

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

Vol. LX No. 50 – 1:30 p.m., Monday, June 2, 2008

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
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DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
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EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
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LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 2, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): On House business.

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Chomiak: I'd like to announce that the two committee meetings for this evening, the Standing Committee on Justice considering Bills 14, 26, 35, 37, 39 and 40, and the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs considering Bills 6, 25, 29 and 38, will have a change in the meeting start times. Instead of starting at 6 p.m., the two committee meetings will now start at 8 p.m. I'm advising that I'm making this announcement after consultation with the Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Hawranik).

I'm making this announcement as early as possible in order to allow for as much contact of individuals and to lessen the impact on individuals as much as possible in order to allow this to take place.

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that the two committee meetings for this evening, the Standing Committee on Justice considering Bills 14, 26, 35, 37, 39 and 40, and the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs considering Bills 6, 25, 29 and 38, will have a change in the meeting start times. Instead of starting at 6 p.m., the two committee meetings will now start at 8 p.m. The House is being advised that this announcement is being made after consultation with the Official Opposition House Leader and the Government House Leader.

PETITIONS

Headingley Foods

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The owners of Headingley Foods, a small business based in Headingley, would like to sell alcohol at their store. The distance from their location to the nearest Liquor Mart via the Trans-

Canada Highway is 9.3 kilometres. The distance to the same Liquor Mart via Roblin Boulevard is 10.8 kilometres. Their application has been rejected because their store needs to be 10 kilometres away from the Liquor Mart. It is 700 metres short of the requirement using one route but is 10.8 kilometres using the other.

The majority of Headingley's population lives off Roblin Boulevard and uses Roblin Boulevard to get to and from Winnipeg rather than the Trans-Canada Highway. Additionally, the highway route is often closed or too dangerous to travel in severe weather conditions. The majority of Headingley residents therefore travel to the Liquor Mart via Roblin Boulevard, a distance of 10.8 kilometres.

Small businesses outside Winnipeg's perimeter are vital to the prosperity of Manitoba's communities and should be supported. It is difficult for small businesses like Headingley Foods to compete with larger stores in Winnipeg, and they require added services to remain viable. Residents should be able to purchase alcohol locally rather than have to drive to the next municipality.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act (Mr. Swan) to consider allowing the owners of Headingley Foods to sell alcohol at their store, thereby supporting small business and the prosperity of rural communities in Manitoba.

This is signed by Sylvia Shettler, Janice Wolfe, Rita Tully and many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

Lake Dauphin Fishery

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Fishing is an important industry on Lake Dauphin.

To help ensure the sustainability of the Lake Dauphin fishery, it is essential that spawning fish in the lake and its tributaries are not disturbed during the critical reproductive cycle.

A seasonal moratorium on the harvesting of fish in Lake Dauphin and its tributaries may help create an environment that will produce a natural cycle of fish for Lake Dauphin, therefore ensuring a balanced stock of fish for all groups who harvest fish on the lake.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) to consider placing a moratorium on the harvesting of any species of fish on Lake Dauphin and its tributaries for the period April 1 to May 15 annually.

To request the Minister of Water Stewardship to consider doing regular studies of fish stocks on Lake Dauphin to help gauge the health of the fishery and to consider determining any steps needed to protect or enhance those stocks.

This petition is signed by Gilles Maguet, Denis Parthenay, Donna Parthenay and many, many others.

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by Nancy Metcalfe, Linda Warkentin, Brad Elias and many, many others.

Pharmacare Deductibles

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The NDP government has increased Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent each year for the past seven years, with the curious exception of the 2007 election year.

As a result of the cumulative 34 percent hike in Pharmacare deductibles by the NDP government, some Manitobans are forced to choose between milk and medicine.

Seniors, fixed and low income earning Manitobans are the most negatively affected by these increases.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba to consider reversing his decision to increase Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent in budget 2008.

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

This petition is signed by Earl Dick, Ivan Wiebe, Ron Klassen and many, many more.

Crocus Investment Fund—Public Inquiry

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

The 2007 provincial election did not clear the NDP government of any negligence with regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

The government needs to uncover the whole truth as to what ultimately led to over 33,000 Crocus shareholders to lose tens of millions of dollars.

The provincial auditor's report, the Manitoba Securities Commission's investigation, the RCMP investigation and the involvement of revenue Canada and our courts collectively will not answer the

questions that must be answered in regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his NDP government to co-operate in uncovering the truth in why the government did not act on what it knew and to consider calling a public inquiry on the Crocus Fund fiasco.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by Barbara King, Fred King, Henry Celones and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

* (13:40)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I table the Annual Report of the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission for the year 2007-2008.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from St. Boniface Diocesan High School 42 grade 9 students under the direction of Mrs. Sharon Ste. Marie. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

Also in the public gallery we have from Prairie View School 14 grades 7, 8 and 9 students under the direction of Mrs. Geraldine Rempel. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Western Canada Free Trade Agreement Government Support

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): On the major issues that confront our province such as free trade, we have a hard time pinning down the Premier's position from one day to the next, never mind one year to the next.

