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DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed by the House, this morning two sections of Supply will sit concurrently with the House while this House considers Private Members' Business, with no votes or quorum calls to be in effect.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: Second readings, Bill 200, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act. Are we dealing with that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I'm sure if you were to canvass the House, there would be leave to go directly to Bill 220.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to go directly to Bill 220? [*Agreed*]

Bill 220—The Right to Timely Access to Quality Health Care Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 220, The Right to Timely Access to Quality Health Care Act; Loi sur le droit à l'accès à des soins de santé de qualité dans des délais raisonnables, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, Bill 220 provides, as a basic and fundamental human right in Manitoba, the right of Manitobans to quick access to quality care when people need it. This is a fundamental human right. We can go back to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and we see that Article 25 talks about everybody has the right to medical care. Medical care means, in my view, timely access to quality care. It does not mean what is happening at the moment in Manitoba that people are having to wait for up to 13 hours in emergency rooms. I raised this in the House yesterday. The answer was most unsatisfactory.

The reality is that there was an Emergency Care Task Force report and that Emergency Care Task Force report says, and I will read: Every patient is entitled to and will receive timely access to health care in an emergency.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River Heights has the floor.

Mr. Gerrard: We are talking today about a basic and fundamental human right. We are talking today about the results of an Emergency Care Task Force report, which was done as a result of the death of Dorothy Madden in an emergency room. She died waiting six hours in an emergency room.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. All members will have a chance to speak to this. Let's just have a little patience here.

The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

Mr. Gerrard: The MLA for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) can talk in due course.

There were a variety of things which happened under this NDP government which should never have happened, which led to an Emergency Care Task Force being created and a report. The report said very, very clearly, every patient is entitled to and will receive timely access to care in an emergency.

It has not been delivered, in spite of the fact that this task force was some time ago, and the report was some time ago. The recommendations have not been followed through. This report is still outstanding. It has not been delivered what should have been delivered—[*interjection*—it was not the problem with the report; it was a problem with the follow-through by an NDP government which, when it comes to health care, is a sham, and they need to be exposed as a sham.

An Honourable Member: A sham.

Mr. Gerrard: Absolutely. When you've got to wait 13 hours in an emergency room for acute care for an emergency, this government is not doing its job.

I am sure that, if this government wasn't doing such a bad job, it wouldn't be such a sensitive issue for them. The reality is that waiting like this, whether it's in an emergency room for tests, for surgical procedures, it's very costly in terms of human quality of life and in terms of the costs to the health-care system. The present NDP government has been very bad when it comes to delivering timely access to quality care.

This bill establishes the right to quick access to quality care when you need it, and it also provides a mechanism to implement that right. It provides for judicial decision, and let me give you an example. We have in the health-care area for many years where there is a Jehovah's Witness child who cannot get a blood transfusion; there is a procedure so that you can go to a court and get a court order and that court order will allow for the use of a blood transfusion under very exceptional circumstances where the life of a child is at stake.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the lives of Manitobans. We are talking about circumstances where the lives of Manitobans are at stake, and that is what this bill is about. This bill uses, as the basis of a court judgment, scientific evidence, all right, and it says very specifically in the act that you need to have scientific evidence to make the basis of a judgment.

* (10:10)

This right to timely access to health care is based on evidence, for example, that while the person who waits for health care, if there is a high likelihood of the disease or condition progressing, complications arising, the persons experiencing extreme pain or long-term chronic pain. We've witnessed situations in emergency rooms where people's lives are at stake, where there is extreme pain, and they are waiting for hours. I had somebody in my office this morning waiting in pain, came in by ambulance, waiting in pain for seven hours at the Health Sciences Centre in conditions where the person should have been seen quickly.

We are talking about quality health care. We are not talking about sham health care, which is not essential; we are talking about quality health care, where the net effect of providing the health care will improve the person's quality of life. The health care can be shown to do more good than harm for the person, and it's the best care that can be provided, based on international standards or reasonable alternative.

Mr. Speaker, the goal here is to provide a mechanism through the court for ensuring the right but, as in so many other areas of law, it is far better if you don't have to go to court if the system is working to provide that right. This is fundamental to improving the system and to providing a mechanism to ensure that it is working right. One hopes, in fact, that you don't actually ever have to go to court because the system is working so well. That's unlikely and that's why we need this bill.

This bill also provides the right of residents to be fully informed as to their medical situation; the right to be advised of the options for treatment and for promoting better health that are available to them; the right to participate actively in the decision as to when treatment and what treatment to receive; the right to information on the qualifications and experience of the health-care professionals from whom they receive health care; the right to receive considerate, compassionate and respectful health care; the right to communicate with health professionals in confidence.

Mr. Speaker, after eight and a half years going on nine years of this government, we are not being given quick access to quality care when needed. That's why we need this bill. That's why we have brought forward this measure to implement finally the UN Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 many years later here in Manitoba.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the reason I take such exception to this bill is that it is so misguided, so off-target, so classical Liberal; let's put in place a procedure but not talk about the relevant issues. I find the bill and I find the member's statements quite, in fact, almost insulting to this Chamber. I will tell you why.

The Canada Health Act, the provision of medicare in this country, provides for core services, health services and personal care home services. The provinces, as a result of that federal legislation, put in place a whole range of services: personal care home services, home care services, palliative care services and a whole range of services under the provincial ambit.

When that member was a member of the federal Liberal Party, they cut the funding that used to be 50-50 to those services; the provinces were forced to pick up the cost of that. As a consequence, our health budgets went right through the roof to try to cover all of those services. Notwithstanding that, I sat in

opposition with the Liberals and, every time I'd stand up and complain about waiting lists, the Liberals said nothing. In fact, I was ridiculed in this Chamber by members opposite, including the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and his partner at that time from The Maples, for being critical of the Health Minister.

When cancer lists went beyond the level of 15 weeks, which was a danger to patients, when members opposite were in the Chamber, when I was in the Chamber and I stood up and said to the member, asked the Minister of Health to do something and then privately in the hallway said, send them to the States, nothing was said. Those people waited and we came in government; we've got the list down from 15 weeks to 1.5 weeks, the lowest in the country. We did what was practical. We didn't have to put in place legislation or a right that Liberals love to do, a process in rights, but if you don't back it up with programs, if you don't back it up with real action, it amounts to just liberal rights and liberties. Rights and liberties are fine. If you can't pay for them, if you can't do them, they're not worth the paper they're written on.

The member brought an example of a patient, yesterday, that was a problem. Then the member jumped and said, well, if it's a serious case, they could go to court. Well, was the person who was in the hospital supposed to go and engage a lawyer while waiting and get a court action. Of course, that's not what the member meant. The member was talking about lifesaving treatment.

In this province, if you're in life difficulty, you'll get your medical care provided instantly, on the spot. The member talked about the task force on heart surgery. We revamped the entire program. We followed the directions of the task force. Pay attention. We put in a waiting list where our list is the best, if not the shortest, in the entire country. If you need heart surgery, you get in. Right now, as we speak today, three or four patients are being done today. There is a waiting list that's based on medical standards. If one of those people on that waiting list, for a reason, a medical reason, needs surgery, they'll be bumped up and get it instantly, Mr. Speaker, and someone will be moved who needs it less urgently.

So these phony comments by the member opposite, by picking one list or picking another list and then using those examples to put in place a narrow bill for lifesaving treatment, is phony. It's illustrative of their inability to recognize that (a) lists have come down in virtually every area,

(b) admittedly, there are some difficulties and problems that we're working on, and (c) they have nothing reasonable to offer by way of suggestions as to how to improve the system.

I remember an example when I was Minister of Health, when the member went right on the front page of the *Free Press* to criticize a procedure. In fact, he made a mistake. He never apologized publicly on that particular issue, but he sure did internally. He knew he made a mistake, and he did that two or three times.

The member stood up when I was the Minister of Health and said, why is the waiting list so long for some procedure at Misericordia Hospital? In fact, that procedure had been stopped years ago. He had wrong information; he never apologized. The member likes to take particular instances and build a big case about Liberal promises and Liberal rights. You talk about a universal right to health care. There is more provided in this province of Manitoba than virtually any place in North America. We have some of the shortest waiting lists. We have some problems, but we're working on them. The member demands Liberal perfection, but does not offer funding, does not offer programming, does not offer assistance.

Has the member said anything about the expansion of the medical college? Has he said anything about the doubling and then doubling of residency positions? Has he said anything about the fact that we've doubled all of the technical training to provide that kind of care? Has he said anything about the 1,500 nurses that we've hired to provide services? Has he said anything about the fact that, when you go to hospital, you're triaged? Has he said anything about the fact that we've expanded and rebuilt the Health Sciences Centre, the Brandon centre, about 11 rural centres? We're expanding the Concordia emergency, the Seven Oaks emergency and Victoria emergency. Has he said anything about that and its impact on health care?

All we ever hear from the member is, yes, there are problems of difficulty, but to take one case and one difficulty, and say, it's a sham, and my bill, where you can go to court to get rights, is going to solve everything, is hokey. It's a phony Liberal kind of process that doesn't have anything to deal with the problem.

The Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) says we're wasting money in health care. Does the member ask his constituents who are on palliative care who used to have to go to the hospital to get

their drugs for palliative care because of the way the medicare system is set up—no thanks to the Liberals—because of the way the system is set up, you get your drugs in the hospital, but if you're at home, you don't get your palliative care drugs? One jurisdiction in the country came in and started paying for those drugs for free at home. That was Manitoba, and that's one of the reasons why our prescription drug plan is going up, so that palliative care patients can choose palliative drugs, have them at home, get those drugs at home and not have to go in the hospital to die and have the choice at home. That's one of the reasons the budget's going up.

*(10:20)

The member complains about billions and billions of dollars going into health care. Eighty percent of our costs are salaries. When you have 1,500 more doctors, 1,500 more nurses, 200 more doctors, several hundred more technicians, more medical rehab, more ultrasound technicians, more lab technicians and it's all 80 percent of the cost are funding, your costs are going to go up and your waiting lists are going to go down. That is what happened. Putting in place a legal right to challenge the system, Mr. Speaker, does not help the system or the individual patient.

Now, cite me an example. Can the member cite me an example? He didn't cite me an example of a patient who needed emergency care that could go to court to get the emergency care. He didn't do that. He said, life and limb.

In Manitoba, if you're facing it, you get it that day. If you're in emergency and it's life and limb, you are triaged in front of the other patients. If it gets so busy, you might even be transferred to another hospital, but we don't put life and limb at risk, either on the heart list or the cancer list or any of the lists. So what the member's talking about is phony. It's phony symbolism and the examples he cites do not apply. His example doesn't apply. His heart example of those patients doesn't apply because we have the system in effect, and they are dealt with and his example of the person waiting in the emergency doesn't apply either because it's not even practical.

So it's phony and the real difficulty is providing a proper range of services and getting to provide all Manitobans. We've expanded that dramatically and there are gaps and we are getting better, but I cite the cancer example as the best example. We came into office, months. It's now a week and a half, the best in

the country. That is lifesaving. In fact, the people that went to the States formed their own committee of people that had been saved by virtue of doing that. We will do anything necessary to protect Manitobans, particularly those facing life-and-limb injuries or whose lives are at stake and we brought down every other waiting list and we'll continue to do that. But we don't need a bill saying you go to court as a symbol that signifies nothing except symbolism. What we need is real progress, training, programs and systems in place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, it's always an opportunity to talk about health care in Manitoba. It certainly appears from the Attorney General's discussion this morning that this government's in denial in terms of how fragile the health-care system is in Manitoba. I certainly want to talk a little bit about rural Manitoba and I'm very familiar with that.

Obviously, the Leader of the Liberal Party is very familiar with the situations that are developing within the city here of Winnipeg. He does raise very valid concerns. We know that there are people lying in hallways, waiting for treatment. We know there are people that have some terminal conditions that have to be treated and aren't being treated. As a result of the Leader of the Liberal Party's seeing this thing day after day, when people come to these people, when people come to the Leader of the Liberal Party with these situations and he comes and he says, we've got to do something with it and he decides he's going to bring some legislation forward, that's a sign of just how fragile this particular system is developed under this government.

It's frustrating to hear the Leader of the Liberal Party having to bring legislation forward, because all Manitobans should be covered by health care. It's an expectation that we have and it's just not happening, Mr. Speaker. The unfortunate part with the member's legislation is, if they have to go to court to get health under the health-care system, getting involved in the court system is just as big a fiasco as it is in terms of getting health-care coverage. So, this whole process seems, very, very onerous and very frustrating. It comes down to the fundamentals where the government has an onus to Manitobans to provide quality service and timely service. If we're not getting timely service in terms of health care, in some cases, in far-reaching cases, we're not getting any service at all.

Mr. Speaker, we know the government is good at propaganda and perception. They have the ability to cherry-pick on certain wait times. They bring those ideas and they bring those things forward to the public and try to sell it, that everything's good here in Manitoba. Well, we know that's not the case or else people wouldn't be coming to us with different situations.

We heard the example, just last week, of an 80-year-old grandmother stuck on a gurney in a hallway here in Winnipeg for days on end. After paying taxes in Manitoba for years and years, there's an expectation that you're going to be looked after as a senior. Quite frankly, those sorts of things are happening on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker.

So, instead of really going out and addressing the situation, how do we deal with people in the hallways? What this government has done is they came out and they changed the reporting structure, so it appears that there aren't as many people out in the hallways, Mr. Speaker. It really comes down to addressing those issues, and the government has a moral obligation to Manitobans to address those. Manitobans' lives are at stake in a lot of cases, and again, there's that expectation that we as Manitobans deserve health care, especially now, when over 40 percent of our entire provincial budget goes into the health-care field. It's really about getting value for the dollars that we're putting in there. It's one thing to spend money; the other thing is to get a result, have an impact over the dollars that we're spending in terms of health care in Manitoba.

So that's something that the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak) just briefly touched on today, but there is a very important part there. We have to make sure that we're getting dollar for the millions of dollars that we're investing in health care.

Now we know that this NDP has an ideology of how they want to invest their money and how the process should work. After nine years, they've proven that that's not completely effective. We think there are other ways to deliver health care, again using public funds to deliver that health care. It's something that, as a government, we should have an open mind in how we invest our money and how that health-care system should run. I think the onus is on the government to have a look at different solutions to these very important problems.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you from personal experience where, in rural Manitoba, we are facing

shortages of doctors; we're facing shortages of nurses; we're facing a shortage of lab and X-ray technicians. We're also facing shortages of EMS paramedic personnel as well. Quite frankly, we've developed a real fragile system in rural Manitoba, for sure.

Mr. Speaker, what it's come down to is crisis management. So, in rural Manitoba, when we have a shortage of a doctor in some community, that particular facility is forced to close down, and we lose an emergency room for a period of time. What the RHA does is they manage crisis by crisis, and there's no long-term planning in how we're going to deal with the situation. I think that's what Manitobans want to hear. They want to hear a plan. Let's have a vision. How are we as Manitobans, especially in rural Manitoba, going to be involved in the discussions to move forward, and how could we all have a better health-care system?

I think Manitobans recognize that we can't have an emergency room, a hospital, in every small community, and Manitobans are looking for that discussion. We've come to the point to realize that, that we don't have enough doctors, nurses, technicians, paramedics to cover every small community. But let's have the foresight as a government to have that discussion with Manitobans, and let's move forward and see how we can get things done, how we can get better value for the dollars we're spending. It's all about managing health-care dollars, health-care personnel, health-care facilities if we are really up to the task and want to properly address and manage how we deliver health care. We can do it. But let's have that discussion.

We met with the RHA in the Assiniboine region not long ago, as a caucus. The question was: Are you prepared to look at future management within the health-care area? Quite frankly, the answer was no. Mr. Speaker, what they're doing is they're managing crisis by crisis without any forward thinking of how we're going to handle those dollars in the future.

* (10:30)

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are fed up with that approach. They're looking for some leadership, and they're not seeing it from this government, but we on this side of the House are certainly going to press for change. We know change and some vision is necessary if we're going to have better health-care facilities throughout Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know it's a very passionate discussion we're probably going to have here this morning. Everyone has their own views, of course. We do know there is a tremendous amount of work to do, but I think we should engage Manitobans in that discussion moving forward so that we can have better health care for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): I am very pleased to put a few words on this issue.

I'm also appreciative that I am following both the leader of the third party and a Conservative in putting in a few words here, because it would be nice to talk about what the issue is. When we're talking about investments, I look at where 80 percent of the money goes, to doctors, nurses, technicians, health-care staff. And when you're talking about improving the system, where you have to improve the system is have appropriate human resources, because no matter what you do, you need to have the appropriate people there.

I find it passing strange that we had a member of the Conservative party talking about investments in health care when they cut the programs to train doctors, cut the nurses' programs, got rid of the LPN programs. In fact, when the member opposite is talking about lab techs and technicians, I find it passing strange that, around 1995, they removed the whole program, and then, lo and behold, seven or eight years later, they're shocked that there's no staff there.

I know that this is tough to understand, but basically, if you wipe out the program, you cut the program numbers down; you cut the graduates down; you have less people graduating. So if you cut the program completely from Red River College, you don't have people graduating. I know the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) has difficulty with that, but the program was cut and I'm proud that we reinstated it.

I'm also pleased that we are a government that believes in action, and I know the Liberal leader, leader of the third party, may be full of sound and fury, but the last part of that quote is, signifying nothing.

I think what we need to do is look at what we've done, and I know that the Conservative beliefs were to privatize. I know that the Conservative beliefs are to make sure that we don't make investments in the

public health-care system, but I look at some of the investments. I look at the new hospitals. I look at CancerCare Manitoba. I look at the new emergency rooms. I look at where we're making legitimate investments.

Just last week, we went to a simulator announcement where the Province invested with students, with the University of Manitoba, to make a simulator to be state-of-the-art instruction, so that they can actually work with a simulator to work to be trained so that you can have more practice. You can practise procedures by yourself. You can practise with a team to try and learn. And it's a new way of doing things, and I'm pleased to say that I was at the announcement with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to take a leadership role.

When we start talking about vision of health care, we believe that we need timely access to health care. We believe we need staff there. We believe there should be public institutions that provide service.

Now, I know that Tories believe in a user-pay, credit card machine, and I use a few quotes here. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said in the *Brandon Sun* on April 28, 2006, that he would give people the right to purchase private services.

I know that the members opposite believe in a case where home care was privatized. I understand that. I know they believe that the priority should go to the people who have the biggest wallet, but we believe it should be a prioritized on the need for health care. I know that the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) said, in *Hansard*, November 22, 2005: "... patients should be allowed to purchase ..." as she was talking about MRI services.

The other thing that was interesting is the leader of the third party, the member who spoke earlier, went along with the Tories. He voted against the ban on private hospitals. That means a member who believed in the national Health Act, who believes in, he says, a public service, actually voted against public processes of health care. They're actually supporting the privatization of health care which goes against the national Health Act, which I'm shocked.

I believe we should have a good system. Mr. Speaker, the average person doesn't understand that palliative care that's provided at home is not supported by the national government. We provide support for the palliative care and this is a very

humane thing; it's a very good thing, and I'm proud that we're a government that expanded that.

I look at Pharmacare. People often don't understand that the Pharmacare program is generally not cost-shared with the federal government. It's a provincial program and CIHI and other organizations have said that we have the best Pharmacare program in the country. I'm pleased at that. It's extensive, it's not just on palliative care, it's on all sorts of drugs and we have a good, good Pharmacare program, that isn't cost-shared with the federal government.

Look at home care. One of the things I am very proud of in this government is that we have a public home care system. I know that I've had some people move into my constituency from Alberta because they don't have that system. Mr. Speaker, I know when people are getting older and they need some support, the home care system in Manitoba is based on need, not the size of your wallet. What's nice about it is people that are getting older can get support in their homes, get support while they're living and aging appropriately. I like that. I believe that's an important component.

I know the Conservative Party and the members opposite believe in privatizing these services and not having them available to the people who need them but according to your size of your wallet. I'm surprised at that because I really believe that the members opposite, intellectually, believe that everyone should have access. It's strange to me that philosophically their parties are opposed to having the provision of services based on need rather than the size of your wallet.

