work up their files because they have not had a family physician for a number of years or maybe never had a family physician.

I believe that is a very important function because those are the people with whom you will pick up chronic conditions, hopefully before they become a big problem: diabetes, hypertension, overweight, et cetera. Anecdotally, what I am told is that the centre is meeting its objectives, and the people who work there are very pleased with it.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Chairperson, The southeast part of Manitoba, as the minister knows, is a fairly remote part of the province of Manitoba. It is accessible by road, but many of the facilities that communities such as Sprague and Piney and east, specifically, on a daily basis for health care have a need for people to travel a very significant distance, to Steinbach mostly, and some to Vita if the needs are not too great, but Steinbach would be their main centre.

We have an agreement, as the minister knows, with our American medical friends, whereby Manitoba Health pays for some of the services to those that are in Middleboro and Sprague and are able to access the facilities in Roseau, Minnesota. What I find interesting is that we have no facilities at all for seniors, other than Manitoba Housing units, in that southeastern part of the province. The community, in conjunction with the Southeast Health Authority, put a significant effort into building a facility to house the public health nurse and some other services which the minister is aware of. I think they spent some million dollars in building the facility, which is a state-of-the-art facility.

What I would like to know from the ministry is has the minister been approached by the new community corporation that has been formed to investigate the possibilities of adding some personal care beds to that facility, and also some assisted living kind of facilities to that facility. Can the minister give us some information as to where that is at? I know that that board was going to make some approaches to government. Whether they have done that or not, I am not quite certain, but they have certainly done a lot of homework as to needs assessment and those kinds of things in that area.

Mr. Sale: I thank the member for the question. Yes, the Vita area did get a good primary care clinic developed through the work of the community and the Southeast Regional Health Authority. I am personally not aware of any approach. It is possible that they have gone to SRHA, to Reg Toews and

Aurèle Boisvert with a proposal, but, as far as I am aware my staff does not have any recollection of an approach coming to us.

That said, one of our biggest priorities in the department is to increase the supportive living, assisted living capacity of the department. Small nursing homes are extremely hard to staff and to have viable. Generally, the smallest, and this is really the small end, you would not want to build a nursing home of fewer than 30. That area probably does not require anywhere near that number of beds, so that is a real challenge.

What we have found in a number of the assisted living facilities or in seniors blocks that have group home care is that you can help people stay in their community who have quite serious medical needs, who might otherwise find themselves in a nursing home, by having an aggressive supportive living program. So we are committed to expanding that kind of resource. I think that we would expect the Regional Health Authority to do the planning with Housing because usually they will be using units that are in a Manitoba Housing building.

It is not beyond the realm of possibility, though I am obviously not in a position to make a commitment, that if you added a few newer units to a building that could be built with more mobility, accessibility, in mind, that that also might be an appropriate approach. I am obviously not in a position to make that kind of commitment, but that is the direction.

So, if the member is aware of a community initiative in this regard, it should come through the regional health plan. I am sure he knows that already and probably is at work doing it.

Mr. Penner: Thank you for that response. The second question I have is more related to what people in that southeast corner experience in health care at Roseau, Minnesota, when they utilize those facilities, both doctors and operational facilities and other facilities such as MRIs.

I want to ask the minister whether he is aware that in Minnesota and North Dakota they have what is considered mobile MRI machines that are owned privately, who employ the technicians. If the need for MRI is prevalent in Roseau, Minnesota, for instance, they would come from, say, and I am not

sure whether they actually come from Grand Forks, but let us say they come out from Grand Forks upon a phone call, come to Roseau with their mobile machine, do the MRI and take off. The local people do not have to travel a great distance.

I have often wondered why we would not do something like that in Manitoba. They only pay for the time of the use of the machine and the technician. The health care system there does not invest in the actual operational and/or the hardware used or the facility. They travel from town to town and do the MRIs as needed.

As you know, much of the health care system in the United States is as public as ours is, and publicly funded as ours is. I know very intimately how that functions because we live right there and our grandchildren were born and raised there, so we have a good understanding of how they function over there.

So I wonder whether the minister, at all, would entertain some innovativeness such as that to bring efficiency and better services where MRIs, or CT scanners for that matter even, could be utilized and publicly owned, publicly serviced. You would only pay for the cost of the use of the machine and the technicians if and when you use it.

Mr. Sale: Well, the member probably knows we have, I believe it is four, mobile mammography clinics already. We have four mobile machines for mammography. No, we do not have a mobile MRI. I guess the question there is, if you spend a lot of time on the road in terms of, if you are travelling from Grand Forks over to the area you are talking about, that is not a 15-minute drive, so you are spending a lot of time trucking a machine around. I guess the efficiency question is, is it better to have the scarce equipment and technology serving a lot of people and having the people coming to the equipment? Yes, there is no doubt it is more convenient to have the equipment come to the people, but the question of what the true costs are, I think, is always an interesting one.

*(15:20)

The Americans spend about 6.2 percent of their GDP on publicly funded health care and roughly 9 percent on privately funded. So their public sector is not that much smaller than ours, it is just that their private sector is much bigger.

You know, when I look at the equivalent costs, a hip replacement in the States, \$20,000 to \$25,000, and that many people would say is a low end. Here, we are generally budgeting around \$10,000 to \$11,000 Canadian for the same procedure. So I am not sure about making efficiency claims around how much it really costs. There is some pretty persuasive data that their costs for any unit of care are at minimum 50 percent higher than our costs.

Now, there may well be components within their system where the costs are comparable and the member may be citing one, but in terms of the principle of having equipment travel to people, we do that in our mammography area, but, frankly, the radiologists of Canada tell us that we need to use our MRI equipment very appropriately and that everybody who might want an MRI does not actually need an MRI.

So it is always a question as to whether you really need to have an MRI on every doorstep, or whether you need to make sure that the clinical requirements and the clinical indications for using that technology are appropriately used, because it is expensive stuff, but I thank the member for the suggestion.

Mr. Penner: Well, I just want to say that the minister will find that the MRI actually, the application of a pro-MRI treatment is in Roseau significantly less than it is here.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): I will be very short. I know the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) wants to get in. I had a phone call from a constituent of mine, and she was asking me about a drug and coverage for Pharmacare. I do not know whether the minister has the facts in front of him, but it was a drug called Azandia, A-z-a-n-d-i-a. It is a drug—

An Honourable Member: Azandia?

Mr. Reimer: Yes. I do not know whether the minister has—

An Honourable Member: I have no idea.

Mr. Reimer: No. Well, if the minister could get back to me as to whether that has coverage, I—

An Honourable Member: What is it for?

Mr. Reimer: It is hormone therapy. The constituent was a lady phoning about this drug, and she wanted

to know why or whether it is covered under Pharmacare. If the minister has that with him now—he does not? Then he could get back to me. I would appreciate it.

Mr. Sale: I apologize to the Chair and to Hansard for talking without being recognized. I will find out the information for the member and communicate to him directly to his office.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Madam Chairperson, just for the record, I will indicate to the Minister of Health that I have thousands upon thousands upon thousands of questions for him. Unfortunately, we are limited to the number of hours that we have in Estimates these days. I know I have asked a number of questions as have my colleagues. There is an overabundance of questions out there to ask this Minister of Health, and we just wish we got some answers to a number of them. We did get to some, but certainly not to all. I think that is unfortunate. I think at this time we are prepared to go line by line.

Mr. Sale: Can I give the member the answer to one of her questions, which is the names of the people who are on the therapeutic standards committee, how often the committee meets and how we get our generic drugs on the formulary?

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 21.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$18,213,300 for Health, Policy, Planning and Program Support, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.3. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,322,900 for Health, Health Workforce, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.4. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,878,600 for Health, Regional Affairs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.5. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$65,905,800 for Health, Healthy Living and Health

Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.6. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,174,694,500 for Health, Health Services Insurance Fund, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.7. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,176,400 for Health, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.8. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$80,754,900 for Health, Capital Funding, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.9. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,023,700 for Health, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

Madam Chairperson: The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 21.1.(a) Minister's Salary, contained in Resolution 21.1. At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this last item.

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Chairperson, I think it is unfortunate at a time when this government is spending the most money per capita in Canada on health care, and the provincial government has received an unprecedented level of increased revenues to the Province and increases from the federal government, it is truly unfortunate that Manitobans are faced with the situation that they are currently in with the increasing wait lists, and so on.

I think it also unfortunate that the Minister of Health and indeed, the Premier (Mr. Doer) are so

blinded by their ideology that they refuse to look at the private sector to partner with in reducing wait lists in our province. I think it is extremely unfortunate for those people waiting for hip and knee surgery and those children waiting on wait lists for pediatric dental surgery. I believe this government has made a lot of announcements in the past, and certainly, they have sent out a lot of press releases, but we see very, very little action.

* (15:30)

I think we see administration costs within the RHAs are skyrocketing. Again, under this government's watch in the last six years, they have skyrocketed. We do not believe that is the right direction for the expenditures of the Department of Health. Clearly, the money should be going towards reducing wait lists in our province, and that, clearly, is not where it is going as wait lists continue to rise.

The government has absolutely no plan and no vision for the future of health care in our province. They refuse to partner with the private sector to help reduce these wait lists. I believe that this status quo option of this government, by refusing to set aside their ideology, is doing nothing but hurting Manitobans. Again, I think that is unfortunate, and for those reasons, again, I could go on and on and on, for many, many reasons as to why I move,

THAT line 21.1.(a) be amended so that the Minister of Health's salary be reduced to \$1.

Madam Chairperson: It has been moved by the Member for Tuxedo,

THAT line 21.1.(a) be amended so that the Minister of Health's salary be reduced to \$1.

It is in order. The debate can begin.

Mr. Sale: I am deeply disappointed by my critic's callous treatment and utterly false accusations. Just for the record, before we have this momentous vote, I want to make it plain that the information she has put on the record is incorrect. The administrative costs of the government health authorities that have been documented over a number of years by CIHI have been absolutely stable, in fact, they are .1 percent lower than they were in 1999 as a percentage of the expenditures, so administrative costs are not rising as a percentage of what we spend.

Secondly, waiting lists for MRIs are down from 25 weeks to 16 weeks. Waiting lists for cardiac surgery are now way below what they were, and are within Canadian medically accepted guidelines. So those waiting lists are down. Waiting lists for ultrasound have been reduced as well significantly.

In addition, probably the success that we are most pleased with is that radiation treatment access is now a week or less. When we formed government we were sending people out of province for prostate therapy. We were sending them out of province for breast cancer radiation therapy.

So, while we accept that there continue to be challenges in our health care system, given that we have 160 more doctors, hundreds and hundreds more nurses, 800 graduating in the upcoming year, as opposed to 200 when we formed government, I think that, while I respect the member's attempt to reduce my disposable income by a significant amount of money, I cannot accept her accusations that either our administrative costs or waiting lists have grown sharply. I am sure we will resolve this in a friendly manner in the Chamber.

Madam Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Chairperson: The question before the committee is the motion moved by the honourable Member for Tuxedo. The motion reads as follows, moved by the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

THAT line 21.1.(a) be amended so that the Minister of Health's salary be reduced to \$1.

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Voice Vote

Madam Chairperson: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Chairperson: All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Formal Vote

Mrs. Stefanson: Recorded vote, please.

Madam Chairperson: Does the honourable member have the support of another member?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable member does have support. The committee will now recess in order to proceed to the Chamber for a counted vote.

The section is now recessed.

The committee recessed at 3:34 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:47 p.m.

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 21.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,790,100 for Health, Administration, Finance and Accountability, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

Madam Chairperson: This completes the Estimates of the Department of Health.

The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is the Estimates of the Department of Healthy Child Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Mr. Reimer: No, it is okay. I was going to ask some questions in one of the other rooms, but it is okay.

Madam Chairperson: Shall we briefly recess or would—

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Chairperson: No? The will of the committee is to just continue. We will open the next set of Estimates.

HEALTHY CHILD MANITOBA

* (15:50)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): The committee will come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of Healthy Child Manitoba.

Does the honourable Minister responsible for Healthy Child Manitoba have an opening statement?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister responsible for Healthy Child Manitoba): Yes, I do, Madam Chair.

On behalf of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, I am pleased to present to this committee for its consideration the '05-06 Expenditure Estimates for Healthy Child Manitoba.

Research concludes that the early years comprise a significant period of brain development and set the foundation for success in all aspects of life. The Government of Manitoba continues its commitment to supporting early childhood development because successful development in the early years is the foundation for lifelong health and well-being.

Every year, government spends about a third of its total budget on children under the age of 18 years. By working together, the seven departments of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet strive to ensure that this investment is made strategically and with the goal of achieving the best possible outcomes for all Manitoba children.

I am proud to be part of the only standing Cabinet committee in Canada that is dedicated to improving the opportunities and quality of life for children and youth. The office of Healthy Child Manitoba is led by the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. This committee is comprised of the ministers of the departments of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs; Culture, Heritage and Tourism; Education, Citizenship and Youth; Family Services and Housing; Health; Justice; and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, and, might I add, Healthy Living.

The leadership of this Cabinet committee continues to improve the co-ordination of long-term strategies for children, families and communities. Through a continuum of financial supports and

community-based family supports, Healthy Child Manitoba improves the health and wellbeing of children and families. The core commitments of Healthy Child Manitoba include parent-child coalitions, home visiting programs, healthy baby prenatal benefit and community support programs, healthy schools, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder prevention, healthy adolescent development, adolescent pregnancy prevention, and the newly announced Triple P, that is, Positive Parenting Program.

In '05-06 Healthy Child Manitoba will receive an overall increase of 11 percent to further support these commitments. This \$2.4-million increase demonstrates our government's commitment to invest early in children's lives and sustain their success as they grow into Manitoba's future learners, workers, parents and citizens.

Research confirms that positive parenting is a single most important factor in building a strong foundation for a child's life. The funding allocated within Healthy Child Manitoba's budget for '05-06 has enabled us to provide 1.2 million to implement the Triple P, Positive Parenting Program in Manitoba. A world-renowned parenting program which promotes positive caring relationships between parents and their children, Triple P helps parents learn effective management strategies for dealing with a variety of childhood developmental and behavioural issues. The Triple P approach strengthens parents' knowledge, skills and confidence to better meet the needs of their children while increasing the parents' sense of competence in their parenting ability.

In addition to the funds vested within Healthy Child Manitoba, member departments will contribute an additional \$213,000 in funding while staff of partner departments will work with Healthy Child Manitoba toward the successful implementation of Triple P in Manitoba. This cross-departmental support is indicative of our belief that improving outcomes for children is a shared responsibility with rewards that will be shared by all of society.

The '05-06 fiscal year will also see the implementation of the recently announced Families First program. This enhanced home visiting program was made possible through the integration of BabyFirst and EarlyStart. Delivered by Regional Health Authorities across Manitoba, Families First

provides a continuum of home visiting services for families with children prenatal to school entry.

The Families First budget will receive an increase of \$526.1 thousand in the '05-06 fiscal year raising this government's commitment to just over 9.3 million annually. Committed to the belief that good health is a prerequisite for learning, we have dedicated \$400,000 to the Healthy Schools program in '05-06. Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth and Healthy Living have also identified financial support for this initiative.

It should be noted that Manitoba's Healthy Schools initiative is compatible with the Pan-Canadian consortium on Healthy Schools that has recently been approved for implementation by the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education and federal provincial territorial ministers of Health.

Within '05-06 our government is pleased to be able to increase support for innovative research and evaluation approaches such as the early development instrument or EDI. By looking at the five areas of childhood development that have the greatest impact on children's readiness to learn, the EDI provides us with the evidence base needed to measure the effectiveness of current investments, early childhood development and determine areas for further investment. I am pleased to announce a 70 percent or \$35,000 increase to this initiative in the '05-06 allocation.

Within '05-06 our government is pleased to be able to maintain support for the Healthy Baby program and the parent-child centered approach. Over \$5 million has been committed to the Healthy Baby program. Through the provision of a monthly financial benefit for low-income pregnant women and a network of Healthy Baby community support programs, participating women increase their awareness of health and parenting choices.

Our government's commitment to supporting families and communities is demonstrating by the significant funding we have provided to this priority area. Since April 2000, the Government of Manitoba has increased investments in early childhood development, or ECD, by over \$64 million. Of this investment in '05-06, 18.3 million was provided by the federal government through the Early Childhood Development Agreement.

I look forward to this committee's review of the '05-06 Estimates of Expenditure for Healthy Child Manitoba, and I welcome the comments of committee members.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the Minister responsible for Healthy Child Manitoba for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, have any opening comments?

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Madam Chairperson, I appreciate the minister's comments today. Obviously, Healthy Child Manitoba is involved in quite a number of very worthwhile programs, and hopefully we will get into a bit of a discussion on some of those in particular.

One issue you did touch on in your presentation was the important role that parents play in raising healthy children, and I think that is very important. Further to that is, as legislators, we have to make sure that we educate the public at large as to the important role that they have to play in facilitating healthy development of children as they develop.