Mr. Speaker, there's a western Canada free trade agreement that's now under discussion that stands to create up to 38,000 jobs in British Columbia alone.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier, who was opposed to free trade with the United States and

Mexico when that agreement was being negotiated and that, as of a few weeks ago, was strongly in favour of it: Last week he's opposed to western Canada free trade; this week, after his meeting with his western counterparts, has he changed his tune on that, and is he now in favour of free trade in western Canada?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the discussions on internal trade remain positive in the sense that we have a national internal trade agreement that will build upon the agreement that was reached by former Premier Filmon.

The unfortunate part of the internal trade agreement that was reached by the former premier and other premiers of the day is it did not have an enforceable dispute mechanism. We know that—in fact, I think Mr. Mauro was the chair from the private sector in that regard—the mechanism put in place provided for panels to implement decisions that could be made. Unfortunately, it didn't require a province to appoint a panellist.

We've since changed that, Mr. Speaker. We have now agreed that it's mandatory for provinces to appoint a panellist. We've also agreed that the decisions of the panel would be fully enforceable and that there would be financial penalties up to \$5 million put in place for enforceable internal trade decisions. We believe that's in the best interests of Manitoba. It's not a toothless tiger as we had in the past. It is an enforceable document that will allow for the procurement for private companies with Crown corporations. It will allow, for example, margarine in western Canada to be shipped to provinces across Canada. It would allow for the proper procurement of services.

So I believe that, at the premiers' meeting in July, there will be, and I'll be happy to report to the House at that time, we'll be happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that, in fact, there is an enforceable dispute mechanism panel.

We have an agreement reached by ministers of Agriculture and deputy ministers of Agriculture on trade pursuant to the question raised on pages 37, 38 of the document he had last Wednesday in the House, Mr. Speaker. We will have and we do believe in taking the toothless document of the past and having an enforceable document into the future. I'm confident we will be able to achieve that.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I've never heard so many words used to give what he could have done

and just said, no, he's not in favour of the free trade agreement with western Canada.

The Premier is right that the problem with a national agreement is the lack of an enforcement mechanism. There's an agreement now between B.C. and Alberta. Saskatchewan is now at the table and ironing out their issues. Manitoba is the only province not at the table in the western Canada TILMA free trade agreement.

I want to ask the Premier if he will—never mind the discussions on the national agreement which are moving ahead and which are positive but which other provinces have acknowledged aren't enough, which is why the western provinces are moving ahead to create a western Canada trading block that only Manitoba is outside of right now—will the Premier be specific? Will he say he wants to get in on TILMA, get to the table on TILMA and negotiate a TILMA agreement, a western Canada free trade agreement, that's good for Manitoba and good for all of western Canada, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, one should point out that the new Premier of Saskatchewan was part of an all-party committee that recommended against that agreement that the member is citing.

We've had a bilateral agreement, as well, in place. When we came into office, Mr. Lord and myself signed an agreement because we were paying \$13,000 per call-centre job and competing up the cost of every call-centre job between New Brunswick and Manitoba. There are other bilateral agreements. Alberta-B.C. have a bilateral agreement. Manitoba and New Brunswick were trying to deal with corporate welfare that was, of course, supported by the member opposite when he was the chief of staff to the so-called free traders at \$13,000 a job in the call-centre sector. There's an agreement between Ontario and Québec dealing with labour mobility.

But, Mr. Speaker, 70 percent of our trade is actually east of us. A lot of the mobility we have of people coming to Manitoba is also from eastern Canada, as well as mobility that takes place from western Canada. So it doesn't make any sense at all to have a Red Seal trade job in Ontario not part of an internal trade agreement with Manitoba and only have potentially a Red Seal trade job in Alberta and British Columbia. We believe in accepting the credentials of other provinces. That's a position Manitoba has taken at the internal trade negotiations.

I'm pleased that Premier Stelmach indicated that he was pleased with the work we've been doing at the press conference on internal trade. It does make more sense to have a Canadian internal trade agreement, so that a teacher in Ontario can be a teacher in Manitoba, a nurse in Québec can be a nurse in Manitoba and a welder in B.C. can be a welder in Manitoba. That's what we're going to get in July and, Mr. Speaker, that's what makes more sense for Manitoba.

We look east, west, north and south, not just in one direction, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Again, he's stating his opposition to entering into the TILMA agreement. He gave a kaleidoscope of reasons last week as to why he was opposed. First, it was because Saskatchewan wasn't interested. That's not true. Second, it was because he was worried about agriculture. It turned out that that excuse didn't work. Then he said he was worried about water. It turns out water was exempted.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, CUPE has filed a lawsuit against TILMA, so now we know the real reason is because his CUPE brothers are opposed to free trade. That's the real reason he's dragging his feet on free trade. It's the real reason he's going to sacrifice thousands of Manitoba jobs as the rest of western Canada enters into a free trade agreement that we're being left out of.

Now, the Premier has just said that he wants to have free trade to the east; that's where a lot of our trade goes. Is the Premier aware that two hours ago there was an announcement at a joint news conference between the premiers of Ontario and Québec talking about their desire to form the fourth largest trading block in North America behind California, Texas and New York?