Then I look at supported housing. I'm pleased that our government is continuing to expand support of housing. I think that it's very, very important because it does affect quality of life.

I looked at just one thing in my own constituency; it's called Friends Housing. It's a residence for people with schizophrenia and mental health issues. It's a wonderful place to be. It's wonderfully run. It's got great people in it, and I think that's where housing makes a difference on your health outcomes and I'm really pleased that were still supporting supported housing issues.

But then we start talking about how to invest. We invest in new facilities. I look at the Conservative record which closed Misericordia. One of the reasons why I got involved in politics is because they actually had closed Grace Hospital

emergency. I find it passing strange in this last election because the Conservative candidate actually ran against me about a threat to close Grace Hospital emergency. Actually, there was no threat in 1998-1999. They actually had closed the emergency on weekends and evenings.

Our government's committed to keeping emergency services open so that if someone has a heart attack or major issues, they get into the emergency and are seen in front of the line. I think that's very, very important. I think that it was sad that they closed Misericordia Hospital and other health-care things.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to talk about the differences between us and them. We have now about 3,115 nurses enrolled in training. That's very, very important because in 1999 it was 1,123; that's wonderful. I think that's important because the human resources issue is a major issue. I think when you talk about looking at how many nurses we have, we have 1,789 more nurses now than in 1999. That becomes important because when you come and you need service, you need people there.

When you're looking at doctors, I think what you have to do is look at the amount of doctors we have. Basically, we've promised to hire 100 more doctors and I'm proud to say that we have 235 doctors more now than in 1999.

Is it enough? No. I think what we have to do is continue to train more doctors, continue to train more nurses, continue to train more technicians. That's why we've expanded those services because when you come to a hospital, your service depends on the people, the trained people, that can deal with your issue.

* (10:40)

I know that we still have work to do, but I look at the CIHI, which is a third-party group that, in February 2008, reported that wait times, Manitoba is a leader on wait-time reductions in certain areas. Have we got it perfect? No, but what we've done is we've worked on life-and-death areas so that CancerCare—

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to look at what the actual bill is attempting to do and then put the question as to why

it is that the government would not see the merit of supporting this bill.

Mr. Speaker, we hear all the time about how much the New Democrats say they value our health-care system. We hear how they want to be the champions of health care. Here we now have a bill that's before us that would allow us to lead the country in terms of ensuring, giving the right to every Manitoban, to have timely, quality care.

Now, we've had two speakers from the New Democratic Party stand in their places and be critical of the bill, be critical of the principle of what it is that the Liberal Party is trying to do here for all Manitobans, and I'm a little bit confused as to why it is that the New Democrats would actually not support a bill that would guarantee quality health care.

Let me give you an example that was conveyed to me, Mr. Speaker. Individual who has cancer in the mouth, and there's a great deal of work that's done there to remove the cancer. There's a need for follow-up surgery for his jaw to get it working properly, and you'll have to excuse me, I don't know the proper medical terminology, but the essence is the individual needed to get more reconstruction work done with his jaw.

Well, that couldn't be done at the time here in the province of Manitoba, but it could be done in the province of Alberta. This legislation would allow that particular individual to be able, if the government was not prepared to do the right thing on the issue, the individual then would be able to take the government to court in ensuring that he would be able to get that quality health care.

That's just one example of many that would ensure that Manitobans would be given the right to quality care. That's what this bill is about. I would have thought that the government would have been more supportive of the principle of what it is that the Liberal Party is trying to do. Instead, Mr. Speaker, we hear all sorts of rants from the former Minister of Health and the current minister of industry as to why health care in this province is actually doing well and why the Liberal Party is out of tune.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) was right in his assessment in terms of that the government needs to take its head out of the sand on the issue of health care. We need to realize that it goes beyond just spending money. You know, when I was first elected, the budget was

being proposed to be spent. The entire budget was \$4.3 billion. Today's health-care budget is \$4.3 billion plus.

It's not an issue of just throwing money. It's an issue in terms of how you are spending that money, and spending money smarter seems to be a challenge for this government, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) talked about, well, everything is perfect. Give me names. Provide me names. Things are working well. Well, if the Member for Kildonan does not want to listen to what the Leader of the Liberal Party is saying and other members of the opposition and other people that have a stake in the health-care field are saying, maybe he should listen to his constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you that, if you were to pose the question to Manitobans today, whether or not they believe that their health care is better today than it was in 1999, you will find that a majority of Manitobans would say, no, it's not. I know what it is that I speak of in the sense that I canvass the opinions of my constituency in a very real way.

We're not talking about a small sampling; we're talking close to, let's say anywhere from seven to 10 percent. I can prove what it is that I am saying, Mr. Speaker, for those members that would challenge the assertion when I say that a majority of Manitobans believe that our health-care system is no better today than what it was. Some might argue then, it's an issue of money; some might argue, it's an issue of perception. I would argue that it's ultimately a need for how we are managing the changes that are required to deliver that better quality service. The bill that we have today, put in its simplest way, is saying that we want Manitobans to have the right to timely quality care. Why?

The Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) says that they are. Mr. Speaker, if that is the case, then why would they oppose allowing this bill to ensure that it continues to be? It's not saying that I agree that it is, because I would beg to differ with the Member for St. James but, if she believes what it is that she just said, then why not allow the bill to become law so that all Manitobans would then have that right?

One would think that it is a way at ensuring that that quality, the thing that gives us a part of our Canadian identity, that being of our health-care system, whatever we can do to enshrine and make it that much richer and give more pride amongst our population, we should move towards. Why oppose?

If the government truly believes that everything that's being said in that legislation is, in fact, there today, that we don't have to worry about it because there's nothing wrong with it, then why would they oppose the legislation? Why would they oppose that basic right, Mr. Speaker?

That's the question that I would leave with members. I know the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) makes reference to my leader and talks about a speech that was given or a vote that had occurred. One of the things that I've learned from the government is that they do have a way of twisting or spinning things to try to mislead people. You will see that in question period today when I pose my question to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) how they attempt to mislead the public. They will do it, Mr. Speaker, even during elections.

If you read the material—listen very carefully on this one, Mr. Speaker—if you read the material and follow the logic of NDP propaganda that was being circulated in the constituency in which I was competing for votes, if you read what the NDP was saying and carry the logic through, you would think that I voted against babies being born in hospitals in Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: Did you?

Mr. Lamoureux: That's how they twist—and the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) is right in the question mark, did you? Mr. Speaker, I believe that babies should be born in hospitals whenever possible and I believe that we should look at expanding for midwifery, but the government has this way of spinning things. The reality is, the Leader of the Liberal Party has been a stronger champion of health care and ensuring rights for Manitobans on the whole health-care front than any member of the New Democratic Party in the last nine years plus. Thank you.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak against this bill by the leader of the third party, The Right to Timely Access to Quality Health Care Act. There's no need for this bill because there is timely access to quality health care act already. I want to share personal experiences.

* (10:50)

Two days ago, I heard on CBC, and it was in the papers too, that St. Boniface would have some backlog in MRIs simply because there were not

enough technicians. However, in the same news item, it says, urgent situations, urgent cases, would be attended to right away. That brought to mind an experience I had in 2002.

In 2002, already I had been experiencing some problems, and so I contacted a neurologist who made me go to another practitioner, and I got an MRI scheduled. That was for November 19, if I'm not mistaken, which was fine, and that was around September. I thought, September, October, November, that's two months waiting, won't kill me.

However, in late October, one morning, I experienced something different. I thought I had a seizure, and I thought I had been experiencing unusual issues there so I thought I should go to an emergency, which I did. I went at St. Boniface around 6 in the evening, and I did get my MRI around midnight. I had to wait six hours, which was fine, because there were people who came to the emergency section which I believed needed to be attended first and foremost than myself.

However, when I had the MRI and they found a tumour in my brain, right away, I was told to go to Health Sciences the following day. No wait list there. They didn't tell me to go a week after. Just go tomorrow. Bring this result with you and a neurosurgeon will attend to you. True enough, in the morning—that was Saturday midnight. Early Sunday morning I was at Health Sciences. They attended to me, checked my documents from St. Boniface, and right away, they said, you will be operated on on Wednesday.

So, had an MRI Saturday night, went to Health Sciences Sunday morning, and I got a schedule for operation Wednesday that same week. By God's grace, I did have the operation and it was successful, thanks to the skills of the neurosurgeon at Health Sciences Centre. In less than a week, the procedure was finished.

So, what can you say about the right and timely access to quality health care in this particular case? I'm an ordinary citizen. I didn't have anybody with me. I came by myself, and I was attended to in a timely manner.

Another case: I know of an instructor at Red River College. He happened to have a tumour in the brain too, and was scheduled for operation. The first time that he was scheduled for operation, he was being brought up to the operating room at that time, and then, suddenly, he didn't get the operation that

day. However, he was scheduled for a few days after, and he was just wondering why he got bumped.

Anyway, when the day of the scheduled operation came, he was in the emergency room already, the anesthesiologist was already there, and if I am not mistaken, he was ready to go to the operating table. However, again, he was bumped, although the anaesthesiologist had done the procedure on him. He was bumped for another day or two, and then the day or two, he did get the operation and was successful as well.

While he was recuperating in the ward, at that time, he found out that the person beside him who had the brain operation at the time that he should be operated on was a victim of a car accident and had a severe brain injury. So, although he was ready to be operated on, he was bumped, and then this case, this person was attended to right away because of the nature of the situation. Again, that's right, that's timely access to quality health care. Although there was this guy who's already ready to go under the knife, this victim of a car accident was attended to first.

Others, again, I know of an elderly man who had to undergo knee surgery, and he had knee surgery in both knees in a span of under two years. He was fine and he felt better and was very grateful that he was in Manitoba and had been under the care of competent surgeons and family physicians. He did wait, but the wait for him, he considers it reasonable because there were more pressing cases than him. He did get his surgery nevertheless.

So what I might point, Mr. Speaker, is this government is conscious and intentional in upholding the Canada Health Act. If there were waiting lists, if people had to wait, it's because their cases are not as urgent as other people who had to jump the queue. They may have come much later than the ones who are on the waiting list, but then with an assessment of their situation, if they needed the urgent care, they will get it. So, this Bill 220 is redundant since we are already having timely access to quality health care. Thank you very much.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): I'm so pleased to have this opportunity to—any chance when we're speaking on health. I don't get that many opportunities to publicly express my gratitude to the PC Party who were in—was it 11 years, while I was working in health care, front-line worker and a social worker, as a matter of fact. So you can rest assured that I get to hear problems every day—thumb on the

pulse there, finger on the pulse. Anyway, I am eternally grateful that I felt frustrated and angry enough as a front-line worker in health care to jump at the opportunity to run in 1999.

I can assure you, on top of all the ongoing problems with delivery, the frustration I'd feel with the—what is going on when we're negotiating with management that there seems to be some huge gap up there that went nowhere. Nothing ever was resolved. I was really grateful to be able to bring problems that were ongoing here and are then ministered, dealt with, immediately. Talk about instant gratification. The last thing that happened before I ran—well, it was still in the middle of—was the frozen food fiasco, and I had the displeasure of actually tasting that food and looking at it and speaking to the then-Minister of Health when he came for a visit to examine it.

And, again, when he left, I was as frustrated as I had been before because they were in the process of shutting down the kitchen where the only decent food was being delivered to the patients who were able and mobile or fortunate enough to have someone take them down to access the food in the cafeteria, which was another thing that was immediately rectified. That kitchen was not shut down—[*interjection*] Yes, it is, absolutely. It is in the facility; yes, it is, and for that again I can thank our government who stopped a fiasco and—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: It's 11 o'clock. Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have seven minutes remaining. The time being 11 a.m., we will now move to resolutions, and we will deal with the resolution, Condemnation of Holocaust Denial.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 5—Condemnation of Holocaust Denial

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): I move, seconded by the Member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady), that:

WHEREAS January 27 has been designated by the United Nations as the annual International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of the Holocaust; and

WHEREAS on January 28, 2007, 103 sponsor states, including Canada, supported United Nations resolution 60/7 condemning the denial of the Holocaust; and

WHEREAS the remembrance of the Holocaust is critical to prevent further acts of genocide; and

WHEREAS efforts to deny the Holocaust ignore the historical fact of those terrible events and increases the risk they will be repeated; and

WHEREAS all people and states have a vital stake in a world free of genocide; and

WHEREAS Manitobans defend human rights and are passionately committed to the principles of diversity and multiculturalism.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba make public, through the affirmation of its support for UN resolution 60/7, that it rejects and condemns without reservation any denial of the Holocaust as a historical event, either in full or in part, or any activities to this end, wherever and whenever they may occur.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Member for Fort Rouge, seconded by the honourable Member for Kirkfield Park,

WHEREAS January 27—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Ms. Howard: I am honoured today to be able to bring this resolution before the House. Before I begin my remarks, I just want to welcome some guests who have joined us in the gallery, representatives of several organizations that work within the Jewish community and with all of us to help provide education and support. I think these organizations do the work that is likely our best hope of remaining the scourge of anti-Semitism from our province and from the world. So I just want to welcome them here with us today.

This, Mr. Speaker, is Holocaust Memorial Week. I want to speak first, a bit, to the resolution and to the resolution that was passed at the United Nations. Some of the aspects of that resolution, passed at the UN, include the rejection of any denial of the Holocaust, condemning all religious intolerance, setting up a United Nations program of outreach for Holocaust remembrance and designating January 27 as the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of the Holocaust.

I think part of the reason for the United Nations passing this important resolution is, even though the

occurrence of the Holocaust is a historical fact accepted without reservation, there are still, worldwide, those who would lead anti-Semitic events, who would take the opportunity of their position to push and promote hatred of the Jewish people. I think it's very important that the United Nations pass that resolution. Perhaps, there is no greater representative of that anti-Semitic denial of the Holocaust than the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who, in the past, has called the Holocaust a fairy tale.

Mr. Speaker, the act of remembrance of any horrible, cruel act, is painful, but it's necessary. It's necessary because humanity is slow to learn the lessons of the Holocaust. Slow to learn that we need to act as global community to prevent genocides, like the one that's currently occurring in Darfur in the Sudan. Many of us, I know, will be on the front steps of the Legislature at noon, today, where there will be presentations about that horrible, horrible event in the Sudan.

In May of 2000, our government, under the leadership of Becky Barrett, who was the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism at the time, brought forward a bill to mark Yom Hashoah, the day of remembering Holocaust Memorial Day. This year, we'll be marking that day on May 1, in the Legislature, with the reading of names of victims of the Holocaust, as well as, the ceremony that occurs on the lawn by the Holocaust Memorial.

We've also made a commitment to the Canadian Human Rights Museum, which will be located in my constituency, a commitment from this government of \$40 million on behalf of Manitobans, but also I just want to speak briefly how proud I am that this community has come together to support that effort, that individual citizens, that private corporations and public corporations have stepped forward to support this important institution that's going to be located in our city. I think the Canadian Human Rights Museum is so important because it will serve not only as a place of remembrance, but also a place to educate the generations to come so that they can take up the commitment of, never again.

The scope of the Holocaust is horrifying, and numbers in these situations are always difficult to finally determine, but I just, for a moment, want to remind us of what we are talking about. We're talking about the death, the execution, of six million Jews and millions of others who were targeted because of their ethnicity, because of their political

beliefs, because of their sexual orientation, their religion, or their disability.

The price of silence in the face of hatred and the face of anti-Semitism is very high. All of us, I think, all of us have had occasions where we have been around people who have made inappropriate jokes, where we have been around people who have made comments that trivialize the Holocaust, and we've all faced that moment of decision where we decide, we make a choice, whether or not we'll speak up, whether or not we'll take that opportunity to educate and challenge that kind of intolerance, or whether we'll remain quiet. I believe that every time we make that choice to remain quiet, it diminishes each of us.

I want to just remind us of the tremendous price of silence, and I want to take this opportunity to quote a very famous passage from Pastor Niemöller, who was, in fact, an early supporter of Hitler and then opposed him and was imprisoned in a concentration camp at Dachau. He survived that experience and became a voice in Germany for reconciliation. And he, I think, famously, told us what the price of apathy is. This is what he said: They came first for the Communists and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist; and then they came for the trade unionists and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist; and then they came for the Jews and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew; and then they came for me and, by that time, there was no one left to speak up.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we are no strangers to anti-Semitic events in Manitoba, and I want to, at this time, take the opportunity to table, for the House, a report from B'nai Brith Canada that talks about anti-Semitic events both nationally as well as in Manitoba. This report is quite alarming. In 2000, there were over 1,000 incidents of anti-Semitism reported nationally. That's the highest figure ever recorded since the B'nai Brith has been doing this audit, and in Manitoba, anti-Semitic incidents were up 64 percent in 2007, with a total of 41 cases.

I just want to take the opportunity to tell the House what some of those incidents entail. A Jewish teacher received a hate letter addressed to him at his school that said, in part, Jews are pigs. Jews will die and Hitler knew what he was doing. This is happening now in this province. Two buildings, including a day-care centre at a city-owned community club, were sprayed with anti-Semitic and hate messaging. A man was beaten and his wife threatened by an individual who mistakenly thought

they were Jewish. A notice was posted in a public place encouraging youth to visit a Web site that features other youths, some of whom claim to be in Winnipeg, with swastikas, photos of Hitler, as well as hate messaging.

So, certainly, we have no occasion to be silent. We have no occasion to not speak up vigorously against anti-Semitism wherever it occurs and to continue to take advantage of every opportunity to educate ourselves and our constituents.

I want to also, for a moment, talk about the tremendous hope that humanity can experience in the face of great cruelty, and I suppose, like many, many people who were not alive during the Second World War, who grew up in a fairly sheltered environment, living in a small community in this province, my earliest connection to know about the Holocaust was through the writings of Anne Frank and through seeing a play that was made of her life that was put on in my home community of Brandon.

* (11:10)

It's so important to me that, even in the face of tremendous cruelty, even in the face of circumstances that none of us can imagine, she maintained hope.

I just want to close my remarks by quoting Anne Frank who died in the concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen. She said, I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart.

So I'd like to close my remarks by asking this House to please consider this resolution, and I hope that we'll be able to unanimously pass it today. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know the members in the public gallery are deeply concerned about this resolution, but we have a rule in the House that there is to be no participation from the guests in the public gallery. So, I'm sorry, but I have to pass that on to you because that's one of our rules, and it's there for all the guests that we have coming to visit us.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join my colleagues in the Chamber to support this resolution. The Holocaust was a tragic time in our history, illustrating the horrors people can carry out against their fellow human beings when ignorance, intolerance and discrimination persist. Six million men, women and children, representing one-third of the Jewish people, were killed through deliberate and state-sponsored persecution by the

Nazi regime and their collaborators. Along with those of Jewish heritage, other Holocaust victims were tortured and killed because of their race, religion, sexual orientation and physical and mental challenges. All of these people suffered indescribable horrors in concentration camps, and for those individuals fortunate to escape the merciless treatment at these camps, living in fear of persecution was inevitable. Everyone dealt with the emotional agony of knowing their family and friends were enduring unimaginable pain.

This dark moment of our collective history was not that long ago. We continue to hear of accounts from survivors in their video, audio and written records depicting the actions of the Nazi regime and the consequences of these events. Therefore, it is astonishing to think that there are people who deny the occurrence of these events and reject the scope of what did happen.

This resolution is an action against denial of the Holocaust. Such denial is inexplicable, and it is an appalling attempt to diminish the value of the six million lives that were lost. In the face of this denial, it's important to remember the horrors of the Holocaust and address the impact these events had on the survivors and families of the deceased in the world around us. As the resolution states, ignoring the historical facts of this tragic event increases the risk of repeating the same horrors. It is imperative that we all take action to acknowledge what has happened in our past. I am satisfied that we properly commemorate and respect the tragedy of the Holocaust through our actions in Manitoba. Our counterparts throughout the country and most of the world have done the same.

On May 1, 2000, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly voted unanimously to pass Bill 19 proclaiming Holocaust Memorial Day in Manitoba. This day is known as Yom Hashoah, the Holocaust remembrance day, and it was established according to the Hebrew calendar of the 27th of Nisan.