Certainly, through the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force, we examined a number of options to do that. Hopefully, we can bring forward some great ideas which will help foster development of children both preschool and during their stay in school. There will be a number of parameters that we will have to look at. I know it will not be easy to come to terms with some of those issues, but I am sure we will have a good, healthy discussion.

Healthy Child and healthy children is an issue that most countries recognize as being a very prominent issue. The media has certainly caught on to it. In fact, I was watching a news show this morning out of the United States where, in fact, ex-President Clinton is now on a campaign to address some of the health issues related to children, so it is certainly going to gain some more notoriety in the United States in terms of developing healthy children.

A lot of the states have caught on in developing some programs as it relates to healthy children as well. So I think we will see those types of programs

and those high profiles will develop as we go forward. I think we all as a society must recognize the important role that we all must play in the development of healthy children.

One of the unfortunate situations we may be into is where this current generation may not be outliving our past generations, and it is something that we as a society must step up to the plate and recognize the reasons for that. Clearly, the factors when it comes to the food we are now using is maybe not in our best interest when we look at the long term.

We see the incidence of diabetes increasing in our society, and, I guess, as a factor of that would be the probable decrease in the physical activity we see in our youth, and probably as well in our general population. So those are some important issues that we will have to address as we go forward. I do thank the minister for her comments, and I know it is a very important committee of government, and I look forward to some interesting discussion on Healthy Child Manitoba.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the member for those comments. At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and we ask that the minister introduce her staff present.

Ms. Oswald: Madam Chair, I am pleased to have joining me today the Executive Director of Healthy Child Manitoba, Jan Sanderson.

*(16:00)

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister.

We will now proceed to Resolution 34.1 on page 99 of the main Estimates book. Shall the resolution pass?

Mr. Cullen: Madam Chairperson, I just have some questions of the committee, if we may take some time to review the Estimates and, too, if we could we could go into a global discussion on the Estimates.

Madam Chairperson: Is it agreed to have the discussion globally?

Ms. Oswald: We would be delighted to proceed in a global manner. As we proceed, I would ask the member if he wished me to start, perhaps, with a specific question that he had on the Triple P

Parenting Program that occurred in Healthy Living, and I deferred perhaps to this time. I could proceed with that now, if he would so desire.

Madam Chairperson: Is it agreed to discuss in a global manner? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Cullen: If the minister would be prepared to talk about the Triple P program, that would be great.

Ms. Oswald: Thank you, Madam Chair. In our earlier session in Healthy Living, the member asked a question regarding the nature of Triple P, Positive Parenting Program, and asked a question about the allocation of funds for this year and perhaps how those funds might be rolled out in implementing Triple P. So I will take a moment or two to just acquaint the member with some information about Triple P.

Triple P is a flexible system of parenting and family support. It is certainly based on evidence. It is a prevention and early intervention approach. We have within it five intervention levels in increasing intensity, and it has a principle of sufficiency about it. That is to say, it is cost-effective, makes perhaps even better use of our work force and has an approach within it that does not involve belabouring a point. Once a problem within the context of a family is solved, then there is an exit strategy from the program.

It is multidisciplinary in nature. Certainly, there are multiple access points which has led to its success across the world, in fact. Of course, it falls within a population health framework. One of, I would say, the two most interesting things about Triple P, and there are many interesting things, is that it originates from Australia. We have seen Triple P's success in a number of different countries with quite diverse cultural origins, cultural beliefs, with varying socio-economic situations. The program itself has been successful in every environment, and in fact, we have internationally programs showing great success: Australia, Austria, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, Iran, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, the U.K., the U.S., and Belgium and Norway, perhaps.

Certainly, where the results have not only shown incredible success in terms of parent-child relationships, decreasing even children's trips to the office at school, but also done in a peer-reviewed

way so that government is not coming up with the evaluation for the program, but in fact people that are experts in the field are hailing the great success of Triple P. That would be one thing that we think is extraordinary about Triple P is that it has been highly successful internationally in a variety of environments.

The second thing about Triple P is that it has at its core a universal approach. We have seen over the years parenting programs that have for either economic reasons or even reasons founded in research to have been targeted to certain populations. One might make a very general statement that a parenting program would be targeted to a specific socio-economic group or single moms or a particular facet of society that seem to be having more problem than another element of society. But what the research has shown in terms of a need for a universal approach is that, if you target but one economic group, you tend to miss two thirds of problems that are occurring in other economic groups. Children being sent to the office at school or having issues with relationships with their peers, or at younger years with something like biting, it does not tend to fall into one socio-economic group. It is cross-economic.

The Triple P approach is one that is indeed one that can address a population universally. The other reason this will be successful is we are, as a community, all in this together in the successful raising of our children. One particular group is not singled out as being less successful than another. This is what people across the world have said is the second great thing about it. Not only does it work in different cultural environments, but it really works in an environment where a universal approach is being targeted.

The other thing about Triple P that I would like to tell you is just a little bit about the five levels of intervention. Level 1 is a media and communications strategy where parents everywhere are getting the message that it is okay. If you are having trouble, you do not have to feel like a bad person or a bad parent and there are places you can go for help. This kind of a communication strategy has proved highly effective in reducing issues that parents are having with their children.

The second level is one that involves brief parenting advice. Perhaps, even a tip sheet that a

mom or a dad can get from school, from kindergarten, from day care, from a community liaison worker. If, for example, they were having an issue like the aforementioned biting, I have a great kid, but Bobby bites. He bites his brother. He bites the dog. He bites everybody. What are we going to do about this? Everything else is fine, but this is one problem. In fact, Triple P has a tip sheet on biting. A parent can receive this and not feel self-conscious about not knowing what to do and that problem can be solved.

Moving into step three, there is a narrow focus of parent skills training that might be a little more one-on-one with the parent, but not really reaching a clinical kind of approach. Level 4 is a broad focus of parent skills training, and Level 5 is intensive family intervention where direction might be coming not now from an expert worker at the daycare or kindergarten teacher, but from a clinician of some variety. And perhaps, in the Level 5 environment, even a psychologist or in some cases a physician. It is a multi-level approach parents can be in and be out at different levels and for this reason we do see this to be quite successful.

One of the other important things about Triple P, and certainly why we have been very enthusiastic about supporting the concept, is that it is training those people in the community that are already serving parents. It is very much focussed on community partnerships. There have been people that have come forth to government expressing an interest in the program, having heard of it. Already we have much interest from the North End Women's Resource Centre where we did our launch. The YMCAs have been very interested, family resource centres, the RHAs, of course, school divisions and day cares. Frankly, the phone is ringing every day with more people wanting to get involved so it is this grass roots kind of community approach.

Mr. Andrew Swan, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Just briefly then, to specifically address the question of the money, we announced \$1.4 million. Our plan is to begin with gradual implementation over the next two years. Our objective will be to have people in the field trained and ready to go and available to all parents of children aged zero to five by '07-08.

* (16:10)

The process will be thus. An interdepartmental working committee has been constituted, as has a stakeholder advisory committee comprised of community representatives, people like trustees, MAST, the Manitoba Child Care Association, Manitoba parent council association, the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, the Social Planning Council and the like, and staff recruitment is already underway.

During the engagement phase, presentations will be made to government and community partners like the RHAs and family resource centres, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, psychologists, parent-child coalitions, friendship centres, school divisions. That will take place approximately April, so we are underway to September of '05.

In the fall of '05, we will determine demonstration communities. We are going to have one in each of the inner city, suburban, northern and rural areas, certainly based on the level of interest from the community, the capacity and their existing infrastructure of inter-sectoral co-operation. We are working out a few other pieces of criteria that will help us establish where these demonstration communities will be.

We will begin that communication and public education campaign that we hear about in phase 1, the evaluation strategy. *[interjection]* He asked a good question. I had a week to prepare. The training of a cadre of specialists will serve in those level 4 and level 5 areas, and by March and April of '06, we will be training the inter-sectoral teams. I am wrapping her up. Implementation of the communication strategy will happen in those communities. Groundwork for the evaluation strategy will begin in those committees.

May and June of '06 will begin the accreditation process and the identification of the next communities. By the fall of '06, training and accreditation for multiple communities and regions will commence until the full implementation is complete by '07-08, around the same time as this answer.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that. A short question, and hopefully it will be a brief answer. In terms of the funding, the \$1.4 million, that will be expended in this budget year?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, that is the portion we will be expending this year as we begin the roll out of the process that I just described to you in detail.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Chairman, clearly there is going to be a number of local organizations involved in this. I am wondering how the money will be placed back to those communities, if it will be an application process, or how that might lay itself out?

Ms. Oswald: Certainly during this initial phase, as I described, we will be investing our money in staff, in a manager, two co-ordinators, two administrators to launch this rather massive ship. Other funding will need to be dedicated to training and resources, things like the tip sheets that I described, videos, booklets, workbooks. The communication and public education campaign and laying the groundwork for a good studious evaluation of the process is also costly. So the monies that are at the outset really are setting the groundwork for this to happen.

As I stated previously, in the initial roll-out, there will be selected demonstration communities to ensure that the process works for us, as well, as it has worked in all the other jurisdictions. This particular money will, for all intents and purposes, be spoken for by the time that process I described to you will be laid out.

Each year, subsequent to this roll out plan that I have described, the money will be divvied up into communities as we broaden out of those demonstration communities. The good news is, of course, the training only needs to happen once and the awareness campaign to let people understand that Triple P is with us, available, and indeed, really working. So the initial investment of over a million dollars is significant, but it is exactly that. It is an investment as we move forward.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, thank you for the response. You had indicated there was a committee together now to implement the program. Do you have a manager that will be overseeing that, first of all, and do you have a person hired for that position?

Ms. Oswald: Yes. As we begin the roll-out of Triple P, we have seconded a manager who is a psychologist from St. Boniface hospital to be the overseer of this process. We also have two SYs from departments, from Family Services and Housing, actually, who, of course, belong to the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet to be urban co-ordinators, and

northern. We also have admin support allotted as well from within the department.

Mr. Cullen: So these people that you have pulled into the co-ordination side, they will be outside of the staff that has been allocated to Healthy Child Manitoba.

Ms. Oswald: When the money was put forward to invest in Triple P, certainly, it was to roll out the project itself as I described in that very comprehensive answer that I gave you, but it was also agreed that manpower and womanpower would be found from within the department and dedicated to the project itself, so we would find staff from within the existing partnerships within Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet.

Mr. Cullen: Just in terms of Healthy Child Manitoba, obviously there are a number of departments involved in that. Just in broad terms of the Healthy Child Committee, how often do you meet?

Ms. Oswald: The Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet meets once every two months. The deputy ministers of each department also meet once every two months opposite to that, and the deputy ministers are also invited to the Cabinet committee meetings as well.

Mr. Cullen: How is the budget for the committee determined?

Ms. Oswald: The Healthy Child Committee per se does not really have a budget. I would say per se. We do get support with, you know, secretarial kind of support from within the Healthy Child Manitoba office, but there is really low cost to the committee itself. I am not sure if that is what the member was asking. Were you wondering about Healthy Child Manitoba per se as funding?

Mr. Cullen: That is correct, and I guess I make reference to the almost \$25 million that is in Healthy Child. Does the committee determine what the budget will be for Healthy Child in terms of that \$25 million and then does the committee, then, allocate the funds to the respective programs?

* (16:20)

Ms. Oswald: Healthy Child itself has an established separate appropriation, which I guess is what brings us here today, not being part of another specific

department, and that is year over year. Certainly, when it comes to something like, say, Triple P, that kind of a program or an initiative would come to the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet to make a request to have that program implemented. In due consideration among ministers on that Cabinet, it would be decided that, yes, this would be a good investment, or, no, not a good one at this time, but for such things Healthy Child would be expected to go through the Estimates process like everybody else does.

Mr. Cullen: Because there are a lot of programs under the Healthy Child committee, are each of those programs evaluated on an annual basis whether they should continue for the year? Would some programs be dropped because you find them not being valuable and where you would implement another program?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Chair, certainly evaluation is a really key component to what we are doing in Healthy Child Manitoba and, of course, some of the issues and the programs that we fund under Healthy Child are less easy to measure than others. But, of course, we are absolutely committed and working toward ensuring that the decisions that we are making financially are evidence based and prove to be very successful.

A number of the programs under Healthy Child are, indeed, quite new to have very solid data established for their effectiveness, or, if you will, ineffectiveness, but we are working towards ensuring that all of those programs have a very sound foundation. We know that, for example, something like the EDI that I mentioned earlier is already demonstrating to us to be enormously important in that we are able to identify communities, pockets of our province where children may be in one area or two areas less ready for learning than they are in others.

Another example of evaluation that is being done would be within the context of EarlyStart and BabyFirst. There was anecdotal and evidence-based evaluation done that showed us that by combining the philosophies and the mandates of EarlyStart and BabyFirst into Families First, that we would be able to not only expand but do so in a financially responsible way and enable us to be able to reach more Manitoba families in as effective a way as we can. We are also connected to the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy. They are assisting us with a

deliverable on Healthy Baby, and we think that is very important, but I would agree with the member that in everything that we are doing in making major investments for children we need to be ensuring that it is being measured in a fair and in a rigorous way.

Mr. Cullen: In doing some research on Healthy Child Manitoba, I came across an organizational chart, and I just wondered if the minister would be prepared to pass on an organizational chart so that we can determine who is employed under the premise of Healthy Child.

Ms. Oswald: We do have such a chart available, and in the name of ensuring that it is entirely up to date, I would be happy to provide the member with the details of who is employed by Healthy Child in a follow-up document if that meets his satisfaction.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, that indeed would help, and I guess just as a follow-up to our discussion on Triple P, could you provide some of the staff that will be involved in there, in which departments they have been seconded from?

Ms. Oswald: We would be delighted to.

Mr. Cullen: I would appreciate that. The other item is in particular to the Estimates booklet itself. We are talking here in terms of about almost a \$25-million expense and, out of that, over \$23 million is Financial Assistance and external agencies. So, in essence, most of the Estimates that we see here in this booklet we really have no idea to which programs they are being administered. I wonder if the minister and the department have a little more detailed budget as to what programs are involved and to what extent each of those programs would be funded.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Ms. Oswald: Certainly, the short answer would be yes. We would be very happy to provide the member with a list of organizations and groups that receive funding from Healthy Child Manitoba. I would just let the member know that the reason they do not exist per se in the Estimates book is that as we look at what our core commitments are in Healthy Child, whether it is a parent-child coalition or a home visiting program, some are funded through an RHA or in conjunction with an RHA. Some are funded as stand-alone, and it is not quite as neat and tidy, as

things never are when you learn how to really co-operate and involve a lot of people in the raising of our children.

Certainly, we would be happy to show you where that money has gone and in what areas of our commitments, whether it be Healthy Schools or Healthy Adolescent Development or Triple P or parent-child coalitions. We would be pleased to do that.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you. I would appreciate that information.

I would just like to follow up on the minister's comment about Healthy Schools. Are we going to have a continuation of that particular program going forward, and is there any change in the allocation in terms of your budget for this year?

Ms. Oswald: Our investment this year in Healthy Schools—and of course, I know that the member has an interest in this because we have spent a lot of time together on the road listening to people talk about how important it is that we work together with our schools to ensure our children are as healthy as possible—\$400,000 of the Healthy Schools budget comes from Healthy Child. Specifically, \$200,000 this year came from Education, Citizenship and Youth, and \$100,000 to about \$150,000 came from Health.

Mr. Cullen: I thank the minister for that response. Obviously, we have recognized over our travels here in the last several months that eating the proper foods is certainly paramount for development of children and adults. We have also recognized that there are certainly a number of people out there in the population who have eating disorders.

I am wondering if under the Healthy Child scenario committee we have a specific program that is aimed directly at those particular eating disorders.

* (16:30)

Ms. Oswald: Certainly within the context of Healthy Schools, I think it is important to note that, you know, really, when it comes to issues like eating disorders or other mental health related issues that our children may unfortunately face, we know that one of the most important things that we can do is make an investment as early as possible in assisting

children in being mentally well and developing coping skills as much as possible.

Indeed, within the context of the Healthy Schools initiative, as the member knows, this year's theme is, in fact, mental health, and we are seeing across the province the largest uptake and interest in that particular issue and certainly the question of healthy eating and self esteem and positive strong body image is all part of that program. So I would say in that sense, certainly, Healthy Child Manitoba is making an investment in ensuring that a safe, honest dialogue about the importance of having a good healthy diet and most importantly having a very positive and healthy body image is part of that investment.

Specifically, Healthy Child would fund a centre like Aulneau that might, in one way or another, relate or assist people with eating disorders, but the funding for, and programming concerning eating disorders, really falls more under the parameter of Healthy Living and Health per se. So it would be something that is being addressed like, for example, funding to the Eating Disorders Association of Manitoba comes out of Health, not Healthy Child specifically. So, while there are organizations and investments like the provincial network on disordered eating and eating disorders, which was established in January of '04, these are things whose funding and whose money comes from Healthy Living and from Health specifically.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I asked the Minister of Health about whether he was considering establishing a centre like Bridge Point in Saskatchewan at Mildred, and he said that had nothing to do with his department, it was all in your department. So I am asking you what is your activity in this area, and have you plans for the establishment of a centre like Bridge Point in Mildred.