Ontario and Québec, a news conference two hours ago, he wasn't there. He wasn't there. We've got free trade to the east of us, free trade to the west of us. We're stuck in the middle with him, Mr. Speaker. When's he going to sign on to a free trade agreement in western Canada?

*(13:50)

Mr. Doer: I'm pleased that the governments of Ontario and Québec have agreed on a carbon-trading system. Manitoba signed on with California and British Columbia a long time ago. If he will pull out the press release from the January premiers' meeting, January of 2008, not two hours ago but five months ago, Manitoba, Québec and British Columbia all

agreed to move ahead on a carbon-trading system. Certainly we believe strongly that that makes sense. Manitoba was the first province in Canada to support the idea.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe that these bilateral internal trade agreements, some between Manitoba-New Brunswick, the B.C.-Alberta agreement, the agreement between Ontario and Québec, will form the basis in some ways of a good internal trade agreement that will be reached and arrived at in July in Québec City under the chairpersonship of Jean Charest. We discussed it last week, not two hours ago, on a conference call with premiers. I am very confident we will have an internal trade agreement dealing with labour mobility, human resources mobility.

Mr. Speaker, what we won't have with some of the provinces that have been mentioned by the member opposite, we won't have a carbon-trading agreement. It doesn't look like we'll have one with Ottawa, and it doesn't look like there'll be one with provinces west of us but not far west of us. So we have alliances where it makes sense.

As I say, we're the first jurisdiction in Manitoba along with British Columbia to join 11 states in the United States on a carbon-trading system. We were the first jurisdiction in Canada to join the Chicago Climate Change Exchange. We joined five years ago. I don't know where the member was. We've already sold carbon credits on the open market in Chicago five years ago, Mr. Speaker, not two hours ago as the member opposite is pointing out.

Bill 38 Government Intent

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I guess the Premier seems to be content that there's a free trade block forming to the east. There's another one forming to the west. He was against NAFTA when he started; then he was in favour of it. He's against western Canada free trade. We hope that one day he'll be in favour of it. We hope that day comes sooner than later, Mr. Speaker, because we stand to lose thousands of jobs in the meantime because he's on the sidelines. He wasn't invited to the meeting with Ontario and Québec today. He was a sideline player in western Canada last week. He was a sideshow at the western premiers' meeting.

And just like his conflicting positions on free trade over the years, this Premier has gone through a series of conversions on the issue of balanced budgets. He was dead set against balanced budgets in the 1980s and 1990s. When he wanted to get elected in '99, he was in favour of balanced budgets. Now he's against them again. In Bill 38, he wants to gut the legislation.

We had some great presentations last week. Mr. Doyle from the Manitoba Federation of Labour said it's okay if governments run deficits from time to time; that's why we like Bill 38. At least Mr. Doyle's being honest and saying this is about deficits or balanced budgets.

I want to ask the Premier if he'll take Mr. Doyle's advice and have an honest debate. Is he in favour of running deficits? Is that what Bill 38 is really all about, and if that's what it's all about, why not just be honest about it? Instead of introducing a bill that tries to call deficits surpluses, why not just say he wants to run a deficit this year and we'll have a good debate about whether that's the right thing to do?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Not only are we running a surplus budget this year, we're running it under the old one-set-of-books rules of the former Conservative. We're running it under the new set of rules or the two sets of books under the old government, where we look at the operating budget. We're running it under the new GAAP financial provisions, Mr. Speaker, where you have one set of books for all entities in government.

We also have tripled the amount of money in the rainy day fund. It's not as if we're worried about dealing with the money from the rainy day fund into the operating side of government. When we came into office, it was \$220 million in the rainy day fund. It's close to \$700 million now.

We are following the advice of the former Auditor General, which was also referenced by the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and at the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Singleton was quite critical of us following the old Filmon balanced budget law. Mr. Singleton said that the balanced budget law of the former government was not adequate in terms of accountability. It was a system that allowed for certain deficits and debt to be off the books and certain measures to be on the books. We have gone from two sets of books in Manitoba, as recommended by Mr. Singleton, to one set of books.

Now, when we, first of all, were criticized by Mr. Singleton for following the Filmon balanced budget legislation, members stood up in the House. John Loewen—remember him?—he stood up in the House and he criticized this. The former—the Member for Brandon West, I'm sorry, that was a Freudian slip, the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) stood up in the House and said go to GAAP financial planning.

He also said, by the way, in the committee in Parliament, don't filibuster private citizens that want to present at the committee, as the narcissistic Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) is doing. Mr. Speaker, why don't you just get a mirror, put it down in your basement and give a speech to the mirror, and let the people of Manitoba speak on this legislation in the Legislature.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I think it's too bad the Premier missed the Member for Steinbach's speech on Thursday night. It was one of the best I've heard in a very long time. He'll have lots of opportunities in the days ahead to listen to the Member for Steinbach, and I think he may just learn something from the Member for Steinbach. A very good speech was given in committee.