Similarly, in November of 2003, the Canadian federal government also passed a bill recognizing May 1 as a national Holocaust remembrance day. As many of you know, for the past 15 years, the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Manitoba, Midwest Region, presents the Unto Every Person There is a Name program at the Legislative Building. This program is held throughout the country and the world. On May 1 of each year, victims of Nazism are remembered and their names are read aloud. Among

the many noble aims of this program is the desire to restore dignity to those who were stripped of their identities and robbed of their lives during this terrible time.

The Holocaust victims are also honoured with a monument on the grounds of the Legislature. This monument was erected in 1985 and the names of the victims are inscribed on it. Internationally, Canada was one of the many states that supported United Nations Resolution 67, which was passed November 1, 2005.

The UN resolution designates the 27th of January as an annual international day of commemoration in memory of victims of the Holocaust, and it rejects any denial of the Holocaust as a historical event. The resolution also condemns all manifestations of intolerance, harassment or violence against communities based on ethnic origin or religious belief. It is the idea that the key to protecting this world from further acts of genocide is to remember the atrocities already made in our past and to educate people of the dangers of ignorance and intolerance.

Unfortunately, some mistakes are repeated more often than they ever should, and there have been too many acts of persecution against communities based on their ethnicity, religion and another aspect that defines them as different in the eyes of the aggressors.

In the early 1930s, Ukrainians were targeted in the man-made famine known as Holodomor. Seven to 10 million people died as the Soviet government increased their demand of grain from the Ukraine, leaving the peasants of the country to starve.

While we might claim these events as dark moments in our history, the events in Kosovo, Rwanda and now in Sudan reflect the immediacy of this matter and the need to not only denounce these actions, but also take our own steps to end intolerance, bigotry, racism and prejudice. Too quickly these dangers can lead to genocide of a group of people.

Manitoba's privileged to be the future home of the Canadian Human Rights Museum. This museum will advance understanding and support for human rights. It will be a great source of information about the advancement of human rights throughout history and what actions are going on today.

The Holocaust reflects an utter assault on millions of people to their right of life. To deny the

horrors of the Holocaust is to disrespect the millions of individuals who perished, the victims who survived the pain inflicted on them and the people throughout the world who fought the Nazi regime and ended the Holocaust.

Every action recognizing the horrors of the past works to prevent repetition of these tragedies in the future, this resolution is an admirable step in the process and worthy of approval.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I am very, very touched to speak to this resolution today. I would also like to welcome our friends in the gallery from the community.

We have representatives from the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University, the Jewish National Fund, B'nai Brith and Israel Bonds. I apologize if I've left anyone out.

I want to give a bit of history of how the resolution came to the floor today.

In January of 2007, Ahmadinejad in Iran held a conference on the Holocaust; all that he personally hosted and very proudly hosted. Upon seeing this, I took an emergency resolution, which mirrors the resolutions we debate today, to the floor of the NDP convention. It was with some pride that I saw my party unanimously support the resolution to condemn all Holocaust denial. Some 600 New Democrats were on the floor at that time and I'd like to thank our party for doing that.

This is Israel's 60th birthday and, in a few weeks, there will be tremendous celebrations happening all over the world to recognize the state of Israel and the right of the existence of the state of Israel, as was determined by the United Nations in 1948.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Long before that, Theodor Herzl who has been a strong voice within the community, both within the Jewish community and beyond, on human rights for well over a hundred years now recognized the need for Jewish people to have their own state. So the birth of the Jewish National Fund happened. What happened around the development of the buying of land in what is now the state of Israel is that people would sponsor, through donation, support of the

establishment of a Jewish state, the idea being that Jewish people would live in safety and security in their homes and that that would be recognized internationally.

As the Jewish National Fund developed, there were different ways of raising money. One of the ways that they chose to raise money was, when a child was born, a child would receive what was called a life book through contribution by the parent, the grandparents or someone in the community.

During the murder of some 15 million people—and I say murder, not death of some 15 million people—during the Holocaust, the Nazi-led Holocaust, numerous children were murdered and there was no record of them. Ironically, Madam Speaker, the only record of them having walked among us is their life book through the Jewish National Fund. There is a very special project going on in Israel today between Yad Vashem, which is the Holocaust Memorial Museum in the state of Israel, and the Jewish National Fund in which the life books of these children are being reviewed and there is research going on: Did the children survive? Did they not survive? I would like to encourage strong support for that initiative and make sure that every name is recorded.

* (11:20)

I take very seriously being an elected official and I know very well the responsibility that elected officials have. It is our job to make good law. This doesn't always happen as was witnessed by a democratically-elected leader of Germany named Adolph Hitler. So, I want to call on all members of this House today to unanimously support this resolution and to pledge that we will focus on laws that are very important. There isn't always agreement in this House, and we know there isn't always agreement in this House but, perhaps, today we could all agree on this resolution.

I would very much like to thank the Jewish people for having the strength, having the courage to speak the truth about what happened. It's very important to recognize, not only what happened in Germany, but also what happened in the Ukraine, what is happening in Darfur. It is our responsibility to listen to the truth, as painful as it is, and to make sure that we, too, join in the chorus of never again, and that we not only join in the chorus, but we live the truth and we make sure that our actions continually prevent ever happening again what

happened to the Jewish people between '39 and '45, what happened to the Ukrainian people between '32 and '33 and be very active in stopping what is happening in Darfur today.

So, again, I call for unanimous support to this resolution and I thank the Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) for bringing this to the floor. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Before I put a few words on the record in support of this resolution, and the condemnation of the Holocaust denial, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'd like to, also, take this opportunity to welcome various guests in the gallery today from the Jewish community. Welcome here today. I'm glad that you can join us on this day and we certainly are very much in support of this resolution.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to a constituent of mine, Mr. Arnold Frieman, a man who is well known in the Jewish community, and who is well known in our community in Winnipeg, and, indeed, in Canada, Madam Deputy Speaker. He is a Holocaust survivor.

Arnold Frieman was born on October 25, 1928, in Hungary. When he was 15, he was sent to live with his uncle in Budapest where schools were better and urban life beckoned. Arnold's world changed in March 1944 when the Nazis marched into Hungary. His freedom was short-lived. Upon being captured, Arnold was sent by the Nazis to slave labour camps sanctioned on the Russian front. Arnold was liberated by the Romanians, but was immediately sent to a POW camp in Romania from which he managed, miraculously, to escape. After a 1,500-kilometre march, Arnold succeeded getting back to his hometown in Hungary. There he was told by other survivors that he had lost his entire family in Auschwitz. Not seeing any future in Russian-occupied Hungary, he managed to find his way to Vienna, eventually ending up at a displaced-person camp at Bergen-Belsen in October 1946.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Arnold's life is a story of survival and adaptation. He survived the Nazis. He outwitted the Hungarians. He learned from the Norwegians. He survived the Israeli War of Independence. He embraced Canada's freedom, thrived in the competitive world of retail business, overcame incredible obstacles and emerged a leader to his people, his family, his community, his employees and his friends. He earned everything, including a prestigious JNF award.

Madam Deputy Speaker, he is a hero. He is a survivor and he is why we are here today to make sure that no one ever forgets the tragic events that took place in this horrific event.

The Holocaust clearly illustrates the dangers of ignorance, intolerance and discrimination when they are used to justify violence against fellow man. Six million men, women, and children, representing one-third of the Jewish people, were killed through deliberate and state-sponsored persecution by the Nazi regime and their collaborators. The Nazis also used race, religion, sexual orientation, and physical and mental disabilities as justification for systematically wiping out large groups of people.

The indescribable horrors of the Holocaust affected victims, families, and the entire world at the time. Generations were impacted by these tragic events and the repercussions are long-lasting. It is difficult to comprehend that there are people who deny the existence and scope of the Holocaust. There are countless personal accounts from the survivors, Arnold Frieman being one of them, and there are historical records depicting the actions of the Nazi regime. Such denial of these events is inexplicable, and this resolution takes action against such attempts which certainly belittle the value of the six million lives lost and the impact the Holocaust had on so many people.

As the resolution states, ignoring the historical facts of this tragic event increases the risk of repeating the same horrors. Here at the Legislature we do our best to commemorate and respect the tragedy of the Holocaust. On May 1, 2000, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly voted unanimously to pass Bill 19 proclaiming Holocaust Memorial Day in Manitoba. This day is known as Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, and it was established according to the Hebrew calendar on the 27th of Nisan.

There is a monument on the Manitoba Legislature grounds honouring the victims of the Holocaust. Their names are inscribed there and for the past 15 years, their names are read aloud on May 1. I've had the opportunity to have read a number of names out at that event and will continue to do so this year, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This is part of the Unto Every Person There Is A Name program done by the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada Midwest Region, and the program is held throughout the country and the

world. It is part of our attempt to restore dignity to those who died.

The UN resolution 60/7 designates the 27th of January as the annual international day of commemoration in memory of victims of the Holocaust, and it rejects any denial of the Holocaust as a historic event. It is the common belief that the key to preventing further acts of genocide is to understand the dangers of intolerance and to remember the horrors from our past, including the tragedy of the Holocaust. However, some mistakes are more difficult to prevent than we would hope. Kosovo, Rwanda and now Sudan remind us that genocide is not simply a dark moment of our past but a problem that we must continuously address. Part of this work is to condemn those who deny the Holocaust and similar acts of genocide. Moreover, we must end intolerance, bigotry, and prejudice as these can lead to dangerous consequences.

This resolution states that we all have a stake in the world, free of genocide, and this is certainly true, Madam Deputy Speaker. To deny the horrors of this event is to disrespect those who died, the fortunate who survived, and everyone who participated in ending the Holocaust. We must recognize the dark moments of our past in order to avoid allowing them again.

This resolution is an admirable step in the process and definitely worthy of our support, and certainly we will join members opposite and all members of this House in support—hopefully unanimous support, certainly on our side—unanimous support for this resolution. Thank you very much.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Madam Deputy Speaker, it's an honour and a very humbling experience to second this resolution brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard).

The Holocaust or the Shoah is one of the saddest events in human history. It represents the depths of hatred that can exist in a human soul, and it also represents the vastness of tragedy and suffering that millions endured due to such hatred.

As such, we must not forget this event and we must remain diligent and condemn the denial of this tragic part of our collective history. To deny this event, Madam Deputy Speaker, is not merely a dismissal of facts due to their inconvenience to one's own perspective on history, but rather, the denial of the Shoah is an active form of anti-Semitism and

hatred and begets further cycles of prejudice, racism and oppression.

* (11:30)

Sadly, in the 20th century and later into the 21st century, after the facts of the Shoah became evident to the larger global population, we as humans failed to prevent these further acts of genocide as seen in Rwanda, Darfur and other places around the world, and is experienced by various indigenous groups globally. We did not learn enough and we did not act enough to prevent similar tragedies.

We must remain diligent and continue to educate ourselves and future generations about the crimes against humanity that occurred in the Shoah. Madam Deputy Speaker, we must take collective responsibility in condemning the ongoing denials of the Shoah, the fact that this perpetuates anti-Semitism and all of its horrific consequences.

This February, I was lucky to travel with many of my colleagues to Israel and visit sites within the Holy Land and learn more about the history of the modern state of Israel. I can say, without any doubt, that this is one of the most beautiful places in the world and one that, for all of its beauty, has marks of the Holocaust at nearly every turn. It is a place of beauty and contradiction, of suffering and endurance, survival, and again, probably one of the most beautiful corners of the earth.

During this, the 60th anniversary of the modern state of Israel, it is imperative that we put on record our condemnation of the denial of the Shoah. In Israel, so many people who have made Aliyah, or moved back to their ancestral home did so either to flee the rising anti-Semitism of the early 20th century or as survivors of the Shoah, and they and their descendants still bare the scars of their suffering. The intensity and vastness of their suffering is almost incomprehensible to those of us who have lived, what I would consider, comparatively very sheltered and protective lives.

One can glimpse into this suffering and begin to feel the pain, despair and torture that Shoah victims were subjected to when visiting The National Holocaust Museum at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Madam Deputy Speaker, I can say that the day our group was able to spend at Yad Vashem was easily one of the most emotionally and psychologically painful days of my life and one that, upon reflections, still overwhelms and haunts me.

At Yad Vashem, one walks through the history of the rise of anti-Semitism and Nazism in Europe and the consequences it had for the millions who lost their lives and their families, and in many cases, their names and their histories. At Yad Vashem, one sees the faces of evil and the faces of survivors and victims. I cannot believe that anyone could see the tragedies recorded at Yad Vashem and ever consider denying these plain, simple and yet tragic facts of our collective history.

Madam Deputy Speaker, my parental ancestry on my father's side is from Poland. My grandfather came to North America in the late 1930's. I grew up being told that we were Catholic and I was raised accordingly. My grandfather rarely spoke of the old country and we were left with the impression that it was merely things like petty friction between family members and geographic distance that barred communication between family members and knowledge of our family's history.

I was raised knowing the Poles experienced a great deal of the suffering at the hands of the Nazis during the Holocaust and that the majority of European Jews resided in Poland at the outset of World War II. What I was unaware of until recently was my own family's connection to the Shoah. In researching my own genealogy and working with others around the world who share my surname, including a long-lost cousin in Australia, I have found that I, too, lost family members in the Shoah. Most were Jewish and even some were those who had converted earlier in pogroms; again, a forced conversion, but whom, when it came down to it, were Jewish enough in the eyes of the Nazis to be persecuted and murdered.

I never knew these people, Mr. Speaker. I was never raised hearing their stories. The stories of their lives and their unnecessary and horrific deaths. But I know that their lives and their deaths in the Shoah cannot be denied. They were denied their basic human rights in life. They must not be denied their right to be properly remembered in their deaths.

Those who deny the Holocaust try to erase the lives, families and histories of six million people and three million people in Poland alone. On Thursday, many people will be gathering here, as other members have mentioned, for Yom Hashoah to participate in the readings of names of Shoah victims. It will be a sad honour for me to read the names of Shoah victims from Poland.

The Shoah is an example of what can happen when too many remain complacent to acts of racism, anti-Semitism and oppression. The Shoah cannot happen again, and we must remain diligent to ensure that those who deny its occurrence and perpetuate beliefs, founded in hatred and oppression, are not allowed to poison the beliefs, histories and perspectives of those around them.

Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I speak in favour of this resolution. It saddens me that this injustice occurred in the first place, but it saddens me more that over 60 years later, we still need to confront those who would deny and cover up the Shoah and six million people who died and millions more who suffered and survived. As someone who has worked as an advocate for social justice and human rights for the past 20 years, I look forward to the opening of the Canadian human rights museum and thank everyone, be it government, private or Crown corporations and individuals, who are all working to bring this vision to fruition.

This museum, like Yad Vashem, will help to educate people about the tragedies of the Shoah and will serve as a means of preserving the names and histories of Shoah victims and will stand as a physical monument condemning the denial of the Holocaust. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Liberal Party supports this resolution. The horrors of the Holocaust are well-established and well-known. I have visited the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem and the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and had the opportunity to see and experience and to learn about some of the very awful things that happened, which are totally unacceptable today as they were totally unacceptable then.

But it is only, when we bring the knowledge and the understanding of what happened out into the open and convey that and make sure that people around the world know what has happened, that we start to bring a recognition that people will not be able to hide these sorts of events, these sorts of activities, on future occasions.

We are today facing a situation in Darfur, as an example, where there is tremendous loss of life, tragedy, again very unfortunate, unacceptable things happening although in a very different context. We need to make sure that, wherever such activities happen, whether they are to people of Jewish background or the people of any other background,

we are ready to expose them and work actively to make sure that we prevent such activities in the future.

I want to commend people in the Jewish community and in other communities who have supported activities in Winnipeg to make the events of the Holocaust and of similar tragedies elsewhere better known—people of Ukrainian background and the tragedies that they're associated with—the Holodomor, a shocking event, a famine which was made so much worse by the actions that were taken by the Soviet government of the day. It is time to make sure that all these are exposed, and that is fundamentally one of the reasons why I, and others, have been very strong supporters of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights to make sure that these activities are known, that we are able to build upon the past experience and improve the nature of human rights, the protection of people, the defence of people against the state, that individual rights are incredibly important and that, well-meaning as some governments are, they need to be protected.

* (11:40)

So I continue to be and will be an advocate for better documentation of human rights, better extension of human rights, and certainly this resolution is one that I and my colleague, the MLA for Inkster, support very strongly.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I'm pleased to support this resolution. I am in favour of this resolution. Being minority in the country of my birth and being a minority in Canada, I can see the pain which minorities can suffer and I sympathize with the Jewish people, but because all the other members also want to speak on this resolution, I won't be saying much.

But I want to bring up a few incidents, a few genocide incidents, which occurred in the world, and people around the world and politicians around the world ignored them.

One of them was Rwanda; the UN totally ignored that genocide. Then one occurred after the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Almost 5,000 Sikhs were murdered, and politicians kept silent. Being silent, that means that you are agreeing with the aggressor. That's what happened. I just want to put these comments on the record, and therefore there's one still happening because one movie, *Amu*, by a non-Sikh person was made, and a censor board

tried to suppress it again and again. They didn't want to come out the real truth.

So, that kind of incident is still happening, and we politicians have our responsibility to not be just selective, but when that kind of incident happens somewhere, we have to speak up.

Again, I sympathize with the Jewish people, and I am in favour of this resolution. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to rise today to speak to this resolution, and I'm pleased to be here to see all of us in such absolute support of this resolution. I think, as other members have indicated, it's not often we agree on resolutions or on legislation or on philosophies, but this is certainly one thing that I don't think any of us have any trouble supporting at all in all sincerity.

The comments today are certainly profound and moving in terms of how we all feel about something that was so absolutely horrible and something that was pure evil. I don't think we should ever forget what happened. I know it must be hard for the Jewish community to be facing still, after all these years, a lot of these memories. A lot of these memories are memories that will not go away for people, but they are also something that we should not lose sight of either, because I think it's important that we all remember because when we stop remembering things like this, that is when we forget, and we lose the respect of what a lot of our history is all about.

Other people have indicated that we can never be complacent about racism or denial, and it is so astonishing to hear people out there that actually do talk about denying the Holocaust. It is amazing that there are people that would actually be of that mind.

There have been so many other genocides after the Holocaust. Ukraine, I mean, other people have mentioned Darfur, Sudan. When we here in this House, and we've talked about the resolution on the famine in Ukraine, it is so amazing to think that evil like that could exist in this world and so profoundly affect so many people. I think, as politicians, we do have a responsibility in representing the public to stand here and speak out against ignorance, intolerance, and discrimination because the more often that we can do that, I think, the more we can ensure that these things never happen again.

I had an opportunity to speak personally with General Romeo Dallaire after he spoke here at a

dinner, and he only told some, like in a 15-minute speech, I think he articulated the horrors of Rwanda in a very short period of time by just talking about a couple of instances of what he saw and what they faced. He made a phenomenal impact in his statements and, again, here we have a situation where it's probably beyond many of us here in Canada, who are so far removed from all of this, to really have a strong sense of understanding.

That's why it's important that we listen to people from the communities where this did personally affect them, and we show them that respect but we also, I think, take that and do more with it too because we have an ability to move forward and try to eradicate these types of horrors from the future so that children can grow up in a more tolerant way where they will not accept racism, where they will not accept intolerance.

I was privileged not long ago to host a luncheon where we had a presentation, actually, from the Museum of Human Rights, and they showed a videotape of what this new museum was going to look like. I'd heard a lot about the museum, but the videotape showed something to me that was beyond my expectations of what this particular museum is going to do.

As part of that luncheon, there were a number of children from two elementary schools and then from the high school that actually stood up and talked about the significance of that museum. These children got it, and it was amazing to hear them. In fact, once the two high school students finished speaking and after the luncheon, there was a church minister that actually came up to me and said, you know something, I'd like to take those speeches from those two high-school kids and turn it into my sermon because there's my sermon in the church tomorrow because they were so articulate and wise in their comments about the significance of a museum that addresses human rights.