Ms. Oswald: Well, far be it from me to contradict my honourable colleague in Health. Certainly, as we are—

An Honourable Member: She is just ducking responsibility, that is all.

Ms. Oswald: Oh, hardly.

Certainly, while we are not specifically within the context of Healthy Child, and I do not know if I

am breaking protocol by talking about monies from other departments, but I think it is a fair question, given the direction that the member was given.

What I can say is that working through Healthy Living and Health together on this very important issue, as I said before, is the provincial network on disordered eating and eating disorders, which was established in January of 2004. It is working very diligently on developing a provincial strategy on eating disorders and, indeed, the issue of facilities for those individuals that are suffering from this highly debilitating and emotionally wrenching issue is being addressed by the provincial network.

They are making very good strides, even more so in recent days, in being able to push forward in their research and their discussion about what will, indeed, be the best practice for Manitoba, whether or not that will include a recommendation specifically for an adult treatment centre, remains in the hands of the provincial network.

We, of course, are very interested in doing all that we can to assist families that are facing this very, very challenging question and challenging situation in their children's lives and we will look very carefully at the recommendations from the provincial network when we receive them, and we hope that will be very soon.

Mr. Gerrard: Does suicide prevention come under your mandate and, if so, what are you doing in terms of suicide prevention?

Ms. Oswald: Certainly, again, within the context of Healthy Child Manitoba, healthy adolescent development would fall under one of our core commitments to be sure, and suicide prevention would be part of that. Again, I would suggest that suicide prevention and mental health services would more appropriately fall into a discussion of Health and Healthy Living.

I can tell the member that in September of '04 a provincial committee for suicide prevention with representation from government, from the Aboriginal community, very importantly, and from community-based mental health groups was established. Its mandate is to, in fact, develop a comprehensive provincial suicide prevention strategy by June of '05. So we are really on the eve of receiving that. We are very hopeful that we will.

Of course, we have increased our funding to RHAs for community and acute mental health services by 38 percent since '99, about a \$20-million increase. I know the member and I, as with the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), travelled our great province and listened to a number of presenters that expressed very serious concerns about the availability of services. Indeed, a very common theme was being the importance of every investment that we can make to work on prevention of ensuring that individuals, that our children, heaven forbid, do not get to a stage where they would consider such things. We heard this theme, and of course, having a provincial committee for suicide prevention and having a provincial-wide strategy will be very important. We look forward to receiving that posthaste.

Mr. Gerrard: I just presumed, since the minister had been talking so forcefully about preventive mental health in schools, that this was one element of the program that she is, in fact, involved with.

Ms. Oswald: I am not sure if I understand the question. I was just speaking to the other member about the fact that the Healthy Schools initiative has as its theme this year, mental health, mental wellness and mental health promotion, and certainly, one of the prongs of that strategy in ensuring that our children have a healthy dialogue about those challenges that might face them, and the kinds of skills we wish for them to acquire about coping, positive self-esteem and such, along with healthy eating, refraining from drinking and involving themselves with drugs. Indeed, the issue of suicide would fall into that category absolutely. Healthy children are not just about having healthy bodies, but healthy body, mind, spirit, and that is really what the Healthy Schools initiative is all about.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you very much, member from River Heights. It certainly does raise some very important aspects of child development.

You briefly discussed the early development instrument, I believe you called it. What age does that come into play? Is that a pre-school assessment that is done to prepare kids for school?

* (16:40)

Ms. Oswald: I am just getting clarification. The EDI is a measurement that occurs across Manitoba for our

children who are in kindergarten. It happens in the neighbourhood of February, allowing kindergarten teachers the opportunity to get to know the individual students, but what it will measure, we call it "readiness for learning," or "readiness for school." It enables us to see where the child is and what the child has brought with him or her to kindergarten, and maybe identify some areas where the child might be lacking.

One of the things that we find with the EDI is, and what it measures, specifically physical health and well-being, social competency, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communications skills and general knowledge. One of the really great uses of the EDI is that sometimes we are able to identify gaps in communities, thus enabling us to take action. If, for example, there are really high scores on the EDI in every area but maybe language and cognitive development, then work can be done with parent-child coalitions in a community to ensure that there are better Bookmates programs and there are better programs for parents and children to access to help develop those kinds of skills. It is not only a measurement of that child at that moment in time, but it is a very useful tool for us to be able to program for the child in school very early, and enables us to program in the community before they even get to school.

Mr. Cullen: The funding for that initiative, does that come out of the Healthy Child budget, and the second part of that, who actually does the assessment on that? Is it someone local or is it someone paid for by Healthy Child?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, the funding for the EDI at this time is through Healthy Child entirely. The kindergarten teachers are doing the implementation of the instrument on their students so I suppose it could be argued that the public school system is making a real investment in this as well. But, in terms of the analysis of the data and the printing of the instrument itself and the providing of the instrument, it does come from Healthy Child Manitoba.

Mr. Cullen: When we talk about mental health and all the issues around that, it seems pretty hard to quantify or clarify all the departments that are involved in mental health from both a staff and a financial position. I guess from our side, we are a little concerned in terms of who is doing what and

who is managing what, and how all those different programs out there can be tied together. Is there somebody or some organization whose mandate it is to tie all these programs together?

Ms. Oswald: Again, although Healthy Child Manitoba makes investments in things like the Healthy Schools initiative, which, I will not belabour the point, has seen this year mental health and mental wellness, issues concerning mental health, mental health promotion and treatment for people with mental health issues would fall under Healthy Living and Health, although it does not really fall within the purview of these Estimates, as has been the case in the past with the member from Turtle Mountain, myself and the Minister of Health. If the member is looking for as comprehensive as possible an overview on how mental health is being promoted, how it is being treated and what we are doing to work on prevention and, in fact, work on mental wellness, I would be happy to provide the member with as best an outline as I can.

Mr. Cullen: Certainly, I have come across in my constituency alone several issues related to mental health, and it is a bit of a challenge for us to try to define who the players are and where to go to have our constituents' needs addressed. I think, even for us, there is confusion there, so certainly from the clients' or the constituents' perception, there are some issues out there in terms of access to the mental health workers. I think that is something that should be fairly paramount for us. Obviously, we are discussing children's mental health here today, but I think that extends into the rest of our society. I think it is something we have to address within the whole field of health.

I know my member from Southdale has some issues he wants to discuss in his Estimates, so I will not go on any further. I think we have addressed quite a few of the issues that I wanted to raise. Obviously, in Manitoba we certainly have a diverse background, and we do face some interesting social and economic challenges as we travel throughout Manitoba. So I am certainly hopeful that Healthy Child Manitoba will look to address all those issues across Manitoba. I do look forward to getting some of that follow-up material that we discussed earlier with the minister. I guess at this point in time we are prepared to pass the Estimates.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Ms. Oswald: Madam Chair, I appreciate the thoughtfulness with which the member has approached the issues facing his constituents. I would just say in closing, on this issue of mental health, that there certainly is a role for Healthy Child Manitoba to play, and that is and has always been to bring a greater co-ordination of services to the citizens of Manitoba, whether it concerns infant care, prenatal care, or doing the best that they can to ensure that mental wellness is being promoted. The issue, of course, of mental health and the services that are available in Manitoba is complex, as are mental health issues in and of themselves. We know, for example, that we are working very hard within the context of Health and Healthy Living to ensure that issues like mental health and addiction, which so often are co-occurring, are being dealt with in ways that are best for the client, so that they, in fact, do not feel that they go to the wrong door, that whatever it is that is their prevailing issue, a mental health issue or a struggle with an addiction or that subtle blend of the two, they are going to get the care that they need.

So there is, in fact, really a range and a variety of opportunities for people to get help. If that does cause some confusion in accessing a wide range of services, I suppose on one level it is a good problem to have. It would not be a great problem if there was only one place to go and it was easy to find. So, while I am proud that we do have a number of services available, I hear the member loud and clear on issues of access and, as always, will ensure that we have an open door, and we do the best that we can to be as clear as we can with our citizens of Manitoba so that those that need help the most can most easily find it.

I thank the member for his very insightful questions and look forward to passing these Estimates.

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 34.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$24,761,900 for Healthy Child Manitoba for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 34.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,400 for Healthy Child Manitoba, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of Healthy Child Manitoba. The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply are the Estimates for Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat.

Shall we proceed immediately to the next set of Estimates? *[Agreed]*

MANITOBA SENIORS AND HEALTHY AGING SECRETARIAT

* (16:50)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat.

Does the honourable minister responsible for Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat have an opening statement?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister responsible for Healthy Living): Madam Chair, yes, I do have an opening statement, and in the name of a gentlemen's and ladies' agreement earlier, I will edit and be brief.

As Minister responsible for Seniors, I am pleased to present the '05-06 budget Estimates for the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat. We recognize the value of planning for our aging population and we are always looking for ways to better respond to the needs and interests of older Manitobans.

An important part of our work is the continuing progress of the provincial seniors strategy, *Advancing Age: Promoting Older Manitobans*. The strategy was introduced by government in 2003 to address the current and emerging needs of seniors and to guide development of policy, legislation and programs.

Providing advice and suggesting positive directions for older Manitobans will also continue with the introduction of the proposed Manitoba Council on Aging Act. I was delighted recently in discussion with the honourable member that we will be, as soon as possible, moving on to the committee stage on that. I know that the seniors of our province

will be delighted to hear that and will look forward to presenting in that environment.

The proposed act would establish a legislative framework to guide the activities of the Manitoba Council on Aging. In addition to this legislation initiative, we have added new funding for the work of the Council on Aging. It will allow the council to undertake one additional meeting a year in the form of a two-day session and consult in rural or northern Manitoba.

The important work of the council will be further recognized through new financial resources that will bring per diem rates paid to the council in line with similar boards and commissions. The council, of course, is a key partner in the advancing age strategy.

It is worthy to note that, in December of '04, I was pleased to announce that the work of the former Seniors Directorate would be continued within the newly named Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat. This name change reflects our continuing efforts to better support seniors.

The secretariat will provide leadership to the advancing age strategy and will continue to be a central point of contact within government for seniors, their families and seniors organizations. The secretariat will also focus on program and policy delivery across departments to improve access to public services. It will also continue working with the seniors community to identify and address issues and concerns.

To help seniors live independently and as long as possible, many communities have established community resource councils within the context of the support services to seniors programs. I was very pleased to be part of an announcement yesterday to increase funding to support services to seniors by \$500,000.

Over the next 15 years, the number of Manitobans age 65 years and older is expected to increase by 43 percent. Our strategies and initiatives are designed to help seniors maintain the highest possible quality of life now and in the future. I look forward to a discussion with the honourable member.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister for the comments.

Does the member of the official opposition, the honourable Member for Southdale, have any opening statements?

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Just a few comments in regard to the Seniors and Healthy Living Secretariat's expenditures and the Estimates program that we are into right now.

I just want to say that this portion of the Estimates and being the Seniors critic is something that I have had the pleasure of having for a while as a critic. I had the honour and privilege also to be the minister, when we were in government, responsible for seniors.

So I have become very, very familiar in a sense with a lot of the programs and the directions that have been undertaken, not only when we were in government, but what, as the minister has mentioned, from their perspective of being in government. A lot of the directions are something that I think are very, very necessary in the sense of recognizing the amount of seniors in Manitoba, their concerns, their wants and their expectations as they look to government for some sort of help from time to time.

The expenditures that are indicated in the book are up a bit in regard to various sectors, and I have asked some questions in those areas.

I think it is interesting that the minister and I have been to seniors events together. It is always of an interesting note to see the activities, the amount of involvement that seniors have, not only in their community centres, but in a lot of their other endeavours. The involvement sometimes, as some of the seniors say, and as seniors have told us, is more intense since they have been so-called retired than when they were still in the workforce or in their chosen professions. It seems there is a fair amount of activities in a lot of seniors centres. The activity level with various educational components and recreational components seem to be taken advantage of.

The expectation of involvement is something you notice very much in a lot of the seniors centres. I have had the opportunity to go to a fair amount of them here in Winnipeg and in the rural areas. You always sense a sense of pride by the groups in their involvement with some of the programs that they do get involved with. I am glad to hear the minister is

lobbying extensively for the seniors group. She did point out the fact that the sector of the population here in Manitoba is growing. That section of the population of seniors has grown significantly, and it will grow to one of the highest proportions per capita in Canada, I imagine, in the next few years.

There is an awareness and astuteness that has to be recognized by senior level of government, as indicated by being part of the Secretariat to Cabinet and having the Cabinet minister carry the problems to the Cabinet table so there is a recognition when decisions are made, or there are directions taken that in the seniors' perspective is brought into the decision-making. It has a lot of effects in all areas of legislation that Cabinet and government looks at. It is something I think that is worthy of note that we continue that. We have to be aware that there is an overlap, there is an awareness with various points of legislation and rules that are brought forth, so that the seniors' perspective is recognized.

Those are some of the things I just wanted to more or less put on the record in regard to some of the expenditures, and I think the minister realizes it is not a big portion of expenditures. If we could go on possibly a global basis of looking at the expenditures, and possibly move it along a little faster.

Ms. Oswald: It would be fine to proceed in a global manner.

Madam Chairperson: It is agreed to proceed in a global manner. At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce her staff.

Ms. Oswald: Madam Chair, I am pleased to have with me today Mr. Jim Hamilton, the executive director of the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, and in addition, Patti Chiappetta, the director of Policy Development at the Secretariat. Welcome.

Madam Chairperson: I thank the minister. We shall now proceed to Resolution 24.1 on page 128 of the main Estimates book. Shall the resolution pass?

* (17:00)

Mr. Reimer: Madam Chairperson, I was just wanting to get maybe a few names on the organizational chart on page 5. I noticed there is the

elder abuse consultant and the consultants associated with that. Would the minister be able to give me a little bit more information as to the use and the results of the elder abuse consultant and that section of her department?

Ms. Oswald: Thank you for the question. Certainly, we see on the organizational chart an elder abuse consultant, Eileen Mead, and also staff that would field calls from our elder abuse or seniors abuse line, that would work to triage specific calls and deal with the issues that are occurring in our community.

In the '04-05 year, we saw 274 calls, an increase last year from 254. We certainly credit the work that we have been doing to ensure that seniors organizations, seniors residences are well aware that line is in existence. We would have somebody in that category dealing with a variety of issues that might be raised on that line.

From April of 1999 to March of this year, we found that about 34 percent of those calls dealt with issues that we might define as emotional, whether, you know, it was emotional abuse or fear or anything to do with that kind of state of being. Thirty-three percent of those were questions or queries concerning financial abuse of seniors. I think we have done a good job and will continue to work at protecting seniors from the unfortunate predators in our society that might go after their lifelong investments. A combination financial-emotional accounted for about 20 percent. Other kinds of calls might be simply a request for information that may not specifically have to do with the individual being abused, thank goodness. Multiple abuse kinds of calls, emotional, perhaps even physical, issues of neglect would account for about 3 percent of the calls the line has received. I beg your pardon, I said multiple abuse before. Specifically, on physical abuse, it would fortunately account for only about 1 percent. That is still a little too high for my liking, and I am sure that is true for the member opposite. We would hope that we never have to face issues like that.

Indeed, community response teams have been formulated throughout Manitoba in four regions to ensure these kinds of calls can be acted upon and we can ensure that our seniors are as safe as they can be emotionally, physically and otherwise.

Mr. Reimer: I thank the minister for that information. Could the minister tell me the names of

the elder abuse consultant and the other three consultants? Are they full-time positions or part-time?

Ms. Oswald: The elder abuse consultant, Eileen Mead, is indeed a full-time position, and it is going to shortly be a job-share situation with an individual named Susan Crichton. The consultant, Helen Forrest, is a full-time job. Karlee Spiers is full-time, and consultant Vicki Toews is part-time.

Mr. Reimer: I am sorry, the minister mentioned two names. Karlee Toews, did she say?

Ms. Oswald: No, indeed, that name is Karlee Spiers. I will just repeat them in their entirety. The elder abuse consultant, Eileen Mead, who will shortly be job-sharing with a woman named Susan Crichton. One consultant who is full-time is named Helen Forrest. One consultant who is full-time is named Karlee Spiers, and one consultant who is part-time is named Vicki Toews.

Mr. Reimer: The minister mentioned the abuse hotline, that their calls were somewhere from residence home. Is there a breakdown as to how many would be coming from the PCHs?

Ms. Oswald: Thank you very much for the question. Specific calls that might come from personal care homes are dealt with specifically through Protection for Persons in Care. The calls that I referenced would be entirely community-based calls. So the breakdown that I gave, you know, when I said residences, I was not specifically referencing a personal care home. I was more referring to a person residing in the community. So again, because the protocol through Protection for Persons in Care is closer and more immediate, that particular body of data that I gave the member really does refer to persons in the community.

Mr. Reimer: I thank the minister for that. I wanted to ask the minister in regard to, I guess it is on page seven, Grants to External Agencies. I notice they have gone up significantly. Maybe the minister could give me some background as to where some of that money has gone and which agency has received the additional funding.