Mr. Speaker, on Bill 38, the intent of which is to allow the government to call deficits surpluses, that's not something that the former Auditor General ever recommended. The Auditors General, past and present, have always said that we want GAAP accounting. It's a separate issue from whether or not you balance the budget. Mr. Singleton has never said the government should move toward deficit financing. He's always said he wanted the numbers presented a certain way. That's a separate issue. We're fine with that. Put all the statements in one book, that's great. However, to go to deficits on the operating budget of government and to use credits coming off the Crown corporations is something that's never been recommended by any Auditor General.

I hope he'll give Mr. Singleton the opportunity to come to committee to rebut what the Premier has just said on the record, because Mr. Singleton has never, ever made the recommendation or the statements attributed to him today by the Premier. The matter of deficits versus surpluses is a matter of policy.

I want to ask the Premier: Why is he using Bill 38 to change the framework, to allow him to go into deficit financing? Why doesn't he just be up front about it and say we want the freedom to run deficits

and then let's have a debate about whether that's the right thing for the future of Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I would point out that we're the first government to run surplus budgets and balanced budgets for eight years and nine budgets in a row in the last four years in Manitoba. And we also did not balance the budget on the basis of selling a Crown corporation and taking the fire-sale assets of that Crown corporation, put it into the books in the rainy day fund and flush it back out to balance the budget.

That's something the Auditor General said was wrong, and, God forbid, in 10 or 12 years from now if the Tories ever are re-elected and people forget their miserable record, Mr. Speaker, they won't be able to sell a Crown corporation under the GAAP financial budgeting that's in this law and take the surplus and put it into balancing the operating budget. So here we have—*[interjection]* The member opposite can filibuster and be rude to the people tonight again, as he always does. He doesn't have to do it in the House.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Tories sell a Crown corporation. It's a capital asset. They take the surplus from that sale, they put it into the rainy day fund, and then they disguise their fiscal situation in their operating budget by taking the rainy day sale of the telephone system and putting that on the books. Now they're feigning indignation about a rule that has all entities of government being considered in summary financial budgets as the Auditor General has recommended, as almost every province has brought in.

Yes, we are committed to balancing the operating budget. Yes, we're committed to paying down the debt. Yes, we're committed to increasing, as we have, the rainy day fund, three times greater than the members opposite, but we never, ever, ever would ever stoop to the kinds of policy direction members opposite did by replenishing a rainy day with the sale of a Crown corporation without the authority of the public.

* (14:00)

Mr. McFadyen: I want to thank the Premier for that 13-year-old history lesson, Mr. Speaker. I want to just ask him if he can't just move to what's happened under his watch, taking money out of Manitoba Hydro to balance the budget, cutting corners to balance the budget. Now they're going to this phony accounting designation called net debt. What net

debt does is it allows them to use the assets of government to count against their debt, meaning that they have an agenda to sell those assets in order to arrive at a real debt number. So I don't know how they get away with that sort of rhetoric when they use this phony net-debt accounting designation.

I want to ask the Premier, though, to focus on the issue. He's amending the balanced budget law to allow him to run deficits each and every year, masking them with Crown corporation revenues. The debt of the province will go up. The mortgage left to the next generation of Manitobans, who aren't able to come to committee and speak out against this bill, that generation is going to pay the price if they go into deficit financing, Mr. Speaker.

I want to ask the Premier if he will do the right thing with Bill 38, which he has no mandate to introduce. He ran to keep balanced budgets. He's got no mandate to gut the balanced budget law. Will he do the right thing today and commit to withdrawing Bill 38 and go into full public consultations on the desires of the people of Manitoba? I suspect, Mr. Speaker, if he says no, it's because he doesn't want to hear from Manitobans who aren't interested in the old NDP ways of deficits and debt. It's a new, new NDP that has gone back to the old New Democratic Party.

He doesn't want the people of Manitoba to know. Will he have the courage to withdraw the bill and take it to the people, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Doer: The former government ran seven deficits out of 11 years and then ran surpluses based on the sale of the telephone system.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we've run nine straight balanced budgets in Manitoba. When we presented the books in two ways, one under the old balanced budget law in purposes of presenting the budget, and secondly, presenting as information the GAAP financial summary financial budget information, so the public had both sets of information, the Auditor General, Mr. Singleton, I believe in 2005 or 2006, said—and he said it two years or three years in a row—you cannot present to the Legislature, even if you have a law, under accounting rules anything that's not under GAAP financial summary financial budget.

So, yes, we committed, before the 2007 election, to going to summary financial budgeting. We committed in the House. We committed in the public. We committed in our election promise. We

said we would implement fully summary financial budgeting, Mr. Speaker. We will be balanced on our operating budget, and summary financial budget includes also being balanced in terms of all entities in government.

One set of books, Mr. Speaker, but a policy to balance the budget as we've done in the core operations of government for nine years without selling a phone system.

Bill 38 Government Intent

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Actually, that's not quite true. There weren't balanced budgets for the last nine years. There was \$614 million in deficit in the 2003-2004 budget. They took \$203 million out of Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Speaker, to balance the budget, I believe in 2000.