* (11:50)

I think what is happening with the discussion around the museum with the, you know, the fact that we are going to see a museum built in this province is such an honour for this province because it is going to do so much for the children. As the children said, they are the future of the province. They are the group that can take these issues of racism and

intolerance and injustice and discrimination, and they can be the ones to ensure and firmly entrench in their age group and in the futures to make sure that these type of atrocities never, ever, happen again.

I think they had a message for all of us adults and I look forward to the ground-breaking of that museum and to the message that it's going to send out to the world. I think in particular today, with speaking specifically about the Holocaust, I think that there will be an opportunity for a lot of us to make sure we understand it, learn more about it and be respectful of what happened in the past and to honour these people. You know, as members have said, we all cherish our names. To not have a name is probably so foreign to many of us. My in-laws fled Russia. My in-laws are Mennonite, and they fled Russia at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. I certainly sit around with them and as they age, there's still a lot of pain that they have felt in leaving their homeland, leaving their relatives, leaving their family and I think a lot of families are affected by this.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult talking about it, but I'm honoured to support this resolution.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the resolution, Condemnation of Holocaust Denial.

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

An Honourable Member: Unanimously.

Mr. Speaker: Unanimously.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I understand that there might be will to call it 12 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to recess until 12 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

Okay, in the Chamber only, in the Chamber only, then there's agreement to call it 12 o'clock.

The hour being 12 noon, we will recess and reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)
INFRASTRUCTURE AND
TRANSPORTATION**

* (10:10)

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation. As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I'd like to thank the minister for carrying on with my colleagues the other day when I wasn't able to be here, as well, from another commitment. *[interjection]* Well, they might have been easier on you. I appreciate the number of opportunities, and there'll be perhaps a few more of my colleagues that will have some questions today, as well, on certain areas that they wish to discuss.

I'd just like to catch a couple of things that we were finishing up with the other day in regard to a couple of constituency items in Arthur-Virden that we were taking about. Of course, one's beyond that in the oil industry, and I wondered if the minister could—I think I had an opportunity to mention to him the situation with Highway 256 and the portion from No. 2 up to Cromer. Just to rehash that a bit to refresh memories, the relation of about upwards of 80 kilometres of extra mileage being done from oil tankers coming down Highway 2, east of Pipestone corner, up 83 highway, and back on a gravel road, 255.

I wonder if the minister could inform me as to any discussions he might have had with the Municipality of Pipestone on, particularly, the dirt—the gravel part of that road.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, first of all, good morning, everyone, and I thank the MLA for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) for the question. I got part of it, but I didn't know if you were making reference to a specific—just one specific road with what is going to happen with regard to the granular material or gravel on that road, or were you asking, like, what's the plan for that road? Or did I have a conversation with someone related to the road? Sorry.

Mr. Maguire: A year ago—and the minister will recall this, I think—the R.M. of Pipestone, the councillors in that area, we had some discussions with them. They contacted you. There was, you know, calcium laid down in front of the farm yards along that dirt portion of—or gravel portion of PR 255, which is the gravel road that the semis are taking, the oil tankers are taking, a roundabout to get back to Cromer from the west.

I wondered if the minister's had similar conversations with them this spring because the dust is the same condition. The semis, I think I indicated, are going down there anywhere from eight to 12 an hour, and I just wondered if he could fill us in in regard to the kinds of dust prevention and that sort of thing that the Province could play a role in with helping the municipality make sure that gets done to the benefit, I guess, particularly, of the farms along the way. There's a half a dozen of them or so that are getting—it's a safety situation, never mind the dirt that gets into everything and the house and the farms along the way, but the ones that are—there's half a dozen of them that are located quite close to the road. I was just wondering if the minister can update us on where they're at with that.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you for the clarification with regard to the question. Yes, well, certainly we've been advised—and we've talked about this before, about how dusty that road can be and people can dust their counter off in their house and then an hour later there's dust again, a film of dust on their counter.

There are, as I understand, about seven residents there, so our department, through road restrictions, are going to be adding water and just basically spraying down the road to keep the dust down. Of course, and once restrictions are over, that has been—it's primarily taken care of because that's the majority of the challenge that everyone is facing. It's primarily when restrictions are on.

We have budgeted about, roughly about a quarter of a million dollars for spot improvements on that particular stretch of road, on that particular highway for this summer. I think the residents and people who use the road will be happy with that, but, in the meantime, dust is a challenge and it's a problem. Our department's aware of it, and they are attempting to do something about it by using an initial approach of using water to keep the dust down, certainly until restrictions are over.

Mr. Maguire: Does the minister—can he just clarify that for me? It's a quarter of a million dollars that

they're going to spend on 255 or is it after restrictions are off on 256?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, 255.

Mr. Maguire: Is that to do with just the grading and upgrade of the surface or will that be to do with bridges and culverts that are on 255?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, that's just spot surface. They're just spot-grade improvements. It's not dealing with the structures, as I understand it, on the road.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me just what the plans are, then, for the section from No. 2 up to Cromer on 256?

Mr. Lemieux: Conversations have taken place between the department, the industry and local government with regard to what could be done there. Certainly, the department is open to any suggestions and all suggestions as to what might be done on that stretch of road.

Mr. Maguire: I acknowledge that there was work done after the 1999 flood that I mentioned last week when we were in Estimates, and that helped base some it. Some of that road needs to be dug out and rock-filled, perhaps, as a base, get a good base under it before you can continue to do an overall upgrade to the road. But the department people, in that area, have indicated that there are no plans to do anything with it in the next five years.

I wonder if the minister can either confirm, or just say what his thoughts are, in regard to how we should proceed there for an industry as important as the oil industry.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, agreed the oil industry is very, very important. There's been a tremendous amount of drilling taking place. One could describe it as an oil boom for Manitoba, comparatively speaking. You can't compare us to Alberta, necessarily, or what's going on in Saskatchewan, but there is, certainly, a mini oil boom taking place in Manitoba and that is directly related to the southwest corner of the province. But, as I mentioned before, the department is certainly open to any suggestions and wanting to work with local government in the industry to see what—or to, I guess, explore what kind of solutions might be best put in place to serve the industry, as well as the local rural municipalities and, of course, the Province.

Mr. Maguire: Just to remind the minister that there will be a quadrupling of the activity there come August, of course, when Enbridge comes in to build

the pipeline and expand it across Manitoba. The Cromer-end base is the start of the project that's going to come east. There's expected to be 500 workers working in that particular area. There will be a lot vehicle traffic, as well.

For continuing upgrades of that particular road, at least, I would encourage the minister to look at 256 as a priority and see if we can't move forward, even with building a mile or two of it a year, on a base program. I know that's inefficient in regard to having the equipment all there at one time and being able to move forward on 10 miles, or so, at once. But there is good deal of that road needs upgrading, and if it can be done into a budget, that's going to become much more costly in five to 10 years if we don't do anything with it for five years. This kind of use and abuse on No. 2 highway and No. 83, particularly, are going to continue.

If that's going to continue for five to 10 years, at the rate of movement of oil in that area, it's only going to become greater rather than less. I would encourage the minister to look at upgrading that portion of the road so that we can alleviate the other 60 to 80 kilometres of road that those semis are now having to travel on, loaded with oil every 10 minutes, at the present time, during spring restrictions, at least. I know that when we get back and those restrictions are off at the end of May, which is another whole issue, we would certainly be encouraged. But, if it's going to happen for the two-and-half to three-month period that restrictions are on every year, it's going to continue to be a much more costly repair to the other roads than doing 256 in the near future.

* (10:20)

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I appreciate the MLA's comments. He knows the challenges of 19,000 kilometres in the province of Manitoba of roads that the department is responsible for. The department does a great job of keeping a close eye on all the roads and their condition. Of course, even the determination of which roads are restricted and which ones would need to be restricted are certainly—I would say the department keeps a very, very close eye on them. Again, I have mentioned that the department is certainly open to suggestions working with the local municipality and also industry as to what their plans are.

Now, the new pipeline that's coming through, as the MLA mentions, I am not sure if it's going through Cromer or where it is headed. I didn't think it

was headed through there. I'm not familiar with the exact route selection for that. I know that there had been some public hearings, either held or about to be held, throughout the southeast. I think maybe one in Virden. Anyway, I stand to be corrected, but I know that there is either public hearings going to be held or about to be held with regard to the new pipeline going through. The MLA for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) is correct; this will generate additional traffic as I understand it, at least through construction phases and so on.

So we are cognizant of it. We're aware of it, and I know the department advising me that this is something that they certainly want to look at and keep close tabs on because they know that the activity that's taking place there is only going to increase. But, with regard to restrictions overall depending on road conditions, sometimes restrictions come off earlier, sometimes they're extended depending on what kind of frost boils and what kind of frost we are anticipating and what's going on with the weather. This has been an exceptionally dry spring and, fortunately or unfortunately, depending on which side of the fence you're on. You know, many of the people in the southeast are commenting how, you know, the crops are going to get in and it looks very, very encouraging, but and then in about two or three weeks after that, they're going to want more rain to add some moisture to help their crops come along.

But, with regard to highways it has been, I would say, overly positive with regard to the conditions that we've had this spring, but we'll continue to work with the local municipalities and with the industry itself to figure out what is the best plan for a number of those roads on that particular stretch, including No. 2, and 83 as well.

Mr. Maguire: I'm just going to turn it over to the Member for Springfield for a moment.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Yes, the last time I was in front of this Estimates committee the minister and I spoke about an issue dealing with the speed limits in and out of Oakbank.

I had an opportunity to discuss with the town council, the R.M. of Springfield, the issue, and found out that on March 26 there was a motion. It reads: Be it resolved that Warren Morfoot and Councillor Lalonde be delegated to attend the Highway Traffic Board hearing April 8, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. in Winnipeg. Warren Morfoot, his last name is spelled M-o-r-f-o-o-t—that way *Hansard* doesn't have to call

me later on. This was moved and passed. In fact, what they were asking for, and I thought I'd specifically put on the record, the request from the Rural Municipality of Springfield Council is to extend the 50-kilometre-an-hour zone south from Oakbank Drive to Springfield Road and the 70 kmh speed reduction zone south one-quarter mile from Springfield Road. This would be a first step in legalizing and correcting a proper 50 kmh restricted zone in the residential area of Oakbank.

What they're also asking for is an urban speed, 50-kilometres-an-hour unless otherwise posted sign at both ends of town to alert drivers and change that speed mentality.

I know they're working with the department. I was wondering if this is something that could be happening sooner than later. We are going into the summer season, hopefully, and that does increase a lot of the traffic going up to Birds Hill Park, going up to the lakes, that kind of a thing. It is becoming an issue with people going through town and, first of all, hitting the brakes as they get closer, but there's also a lot of traffic turning right and left, because that's where the developments are, as they come into town heading north toward Birds Hill Park and cottage country.

I was wondering, seeing as it's gone to the Highway Traffic Board, if the minister's department can encourage them to move on with this issue. It is a safety issue, and I explained to the minister because all the school buses—In fact, I have a figure here. I believe it's some 2,000 students that are bused in Springfield, and approximately 2,000 students are being bused in and from the municipality's 427-mile jurisdiction, and the buses are all headquartered in Oakbank. So, it does add a certain sense of urgency to it, and I'm wondering if the minister could just comment on that.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I thank the MLA for the update, and I have the utmost confidence in the Highway Traffic Board to take a look at the situation, and, as the MLA is aware, the Highway Traffic Board and the Motor Transport Board are arm's-length agencies from government. They have been commissioned to do a job, and we have the utmost confidence that they will do the job in the best interests of the citizens of Manitoba.

Mr. Schuler: My last question again deals with 206 and 15, which is right in Dugald. We had spoken about traffic lights that would basically be in effect during peak periods. The minister—we'd had a little

bit of a discussion back and forth. Can the minister again assure this committee that he will look into the situation through his department?

Again, because of the heavy traffic and the buses crossing from the north side of 15 to the south side of 15 where the École Dugald elementary school is, can the minister, once more for this House, explain what kind of activities might be taking place? What is he looking at insofar as looking into putting lights up on the corner of 206 and 15?

Mr. Lemieux: As I mentioned before, the department certainly is aware of the increase in traffic during certain peak periods on Highway 15, also, at the intersection of 207 and 206. We monitor this on a regular basis with regard to the accidents that have taken place at the intersections. We also take a look at traffic counts, and those are some of the determinants on whether or not stop signs are put up, four-way stops, lights, et cetera. Indeed, even taking a look at speed limits and the recommendations they may make on speed limits, but, overall, that is continued activity the department will endeavour to continue.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): This is my standard question. I think everybody's hitting the minister up as far as roads are concerned, and my concern is on the project for Highway 227, a project that we've talked about a number of times, that is the alternate route for Highway 16. I was wondering if there are any consultations with the federal government in order to make the 16A at any point in time in the next five-year program, and where we're at as far as maintaining that road. I know each year the government allocates something in the neighbourhood of a quarter of a million dollars for upgrades to that road through chemicals being placed on it for dust collection and that type of thing.

If the minister would put that on the record for us.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I thank the MLA for Lakeside for the question and for the suggestion. There really haven't been any discussions with my federal counterparts with regard to an alternative route of any kind. With regard to 16, I would ask, though, the MLA for Lakeside to work with us, and in working with the federal government and encouraging the federal government to have other highways designated, for example, a national highway system. Highway 59, for example; Highway 6.

But, this particular stretch of highway has not been really in any discussions that I've had, to the best of recollection, that when I think back on the discussions on roads or bridges, this particular stretch of highway has not been raised by any federal officials at all.

* (10:30)

Mr. Eichler: Going back to the days of the administrator of the Interlake School Division, I was very well aware of the fact that the land was purchased in the '80s for the expansion of that particular highway, through various government changes, the new bridge that was built in Selkirk, and, then, of course, joining over to Beausejour and back into the Whiteshell.

It was my understanding, at that point in time, that that was the long-term plan and a number of those people on that route had that same understanding. So, obviously, there's been a miscommunication somewhere along the line in regard to making that Highway 16A.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I can't speak for Mr. Driedger or others who were ministers in the 1990s as to what their plan was or even before that, Minister Plohma and other ministers who have occupied the office of Highways or Transportation, but I know the commitment that we made coming into 1999 was to try to ensure that our transportation network was enhanced.

Then we had the MLA, and I'm not sure if the MLA for Lakeside is aware of it, but the MLA for Transcona (Mr. Reid), the MLA for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and the MLA for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) were on a task force that was to consult with the public with regard to what needed to take place with regard to our highways system. It was called Vision 2020, and I want to congratulate them for the good hard work they did. Actually the rural municipalities, First Nations people and many others who presented to them gave them what would be—can be called—and really the document is a visionary document as to where to go with regard to transportation in the province. We took our marching orders essentially from that document and for the most part, used it as guidance as to where to go.

In fact, recommendation was that \$3 billion be put into Transportation and our government put \$4 billion into Transportation. So we felt that there was a greater need than was recognized when those consultations took place. So I just want to take the

opportunity to thank the MLA for Transcona and Selkirk and Flin Flon, the three of them for working very, very hard on trying to put a plan together for Manitoba for years to come, and, thereby, coming up with a \$4-billion, 10-year plan to really fix our infrastructure on our highway system.

But this particular stretch of road, I'm not familiar with what previous ministers said or did prior to 1999 or what the plan may have been because there are many anecdotal statements of— you know, I don't know if these plans were written on the back of a napkin or exactly what happened but I haven't seen them coming into the office. As minister I haven't seen them. There have been no plans provided to me with regard to anything with regard to this particular stretch of road.

Mr. Eichler: Can the minister then tell us, coming back to the first question, the allocation that will be spent on 227 from Highway 16 to Highway 6?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, with regard to this particular stretch of highway, there is a stabilized base course that is often put on the road. It doesn't have as much dust as other roads because of the kind of granular material that's used. There is an annual maintenance budget that's supplied to this particular stretch of highway, but if the MLA for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) is wanting us to RTAC the road or to do something like that, I have to tell him, no, there isn't anything in the five-year plan, the first part of our 10-year plan, to RTAC this stretch of road.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chair, I'm just going to turn it over to—the Member for River East has a few questions.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Madam Chair, I just would like to ask the minister a few questions on the bridge over the Red River on the south Perimeter Highway. Could the minister indicate what the initial tender was back in 2006, the tender that was let versus how much was the final cost of that project?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, let me just say, first of all, with regard to bridges indirectly or directly, and this is something that all MLAs should know, that the \$2-billion, five-year commitment we've made is more than tripling the annual commitment for bridges. For us, we feel that bridges are very, very important, not only the roads. You often hear about highways and roads which have been mentioned on numerous occasions in this Estimates, but as a government, we

take great pride in the fact that we're addressing a lot of our bridges and structures.

The south Perimeter bridge, this has really never been an issue, quite frankly, of safety. It's about the long-term performance of this bridge, and it was this government that committed \$12 million to replace this bridge. We expect that that investment is to provide Manitobans with a safe bridge that would last 40 years.

Shortly after the bridge was built, there was noticeable or unacceptable cracking that was taking place, on westbound lanes primarily, so we hired a consultant to take a look and to tell us what was wrong or what went wrong as far as their estimation and using their knowledge with regard to bridges. Manitobans overall can certainly rest assured that we're making every effort to protect taxpayers' investment in this project. We're currently and have been in negotiations with the original contractor, the original consultant, I should say, sorry, to recover the costs associated with repairs. As I mentioned before in the House, if negotiations fail, the Province will seek compensation through the courts with regard to this particular structure.

Again, we're talking about long-term performance of this bridge, and it's not an issue of safety. Again, we really regret, overall, that there's an inconvenience to the public, but we are the stewards of the roads and bridges in this province and contractors, 99.9 percent of the time, whether it's a consultant or contractor related to our infrastructure in the province, they do a great job, whether it's Mulder Brothers or Nelson River or other contractors, Maple Leaf, that lay the asphalt or our bridge-building companies. We're very lucky to have good companies, but on occasion, it happens where these companies have either not followed the specs or made a mistake.

It's our responsibility as a provincial government to ensure that the taxpayers of Manitoba are going to—well, to ensure that the money is well spent on the contracts. These contractors are getting a very good dollar these days to build bridges and put in culverts and to build our highways, and we want to ensure, for taxpayers, that the investment in this project is—what they've been paid for is what they're going to deliver. So that's the task at hand.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Who's responsible for the design work related to the initial repairs of the bridge in 2006?

Mr. Lemieux: UMA.

* (10:40)

Mrs. Mitchelson: If I could ask the minister, Madam Chair, which firm won the contract to do the actual bridge repairs?

Mr. Lemieux: M.D. Steele.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thanks. I understand that a new material was used in the bridge's re-decking. Instead of steel rebar, the engineers used glass fiber polymer rods, which are not supposed to corrode. Why was this design chosen and on whose advice was this chosen? I guess my question would be, was there science to back up the use of this method in harsh climates that we see here in Manitoba?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, this material that the MLA makes reference to has been used since 1993, approximately. It's been used in a number of bridges in Manitoba, and ISIS Canada, which is actually located—well, certainly through a Professor Mufti, I believe, as well, and Dr. Rizkalla, originally are the ones who have worked on this area. But this is also part of the Canadian highway bridge code and this material has been used.

Essentially, what this material does is that there's less corrosion taking place, and the idea is it's supposed to last longer. If anyone knows what rebar is like, steel rusts much quicker than this material would, and it's been recognized since at least 1993. So it goes back a long ways. It's a material that has been—it certainly conforms to the Canadian highway bridge code and has been used in many, many different locations.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Could the minister indicate what other bridges in Manitoba this technology has been used for?

Mr. Lemieux: If the MLA wants an exact listing we'll have to go back and take a look at it. But, even approximate—and I stand to be corrected—but we're looking at about four or five bridges as span on the northeast Perimeter. There are some floodway bridges that materials were used. Headingley, for example, going back to the Headingley bridge. So this is a material that is used, and it's recommended to be used, quite frankly, because of the longevity of the product and, just like we've moved from Gestetners in school to photocopiers, we move ahead in transportation as well.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Have there been any similar problems with any of the other bridges that have been constructed using this technology?