Ms. Oswald: Thank you very much. Mr. Hamilton was helping me with basic arithmetic, that is quite a challenge. Yes, the funding to organizations was renewed this year, \$80,000 to five organizations,

including Age and Opportunity, Creative Retirement, la Fédération des aînés franco-manitobains, Manitoba Society of Seniors and the Manitoba Association of Multi Purpose Senior Centres. Each received funds.

This year you will see an additional \$40,000 in the budget to increase the secretariat's capacity in rural Manitoba which, of course, is very important. Specifically we should also add that \$60.5 thousand went to Age and Opportunity. MSOS received \$5,000 specifically for the games, which I know that the member has enjoyed as much as I have, and that ought to do it.

Mr. Reimer: The minister mentioned MSOS got \$5,000 this year. Is that, or for—

Ms. Oswald: Yes, they got \$5,000 specifically dedicated to the games. They were also part of the group that I mentioned earlier that received the \$80,000 funding. So the \$5,000 mentioned was specifically dedicated to the games, a vibrant event in our province each year.

* (17:10)

Mr. Reimer: The minister mentioned math. I did not get fast enough with my pen in regard to the MSOS grant before. So MSOS got \$5,000 for the games, plus how much was it before?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, so just to clarify. Each of the five organizations that I mentioned received \$16,000 of funding, so that would add up to the \$80,000 and then MSOS got an additional \$5,000 to assist with their organization of the games.

Mr. Reimer: In the allocation of grants, I believe there used to be a program where a lot of the seniors centres, and there are quite a few seniors centres throughout all of Manitoba, each got a small grant of some kind. Is that still in effect? Do they still have a bit of an operating grant that is given to the seniors centres throughout Manitoba?

Ms. Oswald: Madam Chair, seniors centres, indeed, do receive funding from the Support Services for Seniors program, the program that we announced additional funding to yesterday, \$500,000. In fact the funding flows through the RHAs, and indeed that is a \$6 million budget that comes through Health and through the RHAs, so the answer to the member's

question is, yes, seniors centres do receive funding and it comes from that Support Services for Seniors program, which is flowed through the RHAs.

Mr. Reimer: I guess the minister would not have access to that amount of money that goes to them in regards to on an individual basis.

Ms. Oswald: No, at our fingertips, no. Of course, because the money is flowed through the RHAs and through Health per se, we do not have a specific list of allocations to individual communities, and without absolute permission from the RHAs and Health—I would endeavour to be able to get those numbers for the member so he could have as best an overview of who is receiving what funding from our perspective. I will do my best to forward that information to the member.

Mr. Reimer: I think that in the announcement that the minister made yesterday regarding the half a million dollars that is indicated will be distributed through the Support Services for Seniors program. That is what she is referring to, I guess, the half a million dollars. Am I assuming that that money will be sort of spread out through all seniors centres in Manitoba, not just the Winnipeg ones?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. Indeed, the monies that were announced yesterday and that exist in Support Services for Seniors are split between Winnipeg and rural Manitoba and do come as a result of a comprehensive needs assessment that was done through established organizations and in consultation with our service providers and people working with seniors organizations. That money is going towards meeting those needs that came directly out of that assessment. In some places that will be augmenting existing programs, but indeed, in many, many others it will be introducing new programs into communities that may not otherwise have them. Yes, indeed, we are talking about a breakdown in urban and rural environments.

Mr. Reimer: On a different topic, there was talk within some of the organizations in regard to a campus, a seniors campus, established downtown with Creative Retirement, A and O, even MSOS sort of getting together and working out of one structure. Has there been any other direction taken on that or has there been any study? I believe there was a study initiated on that and maybe the minister might give me an update on that.

Ms. Oswald: Madam Chair, yes indeed, there was a study that was done on this subject, funded, in fact, by the Winnipeg Foundation, to discuss whether or not this kind of a campus would come into existence, and it would appear at this time that there is not absolute consensus among the organizations about coming together to work under one roof. It is not an agenda item that is being really forcefully pushed forward at this time, and while we would not rule out the possibility of having that kind of environment come into existence, we will, of course, be taking advice as all of us should from the seniors themselves, and we will proceed carefully with advice from them. My most recent information on this is that it has not been listed as a top priority among the organizations right now. They have other burning issues they are working on.

Mr. Reimer: I thank the minister for that information and update on it. We presently have before us a bill, The Council on Aging, in bringing it to the legislature. The present Council on Aging, could the minister give me the members and the chairperson, I believe the chairperson is on the organizational chart, Norma Drosdowech, and I am wondering whether she is still the chairperson, and a list of the other members?

Ms. Oswald: Madam Chair, I would be very pleased to, and of course we are delighted at the spirit of co-operation around our bill to entrench the Council on Aging into legislation and recognize in legislation the great work that they are doing. The chair of the Council on Aging is Norma Drosdowech.

Rene Toupin is the Vice Chair of East St. Paul. Percy Bird of Winnipeg is on the Council. Lorraine Bonnefoy, Winnipeg; John Gano, Winnipeg; Paul Hagen, Springstein; Claude Hebert, Winnipeg; Kathy Horkoff, Winnipeg; France Lemaye, Winnipeg; Bernice Marmel, Winnipeg; Jeaneatte Niven, Minitonas; Archie Orlikow, Winnipeg; Velma Orvis, Winnipeg; Joe Slomiany, Brandon; and Eleanor Spencer from Flin Flon are members of the Council on Aging.

Mr. Reimer: If memory serves me right, there are five rural members?

* (17:20)

Ms. Oswald: If I look on my list here, Flin Flon, Brandon, Minitonas, Springstein, East St. Paul, I

suppose we would count five, indeed, although there is no requirement in the legislation about representation from Winnipeg or rural Manitoba.

The Council on Aging itself certainly does recognize the need to reach out to rural and northern Manitoba, which is why we are supporting them this year with more funds so they can conduct a forum in rural Manitoba, and they certainly work in a manner that is very inclusive of all Manitobans. They extend the hand of friendship and interest to those from rural Manitoba, and we look forward to continuing to have diverse representation of urban, rural, northern representatives on the Council on Aging, as well as the best gender balance we can achieve.

Mr. Reimer: How many meetings per year did they have last year?

Ms. Oswald: Could the member repeat the question?

Mr. Reimer: How many meetings did the Council on Aging have last year?

Ms. Oswald: The council last year met four times. One of those meetings was a two-day, rural forum, a rural meeting. This year they will be meeting five times and having that rural session included in that, as well.

Mr. Reimer: Would the minister be able to tell me where the rural meeting was held?

Ms. Oswald: The meeting last year was held in Brandon.

Mr. Reimer: Is it the intent to move the rural meetings to other venues or other locations?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, that is the intent, to have a meeting in rural or, indeed, in northern Manitoba.

Mr. Reimer: At this time, we are prepared to pass the Estimates.

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 24.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty, a sum not exceeding \$913,000 for Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat. Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty, a sum not exceeding \$8,000 for Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat. What is the will of the committee?

An Honourable Member: Committee rise.

Madam Chairperson: Agreed? Committee rise.

TRANSPORTATION AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

* (14:50)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Will the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Transportation and Government Services.

Will the minister's staff please enter the Chamber?

We are on page 132 of the Estimates book. The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I started out yesterday, but I would just like to start over again because it is a different day.

Just to go back to the question of yesterday, just a bit of a history. In 1993, the Rural Municipality of Headingley and the then-Minister of Transportation and Government Services had agreed on the unsafe condition of PTH 1 west, the potential of commercial development along the highway and the benefits of a highway upgrading and access management plan. In 1996, the study and design for the upgrading was completed by your department. In 1999, the first of those improvements were accomplished with the construction of the new controlled intersection at PTH 1 and PR 334.

Further then, in 2001, a memorandum of understanding regarding PTH 1 west proposed highway upgrading and access management plan was

formally signed by the Honourable Steve Ashton, who was the Minister of Transportation and Government Services at the time, and Reeve Wilf Tallieu of the R.M. of Headingley. Also, Headingley has gone to the extent of accumulating tracts of land to accommodate upgrading and extended sewer and water services in anticipation of further commercial growth. The reasons the department has given for not going ahead with this project have been that it has been a low priority and there is a lack of funding.

I would like to ask the minister now what is the priority sequence for PTH 1 between Headingley and Winnipeg to upgrade and twin that highway.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I thank the member for the question. The department has been in contact with the R.M. of Headingley and has discussed this issue over quite a long period of time, as has been mentioned by the MLA for Morris. Right now, what we are looking at is about roughly \$4-million worth of work on that stretch between the west Perimeter and what most people call the community of Headingley, the town of Headingley. There is about roughly \$4 million, a little bit more than that, is going to be tendered out.

There are two pieces to this work. One is going to be at the Husky cover-all location, as well as one at the golf course. This, I believe, is part of the SHIP money, meaning that we are in partnership with the federal government on these projects. Right now as far as where the priorities go, if you are taking a look at, I call it Bridge Road, and continuing to the scales, that is to be looked at into the future.

There have been no decisions made with regard to the completion of widening that and four-laning it, but this stretch of road, as was mentioned by the member from Morris, has been a conversation piece for a number of years now. Even though the lowering of the speed limit has assisted in reducing the amount of accidents, it still can be a dangerous stretch. If people are driving along and are wanting to turn one way or another, and you have a truck coming on the lane that is on the inside closest to the middle line, it can be quite dangerous still. We are looking at this.

We have had discussions with the R.M. of Headingley in taking a look at the different changes that we may want to make, but, again, right now

those are just conversations and those are meetings that have taken place with the reeve and with others from that community.

Mrs. Taillieu: This stretch of highway is comprised of approximately seven kilometres. I believe that once the twinning of the Trans-Canada west of Virden is completed, this will be the only section of the Trans-Canada Highway in the province that is not twinned.

There are a couple of new commercial developers who are interested in developing right along the Trans-Canada there. One is the Eco world water parks, which I am sure you are aware of, and the other is Flying J travel stop, both of which would create economic growth and tourism in the capital region investing over \$30 million into the Manitoba economy. However, they have some roadblocks in front of them in terms of getting approvals to proceed with their development. I would like to ask the minister if it is standard procedure to ask a developer to do a traffic count on the Trans-Canada Highway. I am sure he must have these kinds of numbers.

Mr. Lemieux: The member is correct. The department has the capacity to do a traffic count by counting vehicles, but when you take a look at a development, a development that is going to take place on a provincial road, there is a—I believe the proper terminology is called a "traffic impact count," which means what is the impact of that development going to be on a provincial highway. That is something that is my understanding. I have been advised that is a norm that takes place. If you are going to have x amount of vehicles now encroaching or now using a provincial highway or entering a provincial highway like No. 1 highway, there are safety impacts related to that.

It is not just a matter of counting the vehicles. It is the impact of what is going to happen at an intersection if you have a huge development or a number of different developments taking place around an intersection. What are the safety impacts and what are the traffic impacts overall? I understand, and I have been advised, that is a departmental policy.

Mrs. Taillieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank the minister, but I would like to say that the impact on the economy with the amount that would be invested

into this province with these two new commercial developments, what they are going to add to tourism in attracting people to our province and our capital region, the jobs that are going to be created and, subsequent to that, the taxes that are going to come back, have a lot of impact on the province as a whole. The impact of not allowing these people to develop, and there is fear of that because they need to get going on this and they are being held up here. It has to be considered and weighed against the economic development and growth it will provide for Manitoba.

Secondly, the minister spoke of work to twin the highway in the area of \$4 million. Is that a correct amount?

Mr. Lemieux: The work that I was referring to is work around the cover-all Husky area as well as the work around the golf course. That is in partnership with the federal government and it is approximately \$4 million. Actually, I believe it is over \$4 million. That work is going to be taking place and, hopefully, will be tendered in the very near future. That will be taking place this summer.

*(15:00)

Mrs. Taillieu: It is my understanding that, at least for the Eco water park, they have been asked to provide funding of some estimate of approximately three quarters of a million dollars to do a temporary turning lane into their property there. If we can assume that the Flying J travel stop, we would be required to do the same thing, then we are going to have two temporary turning lanes on that highway amounting to a \$1.5 million.

Then you are going to go down the highway, and you are going to have two other intersections amounting to approximately \$4 million. When does it become economic and just plain reasonable to twin that highway and get it done?

Mr. Lemieux: I just want to, at least for the record, state that the highway is twinned already, that particular stretch of highway. But it is not a divided highway. It is still twinned.

But having said that, no one is restricting these businesses from going ahead and moving ahead on their business plan if they feel that their businesses are economically viable, and they want to move ahead, and go ahead, they certainly can.

But the other side of the coin is that they are going to have, and may have, a huge impact on our provincial highway, and that is why the suggestion has been made to them that if they are going to develop, they have to be concerned about the safety and the impact of the traffic going into those businesses, whether it is the Flying J or the water park on the other side. The impact it is going to have on possible safety and traffic safety.

I know the member opposite is concerned about traffic safety, just as we all are, and we are saying that is something that those businesses are very much aware. It is part of doing business. They have to be cognizant of the fact of the safety concerns related to their business. But that is also the benefit for them of being on No. 1 highway or that stretch of road that goes from Winnipeg to Headingley. That gives their customers excellent access to their businesses. They have calculated this and looked at the benefits of developing right onto that road. So, at this point, it is something that we have definitely mentioned to those organizations that they have to take into consideration, the safety aspects.

I understand that they are looking at consultants and have asked people, engineers, to look at what it would cost to put in turning lanes. If they want to go ahead right now and they feel that their business is ready to go, and they have an opportunity to make a lot of money, and we as a department are not ready to go as far as redoing all the work that we want to do on that stretch. We do not want to restrict them, and we are not being restrictive, as far as if they want to start, they have to go ahead and take into consideration the safety aspects if they want to go ahead and build, for example, this summer or this fall.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, I should correct myself. The highway is not divided and is quite dangerous in terms of the number of semi-trailers that do travel that area, that turn into existing truck stops there. School buses travel that road. There are a number of people turning into the Blumberg intersection. When the drive-in is operating, traffic is backed up all the way into Winnipeg, so there are issues on that highway, not just revolving around the commercial developments that I am speaking of, but my understanding is that this is being held up because there is not approval. I would just ask the minister this, then: Is he giving approval to these developers to go ahead? Could he provide that in writing?

Mr. Lemieux: Just to follow up, the member from Morris has stated that, indeed, it is a very busy stretch of road. I know she appreciates the safety concerns related to it. So it is not if they feel like going ahead to do a traffic impact study, it is a requirement on our part on those businesses to do a traffic impact study and not on the taxpayers of Manitoba to pay for the traffic impact study. It is up to those businesses to do that because of the impact the traffic is going to have on that major stretch of road.

Mrs. Taillieu: I will just leave that there for now because I am getting the keen ear, but I have one more question, and this relates to the Manitoba Developmental Centre. I am wondering if any contracts have been tendered dealing with the renovations at the Manitoba Developmental Centre.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Chairperson, this is not a Transportation question, but I will attempt to answer it, but that is okay. It is a Government Services area, but I can just say that my understanding is it is on a seven- to ten-year track, and there are a lot of safety and health concerns related to this particular establishment. I know the member opposite, she is concerned about highway traffic safety as well, and I am sure she is concerned about the safety of the residents. I would say that what we are looking at is a seven- to ten-year look at this particular building and looking at making some alterations with regard to the safety and health of that particular building. I know the member opposite is equally concerned about the safety and health of the residents. Thank you.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I have heard the minister indicate on a number of occasions that, with respect to road construction, there are a lot of needs out there in the province and certainly there are not enough dollars that are available to meet those needs, but my answer to the minister, of course, is that it is all a question of priorities.

*(15:10)

I just want to bring the minister's attention to some of the roads and highways that are within the Lac du Bonnet constituency that really need attention. Provincial Road 520 is a connector road from the Bird River area to the Pinawa community. It is an important road in the sense that it, of course, provides immediate access to health care at the

Pinawa Hospital from the Bird River, Lee River area. It is currently gravel, and, in the spring, even the ambulance attendants are afraid of travelling that road when they are taking people on an emergency basis to the Pinawa Hospital.

Provincial Road 317, again, another important road connecting 59 Highway to Lac du Bonnet, and it serves an important access route not only for farmers in the area, but also for cottage owners going to Lac du Bonnet. Provincial Roads 307 and 309 are the roads within the Whiteshell Provincial Park. They too need attention. As you are aware, the Whiteshell Provincial Park is the busiest provincial park in Manitoba with well over a million visitors a year, and those roads need attention before they become a real safety concern. They are a real safety concern at this point.

Provincial Road 302 is a road that connects Beausejour to the south to Provincial Trunk Highway 15. It is an important road in the sense that it provides another alternative route for people, industry in the Beausejour area and for people from Winnipeg who want to travel to Beausejour with high loads. Provincial Trunk Highway No. 12 north is an important route as well, particularly for farmers. There have been some threats in the past of reducing the loads on that provincial trunk highway, and a number of farmers have expressed concern over that and gravel haulers as well.