Mr. Speaker, they don't balance their budgets. Do you remember the Pawley years? Do you remember the Schreyer years? Those weren't balanced budgets. What they did is they put this province into debt and they spent more than they brought in.

Will the Finance Minister, please, today, stand up and say exactly what it is that he's intending to do: No. 1, with this bill, Bill 38, he wants to run a deficit, Mr. Speaker, and will he please just repeal the old balanced budget legislation and tell Manitobans that he's going to run a deficit this year.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I think the Member for Brandon West has been engaging in a little wishful thinking. He wishes we would run a deficit so that—it's very similar to what's happened since the member came into the Legislature. Every single question period of every session, the member has said that the economy is going into the tank. He started playing the game that if you say it long enough, if you bet on No. 7 long enough, eventually No. 7 will come up on the roulette wheel.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that we've had six credit-rating upgrades. We've reduced net debt. We've addressed the pension liability which members opposite kept outside of their balanced budget legislation. We've balanced the budget nine times. We have the full intention of doing that going forward.

This legislation won't let you run away from a deficit. You have to use a four-year rolling average going backwards—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister is absolutely wrong. I do not wish for a deficit in the province of Manitoba. I do not wish that this minister be given the opportunity to run that deficit based on the backs of the Crown corporations in this province.

What I want, Mr. Speaker, what I actually do want, is I wish for fiscal accountability. I wish for this government to be efficient in what they do, in the services they provide, not into running a deficit but to use the money that they're getting from all sources, especially the federal government, to make sure we don't run a deficit.

Will the minister please stand up and say he is not going to run a deficit under the summary budget, and if that's the case, why will he not just simply repeal the balanced budget legislation that's currently in place, the 1995 balanced budget legislation, and not put this charade forward with Bill 38?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Brandon West says he simply wants fiscal accountability. If that's the case, I would encourage him to vote for this bill because it improves fiscal accountability in several ways.

First of all, you can no longer double-count money going in and out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. You know, the members opposite seem to like in-and-out schemes. It's something that they practised at several levels of government. You can't count the money twice. You can't sell off Crown assets to balance the budget. You have to include everything on the bottom line, including all the Crown corporations. You have to have a fiscal management strategy for the first time in history. You have to have the Auditor General sign off in law on whether the budget balances according to the GAAP rules in effect at the time, Mr. Speaker.

All of those things improve fiscal accountability. If the member really wants that, he'll vote for the bill.

Breast Cancer Provincial Mortality Rates

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this week, people from around the world are going to be meeting here in Winnipeg for the World Conference on Breast Cancer. While they are here, they may be shocked to learn that according to the 2008 Canadian cancer statistics, the mortality rate for breast cancer is the highest here in Manitoba,

the worst of all the Canadian provinces and well above the Canadian average.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: Can she tell us why the rate of women dying of breast cancer is higher in Manitoba than in any other province in this country?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question. Indeed, we are going to have the privilege this week in Manitoba of having the World Conference on Breast Cancer being hosted here. We know that this is a very important opportunity for Manitoba to not only be showcasing the kinds of work that CancerCare Manitoba and the Canadian Cancer Society have been doing on prevention, on screening, on diagnostics and, of course, on treatment here in Manitoba, but it's also going to be an excellent opportunity for us to continue to work to get the message out about how important it is for women and men to ensure that they take opportunities to have that screening done, because it can make all the difference in terms of their mortality rates, Mr. Speaker.

Breast Cancer Screening Funding

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, the minister had best listen very carefully to this next question. In a letter I received from the Manitoba Division of the Canadian Cancer Society—and I'll table that letter right now—they said that this government is underfunding the Manitoba Breast Screening Program, that current funding allows for only 50 percent of the target population to be screened. Only half of the population is being screened because of underfunding by this government.

In B.C. and Ontario, they have significant reductions in mortality to breast cancer because of their organized screening program. So I'd like to ask: Why is this NDP government underfunding Manitoba's Breast Screening Program when it's been shown that it can actually save lives?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): In fact, I always listen to the member opposite's questions. In fact, on many topics the member and I passionately agree. We agree on the issue that screening does indeed save lives. That's why this past fall we made an announcement to increase the number of screenings that are going to be done. That's why we have made sure that we are among the

first provinces in Canada to have a colorectal cancer screening program, and I don't mind saying, Mr. Speaker, it was because of an impassioned voice of Manitobans and indeed this member opposite to help that happen.

There are times, of course, in this House when we are very much at odds with one another, but on the issue of saving lives and cancer screening, I believe the member opposite and I do, in fact, agree.

* (14:10)

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, according to the Canadian Cancer Society, they're saying that this government is underfunding breast screening in this province. They are also saying in the letter that the NDP government needs to develop a breast health strategy, something that they have not done. In fact, they've challenged the government in this letter to do that. They specifically want to see reduced wait times for diagnostic ultrasounds and for biopsies following abnormal screenings, if, I guess, you get screened at all.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to commit today to the development of a breast health strategy and adequate funding for breast screening in this province so that more women will not die. Will she step up to the plate and help women fight the fight in this province?