Mr. Lemieux: Not that I'm aware of, nor have I been advised. With regard to bridges, I mean, there is some cracking that is normally expected. This happens on a lot of projects and people will know this from their own garage or basement and it's just natural that this happens. It's regrettable, but, again, we're the stewards of our bridges and our highways. We want to ensure that the long-term performance of this bridge, or any other bridge for that matter, is ensured and that's part of what our department does. Also, we'll do everything that is humanly possible to ensure that Manitobans get the best bang for their dollar.

As I mentioned, if negotiations don't work out, we'll seek compensation to the courts to make sure the product that we're expected to be delivered to us, for the dollar paid, that we're getting that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I wonder if the minister could indicate whether his department inspected the bridge at any time while the repairs were under way and whether anything unusual was discovered, if it was inspected.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, I've been advised that, from my officials, that we had a resident on site. We monitor projects and larger projects, we, well, all projects, quite frankly, we'll make sure that Transportation people are keeping an eye on these projects and ensuring that taxpayers' money is being well spent. The construction itself was going, as I understand it, okay. Just after the construction, it was determined that there was unusual cracking taking place, and something had to be done. In fact, even the department tried to, through contractors or through other individuals they worked with, tried to ensure that a fix take place and as I understand it, that that has not been successful. So we continue to look to see what the remedy will be and we move forward from there.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, then I take it that there was nothing unusual discovered during regular inspections while the bridge was under repair.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I've been advised that the answer is no. There was nothing really unusual. It didn't appear until traffic started using the bridge and then, as I mentioned, I've been advised that unusual cracking started to take place on this particular

bridge. That is something then that started to stand out, because there is normal cracking, but unusual cracking or extraordinary cracking is something that the department and others started to notice.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And how long after the bridge reopened to traffic was the cracking problem discovered and who discovered it?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I don't know if I can say in days or minutes or weeks, but I certainly can inquire and find out what kind of time lines we're talking about. I'm not sure if the MLA's looking for hours or weeks or days or—I'm not sure exactly what she's asking.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Okay, Madam Chairperson, then maybe if the minister could just go back briefly and indicate when the initial repairs began and when they were completed and then when the bridge was closed again because of the additional repairs that needed to be done and how long was that closure.

* (10:50)

Mr. Lemieux: Well, maybe the best way to go through this, through the chronology, is that in '06 the work was done on the westbound lanes. Westbound lanes in late 2006 were opened. Unusual cracking began to develop or were certainly being noticed, that unusual crackings started to happen in the summer of '07. So August repairs started to take place into the fall, late fall, certainly the fall of '07, and then the new lanes were opened up heading east and then the westbound lanes were closed.

The westbound lanes are the two lanes that we're referring to, so, hopefully, that answers the chronology of when they were open, when they were closed.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Just to be clear, in what month in 2006 were the westbound lanes closed, and what month were they reopened?

Mr. Lemieux: I'll have to take that as notice and let the MLA know.

Mrs. Mitchelson: If the minister could provide for me, too, then, when the cracking was discovered in the summer of 2007, when was that? What month was it closed again for repairs, and when reopened?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess I might ask, is it normal practice or procedure for this minister's department to repair the cracks, which I believe the department did, and did the department—did we pay for that and now are we going back after the contractor or would

it not—I mean, what is the normal process? Would the contractor not be expected to repair the cracks?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, this is something that is not an everyday occurrence, as I pointed out. When the extraordinary cracking took place, the department felt that they would be doing the repairs and take a look at the repairs. Then they looked at the contract itself and the contractor and felt that it was not necessarily the contractor, but a possible design problem as opposed to a contract problem.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

They saw a problem and they fixed it. This is usually what anyone, I think, would probably expect. But then they had to determine when, this continuation, that they had to pursue this further.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I wonder if the minister could indicate to me whether it was UMA who initially did the design. Whether this was the technology that they recommended to the minister's department or were there options provided to the department for the department to make the final decision?

Mr. Lemieux: There are a couple parts to this. There is the standard steel design and then there's the steel-free design through the regular design process. He or she who pays determines on what they want to use. This is something that UMA understands and all other design companies understand as well.

The steel-free design, as I mentioned, the Canadian highway bridge code that's used, this particular material has been used since 1993, and we've used it in a number of different locations in Manitoba. UMA is the one who did the design, and UMA is the one who we certainly are working with, with regard to the design and some of the challenges that have taken place with regard to this span.

There is a standard steel design and there's a steel-free design. Many would argue the steel-free is the way to go. As I understand it, you get long-term performance out of a bridge that has the steel-free, and that's the way more and more companies, as I understand it, are going.

As I mentioned, this has never been an issue of safety, but it's an issue about long-term performance of a bridge. For the \$12 million that we committed to replace this bridge, we're expecting that this investment should provide Manitobans with a safe bridge for at least 40 years. That's our main challenge. We want to make sure that this bridge is open and that we get that kind of life out of a bridge.

We are going to be working through this to ensure that, as I mentioned before, if negotiations fail, that the Province will seek compensation through the courts on the design because we don't believe it's necessarily—it's not the contractors, but it's the design and the way it was designed.

* (11:00)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I'm not sure that the minister answered my question, so I'll ask again, maybe in a little different way.

Did the department direct a certain technology, either steel-free or steel, of—of UMA or did UMA indicate to government that they could use either a steel-free design or a steel design and government ultimately made the final decision. I think the minister indicated in the beginning of his last answer that it was up to the purchaser, which would have been the government of Manitoba or his department, to make the decision on what technology would be used.

Maybe he could just clarify that for me.

Mr. Lemieux: Just like anything else, the MLA for River East, if you're building a house, you have the ultimate say. He or she who pays has the say. They did a design, both in steel and steel-free, and the department, as I understand it, made a decision on what they accept. Now, I would never want to cast aspersions on the MLA about being UMA's representative at Estimates, but I respect the question she's asking and we're the ones who make the decision, I mean, on behalf of the taxpayer. We have enough information through, not only the Canadian highway bridge code using this material, but other examples of where this material was used. That's why we were trying to get to the bottom of this, to find out where exactly the problems resulted because of the extraordinary cracking on this bridge.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess I would indicate to the minister very clearly that I am, as the MLA, representative of the taxpayer of the province of Manitoba, and it's the taxpayers that want to see good value for their dollars and I'm just asking informational questions. I would hope that the minister wouldn't get his back up and play games with this. I mean, obviously, that technology that's been used successfully in other bridges didn't work in this instance—

An Honourable Member: How about the design—

Mrs. Mitchelson: You know, the minister is saying that maybe it was the design problem, but it appears to me that both options were presented to the minister and the option that was chosen maybe wasn't the best option for this particular structure. So I'm asking questions for information on behalf of taxpayers and on behalf of people that are finding a bridge that's been opened and closed and opened and closed since 2006.

There are some legitimate questions that need to be asked, that should be asked, and that's exactly what I'm doing. I understand that the minister also hired a private consultant last fall to conduct an engineering review of the bridge project, and I wonder, if I might ask, who was hired and whether the work of that consultant is complete.

Mr. Lemieux: I hope the MLA for River East is not questioning the technology of the non-steel because, I mean, she's not an engineer, as far as I know, and neither am I. This has been used since 1993 so if the MLA for River East is questioning the technology, I think she's barking up the wrong tree, quite frankly, even though she is, certainly, entitled to ask any question she wants. I'm just saying that this technology has been around since 1993, so if it's not the technology and it's not the contractors, maybe it's the design. That's all I'm saying is, maybe, it's the design that was the problem.

Now, having said that, yes, we did hire people to ensure that we do a double check on that bridge to find out what's going, and one of the pre-eminent bridge people or companies around is Buckland & Taylor. We have been very open with providing her caucus or others with information and letting them know exactly what we're doing.

We've been very open on this project, and we want to ensure as well that the taxpayers of Manitoba are getting good value for their dollar. That's why I've stated before that if negotiations fail we'll see compensation through the courts and making sure that these projects are done right. The contractors and people who design our bridges get good money, paid good money for the jobs that they're doing these days, and we're going to ensure that the taxpayer gets good value for that money because, again, it's not about safety in this particular case. It's about the long-term performance of this bridge and the technology is a proven technology. So I hope the MLA for River East is not questioning the technology because it has been proven to be

absolutely successful. At least that's what I've been advised.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chair, obviously, the minister didn't listen to my comments because I indicated that it is technology that has been used and been used successfully. So I have never questioned the technology, and so I don't want him to put words in my mouth and leave false comments on the record. That was not my intent, and I just wanted to make the record clear on that. I wasn't questioning the qualifications of the consultant that was hired by this minister.

I asked the question and the minister didn't answer. Is the work complete? All I need is a yes or a no to that. If it is complete, if the answer is yes, what were the findings?

Mr. Lemieux: We're still working with the consultant.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chair, I wonder if the minister can give me any time lines on when the bridge repairs might be completed and give some assurance to those that travel those roads on a regular basis might have some relief soon.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, first the determination is going to be what the approach is going to be to do the fix. Then, once that is done, hopefully very shortly, that then will determine what option we select and then it will determine the timeline. So certainly it will be complete by this year.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Can the minister indicate whether this year means this calendar year or this fiscal year?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, it will be in 2008. That's the plan, and I've been advised that that's realistic.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I just say thanks very much to the minister and his staff for the answers.

* (11:10)

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Highway 305 between No. 2 and the junction of No. 1 and No. 16, it currently is paved, but it's not to RTAC standards. This is a feeder route. There are a lot of potatoes, grain, cereals, gravel, livestock that travel this route, and when, as in right now, restrictions are on, particularly the potatoes because other commodities can wait, but Simplot and McCain's don't wait for their potatoes, the trucks right now have to travel either down to Elm Creek to Highway 13 or west to Highway 10 out of the Treherne area. Obviously, the

gravel is not moving at all out of the Notre Dame area.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

You know, the 5 percent greenhouse gas emissions target reduction in the next 10 years—whatever it is—these trucks having to travel an extra hundreds of kilometres to get around. Simplot and McCain's want their potatoes on time. What is the process—is this highway in the process of being upgraded to RTAC standards, and let's just start with there. Is it in the queue for upgrade?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, let me first of all say that, you know, we're very pleased as a department and as a provincial government to be putting multi, multi-millions of dollars into renovating our highways and our bridges and structures in the province and, in some cases, building new. The MLA, certainly for Carman, is familiar with PTH No. 2 and 3 which, you know, over \$60 million is going to be invested in those particular highways and again, it's, you know, the game. I understand politics. It's what have you done for me lately, and then, once certain roads are taken care of, you move on to others.

You know, Manitoba should be congratulated. As I understand it, we are the No. 1 potato-producing province in Canada. We have taken over from P.E.I. and this is something that is very, very encouraging, quite frankly, to this industry, and this stretch of highway that the MLA refers to, I understand that it is restricted. Certainly, in the next year or so, it's not going to be, at least in the current plan, upgraded to RTAC.

I appreciate the arguments that the MLA puts forward, but, again, there are 19,000 kilometres of highway in the province of Manitoba. As a department, preservation has become increasingly important. It's not new highways that we build, so when you take a look at preservation in the province and what we're going to do about our highways, there is a plan put in place and there's a priority: taking a look at our priority arteries in our highway system as to which ones we tackle first and then we work our way through the system. There are various criteria related to that, but I will just maybe keep the answer at that, that there are criteria on the approach we're taking with regard to what highways get how much attention on and what particular year.

Mr. Pedersen: So, Mr. Minister, is Highway 305 on any list at all right now in terms of upgrades in the—and I realize that it's not going to happen this year or

next year, but is it on the queue for upgrades to RTAC in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, in this part of the five-year plan we've already gone through year one, and it is not within the five-year plan to RTAC. Highway 13 is the RTAC route. We can't RTAC, obviously, every highway in the province of Manitoba, and I know the MLA for Carman knows this, understands that. So it makes the choices very difficult.

We've always believed as a province that highways or transportation is an economic enabler. Our job is not just to provide the esthetics of a great ride in a car or a truck, but it's also to help industry. It's also to help tourism and so on. So this, of course, creates a huge challenge for us because agriculture is changing. Agriculture is becoming very diversified. It's changing as we speak, quite frankly, and so we are going to have to be very nimble and resilient to react to what's happening in the market and what's happening to agriculture and other industry.

So the plan I talk about is not including this particular stretch of highway in the foreseeable future. This is not something I'm sure that—it's very easy for ministers of, in my department anyway, to announce new bridges, announce new roads, announce the different monies of being invested. Some, regrettably, because we're not able to do it all, the answer is not an easy answer, but it is an honest answer that certainly in the foreseeable future, this particular stretch of road is not being looked at to be RTACed.

Mr. Pedersen: That's about as straight an answer as I've heard in committee yet for a long time, that, no, it's not within the five-year plan, and that's fair. I know that my constituents realize that.

So the next question is, would the minister or his staff be willing to meet with—I've got quite a large group there—the Treherne-South Norfolk development corporation, clay, gravel, TDT transport and there's a local group in—

An Honourable Member: Swan Lake.

Mr. Pedersen: Swan Lake, again. The potato growers are sort of included. The potato growers with the Treherne-South Norfolk development, because we do have irrigation projects and the whole bit. Would the minister or his staff be willing to sit down with this group when I organize a meeting to look at this as a long-term strategy? I appreciate it's not within the next four years, but I want the meeting before the next four years so that we can get this

highway on the list for improvements in the future, particularly when you look at 1 and 16 overpass going in there now. This becomes an artery to connect to those routes.

Would the minister commit to a meeting should I set it up?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I would, No. 1—well, the quick answer is yes. I certainly don't have a problem with meeting. I have many many meetings throughout the year with many organizations, including companies that are willing to push forward a particular stretch of road that they believe will enhance their business. I'd be certainly pleased to do that.

I just would ask them if they would mind just writing me a letter asking for the meeting and, essentially, what the meeting is about. I don't mind meeting at all, whether it's here or in Portage la Prairie or, you know, the location is not a determinant whether or not the meeting is going to happen. We will do this. We can certainly do that.

Mr. Pedersen: Your mailbox will be—look forward to the letter because I know that these people want to meet, and we want to get this on the agenda for years to come. We want to be part of this major transportation hub. Thank you for your answer.

Mr. Maguire: I just have a couple of questions I want to finish up from some of the discussion I was having with the minister before, in regard to a few items out west there. I was, you know, he was mentioning how dry the spring is and the conditions in that area.

I know, a few years ago, the industry came to him and sought, or at least some of the staff, to look at a—because of the Palliser Triangle region, of that area being dryer than some other parts of Manitoba on a regular basis, sort of a third jurisdiction of highway restriction values for the province of Manitoba. I wonder if the minister can just advise me as to whether there's been any further discussion on that.

Mr. Lemieux: I will certainly take the MLA's request under consideration. The department, I'm not sure who has been looking at it or looking at the different zones and so on to determine what's happening, but we'll certainly consider the MLA's suggestion.

* (11:20)

Mr. Maguire: Yes, just to correct him, it wasn't my recommendation. We were looking at it from the

group of service crews, and that sort of thing in the region that we're looking at, their type of equipment that they have to move and in a meeting that we had with some of the staff in the regional areas there at that particular time. I believe I raised it in Estimates a few years ago just to look at the situation around that region and the movement of traffic that's needed, mainly in that oil industry.

I mean, we know that grain trucks can be loaded down more because they can control their weight better than a vehicle that's already over when it's empty, and moving these service rigs because of the dryness in the region. Of course, it is dry this spring. As I mentioned last week, it may be a situation where you have to look at it year by year from that kind of a circumstance. It is a concern of safety with bridges. I understand that. I know that they have been granted permits in the past to move longer distances around to bypass some of those bridges, and the industry is quite willing to do that and play ball with the government in regard to how they can, you know, make those choices.

So I just wonder if the minister—I thank him for looking into this. One of the other areas that they would have to look at is probably the bridge over the Pipestone Creek right at the bottom of the valley at Cromer, just before you get up to the substation. I wonder if the minister can indicate the condition of that bridge to me on 256 and if he has a report that he can provide me on that bridge.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I know the MLA—well, I have to give the MLA, my critic, a lot of credit. He's like a pit bull terrier when it comes to his region. I know he continues to raise these particular roads and, well, and he should. He hears this from the industry and the industry is knocking down his door all the time wanting him to raise these questions, and this is absolutely valid. But I'm sure he knows that there are thousands of bridges in the province. I don't know the exact, you know, how old this bridge is, or, you know, whether it's a 30-, 40-year-old structure, but I certainly can look into it to find out what is the status of this particular structure.

But, having said that, the bridge program we've put in place over the next number of years is substantial and we've put extra money into it. We announced \$125 million more for bridges just last year and essentially, it's well over \$300 million anyway. Funding will be spent in bridge construction and this is about six times more than was in the '90s. But, having said that, you know, we're tripling its

annual commitment with regard to bridges and bridges are important. You know, people think of asphalt, they think of highways and roads. That's where their primary attention is put, but we are looking and have been looking, not only doing the inspection side, but we understand how important our structures and bridges are. You can have an RTAC road, but if the bridge can't handle the traffic, it's virtually useless to have that kind of a road in place if you don't have the structure to handle it. So we're certainly cognizant of the fact that more attention needs to be placed, quite frankly, overall to roads, and that's why we've budgeted for that. But this particular structure the MLA is talking about in the southwest, I'm not sure of the age of the structure or even what kind of shape it's in, but I will endeavour to find out and ask my department that particular question.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I appreciate that, Madam Chair, and I appreciate the minister's answer. If he can provide me with an update of that at his earliest convenience, that would be good.

I know that there are other areas of movement in that area, and I'm going to refer to another specific bridge that I'm sure the department is aware of, but I know that there's a good deal of concern all across the province. As the minister's indicated, there are hundreds of bridges, if not thousands, throughout the province of Manitoba and, certainly, thousands when we take into the crossings through culverts. I appreciate the fact that there were a good many of those replaced on No. 1 highway in the past year in those areas. I've been so efficient at it, that coming to town last week, I noticed that the beavers are already damming them up on the south side of No. 1 out in my area, if you can believe it, that far south in the middle of a ditch on the No. 1 highway. I couldn't believe beavers are already building a dam beside one of these culverts to hold the water out of it. I finally figured out why the pond was building already to the south side of the No. 1 highway in the Oak Lake area. But there are a lot of willows and that sort of thing, and I guess these are pretty dexterous little animals.

I appreciate the minister's willingness to get back to me on that. The bypassing and the oil industry expanding is not just the only reason the border crossings are becoming more in use in that area, as well, from trade with the American neighbours to the south and 83 highway as a major artery in that area, as is No. 10 from Brandon through Boissevain to the U.S. border, our second largest port in Manitoba.

Can the minister indicate to me what kind of work they expect to be doing and how soon they expect to be doing it on the Jackson Creek Bridge, the one on 83 highway just north of Melita? This bridge has been raised, I know I've raised it, just about every year that I've been in Estimates as Transportation critic, and I raised it as a new member of the Legislature back in the spring of 2000 when we first had our Estimates process. This bridge, I was told at that time, was to have work done to it that was budgeted for, and then it was put on hold because of new types of beams and new materials that were being used in experimental projects in eastern Manitoba. I know the citizens in that area keep reminding me of the circumstances around this particular bridge. It very much needs to be RTACed, and as the minister indicated, an RTAC road is no good if the bridges aren't RTACed. We also have a case on 21 highway where we have an RTAC bridge and the road isn't RTACed. But that was just, maybe, a bit visionary.

The situation with the bridge over the Jackson Creek, just a few miles north of Melita, I wonder if he can give me an update on its condition.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the MLA for the question. This was a bridge that was looked at by the department for some remedial action, but, upon further inspection, they determined that other structures needed the attention much quicker than this particular structure. They are monitoring it on an ongoing basis and really keeping a close eye on it. When they had to make their priorities, this particular structure was not as needing as others, so that's why it didn't receive attention right then.

Mr. Maguire: I know a citizen and a town councillor by the name of Ted Wall. He may have e-mailed the minister on this, as well. I've been in touch with Ted over the years in regard to this particular project. He's not the only one very concerned about it in that region, but, certainly, I would appreciate the minister's update on that. I understand that it may not be a priority in his five-year program, but with the bridges that we have seen collapsing in the last year, there was a lot of work needed to be done on the bridge on No. 10, going south. We saw the No. 2 bridge near Wawanesa being done. Of course, the Portage bypass needed to be completed. I understand that those projects take enormous amounts of energy from the department, as well as dollars to do those projects. Let the minister be the first one to admit himself that they have

expanded the budgets for that area, 125 million more, as he just indicated to me for the repairs on bridges.