Provincial Trunk Highway No. 11 north is an important road connecting Provincial Trunk Highway 44 with Lac du Bonnet and Pine Falls, and it is becoming a safety concern as well. It needs attention. Provincial Trunk Highway No. 44, particularly from Whitemouth all the way to the No. 1 Highway, again, is in dire need of attention. All of these roads are really in poor condition, including Provincial Trunk Highway 15 east to Ste. Rita. I had mentioned this to the minister before. It connects as well. It is the connector road for commuters from Ste. Rita and Elma to Winnipeg, and it also serves as a highway with very large traffic volumes serving the Whiteshell Provincial Park. So all of these roads need work. They are in poor condition.

I repeat again to the minister that it is all a question of priorities. If there was one road within the constituency—and I have driven all of them many times. I think the minister probably has driven most of them as well, if not all of them. If there is one road

that really needs attention within the constituency in terms of a priority, it is Provincial Road 304.

Provincial Road 304 is the connector road between Pine Falls, Powerview, Great Falls, St. Georges, Manigotagan, Bissett and the northern communities and Sagkeeng directly south of Powerview to 59 Highway. This road is really in terrible condition, at least the first 14 or 15 kilometres or so proceeding south of Powerview. I know there has been a phase one study done within the community. There were public meetings; I attended those public meetings. That study indicated there were alternative routes possible that were available in terms of costing and so on for that particular highway.

My question to the minister is with respect to Provincial Road 304 and in terms of priorities. What is the next phase of the redevelopment of Provincial Road 304, and when will that next phase be complete? We know, I know that there is \$525 million in new revenues this year over last year. There should be more funds that are available, I believe, for highway maintenance and highway reconstruction. The second question is this: Is there any money in this year's budget for Provincial Road 304, and if so, how much and what is planned?

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question, and also I know as a rural MLA he has an appreciation of how important the roads are. I believe he agrees with me that transportation is an economic enabler, and it is really important not only for agri business, but for tourism and many other reasons. So I am not going to belabour the point. I know he has a good understanding of that.

The functional design study on the PR 304 that the member refers to, I believe it was Earth Tech Consulting that completed that study. I think it was June 2004. This particular project where the member talks about money is one, in particular, that initially was looked at doing about six stages. Six stages of this project would amount to about \$13 million, and \$13 million is a lot of money. It is an approximate cost, but it is huge dollars that we are talking about to do a stretch of road that, indeed, is important like many other roads that are important. I mean, the province has 19 000 kilometres of roads. Yes, the funding has not been approved to proceed yet with a detailed design or land acquisition or utilities. The

construction or the structure, I believe that Catfish Creek is there as well.

I know the road. I have driven the road and I know that when I drove it the last time, the shoulders were breaking up, quite frankly. It is a road that does need some attention. I think the member, the MLA for Lac du Bonnet, touched on an important factor about money.

We came up with legislation and I believe it was a good piece of legislation that directed the government to put all motor fuel tax into transportation. That is something I know the member is hoping and praying that the federal Conservatives become government. But, you know, it is something I have not heard from the federal Conservatives at all on what they are going to do with regard to this issue.

I have to agree that the federal Liberals went halfway. They did not go all the way, they went halfway. They are giving the municipalities the money which is a good thing. They are going to ratchet it up, I understand, and it will end up being around five cents a litre of gasoline that they will be receiving in a number of years.

Now, what I am saying to all the political parties, the federal political parties, is that they have to address the needs of the provincial governments. I am hoping Mr. Harper and the Conservative government will come out and tell us where they are coming from with regard to dollars to provinces, with regard to transportation infrastructure before the election, and not when they get squeezed and pushed up against the wall so they have to do it. But come out right now before an election is called. Even ask their separatist friends in Québec where they stand on it as well.

I just want to say that the dollars involved we are talking about is about 165 million in motor fuel tax that the federal government takes out of the province of Manitoba. I believe that the last count I looked at, they gave us about 13 million back which is fine. Every dollar counts but I am sure hoping that the Conservative federal party will come out and state—to the credit of the federal Liberal government, they came out. A matter of fact, they just made a recent announcement to the British Columbia government that they received over \$600 million, I believe it was, and I know the B.C. government really needs it.

The Province of Manitoba and other provinces, every time we meet with our federal counterparts, we are continually wanting to ensure we get more federal dollars coming our way on the gas tax revenue side. I believe most Manitobans would expect our federal government to put that gas tax revenue back into transportation.

Now, there is a report coming out, I understand, a survey that has been done today. I cannot recall what the name of the survey is, but there is a study done that health care education will always be a priority. Now, for one of the first times in recent memory, transportation and transportation infrastructure has turned up to be one of the top four on this survey of Canadians on where they think government dollars should be going. That is pointed to the federal government and I am hoping all three political parties at the federal level will be coming forward in giving their views as to where they are on transportation infrastructure and how much money they plan on putting.

*(15:20)

Now the next election may not happen until next winter, next January or February. I think most Manitobans, as well as most Canadians, do not want an election now, but that is a choice the parties will have to make. What I am saying as a provincial Transportation Minister is that there is a huge need. We need more of that federal gas tax money going back to transportation infrastructure. I hope the member opposite with all his influence with regard to his federal counterparts will do everything he can, and all the members on that side will do everything they can to ensure that is part of their platform come the next election.

Mr. Hawranik: I find it quite interesting that the minister blames everybody except himself for the situation on Provincial Road 304. I mean my concern is, do not blame the federal government, blame yourself for your own inaction. Quit playing the blame game, already. There is provincial responsibility with respect to Provincial Road 304, not necessarily federal responsibility. You are primarily responsible for Provincial Road 304, not the federal government.

When he looks to have more money, when he is asking for more money, why does he not ask his Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) for more money? He

had \$525 million of new revenues. All we need is \$250 million in new revenues every year, year over year, in order to fund all the programs of government. It has been done in the past. Instead, we have got \$270 million extra revenue directly from the federal government.

So why does he not ask the Finance Minister for more money for roads, for provincial roads and provincial trunk highways? It is his responsibility as a minister. It is his responsibility as a minister to represent his department when it comes time to getting a fair share of provincial revenues. It is his share. It is his responsibility as Transportation Minister to, if he is concerned that the federal government is not giving him enough money, it is his responsibility to go to the federal government and continue to lobby and continue to ask for more money from the federal government.

I can tell you, and I do not know whether he has consulted with the Minister of Finance or not, or whether the Minister of Finance just kept this close to his vest, whether he is not letting other ministers know, but there is plenty of money. There has been plenty of money coming from the federal government. It is a question of priorities. I repeat that again, it is a question of priority.

There is money available for reconstruction of roads in this province. It is a question of priorities. Provincial Road 304 is a very heavily travelled road within the constituency. It has had a number of fatalities over the last few years. It has had many injuries. There are many accidents as a result of the condition of the road. It is a very important connector road for one of the largest employers within the constituency, Tembec, because many of the pulp trucks and the chip trucks go down Highway 304.

The minister has mentioned that he has driven that road and he has noticed that the shoulders are crumbling and in many areas there are no shoulders. The difficulty becomes, when you put a lot of traffic on that road, resident traffic, tourist traffic, on that road combined with large trucks, it becomes a safety hazard.

I would ask the minister to consider taking a look at that road again and making it a priority because I believe that it should be a priority of this government. I am sure the minister is concerned

about safety on the highways, as I am, and I would ask that he look at it again and make it a priority, if not this year, perhaps for next year. I would urge him to go back if necessary, if he does not have enough money, talk to the Minister of Finance because I can tell you that he does have enough money. I would ask that the minister make it a priority for this year in terms of moving that project forward and not leaving it stalled where it is.

Mr. Lemieux: The member knows fair well that we have built a new school in his constituency. The member should know the Minister of Finance and our government have provided \$16 million more this year than last. That is a substantial amount of money to the capital budget. I know it is never enough and the members will say, "Spend more on MRIs, spend more on CT scans, fix my hospital, fix my school, fix my road. Then, on the other side of it, it is: What have you done for me lately, and you are spending too much. How could you spend money like that?"

I understand the opposition, I think it was Mr. Harry Enns, who is retired from this particular building and a long-time MLA in good standing said, "You know, the opposition can have it any way they want." Essentially, that is exactly what the member from Lac du Bonnet is saying.

Now to be fair, though, to the member, 304, there are some real challenges around that. I will not take that away from the member because maybe I am slightly biased as a rural MLA, but roads are very, very important to rural MLAs. They travel them all the time, but not only that, they also hear from their constituents on a regular basis about the roads. So I just want to say, at least in closing on 304, that the department is continually looking at this road. The door is not closed, but there are a number of things to look at in a big project like this. It was initially looked at staging it over about, the study showed about six different stages, \$13 million is a lot of money, and he is, indeed, correct, it is a logging haul route and that mixed with regular traffic can be a real challenge.

So I appreciate the member raising it. There are a lot of challenges around Manitoba. Last summer was a terrible, terrible, terrible summer for roads, quite frankly, with the weather we had, the amount of moisture we had and the freeze-up affected a lot of our gravel roads and a lot of our paved roads. So it is not easy, but hopefully with the 16 million extra we have, representing about a 20% increase from the

'04-05 budget, we are going to try to make some inroads, no pun intended, but we are going to try to make some improvements. That is something that our department has a lot of pride in, in the job they do.

Obviously, everyone would like to have more, but health care and education continue to be a priority in the province, as well as it is a priority in most provinces. What I will say to the member is that the department continues to look at this and is looking at what needs to be done because there is the detailed design, as I mentioned, land acquisition, utilities, construction and that particular structure at Catfish Creek will have to be addressed, too. So there are a lot of challenges around the road.

The member knows I cannot commit today and would not commit. It is not a matter of the minister deciding and pulling a highway number out of a hat and saying, "This is the one we are going to do this year." It is not like that at all. He knows that. The department and the engineers we have are professionals and they work hard at trying to manage the dollars that we have, limited as they are, even with the \$16 million increase. They do a very good job under the circumstances and I know the member appreciates this. Having a study by Earth Tech is helpful because that is kind of Step 1, and now it is just a matter of looking ahead and seeing where this will fit in the queue. In years to come and, eventually, maybe we will get a five-year rolling capital plan that will be able to address a lot of these challenges. Thank you.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): In light of the time of day, there are a great number of questions around this whole issue in Transportation and, of course, we want to allot some time for Government Services later on, so I appreciate the minister for having the Transportation staff here to deal with some of these questions today as well.

I would just like to, I guess, first of all, the minister has indicated that there is, I believe, correct me if I am wrong, about \$145 million that the minister just indicated in reply to some of these questions that the federal government takes out of Manitoba in regard to taxes and fuel taxes and puts about \$13 million back?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, it is approximately \$160 million to \$165 million, and the last time I looked, it was approximately at \$13 million that the federal

government put back, but that is in motive fuel tax. I will just double-check with the department to determine if that is correct, but I understand it is the motive fuel tax portion, and they put back about, approximately, \$13 million back. So, approximately \$160 million to \$165 million, and they put back into Manitoba about \$13 million.

* (15:30)

Mr. Maguire: You mentioned that the B.C. government had received some \$600 million, over \$600 million, that for sure it was announced by the Prime Minister in British Columbia just before the B.C. election was called. Can the minister indicate if he has heard whether there have been any other provinces given any indication of the kinds of funds that they can expect?

Mr. Lemieux: I just want to clarify. As the Minister of Transportation, I am not the one negotiating with the federal government. One of my colleagues is doing that. They are in the stage of negotiating across the country, and the announcement in British Columbia is, I understood it to be approximate dollars that the federal government was looking at, but it is a matter of ratcheting it up. I understood that over a number of years it would eventually get to be approximately 5 cents a litre, federally. I cannot speak for British Columbia, but I just heard the same story the member from Arthur-Virden heard on the news, that the Prime Minister was out in British Columbia making an announcement around infrastructure dollars related to gas tax. I cannot be specific on the dollars because I am not aware of it.

The federal government is in negotiations with all provinces trying to determine the dollars and the staging of those dollars, and eventually it is going to ratchet up to a certain amount. We look forward, of course, to the dollars. Again, that is going to municipalities. Those are dollars that are not going to the provincial road system per se. They are going to municipal infrastructure, and not all municipalities are going to use those gas tax dollars for transportation infrastructure. They are going to use it for other things. Some have said that they are going to use it for transportation infrastructure, but others are not. That is their prerogative.

I guess the case I am making with the member from Arthur-Virden as well as the other members

opposite is that they have an important role to play in this as well, in the sense that, for the benefit of all Manitoba roads, I believe it is incumbent on all MLAs in this Chamber to be speaking to their federal members of Parliament, to their federal parties that they are associated with, to encourage them to push their leaders and their policy people to direct gas tax dollars back to the provinces.

I do not want to belabour the point, but I know the federal Conservative Party is in alliance with the separatist party of Québec. I will not use the term "they have jumped into bed with the separatists," but I would say they are very supportive of the separatist party and that is a choice they made. I just want them to talk to the members of Parliament to encourage them about gas tax revenues. Get that gas tax revenue back to the provinces.

Mr. Maguire: It would be awfully tempting to take up the challenge that the minister has thrown over the floor here, but our responsibility is being critics for departments of government in Manitoba, and I think if he was to deal with his counterparts in Ottawa as an individual, he would be much better off as well.

I think the situation we are faced with today, and, of course, we pointed out yesterday, that the minister has his arms around the federal liberal cohorts in Ottawa, and I suggest that is perhaps a bit risky as well for the province. I would want the minister to make sure he is very cautious in regard to how they proceed in that manner, how he proceeds in that manner. He could be putting the department in a very difficult position in regard to where he is at. I take from his comments that he has put on the record that we know his alliances and leanings in regard to this area.

The reason I ask about whether or not the B.C. government, or he had heard of any other provinces in regard to the kinds of dollars that are flowing to B.C., is during the last, it was much prior to the last federal budget, there was an announcement by the Finance Minister, Ralph Goodale, at the time. Of course, the minister mentioned some of this in his opening remarks about the SHIP program and the Strategic Highway Improvement Program.

I wonder if the minister can indicate to us that at the time I believe it was some \$78 million

announced for twinning the No. 1 highway in Saskatchewan or to be used by the Saskatchewan government in that area. I was waiting with bated breath to find out what portion would be announced for Manitoba as well. It was not made public at that time. I wonder if the minister could indicate to me just exactly how much Manitoba's share of those funds were.

Report

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (Chairperson of the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255): Mr. Chairperson, in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 considering the Estimates of Health, the honourable Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) moved a motion to reduce the Minister of Health's salary in line 21.1(a). The motion reads as follows:

THAT line 21.1(a) be amended so that the Minister of Health's salary is reduced to \$1.

Mr. Chairperson, this motion was defeated on a voice count and subsequently two members requested that a formal vote on this matter be taken.

Formal Vote

Mr. Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

All sections in Chamber for formal vote.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 20, Nays 32.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: We shall now resume Estimates in the Committee of Supply. The Chair invites the members of the minister's staff to come back to the Chamber.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I thank the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) for his question. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to respond.

I just want to say, with regard to my comments about the federal Conservative Party, a member

opposite, not my critic from Arthur-Virden but another member, said, "Well, we know where you stand and we know your politics." No, that is not correct because you know I am making comments about different allies that are being formed in Ottawa, and I am just saying that within this Chamber every MLA in this Chamber has an onus on them to speak to their members of Parliament about the importance of the gas tax revenues coming back to the province of Manitoba.

That is what I am stating, and there are many of my counterparts in other provinces that are Conservative Cabinet ministers that are ministers of Transportation that we work very, very well with and are trying to work on all of these challenges, and they have the same view as I, or I have the same view as they do, with regard to trying to get more dollars from the federal government back into the provinces for transportation.

That is the point I am trying to make, and I hope members opposite would also speak to whoever they can. They may have better access to members of Parliament from the Conservative Party than I would, and I am just saying that all members in this Chamber should be speaking to all members of Parliament federally to get them on board and to tell them how important it is that those federal gas tax dollars that are taken out of the provinces, that motive fuel tax should be put back into the provinces for transportation infrastructure. I have a bias, yes. I am the Minister of Transportation. I know the challenges we have, and I believe all members opposite understand that as well.

*(15:50)

With regard to infrastructure, we have many, many different projects taking place in Manitoba. One I can tell you, of course, is the floodway. When I take a look at the floodway and the bridges that are being built to cross that floodway, I think we are fortunate in Manitoba to be having the federal government paying for essentially half of those bridges because they are 50-cent bridges. Many of them would have had to have been replaced anyway, and, because of the expansion of the floodway, we are also fortunate to be able to have half those bridges paid for. That is one of the real big benefits of the floodway. That would have been a huge cost, a huge infrastructure cost, and that burden would have been on the Province, to pay for those bridges.

Mr. Chairperson and Deputy Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about infrastructure, and I know the members opposite as well know how important it is to the province, and we are pleased that many, many different projects are happening in the province. With the \$16-million increase in our capital budget, we are trying to be very prudent and selective and strategic on how we spend those dollars to improve our 19 000 kilometres of roads that we are responsible for in the province.