Ms. Oswald: Again, I say to the member opposite that we know that the Canadian Cancer Society has been in full support of the Manitoba framework, the cancer strategy, in which, of course, issues of prevention, of screening, of increasing diagnostics and of maintaining our No. 1 lowest wait time in Canada for radiation therapy, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell the member opposite also that, once again, when Manitoba has the privilege of hosting the World Conference on Breast Cancer, it's a very important opportunity for us to be announcing public awareness campaigns and for us to be announcing increased capacity, and I believe we're going to do just that.

Brandon University Lack of Nursing Training Seats

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): It's interesting this minister is talking about opportunities. Well, I want to talk about a missed opportunity, Mr. Speaker. There's a severe nursing shortage in the province, especially in rural and northern Manitoba, and during this last election campaign the NDP

government went to Brandon University and promised more RN training spaces.

Can the Minister of Health explain why she then ignored Brandon University and gave RN training seats only to schools in Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question. I can confirm for the member, once again, that a year ago, or slightly more, during the election campaign, we did commit to bring 700 more nurses to Manitoba. Indeed, as one of the ways to do that, we committed to increase 100 seats for training. We did, in fact, announce, this past fall, \$3 million for 40 of those seats. We have 60 of those seats left to fill.

I can also let the member opposite know, regarding a previous question, that Assiniboine Regional Health Authority did receive two nurse practitioners. We just did them sooner than the other regions. We announced that in February. I can also let the member know that Brandon is the happy recipient of two nurse practitioner positions as well.

Mrs. Rowat: I'll correct the minister for the record. There's one nurse practitioner, two half-time positions, so she is incorrect, Mr. Speaker. This minister's government has a bad habit of ignoring the Westman region. No wonder they couldn't hang on to the Brandon Cabinet minister in the last election.

This election promise was made at the Brandon University, Mr. Speaker, but when it came time to follow through on that promise, this minister allocated training seats only to Red River College, the U of M and the Collège de St. Boniface, ignoring Brandon University completely.

Why is this minister and this government punishing the Westman region, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Oswald: I'll say to the member again, that, indeed, Assiniboine did receive funding for two nurse practitioner positions. The member opposite and I can have a dispute over the facts, but I can tell the member that.

In terms of what's happening in the Westman region, while members opposite were declaring publicly that health care would not be their priority—that's what they went to the public with, Mr. Speaker, if you can imagine—we were announcing \$20 million for a new facility for a new linear accelerator in Brandon.

We set up the medical transportation and communication centre for emergency medical

services in Brandon. We spent \$58 million rebuilding the Brandon Health Centre. We invested in the first MRI outside of Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker. We—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Rowat: But I find it passing strange—I'll use her acronym—that Brandon University is actually turning away students from the nursing program because this government will not fulfil its promise.

Mr. Speaker, what this adds up to is another big disappointment for the people of Brandon and the Westman region and another broken promise from this NDP government, or is it, as the defeated NDP candidate for the Minnedosa constituency said to the *Brandon Sun* just after the last election: I can't see this area benefiting from a lot of stuff from this kind of a vote.

So can the minister explain to the House why her government has failed to follow through on this promise to Manitobans and failed to add RN training seats at the Brandon University, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, I ran out of time in my last 45 seconds to talk about the investments we've made in the Westman region, and I do appreciate the opportunity to go on.

But let's be very, very clear, Mr. Speaker. We made a commitment to increase the number of nurses in Manitoba by 700, and one of the ways we're going to do that is by increasing the seats for nursing by 100. So far, in fact just a year into our mandate, we've announced 40 of them.

Members opposite barely promised a handful of nurses and couldn't get around to promising one doctor. Our side of the House, we're committed to health care being a No. 1 priority. Their side of the House, their leader came out in public and said it wouldn't be a priority. Let's get a little bit real about health care in Westman and all of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 17 Economic Impact

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's pork industry invests tens of millions of dollars into the provincial economy annually. Bill 17 throws a huge wrench into the industry and the economy built around it, yet the government seems oblivious to the impact that this bill will have on our farm families and this province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Conservation: Why has he failed to conduct an economic impact of Bill 17? How can he ignore the economic consequences?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, this bill will actually separate those apart, those who want to protect water and those who don't want to protect water.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), what did the Leader of the Opposition say when he was asked about this? He said, we're going to oppose it; yeah, we don't think the moratorium should carry on. He's clearly on the side of not supporting protection of water.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote a little bit from the R.M. of De Salaberry, an R.M. right in the area, and it says: The R.M. of De Salaberry Council commends and supports the government's decision on extending a hog barn moratorium.

Mr. Speaker, clearly, the reeve and councillors at De Salaberry take water protection much more seriously than the members across the way.

Mr. Eichler: It is a simple matter of economic impact. That was the question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's Hutterite colonies depend on livestock production for their farm families. At a recent meeting on Bill 17, James Hofer of the Starlight Colony said: Agriculture and our culture are a very good combination. That's a way of life being threatened.