I appreciate the fact, and I'll just ask for clarification, how many years is the 300 million to be spent, in one year or how many years is that 300 million that he just spoke of to be spread over?

* (11:30)

Mr. Lemieux: I believe that was over five years. But let me just say that the bridges weren't collapsing, thank goodness. You know, we have put a lot of money into new inspections in bridges and it's important, but the bridges weren't collapsing. Our engineers spotted them, and were able to rectify and fix the bridges up or the culverts through inspections.

As Manitobans have seen, in Minnesota and also in Québec that these tragic incidents have happened and, regrettably, loss of life occurred. As I mentioned before, people look at transportation as asphaltting or paving roads or fixing roads, but an important component, of course, is not just the winter road system and our highway system, all 19,000 kilometres, but it's also the structures that cross creeks and rivers in this province. We have a lot of them. We have a lot of bridges as well.

Just to clarify, these structures were not collapsing. They needed remedial work or, in some cases, needed to be replaced, like the overpass by Portage la Prairie. The total cost was around \$19 million. It doesn't come cheap, but the investment is well worth it especially that being on our No. 1 highway. It was done actually within a year's time which was very, very quick because there was co-operation amongst many people to get it done, and the weather co-operated as well so we're very fortunate.

Mr. Maguire: Just for clarification, then, the \$125 million the minister talked about of new money for bridges is included in the \$300 million over five years?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, I've been advised that it is.

Mr. Maguire: Can he indicate to me when they expect work to proceed on the Jackson Creek bridge?

Mr. Lemieux: No, I can't.

Mr. Maguire: I know the minister talks about a five- and a 10-year plan. It's not on the five-year plan. Can he tell me whether they would look at it on the 10-year plan?

Mr. Lemieux: I'm not sure if it's not on the five-year plan. As I mentioned to the MLA before, the inspections that take place is being monitored on a regular basis. If it is determined by the department that it needs attention, it could get it this summer or next summer.

This is the situation that we find ourselves in with many of the structures. They have to be monitored. They have to be watched and some of them are, regrettably, 50, 60 years old. Not to point the finger at any particular government, but if you're saying a bridge is 60 years old, there have been many governments come and go in Manitoba's history since that time. It just so happens that our government is in this particular situation that we find ourselves in. That we are at the end of that 60-year time limit for some of these structures and we know we have the responsibility to address it.

I'm not sure of the age, the quality of the structure or the state it's in. That's why, when the member asks me a question, it's very difficult to say it is absolutely not on the plan for ten years. If you're watching a structure, watching many different structures in the province, sometimes it's the determination of what may happen to that structure, the shifting, the movement of a particular bridge, whether it's a timber bridge or otherwise, that will determine whether or not it needs action, it needs some remedial action or sometimes, regrettably, needs to be totally replaced. These investments are very costly, but we know they're necessary.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister just follow up, and it's a technical question, I understand. We've got a minute to find the answer on it. The department is doing great work in regard to dealing with new structures. The Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) was asking about new materials that are used in bridges, and in the future we will find new ones that are even stronger and better yet. That's why we have research.

I'm wondering if the minister can indicate how the department is proceeding in its research and its work with some of the new materials to replace wooden and cement beams in some of the bridges that we do have. It's my understanding that the Jackson Creek bridge has those materials in it. What new materials would be available for a structure replacing a bridge like the Jackson Creek one in the future. I know that there have been a number of them in eastern Manitoba that have been utilized, and can he indicate to me just where that research is at?

Mr. Lemieux: I thank my critic for the question. It's an interesting one because we have not only the University of Manitoba Transport Institute but ISIS Canada; you have many different organizations that are doing great research right here in Manitoba. Not only are we a transportation hub, but we are also a leader with regard to research and taking a look at new materials and so on that we can use, and also the smart bridges that we're using. It's amazing. You can monitor a bridge, the flow of traffic, not only traffic counts but also the kind of weights that are crossing bridges. You can embed chips into the asphalt to see the temperature of the asphalt, whether or not it needs to be salted, whether or not it needs to be addressed prior to freezing and so on. Technology is really important in the work that's done, and we also contribute to the University of Manitoba Transport Institute and other organizations to do more research.

This particular structure, the traditional bridge—wooden-beamed bridge—is not something we're looking at in this particular case. We're looking at box culverts or concrete culverts as opposed to the traditional bridge that many would see as they cross rivers and streams nowadays. That's the approach that the department is taking and this particular structure would be removed and a concrete culvert—not necessarily a technical term—but a concrete culvert would be used as opposed to a bridge going over top of this particular river or stream.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate that that may be the type of work that the minister would do in upgrading this particular facility. I also know that the two bridges south of Melita, the one right on the edge of town and the one down by the Antler Creek, have both had tops replaced on them. I wonder if he can just inform me as to the type of work that was done there and will there be future upgrades to those, too, or have they completed some of the work on them?

I know last year they were looking at taking the tops off those bridges. They closed the roads for—it didn't take very long, I mean, it only took a day or two to do each bridge. I wonder if he can tell me just what the future of those two facilities are, although it's my understanding that they already meet RTAC requirements and there was just work being done on them.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the MLA for, you know, for doing his constituency work, but I just want to say that there's a different plan in place for different structures. Sometimes it needs a new deck, especially for the timber structures. There are different

approaches—because these structures or bridges are monitored and looked at by our Transportation, highways people, a different plan is put in place for a different bridge, depending on what they need. Some don't need to be knocked down or removed totally and then rebuilt or put a concrete box culvert in place. There's different approaches that we have to different structures. That is something that our engineers and our bridge people, who have a real challenge because we have over 2,000 bridges in the province, in Manitoba, so it's a huge task to stay on top of the bridges and the structures we have. A different plan is put in place for a different structure, depending on what is determined that is needed.

As I mentioned about Jackson Creek, the plan is in place, that it's a design that would take a concrete culvert, for lack of a better term, but different structures have different plans or different approaches to the structures themselves.

* (11:40)

Mr. Maguire: Just a couple of final questions, then. If the plan's in place to have a concrete project there, can the minister indicate to me how soon would the minister look at providing me with the information as to how soon they would be looking at putting that concrete facility—or structure, pardon me—in place at the Jackson Creek crossing?

Mr. Lemieux: Right now there is no plan in place. Jackson Creek, I've been advised that it's not only functional, but it's doing the job it was intended to do. So there is no plan in place for replacement at all at this point, but the point that the MLA raises is a good one with regard to structures because you're dealing with Navigable Waters people. You're dealing with Fisheries and Oceans people.

So part of a plan is not—some of my neighbours or his neighbours may say, well, why don't you just go in there and just dig it up and knock the old one down and put a box culvert in? We all know it's not that easy. It's well—first of all does it need to be replaced? You know, what are the costs? What solution is there? What are the costs and what do the Fisheries and Oceans people have to say about it or Navigable Waters people have to say about a particular structure? They also have a role to play as to what kind of structure.

I'll use the term "old days" because I'm getting up there like the MLA for Arthur-Virden is—there used to be the ford crossings that were used where people used to be able to drive farm equipment right

through the riverbed because it was just made to—*[interjection]* You didn't need a bridge.

An Honourable Member: I can't remember that far back.

Mr. Lemieux: Oh, okay.

Well, I've had the occasion to go through a few of those crossings. They may be frowned upon now by Fisheries and Oceans people, but they were there. Maybe one or two still exist in Manitoba where essentially you just had a gravel road put through the riverbed where the river drops after the spring runoff takes place, and then farm equipment is just driven across to the other side where you didn't really need a bridge.

I digress, admittedly, but I just want to say that having over 2,000 bridges in the province and additional monies going toward inspections as well as renovating our bridges or reconstructing bridges, in some cases redoing bridges totally, whether you use box culverts or build a structure, the investment is good. It's needed and many of our structures are aging in the province. We know that and we've made a commitment to address it the best possible way we can.

Mr. Maguire: Well, I appreciate that we're not going back to when the Red River carts were taken across with the Red Coat Trail in the Sourisford Park area, his ancestors and maybe some of mine, but I guess I appreciate the fact that you can't replace all the bridges at once in Manitoba. The minister says there are 2,000. Can he clarify if that's structural bridges or if that includes the culverts?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, those are bridges. Those are bridges as we'd know them.

Mr. Maguire: My cohort from the constituency of Portage la Prairie has a couple of concerns that I know he wants to raise with the minister, so I'll provide him with a few minutes to do that here at this time.

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the Member for Arthur-Virden, official opposition critic for Infrastructure, allowing me the opportunity to participate in this morning's committee.

In Portage la Prairie, we are certainly grateful that the department recognizes the need. Although I could have found a lot more areas for asphalt to be laid down, \$19 million, though, was appreciated. I would like to ask, though, with the new restructuring

and responsibilities in the portfolio, a question about the Assiniboine River Diversion as we approach the third anniversary of the failure of the west dike and substantive repairs required.

The reason for the failure has yet to be addressed, although the department did an outstanding job of repairing the breach. The channel itself is in dire need of renovation. It was originally designed for only operation when the ground is frozen, but the channel has been used on numerous occasions when that is not the case and significant erosion has taken place, and also, too, sedimentation, siltation. The channel, if you'll take a look at it, won't take an engineering degree to recognize there is a significant need for attention.

I want to ask the minister whether the department has had opportunity to bring this forward as a major capital expenditure, because, I will emphasize, the reason we have a Forks in downtown Winnipeg is that we have two rivers. The government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on the Red River Floodway. I would say that a small percentage of that spent on the Assiniboine River Diversion at Portage la Prairie would be a very wise expenditure.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the MLA for Portage for the question with regard to the Assiniboine Diversion. Well, I'm not an engineer. So, as he stated, it wouldn't take an engineer to determine whether or not there are problems there. Well, I would argue it probably would take an engineer to determine what solution it would be. I'm surrounded by them, surrounded by hundreds of engineers. I love them all, and they do a great job, but I would never presume to be or try to be in their shoes to determine what a solution would be.

Now, the MLA is correct there has been a restructuring with regard to who's responsible for what, and it does lie within my portfolio now. I know the department is certainly very much aware of a number of the issues raised by the MLA. They have been physically there to take a look at this particular diversion, not only at the inlet, but outlet, and so on. There certainly isn't anything in place as we speak with regard to work to take place, but that's something that our department is very much aware of. They're certainly there keeping a close eye on this particular waterway.

Mr. Faurchou: I appreciate the minister's response, and, if the department is looking to speak with local residents as well, I offer myself to the department on

a consultative basis because this is a channel, which, I believe, is constructed in the best interest of all Manitobans and is deservedly needing of major capital dollars in the not too distant future, if not immediately.

I want to turn, though, to asking the question of the almost \$100 million being charged to the department in interest expenses based upon the amortized investments that the department has made in infrastructure here in the province. *[interjection]* That is page 123. It is the Costs Related to Capital Assets and the interest expenses are categorized between roads, infrastructure, general assets.

May I inquire of the interest rate? Is it one charged in harmony with the same borrowings that the Province incurs? *[interjection]* It's 123 of the revenues and expenditures budget book.

* (11:50)

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, that is determined or established by Finance, and the MLA would have to ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) about specific questions.

Mr. Faurchou: I'll look forward to concurrence then because the Finance section has already passed their expenditures. I will do so because I can only appreciate that it would be basically an accounting asset versus debit side of the ledgers, because it's all financed by government.

I might also then move on to another area of interest in this section, and that is the changes in, once again, restructuring, and the agreement that was struck between Manitoba Public Insurance and the department for the driver's licences. I know there was a long-term anticipated revenue versus expense stream. I wonder how close that is coming to in reality to the projections.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much for the question.

I know that, with regard to vehicle registration and so on, it's—I have to say that, as a government we're, you know, The Gas Tax Accountability Act, for example. I know I digress slightly, but this is something that our government brought in to ensure that all motor fuel tax be applied and applied to highways, which is very, very important. This issue, as I mentioned, is very important for my department because it certainly provides the kind of revenue or dollars that is necessary for the challenges we have. That \$4 billion we talk about over 10 years is going

to make a real difference. I think people are seeing the difference now and it's very, very important. The MLA, I'm sure, is not saying that it's not important. I think he would agree that Infrastructure or Transportation needed more money and that's something that is important for not only our economy, but to make sure we fix up our roads and bridges overall.

Mr. Faurschou: No argument from this quarter about reinvestment in their infrastructure. It's vital to our economy and to the safety and well-being of motoring Manitobans.

But I know my honourable colleague for Emerson asked the question about the increase in vehicle registration and driver's licencing fees. If it is going to pay for the costs that are incurred by the new driver's licences and the new computer system in which we're trying to track more ably the individuals that are driving vehicles on the roadways today, then that is understandable. But we want to make certain that we're getting value for money and that the increases that honourable colleague for Emerson referred to in yesterday's question period, in fact, we are receiving so.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, as I understand it, on a full-year basis—I mean, I'm not sure exactly what the increases are, but I understand that there are tax reductions equalling \$182 million overall and tax reductions are about eight times higher than any kind of fee increases.

I was trying to listen to what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) was saying and, again, with regard to The Gas Tax Accountability Act, we are the first province in all of Canada to bring forward to ensure that those dollars will be directly put into Transportation and again, the Building Canada Fund. That money is supposed to be—that also is supposed to be gas tax money coming back to the provinces, which, obviously, we haven't seen yet. We were in a dispute with the federal government with regard to those dollars. Hopefully, we think that it's going to be amicably resolved. But we believe we had a commitment and we're wanting, of course, the federal government to live up to that commitment and not spend half of that money on the floodway, even though it is important. We believe we had an agreement that we would be receiving the total funds, and not half of it taken away for the floodway.

But, having said that, with regard to any vehicle registrations or any issues related to MPI, I would

really, respectfully, ask the MLA to refer those questions to the minister responsible for MPI with regard to those questions, or even the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), for the specifics.

Mr. Faurschou: I do appreciate that this is new to the department, and there is a crossover between Infrastructure and Finance with the question, but within the Estimates, there is a \$21-million expenditure registered to Infrastructure that pertains specifically to the MPI agreement. Then, when one turns to the revenue page here, you look at over \$19 million that is expected to be acquired from driver's licences, but then also on the other line preceding that, it's estimated that \$106 million is to be collected through licences and fees pertaining to MPI. It is under the revenue stream of Infrastructure and Transportation which is substantive. I just hope the minister is getting every dollar that is collected on his behalf into the department's expenditure as well.

I can appreciate where the minister is in this regard. I just want it on the record that to make absolutely certain to re-evaluate, or examine at the very least, the MPI agreement to make certain that we are receiving the value for dollar, making sure that we are not cross-subsidizing one for the other and making certain that the projections match up with reality.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I would agree with the MLA that we do get good value, as a taxpayer, through MPI. Anyone who has travelled, either to other countries or the United States or other provinces and talked to their relatives about what people pay for insurance in other provinces, it's outrageous. Yet I believe that Manitobans are getting excellent value from our insurer here in Manitoba, and \$23 million, as again, I would refer him to the minister responsible for MPI or the Minister of Finance. But \$23 million refers to—or 21—I think those are dollars for administration fees that are provided by MPI.

Overall, I believe the MLA, also for Portage la Prairie, he speaks to a lot of his constituents. I think everyone knows that the rates and so on that we get, and the third-party liability and so on that we get, through our insurer is, I would argue and maybe arguably, it's the best in North America. We're very fortunate because the moment you travel elsewhere or talk to your relatives, you understand what they're having to pay, since 9/11 certainly. But, again, I

would refer him to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) or the minister responsible for MPI with questions related specifically to MPI. I know also, the Public Utilities Board does an excellent job of working with MPI to determine where they are on their finances and so on.

Mr. Faursehou: Very quickly, before the hour of 12 approaches: 1 and 16, they announced grade separation and the federal government support. Could I have an update as to where the planning process is and potential expected detour routing?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, my understanding is that we're in the very early stages. This project was, I believe, a \$50-million project. The federal government's putting in, I believe \$21 million. The federal government, even though we cost-share a lot of projects, they certainly don't pay for any engineering that's involved with projects like that, whether it's No. 1 highway west to Saskatchewan. So the provinces are pleased to partner with the federal government, whether it's dealing with borders and Gateways money or Asia-Pacific money or Building Canada Fund, which we will get straightened out. We will work with our partners in Ottawa, and I'm sure amicably we'll resolve that.

Again, out of that \$50-million project, the 21 is paid for by the feds, so we're covering more than half of the cost related to that project. We're in the very early stages with regard to that particular project, but we believe it's important and that interchange is going to be—not just for safety, but with regard to greenhouse gases and the flow-through of semis and trucks and tourists and so on—very, very important to improve the flow of traffic on the No. 1 highway.

Mr. Faursehou: I thank the minister for his answer. I hope that there'll be an opportunity for public input for consideration about traffic flow. One of the considerations is that this may be the opportunity to upgrade Provincial Road 305 as the main centre geographically for RTAC rating that would serve southern Manitoba from Highway 2 and—

Madam Chairperson: The time being 12 noon, I am interrupting the proceedings.

The Committee of Supply will resume sitting this afternoon following the conclusion of routine proceedings.

Thank you.

AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL INITIATIVES

* (10:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner, and the floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the minister, in her own words, to describe, not in the words of the deputy or the assistant, but to describe in her own words what the role, function, and activities of the department of rural development are today under her portfolio as minister responsible for that division.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I feel like this is an exam. You've got to be ready for it, but then you can't count on anyone else for assistance. But that's okay because I want to say to the member that this department does have the responsibility for rural development.

We have staff in place throughout the province where we have business development specialists, who are working in the area of economic development. It has become a major part of the staff throughout the region to promote and work with people who are interested. Our department is very committed to value added, to move forward on economic development using some of the resources that we have in rural Manitoba, but, also, looking for other opportunities because with today's technology you can do business wherever you want to. Sometimes there're challenges with infrastructure, whether it be roads or whether it be Internet, but there is a significant commitment to economic development. We have put staff in place throughout the various offices.

* (10:10)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, I can understand that the minister wouldn't know the intricate details of what goes on in rural initiatives, but I would have thought the minister would be able to outline a vision, would have been able to outline the mandate and the goals of her department's role in rural Manitoba. What I got here was basically that we

have some business development specialists, and it's a major part of staff to look at value-added initiatives and economic development, but nothing specific.

What I'm asking the minister to do is to outline, not just for me, but this is recorded in *Hansard* and, therefore, is going to be read by those people in rural Manitoba who look to the minister to provide leadership and guidance in terms of economic development in rural Manitoba, no different than it is in the city or in industrial development where those people, who are charged with the responsibility for advocacy and for leadership in those areas, are going to look to the minister for not only a vision, they're going to look to the minister for defining the goals of her or his department when it comes to that responsibility.

That's basically what I asked the minister to do in her own words. Now, perhaps, I caught the minister off guard. This is not an exam; this is not a test for the minister. That's not what I'm getting at here. This is no trick question. It's simply to allow the minister to be able in her own words to describe what it is Rural Initiatives really stands for, what its goals and visions are, how she is implementing programs to achieve the vision, to achieve those goals.

Part of that, of course, is Rural Forum or the new name about opportunities, and certainly that's fine. The name Rural Forum came from people out in rural Manitoba who wanted a forum to celebrate the successes of Manitoba. Today we change the name to Capturing Opportunities. I don't have anything negative about that, but, indeed, that's part of the whole achievement of the goal that the minister may have in front of her.

What I was asking for was for the minister to describe in her own words those kinds of things. I'm going to ask the minister whether she has anything to add to what she just indicated on the record previously.

Ms. Wowchuk: I didn't mean to be light about the member's question. I was putting a short answer on the record, because I thought he would have more specific questions and we could work or go through them on a case-by-case basis.