Mr. Maguire: I was asking the minister in regard to the kind of SHIP dollars that were available, and I wonder if he could just, I know we had a bit of an interruption, so could he answer my question in regard to the SHIP dollars that were paralleled, if any were, by the federal Minister of Finance's minister's announcement. I think Saskatchewan announced \$78 million, I believe it was. I could be corrected on that number, but it was considerable, in the tens of millions of dollars, under a \$100 million, for the last announcement, to be spent on twinning No. 1 highway in Saskatchewan, and my fear is that they are going to beat us to the border. So I ask the minister what kind of parallel announcement or how many dollars did Manitoba get out of that as well.

Mr. Lemieux: The SHIP dollars were, and I am advised it was, around \$40 million. The end of the SHIP agreement was supposed to happen I believe this fall, but they have given us some leeway to be able to spend those dollars, I believe, into the summer of '06. Sorry, my staff advised me that it was to the end in '06, those SHIP dollars, and we received approximately \$40 million from the federal government to partner with.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister just indicate to me when he received the cheque for that \$40 million?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Chairperson, it has come in increments as we spend it because we partner with the federal government and it is essentially 50-50. Well, that is the theory, it is supposed to be 50-50, but, in fact, I understand that the engineering side, and there are many other costs so that burden falls upon the department to pick up those costs. It looks like it is 50-50, but it is not quite 50-50 cost sharing. It is closer to 60-40, quite frankly, that the Province picks up because we have the engineering costs and there are other costs that we have to pick up. But we are grateful for the dollars we receive from the

federal government, so we are not going to make negative comments on that. Just to say that it is supposed to be a 50-50 program, but yet, in reality, we pick up 60 percent of the costs because of the engineering.

Mr. Maguire: I wonder, then, if the minister could provide me with the information around the last time he, well, first of all, has he had a chance to talk to the transportation minister that has come in, Mr. Lapierre, in regard to SHIP dollars, personally?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, a lot of the conversations, and I am sure the member appreciates it, are confidential on the discussions that we have. I know he can appreciate that.

Specifically, with regard to SHIP, I will say this. I think it is a great program and it should continue. He has heard that not only from me, personally, but he has heard that from other ministers of Transportation across the country, that we feel that program should be extended.

Mr. Maguire: I am not doubting the need to extend it, though, or the fact the minister gets funds from the SHIP program. I just wondered if he had talked to the federal minister about the SHIP program specifically.

Mr. Lemieux: In specifics, as much as I can say and not breaking any confidential discussions that any minister has with their federal counterparts or for that matter, the Minister of Transportation from Alberta, I would not be divulging any confidential discussions we have had on transportation issues or any other issues. What I am saying to my critic, the Member for Arthur-Virden, is that I have expressed the view that the SHIP program, as a relatively new Minister of Transportation, knowing the benefits that we incur, is a program that should continue, that they should look at another five-year program, for example, and put money into a SHIP program.

That is essentially the extent of it. I think Minister Lapierre is probably receiving the same message from all Transportation ministers from across the country, how important a program it was. It is time the federal government gives some indication and we are hoping they will give some indication that a program like that will continue.

I have to just comment, too, since the member opposite raised Minister Lapierre. I can tell you

Minister Lapierre has been very, very open and consultative. We appreciate his openness and his wanting to be consulting provincial Transportation ministers on the challenges they have, whether it be northern airports or northern ports like Churchill. So I have to give Minister Lapierre a tremendous amount of credit for being a new Transportation Minister and taking it upon himself to make trips to western Canada on numerous occasions to meet personally and in other forums with the transportation industry and stakeholders of the west, as well as ministers of Transportation. I want to say that because he could just stay in eastern Canada or he could stay in Montréal and not come out here and meet with us, and just meet on an annual basis with the ministers of Transportation from the provinces and the territories. But, no, he has taken it upon himself to go out there and make an effort to talk to the stakeholders and the ministers of Transportation in western Canada to get our views.

We really appreciate it. He knows how important transportation is as an economic enabler, and we have to give him credit for doing that.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the minister. I want to allude back to his answer a couple of minutes ago, is that he is asking all of us to get involved with being in discussions with the federal government. I would have to concur that from my experience, from what I have seen, Minister Lapierre is probably approachable and open and consultative. I do not have any problem with that, as was one of his predecessors, Mr. Collenette. Mr. Valeri was in there as well. You know, whenever I wrote those gentlemen a letter, I received a reply back. There did not seem to be anything very confidential in regard to those kinds of discussions when you were talking about funding and that sort of thing.

I would be more than glad to help the minister in regard to providing the opportunity of getting funds from the federal government, regardless of who is in power in Ottawa, to bring our roads up to speed in Manitoba and try to get in some small way, shape, or form more funds in an effort to help our depleting—what has been indicated a \$3.4-billion shortfall in regard to the infrastructure programs we have in Manitoba just for the highways department alone.

So I am only asking the minister if he has met with, personally had discussions on the SHIP program with him. I do not know why it would be a

secret, and I certainly do not know why he would want to hold back in regard to the amount of dollars the minister indicated Manitoba would get. I guess that is a two-part question. Has he asked the minister about the SHIP program dollars for Manitoba, and how much have we received?

* (16:00)

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Chairperson, I mentioned about how many dollars we were going to be receiving in total from the SHIP program, and, once again, I will be blunt. Private conversations are private conversations. I am not going to share those here, but I will say that, with regard to the SHIP program, at a meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers which took place in Québec City, I personally asked the minister and the federal government to extend the National Highway Program and taking a look at SHIP dollars.

There is nothing secretive of that. It is something that, as a position, the Province of Manitoba would like the national highway system extended to other roads, not just Highway 16 or the No. 75 or the No. 1. The No. 6 highway, for example, a very, very important trade route going to northern Manitoba should be on the national highway system.

I mean arguably, you know, members opposite might want Highway 59 south to be a highway that is designated. But the reason the designation is important is because the federal government attached certain dollars to those highways and they are saying, "Here are dollars, but they have to be on these certain roads."

That is why it is important. I mean, it could be Highway No. 2, Highway No. 3, but members opposite might have different highways that they would like to be included in the National Highway Program.

So, to that extent, that is the view that I put forwards from Manitoba, that we want the federal minister and the federal government to allow some flexibility with regard to the National Highway Program and with regard to our own SHIP dollars here, which we are rapidly approaching the end of the program. This year it is, I believe, around \$7 million from the SHIP program in '05-06. But the end of those SHIP dollars is coming. We would just like to see the program extended into the future.

So, hopefully, I am not being too long-winded for my critic and the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire). But I just wanted to clarify a couple of things with regard to SHIP and the conversations that not only I have had, but other ministers of transportation across the country.

My understanding is that they value the SHIP program as we do, and we want to see another five-year or seven-year program put together under SHIP dollars, where the federal government would kick in and, as we mentioned, essentially at 60-40 dollars. But still, 40 percent is nice to receive.

Mr. Maguire: Well, this raises a number of questions, Mr. Chairman. But I am going to shorten them up, if I can.

So the minister is indicating that the \$40 million that he spoke about that sort of ends this fall, in '05, is money to come yet or monies that he has received?

Mr. Lemieux: Something that my staff mentioned to me, and I appreciate it, is that just to clarify when we talk about \$40 million in SHIP program, I have mentioned that is 50-50. Maybe he knows this already. I do not want to leave the impression with the member thinking \$40 million is from the feds, and then we have to put \$40 million forward. The program is \$40 million. It is \$20 million approximately each, because if you start taking a look at going back, and I am just going back by memory, the member from Thompson was, I believe, the Transportation Minister, but at that time there was about \$2 million spent in SHIP that summer. Then '03-04, there was about \$5 million; then about \$2 million in '04; and then about \$7 million this summer; and I think maybe about \$4 million or so, \$3 million left. So, every year, it has been approximately on average around \$4 million for five years to make up our \$20 million.

Mr. Maguire: So these funds would be part of the capital budget for roads in Manitoba, then.

Mr. Lemieux: Just trying to address the question, the capital investment, to which I would just refer the member, to page 124, Capital Investment, it just provides for the construction and enhancement of provincial roads and highways. It states there that it is \$94 million, almost \$95 million, but highway infrastructure capital, it shows \$106 million, and then it shows less third-party recoveries. Part of that is

SHIP money and part of that is Prairie Grain Roads, so all of that makes a part of that number that shows capital investment in our roads.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I have a quick question for the minister on Highway 10. I believe that they will be doing some construction work on Highway 10 south this coming year, and I just want to know from the minister what the status is of that project. Also, if he is aware of the Brandon Hills Estates' concern and request for a turning lane at that juncture that would bring into Brandon Hills Estates as well as the Turkey Ranch Road residents. If you can give me an indication of consideration to that project, I would appreciate that.

* (16:10)

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the Member for Minnedosa for the question. The short answer is that there is no major work being done on Highway 10 south this year, but that particular development that the member refers to is that there are a lot of developments that have taken place in Manitoba on our provincial road system. What we have done with regard to the developers, as was raised by the member from Morris, was that we have asked those developers that they should be taking into consideration when they are putting together their business plan or their development plan. We are telling them that they have to take a look at the impacts of traffic that their developments are putting on our provincial road systems and the safety concerns related to that.

So the long and the short of it is that there is no major work being taken on Highway 10 south, at least this summer of '05, and that if you are having developers developing property or businesses of a major sort on our system, the policy of the department has been to take that into consideration. Because they are asked to do some research into the impacts that are going to have on safety on those roads. If it means turning lanes, if it means lights put up, those businesses have to take that into consideration when they are putting up their businesses.

Mrs. Rowat: This community, this development has been there for over 30 years, so I would recommend the next time the minister is out that way I will take him for a drive and I will let him meet with a group who have been established there for over 30 years. *[interjection]*

Absolutely. They have been there 30 years, and they have actually had been told. I met with them this weekend. There were probably about 40 of them in the room, and several of them have talked to the project manager for the reconstruction or the construction work on project 10, and they were assured that the project was going ahead this summer. Those are the comments that have been shared by, I believe, a Dean, I do not know his last name, but that there would be some work being done there this year. As I indicated, this is a community that has been established, has been there for well over 30 years.

There are school bus safety issues. One bus, the one from Brandon School Division does not even turn into the community. It stops right on No. 10 highway, and the children have to cross No. 10 highway to get to their residences. That is a major concern for the individuals who are living there, and especially for the families that have to see their children cross No. 10 highway which is extremely busy. The other bus does come into the complex and drops the children off, but again there is a solid line right on the turn-off to go into the Brandon Hills Estates. My understanding is that there is no turning allowed on that road.

There are several issues there with regard to the safety on that road, and actually I had an individual who shared with me a story of him being in an accident less than two years ago and is still recovering from that accident. Again, people passing on the left-hand, right-hand side. It is a very serious, serious location. There is a dip in the road which, I believe, might be the reason for the solid line.

So, again, this is another very serious issue in a community setting. The people are very concerned. They have been led to believe by the department that there is going to be work done on this project on that highway this year, and they would be very interested in working with the department to get a counter out there to prove the importance and the need for this in the community. And again, one school bus is not turning into the community, is stopping on the side of the road, and my fear is that someone is going to lose their life because of a safety issue which I am very concerned about, and as this minister should be as well.

Mr. Lemieux: I do not mean to be flippant, and I hope that is not the way it is coming across with

regard to this particular area. I may be mistaken on the area I am thinking about, quite frankly, and what she is referring to, but when you mentioned that it has been there for 25 or 30 years.

Could I ask just a point of clarification from the member? How far south of Brandon is this, and where, exactly, is it located to be exact? Because I know she is there all the time, so she should know this. I do not recall exactly where this is.

Mrs. Rowat: The location of the community is near tower road, near Treesbank Road. It is probably 10 minutes from the log cabin road. No, it is closer to Brandon. It is near the tower road. It would be 10 minutes, 15 minutes from Brandon. It is on the east side of the road. It is a trailer community.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the clarification. Now I know that the member is asking. Right now there is some money put aside to look at land acquisition, not necessarily for the turning lanes this summer, but you have to purchase the land and we have to do that prior to doing any work, and that essentially was what was being looked at for this particular summer, was land acquisition. We know exactly where this location is now, and it is something we are monitoring on an ongoing basis to ensure the safety aspects related to this mobile home park, and we want to make sure that our roads are safe in Manitoba, and step one is the land acquisition phase.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Just two quick questions for the minister. Ongoing, and as he is much aware, the four-laning of Highway 32 through Winkler, and the past year, as you are aware, because this is a provincial responsibility, the Province indicated that they were not prepared to participate even in putting in the stop lights. I am just wondering where the minister and his department are at with the four-laning. We are simply asking, and the city is asking, for the four-laning through the City of Winkler.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question. I had the opportunity, we had the opportunity to have a Cabinet meeting in Winkler and Morden and the Premier (Mr. Doer) was there and the full Cabinet was there, and we had an opportunity to meet with council and have a good discussion with regard to transportation issues. After the meeting, I went and also went on a tour with the mayor and one of the councillors to take a look at the challenges they have.

* (16:20)

I can tell you that this particular upgrade of PTH No. 32 is very, very costly. The city knows this. It is something where there were discussions around possible cost-sharing, and would that move the project ahead. We had a whole discussion around that. That particular issue is an important one because should it be just the communities that have the money that get the projects done? So there is a bit of a philosophical question. Where do you go with it? Do you have communities such as Winkler, which is a very prosperous community, Steinbach, very prosperous? These communities could cost-share with the Province, whether it is 50-50 or whatever the cost-sharing is, and have the projects done.

The dilemma, though, is what happens to the other communities in Manitoba that also need work done and that are in the queue. That is the dilemma the department struggles with because many of the communities want to push their projects ahead and they have got the money to do it. Even though, as the member stated, it is a provincial highway, because the money is not there and even though they are in the queue, the many communities that have the financial wherewithal and the tax base are saying, "Well, then, fine. We will 50-50 or split the cost, and we will get the project done because we do not want to wait."

There is a philosophical discussion taking place as to should you just provide the transportation infrastructure in a sense of moving people up on the list that can afford to pay or do you consider all communities in Manitoba. It is a real dilemma and it is a dilemma that we struggle with because communities like Winkler and Steinbach have the money. They could probably do it tomorrow. I know the member is going to raise that argument again about how many tax dollars those communities put into the provincial economy and I cannot dispute that. It is a given. That is why you have the populations growing so quickly there because of our fantastic immigration program. It still is a dilemma for us on the cost-sharing aspect of those projects.

Mr. Dyck: It is discrimination against the Mennonite community. He is quite prepared to take their tax dollars, but he does not want to put it back into there and so he is absolutely right. My goodness, what an answer. All I asked was where are they on the

priority list and looking at, as far as four-laning PTH 32? To get an answer like that is rather absurd. I realize this is not in his scope at all, so I will not even ask another question on that one.

I will see if he has an answer for the highway coming out of Morden going west. They have a real problem with water they are pumping out of the drain that is underneath the highway going through Morden. It is very simple to fix that. I talked to Highways about it and they say that is Morden's problem.

I tend to disagree. It is another case of where this is a provincial highway. All they need to do is rather than have the flat basin they have there, simply make a little trench which would allow the water to escape to the east and that would alleviate the problem. The town of Morden has looked at it, but as I think we have just heard from this minister, if it is in the southern Manitoba area, he would rather just say "not seen" and "out of sight" and "gone."

Do I appreciate that they came to Morden for a Cabinet meeting? Sure. That is nice, but the answer we have received here so far is absolutely unacceptable.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question. Maybe the member forgets about a new school in Mitchell and a new school in his own community, which I was there to announce and is well underway now being built. There is no discrimination taking place with regard to Mennonite citizens at all.

I realize the member is just throwing this out there to try to get a reaction. He is getting a reaction because, Mr. Chairperson, this is a government that governs for all people. We have elected representatives in each corner of the province of Manitoba, which cannot be said for the other parties in this Legislature. I can tell you that we are taking a look at all these issues. They are very important. They are very serious issues but we are not going to be just jumping to the pump in Estimates and just saying yes or no or yes, I will pick this highway out of a hat, and we are going to decide to do that one.

That is not the way the Transportation Department works. They have been taking a serious look at this project. They understand that it is more

complicated than meets the eye. For example, taking a look at the cost, the city—and I do not know whether or not they have taken a look at the upgrading to the drainage system, their illumination, additional work that ties into their side streets, all those things that are a part of this mix. It is a big issue. We made a commitment to the city of Winkler that we are going to work with them. Now, we know the city is growing. So is the city of Steinbach, and they need some work done.

We are saying that right now we do not have the capacity to be doing all the work that these cities want to do. I am being honest and forthright with the member opposite. *[interjection]* The answer is not absurd because it is very difficult to find the huge dollars that are necessary. These cities have grown relatively quickly. When you are putting a multimillion-dollar school just outside of Steinbach, a multimillion-dollar school in Winkler, these are dollars that come out of provincial revenues. It may not be out of Transportation or out of Government Services or out of Water Stewardship, but they are out of the provincial revenues that we have. Those are dollars that are dedicated to those communities.