Mr. Speaker, has the Minister of Conservation consulted with the Hutterite brethren about the effects of Bill 17? Does he recognize the tremendous impact Bill 17 will have on the colonies and their way of life?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, two R.M.s in Manitoba produce 28 percent of the hogs produced in this province; 54 percent of the phosphorus and nitrogen that hits Lake Winnipeg comes from that part of the province. The R.M. of De Salaberry very clearly says, we have to protect water in Manitoba, environmental reasons and economic reasons.

Where do the people on the other side of the House think that the fishing industry makes its money from, Mr. Speaker? Lake Winnipeg is an economic engine in this province and deserves our protection. Don't stick your heads in the sand.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, Bill 17 is a mess. Hundreds of presenters are lined up to air their concerns. Let's remember the Clean Environment Commission did not recommend a moratorium.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Conservation say with confidence that Bill 17 is the right approach or is he prepared to admit the bill needs to be withdrawn and redrafted?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, I very much—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable minister has the floor.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, I very much look forward to hearing the advice of Manitobans as we go to the public committee on this. I very much look forward to that. I do certainly hope that the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) will give them a chance to speak to the members of the committee and not filibuster like he has been known to do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that members opposite know that 54 percent of the nutrients that go into Lake Winnipeg come from the Red River. They come from the area that we have put in a moratorium, and I think that's a responsible way to protect water in this province.

* (14:20)

Bill 203 Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder are among the most important conditions with which we should be concerned in the Legislature. They impact children. They impact health care, social services, education, justice, major issues for us. As we're all aware, the consumption of alcoholic beverages is the major cause of the major incidence, the most prevalent condition leading to mental retardation in our province, and it is preventable.

Liberals have introduced two bills, Bill 203 and 227 to help prevent FASD. I ask the Minister of Healthy Living: Why is she not actively supporting Bill 203 to mandate the labelling of alcoholic beverages, a warning in terms of their causing fetal alcohol spectrum disorders?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, we constantly, on this side of the House, have been advocating around the

prevention and education around fetal alcohol syndrome disorder. The member's right. It is preventable and it's preventable by making sure that women know about the consumption of alcohol during a pregnancy.

We can do that with different methods, by working with the Manitoba Liquor Commission on their labelling that they put on their packages. We can constantly educate and make sure that we're providing those services, as well as providing strong addiction services for women across the province of Manitoba.

Children with the diagnosis of FASD have great gifts that they give this province. We can work with them. We can continue to provide them with the services and supports that they need.

Mr. Gerrard: Then why wouldn't the minister support Bill 203? The fact is that many, many countries all over the world now require labelling of alcoholic beverages with regard to the risk of pregnant women consuming alcohol and causing FASD. As labelling of cigarettes has indicated, it's a very effective way of preventing major health problems.

Many countries including Guatemala, Armenia, Honduras, Ecuador, Colombia, already have labelling of alcoholic beverages. Why is Manitoba falling behind Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras? Why is the government not supporting Bill 203?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, as the government, as the Province of Manitoba, we have since 1999 increased the budget for FASD from \$10,000 to \$7.5 million. This commitment has a whole spectrum of services. It has prevention services where we meet with community residents and we talk about the importance of not drinking while pregnant, but we also have world-renowned programs such as Stop FAS, a mentoring program where workers go out and meet with families and provide that necessary support.

We continue to provide prevention, diagnostic intervention and family supports throughout the province.

Bill 203 Government Support

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the minister doesn't quite understand. She can do all that; there's no questions asked. Bill 203 will even go a little bit more. It can make a difference. What we're

asking the government to do is to recognize that Bill 203 can make a difference in the province of Manitoba. All that's required is an open mind on behalf of the government.

Mr. Speaker, 87 percent of Canadians support the idea. What we're asking for the minister responsible to do is to have an open mind and to allow for the labelling of alcoholic containers in the province of Manitoba, something other countries have done, and to allow for signage and labelling in bars and restaurants, something which Ontario has already done. Will the minister have an open mind?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with the partners across Manitoba. We continue through Healthy Child Manitoba getting the message to parents about healthy parenting. We will continue to do that.

We will also continue to make the investments that we have for FASD, for children with the diagnosis. We have increased diagnostic capacities as well as intervention as well as providing education components for them.

We'll continue to work with all the partners. We attended a conference where we were well recognized about our role in preventing FASD, but as well as providing those necessary support services, for example, such as Spectrum Connections which was announced, what needs to be pointed out is that labelling is a federal issue.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Buhler Recreation Park

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to attend the opening of the Buhler Recreation Park. Buhler Recreation Park is the largest multi-seasonal, multi-use park in Canada. The park covers 150 acres and includes baseball diamonds, nature trails, soccer pitches, a playground, an exhibition area and a canteen. This fantastic park will be open all year with great winter sports facilities, including skating ponds, a toboggan hill and cross-country ski trails.

I've long been an advocate of recreational facilities for community members of all ages. Having a safe place for Manitobans, regardless of their age, to become active in sports and take part in

neighbourhood activities helps build community, keeps our young people active and in safe recreation and helps get all members of the community excited about exercising.