Really, it is about providing front-line services, to support programs in partnership with stakeholders and to enhance the viability of family farms and agribusiness and build a viable rural community. These services are delivered through our GO centres

through extension services, like technical leadership, in a variety of areas in the farm production but as well as in value-added.

The goal is to provide leadership and specialized resources to support these initiatives, to develop new employment opportunities, new capital investment and build sustainable communities. It's really a comprehensive approach that includes community, business, leadership and capacity building. The intent is to develop vibrant communities with a dynamic economy and build on the leadership and community members.

I know the member talks about Rural Forum and where it has gone. It had to be changed. Rural Forum was a celebration of what was happening in rural Manitoba, but, based on the advice that we had been given by participants in Rural Forum and economic development officers, it was on their advice that the forum has changed more to a business forum and support. If the member had participated or attended any of the workshops and the presentations that were made, it has become very focussed on business development and those people who are doing business in rural Manitoba.

That's the purpose of Rural Forum. Like any program or any event it evolves, and it has evolved from what was, as the member says, a celebration of successes to a very focussed forum where businesses, community leaders, economic development officers come together as a resource builder to help them move forward with them. I can say that we have many programs that are out there right now that are helping individuals. There has been a review of the services, a review of the opportunities that are out there. In fact, I appointed a consultation committee that travelled throughout Manitoba to get input from individuals, from communities, from industry on what were the value-added opportunities in rural Manitoba. That committee was made up of representatives from across the province. The committee did a report, and that report was presented at the November '06 world forum. The report indicated that there were six key areas of opportunity: alternate energy, tourism, aquaculture, natural resources, service and manufacturing industry, and opportunities for Aboriginal and northern people.

The committee did that work. Economic development officers did that work, and we have been, then, building on that vision that was spelled out and working along with economic development

officers. We continue to have a variety of programs that help people, programs like the Community Works Loan Program, feasibility studies in programs where people are applying. There were some 20 applicants for feasibility studies. We have programs like Hometown, the REA programs, all of these are helpful for people to see growth and build business. I don't know if the member saw the article in the *Free Press* on Saturday. I meant to bring that article here to our committee hearings, but it was an article that talked about all of the businesses that have been successful in rural Manitoba, so there is growth there and my department and economic development officers are working with them, providing resources to help grow those businesses.

Mr. Derkach: Well, I'm a little disappointed, Mr. Chairman, in terms of how the minister has described what was once a vibrant and focussed department into something that has become a mishmash. She talks about Rural Forum, or the old Rural Forum, in Capturing Opportunities, and she talks about how we have now changed our focus to a business-building forum.

Well, Mr. Chairman, if the minister had been awake during the '90s, that's exactly what Rural Forum was. Not only was it a celebration of success stories and success initiatives in Manitoba, but it was also focussed on how to capture the strengths of communities in rural Manitoba and the strengths of opportunities that exist out there and the potential that exists out there in specific business areas.

*(10:20)

In those days we talked about business building in much more than just value added. The minister is locked into this whole area of value-added processing. There is much more to rural Manitoba than value added. She talks about the six key areas in the report that was issued last November.

I don't know how Aboriginal and northern affairs creep into rural development, because there is a special department run by a minister who's not extremely vocal these days but, indeed, someone who has a responsibility for specific Aboriginal matters, including the community economic development in those areas. So I don't know why the minister is now infringing on something that is in another minister's responsible areas. It doesn't belittle or in any way lessen the focus on northern and Aboriginal people, but this is outside of the area.

Yes, two departments can work together in providing a forum, if you like, and if it's Rural Forum, that's fine. That used to happen. We used to bring people from different parts of Canada, and even beyond, to Rural Forum, so that people could learn, so they could take back home some of the successes that were happening in our province.

When the minister lists the programs that are there, they're still the programs that were developed in the 1990s. Yes, they're successful programs. But, when she talks about involvement, certainly, you would think that there would be an added list of 10 or 12 programs that rural people could tap into.

The minister talks about the report, I guess, summarizing that things like tourism were important to the economic development of rural Manitoba. Yet, in her opening remarks, this was an area that was completely avoided. Where are the specialists that deal with tourism specifically? Who are they? Where do they work out of? We see none of them. We see that from industry and trade, but we don't see that from rural development.

When we talk about alternative energy, we're talking about alternative energy in the form of what? Is it wind energy? Is it alternative energy in terms of how we heat our homes or how we heat our businesses, or what does it really mean?

We talk about the value-added sector. That's a very important sector in rural Manitoba, and it overlaps with agriculture, for sure. But that is not the only thing that is happening out there.

I was at the Rural Forum and I did visit most of the display areas; also, I visited some of the sessions that I could. There's no question, if people who are presenting the sessions are professionals, they do an excellent job, and that's what needed more of in Manitoba. I'm not criticizing the minister for what was happening at Rural Forum or for what is happening out there in the private business sector. But, in terms of the leadership, that is supposed to be provided by a minister, in this case, we need to have a more focussed effort.

When we talk about the Hometown program and we talk about the—we have the Green Team program under this department, I don't know where it's gone to now, but this is part of tourism. This is part of developing our youth to appreciate not only the environmental issues of the day, but to gain some appreciation for working in environments that are

providing recreation and tourism opportunities within the province.

So, Mr. Chairman, I think the minister needs to, perhaps, get a more focussed mandate, if you like, or an explanation of what the goals and vision—and it would be a good thing if the minister could put out, and I know the department has within it, somewhere, a written statement indicating the vision of the department and the goals of the department and where we see this department moving, not just in the near future, but down the road.

When I was minister of the department, we were already prepared and although that has been shelved, we were already prepared to move with the next phase. I know that staff that are still working in that department, had some input into that. I still have a copy of that next phase of where rural development should be moving. Hopefully, some day I'll be able to dust it off. It's not that I want to implement it, but I think rural Manitobans need the opportunity to implement it.

Where are our community economic development centres and our community economic development round tables? Where are our CDCs with regard to finding those opportunities that truly exist? The title of the forum talks about Capturing Opportunities, there is so much more out there than just value-added. There's so much more in the manufacturing, in the processing. We were involved heavily in areas like wood manufacturing, further processing of our manufacturing, if you like, of small markets that exist out there for things.

Now, I will get into specific questions on specific issues in a minute, but, in an overall sense, what I see lacking is a vision statement provided by the department, by the minister, that says, this is where our Rural Initiatives Department wants to be. This is where we are heading to. This is only developed with the input of people from rural Manitoba. Now she talks about having the committee that went around on value-added and yeah, value-added is important, but there's so much more. I think we're missing so much if we don't look at the opportunities that are out there.

Now, I notice that, if I can get down to specifics, and I know we can go on back and forth in this way, I'm not criticizing the minister or her department at all. I'm simply saying that we need to hear from the minister what that vision is, what the goals are and how we're moving towards it, how we're achieving it, what are the measurements that are out there that

allow us to measure our successes in rural Manitoba. Those should be put out at the forum. I mean, this is the opportunity for the department to also showcase what it has done in the previous year. There should be a major booth at Rural Forum that says, here are the accomplishments of the department and Manitobans over the course of the past year. There are lots of them.

You know, when I was at the Food Fight, Madam Minister, I couldn't help but think that we've got so much talent in this province that needs to be tapped and it's because of the staff that she's got in her department that we're able to pull out some of these things and not only showcase them, but give them the opportunity to show the world, to show other Manitobans what in fact they have that is not only marketable, but innovative and some of the products that were produced there. In talking to the minister's deputy, I said, wouldn't it be wonderful if we in the Legislature could even have a taste of some of these products that were in the Food Fight and some of the innovative products that are now being created by rural Manitobans? I know that the minister says, we will, and certainly, I'm going to support her in that effort because I think it's not just politically good, I think it's good for showcasing the true value of what there is out there in our province.

Having said that, I want to now just focus in a little bit on the organizational chart. The reason I want to do that is to get a better understanding of where it is that rural development is moving as well. Under the deputy minister and the agri and rural development division, we have four areas: one is the Growing Opportunities centres; Economy and Rural Development; Food Commercialization and Marketing; and Food Development Centre. I would assume that's the one in Portage.

* (10:30)

I would like, if the minister could outline exactly what the areas of activities are within these four divisions. Now, I'm pretty much aware of what happens in the rural development centre, but as in any other department, things change over time, and we need to know what goes on in any of these areas that the minister has responsibility for. So, if the minister could, just briefly outline the activities—this is on page 6 of the organizational chart—those areas of responsibility, and I thank her for that.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, when you look at that pillar of the Agri-Food and Rural Development division, it is a very important division. When you

look at the Growing Opportunities centres, these are the front-line workers that are throughout the region, and they are the front line, as the member knows, where producers, people of the rural areas, can have their first contact. So it's the delivery and the front line where producers, or anybody in rural Manitoba, can learn about all of the programs that are offered. It's at the front line that the linkage is done and supports can be there for entrepreneurs that are in the rural areas.

If you look at the Economy and Rural Development, that's the front line. This is the business and human capacity building portion of the program. It's under this area that we have done some new things, where the co-op development portion of it takes place, and we have done a significant amount of work in co-op development. In fact, we've seen 12 new co-operatives incorporated under Manitoba's legislation in '05-06. In '06-07, we saw 19 new co-operatives in 11 communities developing. So there is all of the business; that's where all of the REDI programming, the feasibility studies, all of that work is under that division.

Under Food Commercialization, this is taking the value-added food products, working with the whole value chain. This is where the Food Fight that the member talks about comes under, really looking at working with people and all sectors of the value chain to develop and promote Manitoba products and work towards getting them into Manitoba stores so that they are available.

Under the Food Development Centre, which is a centre that's very important to us because this is where products that have been developed can be taken to commercialization. Also, under the Economy and Rural Development, that's where we have 4-H; that's where we have Young Farmers; that's where we have the Aboriginal component of it; and that's where all of the RDCs are, Rural Development Corporations.

The member talked about a couple of things in his comments that I want to address. He asked why we are working on Aboriginal issues. There is a Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs but there are Aboriginal people; there are Aboriginal farmers. There are many opportunities that we want to provide supports for so that the Aboriginal people would become more active, and we are providing supports in that area as well.

There are a couple of other issues that I just wanted to mention based on what the member had

said, but maybe he will raise those issues again. That's the area where we have front-line delivery, where we have the variety of programs that we deliver to help with economic and rural growth.

The member talked about us focussing too much on, at least I sense that we were both focussing too much on value added, but it's much, much broader than that.

In the areas of alternate energy, alternate energy is a key component of economic development in rural communities. Alternate energy, whether we do biomass or wind energy or ethanol or biodiesels, all of those can be and are economic drivers in our rural communities.

Another important issue is immigration and that comes under the economic and rural development area, but it's being delivered by the GO teams. So there's a very strong linkage between what we want to do, what happens in that area, what happens between the GO teams, and what happens by the Regional Development Corporations. One of the winners at the Capturing Opportunities was the Parkland Regional Development group where it was a combination of Dauphin, Swan River, Roblin who had played a very strong role, and their role was recognized in what they are doing with immigration.

There's a wide group working on immigration. There's the Arborg-Riverton community project, the Red River business immigration project, the Pembina immigration pilot project, the southwest immigration co-ordinated project, and the Parkland Regional Immigration Strategy that I spoke about that won the award and was recognized at Capturing Opportunities. So there are many areas, and I show that as an example of where you have the integration of government's agenda to increase the population of this province and the economic and rural development section of this department linking to the GO centres and then linking directly to the various communities. So there is a lot that's delivered through this area, and I think there are also a lot of successes that we are seeing in the communities as a result of this.

Mr. Derkach: I'd like to ask the minister: In the Growing Opportunities centres now she outlines very briefly, I guess some high-level initiatives or programs, not specific. She says that these are the front-line workers, the first contacts where programs are offered from, and it supports entrepreneurship. Can she outline for me the specialists that she has working in the various divisions from the Growing

Opportunities centres? Who they are and what their area of expertise is, please.

* (10:40)

Ms. Wowchuk: There are about 155 staff in the 11 GO centres, GO teams, I should say because they aren't all in centres. Of those, 37 are business development specialists, and I believe that's what the member is looking for is the number that are involved in business development, but I would say to him as well that there are 43 that are farm production advisers and 21 that are rural leadership specialists as well that work across the teams but—[interjection]—rural leadership specialists.

An Honourable Member: Rural leadership specialists?

Ms. Wowchuk: That's right. These are the ones that work with the individuals to develop capacity. They work very hands-on with the people that are going into different business projects. That's an outline of the people that I think the member is asking for but, if there are more specific questions, I'll wait for those.

Mr. Derkach: I didn't get the last number for rural leadership specialists. How many?

Ms. Wowchuk: Sorry, 21.

Mr. Derkach: Can I ask the minister to define a business development specialist and what qualifications are necessary for that person to be called a business development specialist?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, these people all have professional backgrounds. They could be either in the field of agriculture, in human ecology or in business, and many of them would have additional skills as well.

These individuals work directly with the communities. They could work with individuals or with co-operatives to help them move their ideas forward, to help them develop their business plan and help them establish their business.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, if you want to call yourself a specialist, you'd have to have the qualification and the paper to go with it. I want to know how many business management professionals, people who have graduated with an M.B.A., she has working in this area of business development.

Ms. Wowchuk: I would have to disagree with the member to say that you have to have an M.B.A. to be

able to work on these kinds of issues. I would disagree. However, I would say to him there are a small number of people in the department who do have an M.B.A., but I think it depends on the skill sets of the individual and over time there could be more people that will have the M.B.A. I think that a combination of a professional degree, a combination of knowledge of the industry and the ability to draw upon other resources that are available within the department, within government, to help in those areas. It has proven to be successful to have the people with various backgrounds working in these areas and they're improving their skills, but they had a wide breadth of knowledge. This model is proving to be successful in working with people. So I would disagree with the member to say that in order to do a business plan, you have to have an M.B.A.

Mr. Derkach: I don't know where the minister gets that from because I never said that. I said, if you're going to be a specialist then you have to have some kind of qualification that would render you a specialist, not simply a professional academic.

We're talking about business development specialists. I want to know, outside of ag reps, people who've got their agriculture degrees, people who've got their home ecology degrees, I want to know how many specialists she has and what their qualifications are in general terms of business specialists?

* (10:50)

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess I would say to the member that after we did the reorganization we don't have ag reps anymore. The industry has become more specialized and the people who are working with them have become more specialized in addressing particular areas. If the member is saying that people who took their degree in agriculture do not have any skills in business, then I would disagree with him.

With regard to the department and what we have, we have 10 people who have specialized or are specialists in agri-business, 10 people who are trained in community economic development, and there are 17 in various job roles—and one's right here—that provide supports, not only for primary production, but also for value-added, commercialization and economic development. Some of those would be—we have a potato specialist; we have a livestock specialist; we have a grains and seed specialist; someone in direct marketing. We have technology and manufacturing specialists. We have an agri-tourism specialist, an agri-energy specialist, organic specialist, a value chain. We have a northern

food specialist and a specialist that works on immigration, labour and workforce. We also have an urban agri-food office, which I think is very important that we link rural Manitoba and urban people together, and that office is working very well, where it's being used by and linking together people who are in the processing business.

So there's a wide breadth. Yes, there are some that are working in primary production, and there are some that are working in community development, rural development, value-added and developing the various areas, whether they be agri-tourism or alternate energies, all of those.

The member is looking for somebody that's just specifically dealing with economic development, and I say to him that you have to have economic development that's linked to what is available, and that's what we're building on, building on providing the services for a variety of areas that create opportunity in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairperson, I don't like the minister putting words into my mouth, because I didn't say that people who are ag reps or were ag reps don't have any skills in these other areas. I know they have. What we used to call home economists—human ecologists today—have certainly wonderful skills that can be used.

I was trying to focus on the specialists in business. Now, if I go to the department of industry, trade, or if I go to the Department of Finance, or if I go to a financial institution, and I'm operating a \$10-million business, I'm going to have somebody who is trained specifically in either business development skills, or is trained as an economist, is trained as a financial wizard, if you like, who will give me professional advice.

I'm saying this because I have talked to a number of former ag reps, if you like, people whose job role has now changed to be business specialists. I ask them the question: What skills do you have that you can take with you to advise businesses, people who are investing millions of dollars into an enterprise and you can advise them on the issues of finance, on issues of business development, and where you can provide the leadership so that these businesses will have every opportunity of success rather than having the gut reaction, if you like, of the individual who does not have the kinds of skills that are needed in these areas?

Now, the minister can, and the department can, bring in these specialized people through contract to do this kind of work, but when you talk about, I guess, the department and the business development centre, or the Growing Opportunities Centre, and you talk about all of these specialists in business development, in human ecology and agriculture, you have to give the impression that there are specialized skills available in that department to lead you through the complexities of either government programming or the financial world in terms of putting a business plan together, in terms of taking that business plan and selling it to a financial institution so that business has some opportunity.

All I was asking for from the minister was to identify that kind of skill set that she has within these GO centres, or whatever—I didn't even understand that the Growing Opportunities centres are the GO centres. That's not what I was led to believe because the GO centres are part of agriculture as well. This is all very confusing and, yes, there can be specialists working out of those areas, but are they truly specialists or are they advisers? That's what we need to get down to because I think there's a misleading title there, if these are called specialists but they really do not have the kind of skill set that is required of a specialist when it comes to complex business development plans, et cetera.

That's basically where I was going. The minister hasn't been able to answer that and I'm going to assume that most of these people are in the advisory capacity rather than the specialist capacity.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, the member talks about what services we provide, and I said to him, you know, this is the front-line service, this is the link to other departments, and there's a variety of projects. There could be some very small projects that the individuals—that the people in the front line would be able to work with, but they are the pathfinders, they are the links through the various other departments. As the project gets bigger, the member knows full well that there are people with expertise within my department if it's a bigger project that crosses over with the other departments—and people work together. I don't think anyone would expect that someone that's working on the front line, a business development specialist, would have all of the answers, but they work with them and there is training.

There's a lot of work that has been done, and I would say to the member that the model that we have

put in place here in Manitoba appears to be successful because we have our staff being invited to other provinces to come and talk about the model of how we are offering services throughout the province.

You will know that, in many provinces, there is no extension service or it has become very centralized. We've taken a different approach where we want to have more of the services in the field. Are all of the services in every GO Office? Of course not. You couldn't have everything there. These people do have the skills to work, and I believe that many of them are very skilled, but I also would give credit to the people that work in this department as they're working with the business, if they don't have the skills, they have the—they will reach out. They will go where they have to go to help move a project along. I don't think projects stop because someone in the office may not be a specialist, as the member talks about, in a particular area, but they have the skills. I also think that's it very important that you have a breadth of knowledge and then have the ability to seek out the supports that you need, and that's what the people throughout the province in the GO teams are doing.

Is there need to improve? Of course. There's always need and that's why we continue to offer training sessions. That's why people who have ideas come to us and there's development that's offered for them and supports in other ways.

* (11:00)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I'm not criticizing the minister's department for anything. The GO centres have preserved the ability of local communities to still have a team of people within that community to develop services, and then there's the link to the GO centres. That's a fine idea. I don't think the minister has ever heard me criticize that model, because, I think, through the experiences of other disasters in government, sometimes—and I'm not specifically talking about this government. I'm just talking about governments in general. The staff within her department did a very wonderful job in saying, we're not going to follow that trend; we're going to create something that is more responsive to the needs of people, and the GO centres are. There's no question about that.

I think there's a misnomer in terms of people calling themselves specialists, when they are really advisers. You know, I know a lot of the people that work in the department. They've become, from being

professional people in a particular discipline, now they've been given the label specialist. If you talk to them, they say, well, wait a minute, I'm really not a specialist; I'm just called that, but I'm more comfortable in the area of providing advice on what government can provide, and, if we need to go further than that, we can certainly contract specialists in to bring you the kind of specialized opinion that you may need.

So that's the only area I was getting at, because I thought that the government was moving in this department to bring in business specialists that could advise emerging small businesses in rural Manitoba as to the direction they should be taking when it came to business development plans, when it came to marketing, when it came to all kinds of issues as they relate to a business. That's what I was getting at.