So I object to the comments that somehow we do not care about those communities. We absolutely do. We are going to do everything we can to work with those communities.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Just in order to help the process along, I would like to inform the minister that we will probably be switching over, if he would not mind, at about a quarter to five. If you want to put your staff on notice at about a quarter to five, Government Services, that we would be moving into there, if that would help us work along a little bit better.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I just want to, first of all, thank the minister for meeting with the group from southern Manitoba and the southeast region regarding the bridge at Letellier. It was much appreciated. Secondly, I want to ask the minister whether he can give us any information as to when that project will, in fact, start.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question. He knows how serious an issue this is. I have to tell him, personally here and on the record, that he is not one, to the best of my knowledge, that has made politics of this. He understands the seriousness of it. He has not made political mischief in the kind of

sense of the word, but he has raised it in a fashion to say this needs to be addressed. I appreciate it and I thank him for that.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

We met with a delegation from the southeast, many of the municipalities there. I have not met as yet with Roseau First Nation, but they are certainly a player that this bridge has an impact on. One thing that I should tell the member, the price tag on this bridge that we are talking about, the Letellier Bridge, is about a \$20-million bridge. It is \$20 million. Just the structure to replace the structure alone I understand is around \$10 million to \$13 million, but there is engineering, there is a possible land acquisition, there are other dollar figures attached. That is something that when I met with the delegation I told them that it is around a \$10 million or so bridge. Well, that is true, but that is not the total cost of the project regrettably. I wish it was.

Needless to say, the challenge has just increased. So I just want to state that publicly and to the member opposite because I know he has a real concern with this particular structure, wanting to ensure that this project moves ahead as soon as it can. This has really created a huge challenge for my department because taking a look at the demolition of the existing bridge, the extra measures required to control the ground water release, inflation, taking a look at the price of steel. A lot of those prices on that particular structure were dated. Looking at the increase just due to the current environmental requirements now have really changed since '98 or since 2000. But we know that this is a structure that has to be dealt with. We are going to have to deal with it, and I know what the member is going to say: "If you wait any longer, the price is going to go up even more." So I appreciate his comments on the Letellier Bridge, and I know that the department is looking at reviewing this project. In a way, we are trying to come up with a resolution as soon as we can.

* (16:30)

Mr. Penner: Just one further question. I understand that the Reeve of the R.M. of Franklin has indicated publicly that he has received notice that it will be built within the next two years, and I was just wondering whether the minister would want to confirm that.

Secondly, just a comment, and I think this is historical, probably a more historical comment than anything else. I think in 1996-1997, the department made an approach to the minister and indicated that the Letellier Bridge had a doubtful age limit to it. In 1998, the department made a presentation to the community at a public forum and showed them the design of the bridge and two options to build a new access over the river.

I believe at that time, the department told us at that forum, or some of the engineers told us, that the lifespan of that bridge was roughly about 10 years. I know the flood event, I believe, had a very significant effect on the banks of that river, as we all know how that river can act. It just slides and takes anything with it. I know that that is what has happened here. When you look at the supports under the bridge, they have just slid away. Regardless of how tight the money is, I think the minister is well aware that there has to be work done, either on that bridge, which might be very costly to try and repair that, or to build a new structure. Over the long term, there is no question that would be the most economical way.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I ask the minister whether he has indicated to anybody yet what the time span was, or he might want to do that today and give us an indication as to when they intend to start.

Mr. Lemieux: Let me just say this, and to be as blunt as I can: we need a new bridge. You cannot repair that bridge. It is at that point, but there are all kinds of Fisheries and Oceans challenges, there are environmental challenges related to it, there is land acquisition possibly, there is ripping down the old structure.

To answer the other question that the member asked: no, I have not notified anyone. The department is looking at this, and there is a lot of speculation right now.

I believe the communities, if they could have the construction start this fall, they would. They realize that a new structure is necessary. I think the reality, though, is that the structure itself is probably okay for two or three years, quite frankly. It depends on the weather. This particular structure deteriorated a lot quicker than we had thought. People have been monitoring this structure. That is the reason why

the department is a hurry-up mode to try to see how we can address the financial challenges, but also the engineering challenges, the environmental challenges, everything related to this structure. There are a lot of things to go through. Do you replace that bridge? You close the road off. Do you have the municipalities and the businesses bite the bullet, realize that you yank a structure out for two years, and you replace it on the same path and the same footprint? Or do you put another bridge right beside the old one and build it there?

Either way, there are huge challenges related to both, either replacing it on the same footprint, or putting the bridge to the north of the current one, or either side, but the situation creates a big challenge for the department. I would just say to the member that we are going to address this challenge, and we know we have to. But I am certainly not prepared to give a date right now at this time. I certainly will contact him and speak to him about it when the department comes to me with recommendations with regard to how we are going to deal with this particular structure.

This is a major structure on anyone's scale. There are other structures in Manitoba that can compare, yes. The bridge that crosses the Red River or the Assiniboine around Winnipeg, or there are other major bridges in Manitoba, but this structure would fit into that category. It has enough traffic going across it. The size of the structure is going to be sufficient to handle major traffic for many years to come, hopefully, 80 years. So we are going to build it right when we decide to go ahead and do it, but there are a lot of things that need to be done prior to making that decision.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I know there are a number of highways projects around the province that my colleagues would like to continue to ask questions on, but I want to go back to the SHIP program and indicate, from the minister quickly, just a few quick questions in regard to it. He has indicated that the federal government has been putting out roughly 5 cents a litre. Can the minister indicate to me how much he expects to get from that for Manitoba? In other words, I guess a straight multiplication of the number of litres times the five cents. Has he any indication of what will be coming from the federal government as Manitoba's share of that 5-cent infrastructure program, 5 cents a litre?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Chairperson, I am not the minister responsible for those negotiations with the federal government with regard to those dollars. I understand the federal government is in negotiations with all the provinces right now to determine what kinds of dollars they are looking at and how they are going to phase in those dollars over five years, let us say.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister tell me whether he has had any correspondence with the federal minister in regard to these requests for increased dollars from the federal Transport department?

Mr. Lemieux: Again, this would almost fit the category of confidential meetings that I would have with the minister or any minister for that matter. I would just say that we are always asking the federal government to contribute more through gas tax revenues, but the Minister of Transport federally, I understand, is, of course, under a great deal of pressure as well. I know he has budgets that he has to be responsible for.

What we are saying and we are trying to make a case for is that, you know, you have an option. You can give us some of that gas tax revenue that you take out of the province, which is already from Manitobans spending at the pump, or you can give some of that money you used to purchase Petro Canada in the first place or received from the sale of Petro Canada, either way, give it back to the provinces and we will be happy with that.

I know Minister Lapierre is a very prudent and fiscally responsible minister. He has to take a look at his budgets and where that money would come from and the discussions it takes with his Treasury Board and colleagues. All of that takes a great deal of time. I can appreciate that. He has had this raised, I am sure, by many ministers from across the country as to trying to get more transportation infrastructure dollars back into the provinces.

Mr. Maguire: Just one final question on this area. The minister just indicated a few moments ago that he has received \$20 million in SHIP dollars over the last five years for the projects that he pointed out. Can he tell me if those are the only SHIP dollars the province has received in the last five years?

Mr. Lemieux: The SHIP program is a separate program that I commented on the dollars before.

Now we are almost at the end of that program. There is going to be over \$6 million spent on SHIP this summer, and then the remainder will be spent in the summer of '06. Again, we are hoping the federal government will extend—not extend the program, but will come up with a whole new five-year program or seven-year program.

* (16:40)

The Prairie Grain Roads Program, if I could just conclude, is a separate program unto itself. I know the member, as an agricultural and a farm activist, is familiar with the Prairie Grain Roads Program.

Mr. Maguire: Did the Province or did this minister receive, or any of his previous ministers receive any other dollars in relation to the construction for No.1 from the federal government, or was this the only share, the SHIP dollars were the only share, the minister received from the federal government, or were there other dollars?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, the only place, Mr. Chairperson, that we received money from the federal government was essentially the SHIP program under your government, the previous government, in the 1990s, and now our government, at least that is what I am advised.

Mr. Maguire: I need to quickly move to the capital investment portion, the page 124 that the minister pointed out before, \$94-million worth of construction enhancement, and, of course, this is where the minister has said publicly that they have put an extra \$16 million into the budget this year in this area, he continues to use the \$145-million number, can he indicate to me what else makes up the rest of the \$145 million that he is speaking of?

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you for the question. Mr. Chairperson, I have just taken a look at the documents I have in front of me. When you take a look at the transportation infrastructure related to expenditures and you take a look at that in '05, for example, or '06, when you are looking at the \$120 million from before that we used to use as a measuring stick, if you combine the infrastructure capital dollars at \$106 million and the preservation work at \$39 million, actually almost \$40 million, actually, it almost amounts to \$146 million, not \$145 million, but it is over \$145 million. It is closer, maybe, to \$146 million.

But one thing also I should note, Mr. Chairperson, is something that we do not comment on, but when you are taking a look at the total dollars, when we look at maintenance alone, maintenance alone is \$75 million. And you take a look at winter roads, it is another \$6 million, and often we do not talk about that. We talk about \$145 million because we are talking about preservation and infrastructure capital, but when you take a look at winter roads and maintenance and the huge amount of money we spend on maintenance, \$75 million on maintenance, \$6 million on winter roads and almost \$40 million on preservation and another \$106 million on infrastructure capital, you are looking at over \$215 million you are spending on our roads. I know we used \$145 million, but when you start breaking it down on all the dollars that are spent in each area of the department, it is big dollars. We do not maybe trumpet that enough because we are just looking at just preservation and infrastructure often enough. That is how we get that over \$145 million.

Mr. Maguire: I know that there are other areas that we have indicated that we want to move on to, and so I have a couple of quick questions for the minister and then I will close. There is a situation in Manitoba, and can he elaborate on the situation of the PST of vehicle sales? Every time a vehicle is sold, whether it is, of course, new, and there is a new vehicle sold, the government collects PST on it. Each time thereafter that used vehicle is sold, there is a policy that the PST is also collected on the new sale. That, of course, is not the case with homes and that sort of thing, Mr. Chair. I wonder if the minister has ever looked at a policy that would change the way used vehicles are taxed at the present time. We have had a number of persons requesting some information on that.

Is it the minister's desire to continue to tax the vehicles each time they are sold?

Mr. Lemieux: With all respect, I try to answer every question within my purview, but this really falls within the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Selinger) area. I would ask, with respect, that the member opposite pose that question to the Minister of Finance and ask him the specifics about this.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I need to ask the minister another policy question in regard to towing of vehicles. In Manitoba, we have had some private individuals with towing facilities, tow trucks, that

have arrived at a scene and been told by the RCMP to unhook from the vehicle that they are hooked to because there is a contract for an individual company in Manitoba to have a contract to haul all vehicles within that parameter. I wonder if the minister can indicate to me whether there is such a thing as a circle around Winnipeg of 16 kilometres, or any particular distance, that a particular company is the only tow truck allowed to work in that area.

Mr. Lemieux: We can look at the specifics if the member opposite will send a note forward to myself, or others will look into this. This is a question for the minister for Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. The minister responsible for that, I am sure, has all the details. I understood of a situation of a particular individual that had encountered this that owns a towing company. I do not know whether it was in Selkirk, or in Stonewall, but they were called to a scene and apparently there was a disagreement as to who should tow the vehicle because MPI has a contract with a particular contractor in Winnipeg and they also contract out these jobs.

I do not know any more details than what I have already said, but the minister responsible for MPI would have the particulars on that because it is a Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation issue and they are the ones who do the contracts for that specific situation.

Mr. Maguire: I just want to ask in regard to the capital budget, Mr. Chair, if the minister can tell me whether there have been tenders let this spring for any of the new capital construction projects yet.

Mr. Lemieux: Taking a look just quickly at the document I have in front of me in regard to the region and location and the tender of that date. We have looked at, for example, the grading to the Saskatchewan boundary on No. 1 highway, that is part of that SHIP program we have talked about before, S-H-I-P just for the member from Steinbach. But this is a public document. Rather than taking time here, I am wondering, Mr. Chair, if I could maybe just give those dates to the member tomorrow or at another time, rather than my going through the list of dates.

* (16:50)

Mr. Maguire: That was my question, Mr. Chair. I wonder if the minister could just table those tenders

or provide those tenders to me. Can he just provide me with any tenders that have gone out, those would be public at this point, and perhaps all those going back to July 1 of last year? At some other time, certainly not today.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you. As always, we like to cooperate as much as we can with the opposition and certainly with my critic. We will try to provide him with as much material as we can. I mean, the department does not have it at their fingertips right now, is what I am trying to say, and I am trying to go by memory of some of these contracts, but I will get those numbers and the contracts that have been tendered to date.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the minister being able to give me those tendered projects back to July 1 at his convenience in the near future, as long as it is not too far away. If he could do that this week, I would certainly appreciate it. I would like to turn the floor over to the member from Carman.

Mr. Rocan: Mr. Chair, just in order to facilitate here, I am looking very quickly at the minister's Web site, and I have got to congratulate not only the minister but the staff in the manner in which they have put forward this Web site.

I guess what I am looking for, in order to try and see a sign, in my area, Carman, south of Portage, is it called regions now or districts? If it is a district, are we in District 6, and if it is in a region, are we in Region 2? I am just trying to get that number right to start.

Mr. Lemieux: They are regions now, and the member's region is Region No. 2, that he resides in or his constituency is within.

Mr. Rocan: I thank the minister for that. I guess in order to facilitate, again, because there have been several comments, snide remarks, coming from the other side of the House when we, on this side of the House, are asking, I guess, if there is going to be any construction done on any of our highways, so in order to facilitate, instead of picking and choosing all my highway numbers, I will simply ask the minister then. In Region No. 2, is there any major capital work going to take place in Region No. 2 this year?

Mr. Lemieux: Just wanting to take a look at the south central region, which is Region 2, there is approximately \$17 million in maintenance, another

\$6 million in preservation, another \$8 million or so in enhancements. Also, I mean, the total region is getting over \$30 million worth of work, and to be more specific, the La Salle River bridge is a major project in the south central region, or Region 2. So it is, in my estimation, a major project that is taking place in that particular region.

Mr. Rocan: Now, there are a few issues here that I just want to very briefly touch on. I know the minister is aware because the minister had all these petitions dropped off at his doorstep one day last year, in the municipality of Grey with regard to the No. 2 highway, Elm Creek to Oak Bluff, where the thousands of names were brought forward.

I am just wondering now, and I have seen the letter signed by this minister with regard to Reeve Teddy Tkachyk, Reeve of the R.M. of Grey, with regard to No. 2 highway. I wonder if the minister could give us an update as to what he is contemplating doing with that section of road, No. 2, Oak Bluff to Elm Creek.

Mr. Lemieux: I have had an opportunity to speak to the reeve on a number of occasions, and I have met, also, with the reeve and other interested people—the stakeholders, quite frankly, that have businesses in the region and are really concerned about the status and the situation on how the road has deteriorated over the last while.

Just dealing with that particular region, too, there is about a \$5-million project happening in that region. So there are some large projects happening there, La Salle, as well as others, but on that particular highway, stretch of road, I have had the opportunity to travel that road in the last few weeks and it needs some work. I know the member will talk to as many federal members of Parliament as possible and everyone that he can to ensure that a federal government, whoever that might be, in either next January or whenever. That by that time members of Parliament, in Ottawa, know that the importance of putting gas tax dollars back into provinces.

Highways like No. 2 and No. 3 and No. 6 and No. 59 will get the work that they so richly deserve, but right now there is a dilemma with regard to the kind of dollars these highways need to repair them.

To be fair, Mr. Chairperson, this is not because of a particular government. It is a series of

governments, quite frankly, over many, many years that have let our transportation system get to the point where it is at. We are trying the best we can, only recently putting \$16 million more into the capital budget, looking at trying to do something about it. I know members opposite will say it is not enough. Well, yeah, I would probably tend to agree with them. It is not enough. But we are making some inroads with regard to putting more dollars towards capital to try to address these problems and Mr. Tkachyk and others along No. 2 understand that.

They do not like it. I do not like it, quite frankly, but, you know what, you have to try to deal with the deck of cards that you have. That is exactly what we are doing in the department, and we are trying to address the real challenges as they appear for us. The department is doing a very good job of doing that. Again, \$16 million more does not appear to be much when the infrastructure has taken a real beating over decades and needs to be addressed.

Mr. Rocan: I thank the minister for his reply. The minister touches on it himself when he says he has been in contact with several of the businesses up and down No. 2 highway but, and I am sure the minister was made aware at that meeting back in the latter part of '04, where individuals, and it is unfortunate, but No. 2 highway, the word of mouth is, you stay off of it.

I mean, if you have a way to go around, you will go around. I mean, it is in such deplorable shape, it is just waiting for a terrible accident to happen. You got chunks of cement the size of your briefcase that we could bring in here any given day, and this is what we expect that cars and trucks and motorcycles to travel over. It is unfortunate when the people will try and find an alternate way to travel to southwestern Manitoba other than using No. 2 highway.