We can go around and round this forever, and never really agree on the approach. I have heard from businesses out there as well who are saying, well, these aren't really specialists. They're people that are giving advice, but they're really not specialists. I think we need to be careful about that, because we are leading people down the path, a wrong path. If we really think that—unless we are ready to start hiring people who are truly specialists. I think there are wonderful people in the department who give good advice. I would not discredit them in any way, shape or form, but I would hate to hang something over their heads, when, in fact, they, perhaps, not because of any fault of their own, don't have that specialized expertise in a particular area.

So that's where I was coming from. Not in a critical way, but simply to offer an opinion and a better understanding, I guess, of what the Growing Opportunities centres really are.

I know the minister wants to respond, but then I would like to move into some questions on the economy and rural development.

Mr. Chairperson: Very good.

Ms. Wowchuk: I do want to respond, because I want to say to the member that this is an evolving process. As you reorganize a department, and put a new face on it and—I want to say as well that in each region there's an advisory council that helps us, gives suggestions of what should be there. I will say that, yes, this is an ongoing process.

As we are recruiting new people to the department, then we will look at how we can get those speciality skills there. In some areas we have.

When you look at the livestock industry, that is someone that's a specialist in livestock. When you look at the potato specialist, that is an individual that's a specialist. Agri-Energy, that is someone that's a specialist in those areas, as is Agri-Tourism. Organics—the organic section is a specialist, but the member is right that some people may not have all of the skills. They continue to work on them. I will say that as vacancies come up it gives us the opportunity at that time.

It's an evolving process, and we will continue to work on it. I appreciate the comments of the member.

Mr. Derkach: Could the minister tell me who the director is of the Growing Opportunities Centre—*[interjection]*—or an executive director or someone who's responsible for it?

Ms. Wowchuk: Gerald Huebner is responsible for all of the GO teams; he is the director and he has an associate director, Michael Yaceniuk.

Mr. Derkach: So the Growing Opportunities centres are really the GO centres which have the capability of advising and working with business centres or business opportunities, entrepreneurs throughout the province.

I'd like to go to the area called Economy and Rural Development. Can the minister provide for me the overall mandate and the number of staff and, perhaps, what their skill set is in the Economy and Rural Development section?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, there are 29.8 or, I would say, just under 30 people in this division. The objectives are: to build human and social capacity in rural Manitoba so they can identify and act on economic development opportunities to increase the prevalence of value-added processing and to grow business and economic opportunities in rural and northern Manitoba; to increase the use of the co-operative model; to build sustainability and active organizations and partnerships relevant to community needs; to retain farms and businesses in rural and northern Manitoba; to further engage Aboriginal people, immigrants, women and youth in rural and northern community economic development projects; to increase Manitoba's research and innovation in rural community economic development; and to foster entrepreneurial spirit and community pride among rural and northern Manitoba citizens. Those are the objectives of the division.

* (11:10)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairperson, I'm capable of reading what's in the book. I'm asking the minister if she could outline the practical application of this division and how it's different from the GO centres which she just described, basically duplicating the description of what she gave me in the GO Centre objectives.

So I'd like to know what the differences in the two divisions are and how their objectives differ.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, I neglected to introduce Mr. Leo Prince, who is at the table, who is a director of Economic Development, and I'm sure the member opposite has had the opportunity to speak to him and know him.

In this division, this is where the whole REDI suite of programs is administered. It's all in here. This area provides leadership in a broad range of areas, really, leadership development. This division is responsible for 4-H, ag societies. We have a rural infrastructure specialist in this area, a labour specialist, and I've indicated earlier that we are encouraging Aboriginal people to be more involved in rural economic development and in agriculture so we have the Aboriginal specialist here. Also, the whole co-op division is in this part and as I indicated earlier, there is a focus on co-ops. We have had many co-ops—there have been more co-ops developing. So that is the area that is covered off in this.

This is where we provide funding for various initiatives such as the Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit, the Hometown Manitoba, feasibility studies and Community Works Loans programs funding. Member earlier mentioned green teams; that is funded and administered under here. But it's really to provide community economic development, business, strategic economic initiatives and programs—and also to provide capital funding for projects that are very important for economic development.

Mr. Derkach: Wow, Mr. Chairperson, when I look at this mishmash, I can see why we're providing so much confusion out in rural Manitoba as to where these individuals can go to get some assistance. I hear this almost on a constant basis. We've got under this division a 4-H program thrown in. We have an Aboriginal component thrown in. We have leadership division thrown in. This is just a mishmash. Then we have under all of that, a REDI

program. The REDI program is essentially, as I knew it, a program that is supposed to allow for an enterprise to be able to move forward whether it's through feasibility study, through a financial analysis, through providing support for infrastructure to a business and those sorts of things. How that fits with a 4-H program is beyond me, but I don't understand, perhaps. It's up to every government to organize their departments as they choose, but it appears to me that this whole division under the Economy and Rural Development has just had everything thrown into it.

I'm going to ask the minister: Of the 29 staff, again, how many of these people are, I guess, identified in the department to work specifically with entrepreneurs who are either expanding, emerging, or trying to exist in rural Manitoba, and what, if you like, the skill set is of those individuals who will provide that leadership to these people?

Ms. Wowchuk: There are seven positions that work on economic development. The first contact is with the front-line staff. Then, from the front-line staff, there is a linkage to the Knowledge Centres that help to build this capacity. For example, I would say to the member that I talk about co-ops. There's a co-op specialist in this division, but this co-op specialist works with all of the various GO teams and helps to build the capacity to promote co-ops. But, if there are projects that happen at the region and, then, if there are larger projects that may need a larger team to work with them, then there are the skills within this division to work with larger projects, and there are the skills within this division to help build the capacity of the people that we talked about earlier that are within all of the GO teams.

Mr. Derkach: Since there are only seven positions, can the minister identify the individuals that are the specialists in this area, the seven positions and who they are?

Ms. Wowchuk: As I indicated, Leo Prince is the director. Ms. Tara Budakowski is the administration officer. We have business development specialist, Alex Mulvenna. We have Donald Bromilow as a business development—

An Honourable Member: And what's his position, I'm sorry?

Ms. Wowchuk: He's a business development specialist. And Roger Brunet who is a northern community adjustment specialist. We have, and the member may remember, Bob Newell; he has just

retired; and Joe Laxdal has retired, and those positions have to be filled.

Mr. Derkach: Can the minister tell me what Bob Newell and Joe Laxdal's positions were?

Ms. Wowchuk: They were both business development specialists.

* (11:20)

Mr. Derkach: So, out of the seven positions, how many are vacant?

Ms. Wowchuk: Two are vacant.

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable member for Derkach—for Russell. It's a new municipality.

Shall we try that again?

Mr. Derkach: No, that's fine.

Mr. Chairperson: That's all good.

Mr. Derkach: Of the 29 staff, can the minister tell me how many of those positions are vacant?

Mr. Chairperson: For parity's sake, I guess I have to say honourable minister for Wowchuk.

Ms. Wowchuk: Of the 23 other positions that are there, there are three vacancies now.

Mr. Derkach: So, in total, there are five vacancies out of 29.

Ms. Wowchuk: At this time, yes.

Mr. Derkach: Can the minister tell me whether these are going to be recruited immediately, or whether they are going to remain vacant?

Ms. Wowchuk: They will be included in our recruitment plan so there is not an intention to keep them vacant, but, as the member knows, it takes time to fill positions. These positions will be filled.

Mr. Derkach: Of the 155 positions in the Growing Opportunities centres, can the minister tell me how many of those are vacant?

Ms. Wowchuk: We would have to go through some pretty detailed—*[interjection]* Oh, you have that. The staff just tell me that—I was going to give an approximate answer, but they tell me that there are 10 vacancies.

Mr. Derkach: I'd like to move to the Food Commercialization and Marketing section, and I guess, maybe, together with that, look at the Food Development Centre because, in her description, the minister kind of duplicated what the

Food Commercialization and Marketing section was with the Food Development Centre.

Can I ask the minister for the number of staff—oh, I think that's in here—but sort of the function, if you like, of the Food Commercialization section?

Ms. Wowchuk: The member is right; there is a very close linkage between what happens at the two divisions that he talks about.

The Food Development Centre is about working with producers' businesses to help them develop their food product and take it to commercialization.

The Knowledge Centre provides the other supports that, once it is commercialized, as to how to get it to market. In this division, they work with food processors, direct marketing initiatives like, buy local. They work with the chefs' association, and the culinary arts, trying to help these people get into the markets, work together with direct markets.

A good example is the Food Fight that just happened at Capturing Opportunities. These people have developed a product, but then they have to get into the restaurants. They have to get it into the stores. So it is through this division that the staff is able to make the linkages. It is a new division that is a growing division.

I want to give an example. There was an article in the paper last week about Kroeker Farms jams. They're a big company, but they developed a jam product. Through the work of this division, through a project called Border Busters, they were able to help these people now get their product into a major food chain, in supermarkets.

One is to help develop the product. The other is to help people get their links, and get their product, whether it be into the restaurants, whether it be in through the world market, through missions, helping them get to food shows, which is also very important, or, whether it be through direct marketing.

Those are the different kinds of things and different ways that this division can help individuals move their product once it has been developed to commercialization through the Food Development Centre.

Mr. Derkach: I'm not here to tell the minister how to run her shop or how to run her department, but this is an area—I'm just kind of miffed by the propensity on value-added and the ignorance, if you like, of the other divisions in the other economic sectors.

* (11:30)

I'll just stick to the food commercialization side of this. Our Food Development Centre has done good work over the years. The government did invest a lot of money for the development of that centre. That was certainly needed, and, I think, appreciated by those who use it. One of the areas that is frustrating people who are in the value-added food chain is the snail pace of any work that needs to be done on behalf of these entrepreneurs. So entrepreneurs are voting with their feet, and they're going across the line to labs in the United States where they can get a quick turnaround and then come back. It almost seems like these businesses hang on to the department to placate them and move ahead by using labs in other jurisdictions. I've heard this frustration from most of the people who are involved in the value-added sector. I could even go further and to name them, but I don't think that does any good to anyone.

But I think what we need to do is develop an attitude and a process in our departments here where we can provide the rapid responses that are there in the commercial labs that are in the United States basically, because time is money to any of these entrepreneurs. That's why it's so important to get the testing information done. Months are not unusual lengths of time for entrepreneurs to be waiting for approvals and for responses, and I don't think that's adequate if we're really moving ahead in this area.

In terms of the food commercialization area, in having been to trade shows in the United States and watching what really happens in terms of how the USDA and the entrepreneurs there work together and how the commercial labs work together, we find that we could learn a lesson or two in terms of how we work with our entrepreneurs to help them establish a booth at rural—not at rural, but at trade shows. This is one area that I think the department can be of real assistance to entrepreneurs, and I know we used to do that to a certain extent. I don't think it's happening right now. Maybe it is, but to a lesser degree. But you know, a lot of these entrepreneurs don't have the skill sets or the know-how in establishing a product for a trade show or even when it comes to setting up booths, whether it's the Winter Fair or some of our events that we have around the province here or outside the province. If you were even to walk around, let's say the Brandon fair, or there's the Winter Fair or some of their events where we have entrepreneurs trying to market their product by establishing a booth and displaying their product.

Not only is it in the quality of the display, it's in how the product is displayed.

I think if we're talking about advisers and specialists within our department—and we do have them, especially in the human ecology side, people who can probably be of great assistance to help entrepreneurs establish a booth that is attractive and one that can help to commercialize that product.

I'm wondering if the minister can tell me whether she has individuals within that component of 11 staff, I think it is, in the food commercialization side who in fact have skill sets that can help people who are trying to commercialize their product through displays—well, I guess trade shows is what you would call them; I'm sure there are other names for these events—and help them and assist them in providing opportunities for them to enhance the commercialization of a product.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the member has raised a very important issue, the area of trade and getting the product into the market. Yes, we do support individuals as they want to take their product to trade shows in participation with CTT, the other department—*[interjection]*—Competitiveness, Training and Trade. There's a trade division there.

I talked about the program Border Busters and that is, again, our department working with Competitiveness, Training and Trade and Ag Canada, working with individuals who are trying to get their products, helping them work through the complicated process that is sometimes there to get a product into the market. We work with Manitoba Trade; we work with Agri-Food Trade Alliance. There are workshops that are held on how to do trade shows.

There are trade shows in Mexico, United States, Japan, Europe and Australia. There are a lot of places where we have worked with them and have helped to set up displays but, with regard to the question about whether we work with individuals, for example, at the Brandon Fair, that isn't something that we're doing now. We are focussing more on larger markets but that's certainly something to consider. I would agree with the member that, if you are going to do these kinds of trade shows, they have to be quality shows. There is a lot of work that has to be done before an individual is ready to go into these markets, but we do work with them in conjunction with the other departments.

* (11:40)

Mr. Derkach: The minister didn't provide any specifics in terms of how and who in her department works with these entrepreneurs. It's fine to focus on larger markets and that's where the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism should probably be involved. When we talk about the small entrepreneurs who are emerging in rural Manitoba, when I talk about small entrepreneurs, I'm talking about people who employ five to 10 people in their businesses, who are looking at expanding and sustaining their businesses.

Can the minister provide any specifics in terms of how her department works with these individuals and who those specialists in the department are that work with these people, because I don't know any of them?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, this is a continuum of programs. We talked about the business development specialists who work at the local level, and those people could be, it could start as local as a farmers market or some of the different shows that we have, and the member is well aware of the different events that take place in rural Manitoba where people start with their products.

Then it moves on. It may move on to a larger trade show. It may move on to getting their product into a high-end restaurant, and then it may move on to some of the larger shows in Canada, for example, the Toronto show, and then move on. As a person develops, they end up in the world market. We do various things. It's various things like the buy-local program to encourage Manitobans to buy Manitoba products.

There is the wine and food show that takes place here that features Manitoba products and gets them into those markets. As I say, it could move on. There are marketing studies that are done, but it starts with our own department with business development specialists, and I have a list here of over 300 projects that have been worked on, and some of them are in food products but some of them are in different areas of value-added or job creation that may happen, whether it be running a sawmill or building boats or tourism, straw cubing, biodiesel, wind energy. There's a variety of these, but when we are talking about food products, it has to go—nobody is going to start a food product without, first of all, you might start at the local market and that's fine, but then you have to develop it to a further level. That's where the Food Development Centre comes in.

That's where the Food Commercialization and Marketing division comes in.

It is not only our department. Our department works at one level but as we move to a higher level, then there are other departments that are—in the food commercialization specialists, we have Myrna Grahn, who is a value chain and domestic market. We have Robin McRae, who is organics and natural and pesticide-free, and Randy Stoyko who is agri-food trade, buy-local, and national and international markets. I believe those were the specialists that the member was looking for.

Mr. Derkach: I'd like to go to the REDI program, if I might, and I'd like to ask the minister, first of all, whether or not these programs, whether they're REDI, or the round table, or—they don't have them any more, the RDCs—and those programs, are still funded through the VLT portion of money that comes to the department?

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairperson, may I ask the minister what the actual amount of money coming to the department from rural VLTs is presently?

Ms. Wowchuk: The estimate for 2008-09 is 22.450 million—[*interjection*]-22, 450,000.

Mr. Derkach: Can the minister tell me how this amount changed since 1999?

Ms. Wowchuk: '99?

In 1999-2000, it was 21,000; in 2000-2001, it went down to 15,000; 2001-02, we maintained at 15,000; '02-03, it was 16,000—I'm sorry, million—16.225; '03-04, it was 16.225 million; '04-05, it dropped to 14 million 975; '05-06, it went to 21 million 750; '06-07, it was 21 million 305; '07-08, it's 21 million 108.3; and I just gave '07, and '08, it's 22.450. So, there is a slight increase, and you can see where there were some decreases, some of those are related to smoking bans and some of those are related to, I believe, other events, but mostly it's the smoking decrease, and now there is an increase in revenues and our portion has the amount coming to REDI as increased as well.

Mr. Derkach: Can the minister tell me what programs are funded out of the \$22.45 million?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, 38 percent goes into rural economic development; 20 percent goes into infrastructure; 3 percent goes into quality of life; 18 percent into non-recurring—

An Honourable Member: I'm sorry?

Ms. Wowchuk: Non-recurring.

An Honourable Member: How much?

Ms. Wowchuk: 18 percent.

* (11:50)

An Honourable Member: What does that mean, non-recurring?

Ms. Wowchuk: The programming changes for year to year. I can give a little bit more detail, but the next one is: 11 percent goes to youth programming, and 10 percent goes to capital.

Examples of programming. There are various projects. The non-recurring are one-time programs. Under the quality of life there could be policing projects. So there are a variety of programs. They break down to capacity building and research, which include things like feasibility studies. Youth development would be Green Team, Partners with Youth, Junior Achievement.

There is the business and co-op development, which is the CED tax credit, the REA program, Community Works Loan Program. Then we have community and regional development, which are the RDC grants. Then there is a strategic initiatives program capital. There is some money that goes to water and sewer, conservation districts, Hometown Manitoba. That is some of them. Our Neighbourhoods Alive! projects are under this as well. Strategic funds would be things like the Western Canada Summer Games, Parkland Ethanol Co-operative. There are a variety of things in here.

Mr. Derkach: I'd like to focus in on the rural economic development that takes 38 percent of the budget. Can the minister tell me the amount of money and which projects were funded from VLT revenues in the rural economic development area?

Ms. Wowchuk: Under this division there are feasibility studies, Rural Development Institute in Brandon, the CED tax credit—

An Honourable Member: I'm sorry, the C—

Ms. Wowchuk: CED tax credit, the REA program, the Community Works Loan Program, the Communities Economic Development Fund, and the RDC, regional development corporation grants, and home—

An Honourable Member: RDC?

Ms. Wowchuk: RDC, the grants for them. Hometown comes out of this as well.

Mr. Derkach: Can the minister tell me how much money was allocated and spent in feasibility studies?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chair, \$260,000 was allocated, and \$260,000 was spent.

Mr. Derkach: Can she tell me what projects were supported through the Feasibility Studies Program, or she can table them?

Ms. Wowchuk: There were 20 projects where feasibility studies were funded. One was the Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre; Chaboillé CDC, which is in St. Pierre; Delmar Commodities Limited; GLJ Industries Limited; Heat Innovations; H.W.H. Holdings; Icon Technologies Limited.

Mr. Derkach: That's in Winnipeg.

Ms. Wowchuk: In Winkler. The member asked if it's in Winnipeg. We don't do projects in Winnipeg. That one's in Winkler.

Northern Heat Pump Incorporated; Parkland hemp project; Pilot Mound Hotel Co-operative; Portage la Prairie C, that's the people's food store; Rat River Health Council; Rivers Daly CDC; Russell Memorial Arena Commission; St. Lazare sustainable energy board; straw procurement business case; town of Teulon hotel project; Turtle Mountain ethanol incorporated; Winchester R.M.; and Clean Country Resources.

I can provide the member with a copy of this list if that would be helpful.

Mr. Derkach: Now I'd like the minister to provide the amounts of money that were afforded to each of these centres.

Ms. Wowchuk: Would you like me to read them, or would you like me to provide you with a copy?

Mr. Derkach: If the minister would table that, that would be fine as well.

Ms. Wowchuk: If I could table a copy this afternoon when we return.

Mr. Derkach: Sure. That would be most acceptable.

Ms. Wowchuk: If the member has a particular project that he wants the amount on right now, I can provide that, or we can provide a list this afternoon.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, no, I don't need a specific project. I just want to know what the parameters are, because, when I looked at the list of projects, we have grocery stores being funded out of the Feasibility Studies Program. We have a memorial arena in my own town being funded out of this project. Those are hardly the kinds of economic initiatives and projects that add entrepreneurial value to a community. When I look at Portage la Prairie food store, are we into the retail aspect of it today? An arena is a recreation facility, and a recreation facility usually is funded through a community works program, which is run under a different department altogether.

I just want to know what kinds of parameters and, I guess, qualifications are required by a business. I thought they were businesses, but we're going into, certainly, beyond that in terms of qualifying for Feasibility Studies.

When the minister says they did a CDC—

Mr. Chairperson: The time being 12 noon, I am interrupting the proceedings.

The Committee of Supply will resume sitting this afternoon following the conclusion of routine proceedings.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

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