I would venture then, I guess, that the minister would, I would hope, prioritize it as he has indicated in his letter to Teddy Tkachyk, the reeve, that it would be serious consideration given. Yet I see no work being done at this point in time. I see no numbers being done, put on No. 2 highway, that there is basically, absolutely, nothing at all being done on No. 2 highway between that section that we are referencing, Elm Creek to Oak Bluff.

* (17:00)

Mr. Lemieux: Well, you know, Mr. Chairperson, 19 000 kilometres worth of roads in the province, there is a queue for a lot of the projects on an ongoing basis, very difficult challenge to try to address.

Let me just say this, Mr. Chairperson. Most reeves and rural municipalities that come into my office to meet with me, I would say the majority, in fact, all municipalities that come in and put forward different transportation projects to me, there are very few that you could dispute with them as to whether or not they should take place or the priority of them, and that is the reality of it. The other reality is a financial reality that I also try to express to the reeves and to the rural municipalities, the challenges that I face, and the kind of dollars you are talking about that it would take to redo, for example, No. 2 highway, millions upon millions of dollars. If you were going to do it right, it would cost huge dollars.

I know the impact that it does have on the businesses. I know the impact that it has on tourism. Thank goodness a poll has come out recently today or yesterday, I believe it was today, that talks about where exactly on the radar screen transportation is now. Transportation is actually one of the top five in this particular poll behind health, education, I believe it is Family Services and Housing and maybe it was child care, but, Mr. Chairperson, these are not easy challenges.

You have a budget. You have balanced budget legislation. There are members opposite saying, "Spend, spend, spend." Then the next day they say, "You are spending too much. You are spending too much." We have the responsibility, as government, to balance that off. We have balanced budget legislation that we have balanced the books every year as government, and we continue to do that. We respect the law, and members opposite are saying, "Well, change that. Change the law." I guess just like Mr. Enns said, "As opposition, you can have it every which way you want because you are the opposition." As government, you have to deal with what you have and the dollars you have. You have to balance your budget, and we are trying to be as prudent as we can, trying to be as strategic as we can to take a look at where the needs are.

No. 2 needs some work. There is no question about it, but it is big dollars you are talking about. The reeve and others say, "Well, let us take it off in

little, bite-sized pieces. Let us just do a few kilometres at a time." Quite frankly, that costs you a heck of a lot more money in the long run by doing it in small pieces, but I understand where he is coming from and I understand his point of view. We just agree to disagree on when and what pieces should be done, but the department is looking at it. They have many challenges just like No. 2 highway throughout Manitoba.

Mr. Rocan: Very quickly here, before I get into the specifics of this, I will simply ask the minister with regard to the R.M. of Dufferin, with regard to their industrial park, with regard to the turning lane, can the minister give me a status report on said project.

Mr. Lemieux: I would ask the member, for the benefit of the staff that are here today, just to clarify what the project is in the industrial park. I believe what he is referring to are the turning lanes.

An Honourable Member: Off Highway No. 3.

Mr. Lemieux: Off Highway No. 3?

An Honourable Member: The safety lane turn-off.

Mr. Lemieux: The safety lane turn-off off No. 3 I think is what he is referring to. This is something that the policy of the department has always been that turning lanes like that in an industrial park, if a business was to build on a provincial highway, any kind of turning lanes were always the cost of the business. Now, there has been some flexibility, I understand, throughout the years going back into the 1990s. There has been some flexibility with regard to grain elevators and looking at the industrial parks. Often these conversations have taken place before the businesses have actually gone in as part of their business plan, knowing that, if they set up there, and they are going to be expecting traffic, and they are going to be causing traffic jams or possible accidents as a result of the amount of traffic, whether it is the big trucks, grain trucks turning in, they have to take this into consideration before they build, that there are going to have to be turning lanes for safety reasons and passing lanes.

Yet, having talked to the member opposite, there are many R.M.s who are willing to pay 50 percent, go 50-50, in order to get this work done. The department has looked at this and considered this, but essentially that is where it sits right now, that the decision was made that, no, we cannot do this

because there has been a policy in place for many years and that essentially those companies or businesses have the responsibility to address the safety concerns.

As the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) raised even earlier today, talking about the water park and the Flying J station, about what happens at that intersection and dealing with the I believe it is called a transportation impact study, I mean, that is something that those businesses would be not just asked if it was a nice thing to do, but they have to do it because the impact they are having on that No. 1 highway.

Mr. Rocan: I thank the minister for his answer. The answer prior to this one, the minister makes reference to the reason, that they understand the financial restraints put on this government, and I will quote from a letter that was sent by the R.M. of Dufferin to this minister, which said basically: "This Highway 3 improvement was a condition of approval of our industrial park subdivision, and the R.M. of Dufferin is happy to comply. The BSE crisis and a poor agricultural crop year are making budgeting for operating and infrastructure very challenging. Understandably, you face similar restraints, and we would like to work together to provide an opportunity for businesses to establish in southern Manitoba."

We are not fools. We understand that we have to work with government in order to better facilitate, improving and, in this case, the access to the industrial park, and I had given the minister an opportunity prior to raising this one particular issue by simply asking him for a status report and hoping that he would have said, "Well, we have come to some sort of a compromise." As the minister has indicated just now, where he goes back to his 50-50, which I know to be the way it used to be, and the minister, and I am hoping he wants to put on the record, because I am not afraid to put on the record right here and now that we had a conversation here one day, he and I. The amount was, and I am looking for it very quickly here, I believe the estimated cost of the project was \$100,000. Well, the R.M. of Dufferin did not have anywhere near \$50,000. So the discussion that I had with the minister was can we work out some sort of an arrangement or agreement, and the minister, in his words: "Well, let us consider going a 60-40." I said, "Fine. Then let me go and see if the R.M. is willing to accept your 60-40."

When I went and saw the chief administrative officer and the reeve where I said, "Well, the minister right now is making you an offer at 60-40." I said, "I think they think that is quite generous on the minister's part. He is a great, wonderful guy. He knows that you have to have it. He knows that you do not have the money, and he is prepared right now to go a 60-40 split, which is not traditionally what they would do. The department, I think, goes 50-50." They are in agreement, and I believe there is a letter here that states quite appropriately, "Yes, we would be more than pleased to accept a 40-60 split, and we have budgeted the \$40,000 in our budget just for this purpose."

Then the minister, when I made him aware of the fact that this 60-40 that he had proposed was quite acceptable, comes back and says, "Well, the department had said that back in 1999 or 2000, whatever the year was, they have changed the rules in which we will participate with, and now we have to do a 50-50." But I said, "Mr. Minister, you have agreed to a 40-60 split." Now I am hearing from the minister that he is stuck on the 50-50 split that his department is pushing him towards, when you, sir, gave your word in this House that a 60-40 would be more than ample, and you will be quite prepared to accept what they were offering, the 60-40, their \$40,000 that they had budgeted for. These were words, sir, right from you standing right here in your place in this House.

* (17:10)

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I know that the member from Carman is a very good negotiator, but I would never send him to any R.M. to go negotiate any kind of deal on behalf of the Department of Transportation. Obviously, he was going there to kind of negotiate, I guess, a deal for the R.M. The fact of the matter is the policy has always been, and I was informed of this policy, that when businesses are beginning to want to open up their business or to put in a business, the department has always had discussions with them with the impact on the highways.

I had a discussion with many, many R.M.s, and this particular R.M. is saying, "Why should we be responsible? It is a provincial highway." That is the reaction from a lot of R.M.s, because we are telling them that, as regards their responsibility for those businesses that have the impact on our transportation system, it is their responsibility to look at the safety

hazards related to this particular business, just as we talked about with the member from Morris about the Flying J gas station, I believe it is, or truck stop, and the water park. This particular policy has not changed, and they have to look at the impacts of the traffic on our No. 1 highway.

This particular one is on No. 3 highway, but I would never presume to have an MLA, whether it is from this side of the House or that side of the House, go and negotiate on behalf of me or the department. The department had conversations with the R.M., and they knew where we were coming from. The discussion we had, as I understood it, was a philosophical discussion as to where do you go with regard to transportation. The ones that can pay, are those the jobs that are going to be done, or do you have to take a look at the bigger picture and not just the ones that can afford to pay? I think that is the dilemma we have here is that there is a policy within the department as to businesses having to pay for turn-off lanes.

I understand that some municipalities have a lot more money than others, and yet we have the responsibility to take a look at businesses and our highway and transportation system all over the province, and not to be able to go 50-50. The problem is, the moment you do that, it is generally the R.M.s that can pay who would always have their work done, because they have the financial wherewithal, whether it is tax base or otherwise. There is the dilemma the department is faced with, and we are having more and more people coming forward now saying that they want to cost-share projects. My approach has been, let us go after the federal government to try to get more of that gas tax revenue and put that in. I know member—
[interjection]

Of course, I have to put that out there, because every day we are being asked by the opposition to spend more, spend more, spend more. Then, a week later, it is: "You are spending too much. You are spending too much." I know Harry Enns said that opposition can have it every which way, and that is the way it appears. But, you know, the challenges are that the Department of Transportation has a limited budget, live under balanced budget legislation. We have passed a balanced budget every year we have been in government, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we proceed, because of this competition for the forum, the rule is whoever has the floor continues to have it until he yields it.

Mr. Rocan: I do not want to berate this entire issue, but I have got to put on the record right here and now that there are certain ministers of the Crown, the minister of energy and mines being one of them, the minister responsible for water strategy. One thing about those individuals, when they gave you your word, it was their word and you could take it to the bank. Mr. Minister, you are not included in that same bunch.

Mr. Lemieux: I am sorry that the member feels that way, but I am sure—

An Honourable Member: You gave your word.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I will not get into it, but I will tell you, Mr. Chairperson, that there are challenges all over the province with regard to funding. I would never ask an MLA to go, whether it is an MLA on this side or on the other side, to go and negotiate on behalf of the department with an RM with regard to any project. Never, never. If any MLA in this House wants to go and talk to an RM about cutting some deal, that is up to them, but I would never agree to it ahead of time, never.

Mr. David Fauschou (Portage la Prairie): I have no questions for the department of highways today. I have been afforded the last word on the Department of Transportation.

I want to say, currently, if I can remain composed, that our hearts are sorrowed today. They go out to the family of Perry Dickenson, who is our superintendent of maintenance. He and Roxanne lost their daughter earlier this week, and today is her funeral. I ask that the department, I know we are a large family in this department, that we are grieving along with the Dickenson family today, and I trust that the minister will express, on behalf of all members of this Chamber, and, certainly, on behalf of this member of the Legislative Assembly that we grieve with the Dickenson family today at the loss of Kaitlyn Gayle Dickenson, who left this earth on Wednesday, April 27, at the very, very tender age of 15. We grieve with the family. I thank you very much.

Mr. Maguire: I am sure that we all give our condolences to the family as well. I thank the member from Portage for that statement.

I just want to thank all the members here that have all the members of the Department of Transportation, at least that have appeared with the minister in regard to the work that we have done on this set of Estimates. I guess if I could close just by asking the minister, there are a number of questions around oil field issues in Virden, Boundary Trails, heritage issues in regard to bridges that we have seen announcements for, and federal announcements of late. I thank the minister for the fact that he is going to provide me with lists of all the tenders that he has had in the department on highway construction back to last July.

Can the minister indicate that, of the dollars that have been put forward for infrastructure development this year, what the division is between those assets, or those dollars, that are being used for actual new capital construction this year, and the other part of that division is that it is being used for amortization of infrastructure that has been built already?

Mr. Lemieux: The 94 is all new construction.

Mr. Maguire: I would like to thank the department, then, for their efforts. We would call in the Government Services personnel, if I could ask the minister to make that change.

* (17:20)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): While we are having a change of staff, I will just start my question anyway. It is in regard to Government Services. Last year, I had raised with the minister the idea of what the murals are within this building, in particular it was the Pool of the Black Star. I wanted to ask the minister if, in fact, he has given any thought to it over the last year, and if he feels that the government would be open to doing more work on the inside, in terms of turning this building into more of a tourist attraction in addition to more than what it is today.

Mr. Lemieux: With regard to the Pool of the Black Star, the Pool of the Black Star has always been an area for quiet contemplation and relaxation as opposed to an art gallery. The current policy is that is not going to change.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the minister want to introduce the new staff?

Mr. Lemieux: It is a pleasure to introduce Debra Woodgate. Ms. Debra Woodgate is the deputy

minister. Also, Tracey Danowski is the acting ADM, Supply and Services Division. Also, Mr. Geoff Bawden, who is the acting ADM, Accommodation Services Division. Mr. Rochon joins us as well. He is responsible for both sides of Transportation and Government Services.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am wondering if the minister can indicate what would be the process for someone to initiate a change within the Legislative Building if a person wants to continue to pursue the idea of having things done on our walls.

Mr. Lemieux: Currently, the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism and also the Department of Government Services are working in co-ordination and in a collaborative way to look at how to enhance this particular building and the tourism potential behind it. As a former Minister of Tourism, and also working at that time with the minister who was responsible for government services from Thompson, was shown and saw the value of tourism in this building when the Golden Boy was taken down and fixed up. The interest that was shown in the building at that time was tremendous.

This arguably is probably the most visited building in all of the province. When visitors come and the tour bus comes to this particular building—I must say the Chamber is looking very nice these days because of some changes that have been made to the carpet and to the woodwork. So there are a lot of things we can do that can enhance this particular building. So the two departments are working very, very closely with each other to try to review all the aspects relating to increasing the tourism industry related to this building.

Mr. Lamoureux: I would just point out to the minister it would be, in my opinion, an absolute shame if the government did not, at the very least, consider looking at what can be done through murals. I had the opportunity, primarily at an American taxpayer's expense, to visit the U.S., both in Washington, D.C., and in Kansas. It is just absolutely delightful in terms of how it is that they have turned these parliamentary-type buildings into tourist attractions. I think that we really fail in comparison.

I would suggest to the minister that he might consider asking for some sort of a report with recommendations internally as to how we can make our building—it does not have to be. I suspect you could probably do numerous murals. You could probably put murals throughout the building at the cost of what we did for the Golden Boy. We could really be taking advantage of this treasure that we have here and would ask the minister this time round to look at getting some sort of a report initiated so that we could have something more tangible to discuss in the future about the future of this building.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, speaking of tangible items, I would ask that the member submit a proposal or something in writing, a document that states exactly what he is looking at. He used the examples of Washington and Kansas. I am sorry I have not been there, but maybe he could submit something in writing to me. I will make sure I pass it on to the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism and staff that are looking at the different aspects of tourism related to the building.

The door is not closed with regard to any suggestions, and we welcome them. But I am just saying, as it stands now, the Pool of the Black Star has always been used as a contemplative, quiet, peaceful area where people can relax as opposed to having bright, colourful murals. We have tremendous artists in Manitoba, many not far from here, as a matter of fact, from this building that could do a great job, but the policy has been that that particular area of the building—that is just one area of the building, mind you, and I know the member refers to the whole building. I would just ask him to submit something, put something in writing, and I would ask him to pass that on to me. I would be pleased to pass it on to the staff that are from Culture, Heritage and Tourism and also from Government Services that are looking at this because then they have something tangible, to use the member's word, to look at and to weigh, to see the costs and the implications it has on a heritage building. Those are the other aspects.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the minister's comments, and I will accept the challenge. I will get something very tangible to the minister so that they have something which they could actually look at. I would very much appreciate if in fact it can be passed on to the appropriate individuals so that,

hopefully, next year, or we do not even have to be in the Estimates, I just would like to see some sort of a tangible discussion on it. I will take him up on that, and I will get it to him.

Having said that, the next area that I wanted to ask some questions on is in regard to the Portage development centre. There was a \$40-million commitment that has been made by the government. I would ask the minister if he would be able to actually table the plan for the Portage la Prairie development centre.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Chairperson, the \$40-million figure is an estimate, an estimated amount. What we are talking about is dealing with safety and health issues of that particular facility and looking at a possible phase-in of over a seven-to-ten-year period.

Mr. Lamoureux: The Premier and the government have indicated that there is a \$40-million commitment. I would think that there would be at least some sort of a plan that would showcase how that \$40 million would be spent. Would the minister be able to table that?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, as I mentioned, any changes, of course, are done in consultation with the Family Services and Housing Department, and we work with them. We are taking a look at, as I mentioned, it was \$40 million, which is an estimate. A priority, of

course, is the safety and health and actually the least disruption to the people who call the centre home.

So I have to tell you that the Minister for Family Services and Housing has spent some time answering questions in her Estimates with regard to this particular issue. I mean, I do not want to rehash and go over the answers again. I can if the member wants to go there, but I would have to tell you that, with the least disruption possible to the people that live there, that is truly important to be able to address all the safety and health concerns related to their home. The intention is to go from a seven- to a ten-year phase-in.

Again, it is approximate dollars we are talking about, and, to date, a consulting contract, I understand, has been issued or certainly is being looked at. Having said that, the intent is to deal with the safety and health issues related to this particular facility upfront, and we will be in consultation with Family Services and Housing on the way to proceed.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5:30 p.m., Committee of Supply will rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being past 5:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 3, 2005

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