Mr. Speaker, in developing this trend-setting sporting facility, the natural state of the park and its surroundings have not been neglected. Different species of vegetation and foliage and nearly a thousand trees are being planted. A tall grass prairie restoration project is also being developed. These features will attract a wide variety of birds and wildlife and provide them with a home while allowing visitors to the park to enjoy them in their natural habitat.

I was pleased to see the park's natural areas rivalled the state-of-the-art sports facilities. The park will attract sports and outdoor enthusiasts from all over the region and international community. Athletes from Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan and the United States will travel here for world-class sporting events. Already the Canadian Softball Championship will be held at Buhler Park this year. The park is expected to bring \$10 million to \$15 million annually to our local economy.

On behalf of the honourable members, I would like to congratulate Steve Mymko and all members of the board. A project like this doesn't just happen. It takes tireless effort from tireless volunteers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

His Royal Highness the Earl of Wessex (Prince Edward) Visit

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus of Manitoba, I'd like to welcome His Royal Highness Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, to Manitoba.

We are privileged to have him visit the city of Winnipeg and our province. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for many Manitobans who crowded the south lawn of the Manitoba Legislature this morning. His Royal Highness greeted and mingled with families of deployed Canadian Forces personnel. The families were moved with the show of support and delighted to meet with Prince Edward. The service of members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police will also be marked by Prince Edward at an awards ceremony later this week. We sincerely thank him for acknowledging and supporting our troops and RCMP officers.

Highlighting the charitable nature of Prince Edward and his family, His Royal Highness will visit

the Children's Hospital as part of the royal tour. During his tour he will also experience Manitoba's rich cultural community with performances of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Manitoba Theatre for Young People.

This evening Prince Edward will be attending a special reception at the Fort Garry Hotel to recognize extraordinary young Manitobans. As the International Chair of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Prince Edward will present gold awards of achievement to 100 young Manitobans. Each of these gold recipients has put more than 200 hours into the self-development program in order to achieve this honour. Specifically, recipients met requirements for community service, practical skills and physical fitness.

As an individual who has had the opportunity to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh program as a recipient of the bronze medal, I am aware of the hard work and dedication that goes into an award such as this. We are so very proud of each of these young Manitobans and applaud their outstanding leadership and community spirit.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members here today to join me in congratulating 100 extraordinary young Manitobans who will be receiving a gold award of achievement this evening. This will be an experience that they will forever remember. We're absolutely thrilled and honoured that His Royal Highness Prince Edward has been able to visit Manitoba. Thank you.

* (14:30)

Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate Fundraising Auction

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the House of some extremely important work being done by students from Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate. There are huge numbers of people suffering from HIV/AIDS in Africa and Caitlin MacHutchon, a grade 12 student at Sturgeon Heights is doing something about it.

Caitlin began organizing a non-profit silent auction called Stone Broke after learning about the extent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa. I was very pleased to both attend the auction as well as join the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines (Mr. Rondeau) and the Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) as financial contributors to this very worthy project. All proceeds of this auction will go to the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

With the help and guidance of social studies teacher Mr. Brian Hull, the school has raised over \$6,000 through various fundraisers. This weekend's fundraiser was very well attended and will add to the awareness and funds that this school is providing, and the awareness that these young people are raising about HIV/AIDS in Africa.

The Stephen Lewis Foundation estimates that of the 33.2 million people living with HIV worldwide, 22.5 million, or 68 percent of them, live in sub-Saharan Africa. Each day, Mr. Speaker, over 6,800 persons become infected with HIV and over 5,700 people die from AIDS, mostly from inadequate access to HIV prevention and treatment services. The majority of people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are women, 61 percent, and worldwide there are an estimated 2.1 million children living with HIV in 2007. Nearly 90 percent of all children living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Caitlin, Mr. Hull and all the staff and students at Sturgeon Heights for their efforts on this issue. The money raised is desperately needed. I implore all my honourable colleagues to find out what they can do to help fight the scourge of HIV/AIDS here at home, in Africa and, indeed, around the world. Thank you.

Winkler Bible Camp Memorial Lake Project

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to parents Ralph and Jocelyn Fehr, and to all those who have helped turn the Memorial Lake project at Winkler Bible Camp from a hopeful vision to a successful reality. The project was established to memorialize the tragic loss of Jordan and Brittany Fehr, who, along with Jordan's fiancé, Jamie Klassen, left us far before their time in an automobile accident on February 27, 2005.

Both Jordan and Brittany attended the Winkler Bible Camp as youth, enjoying the numerous activities amidst the beautiful valley surrounding and learning many life lessons that would shape them into the mature, young adults that they would soon become. As they grew into adolescence, Jordan and Brittany sought to give back for the many memorable experiences they had growing up and became camp counsellors. However, for both of them, Winkler Bible Camp was a place that offered much more than simple beauty and enjoyment. It also fulfilled the important role of contributing to the improvement of the community's moral climate.

There are many organizations and institutions that continue to contribute to the improvement of our quality of life, our recreational opportunities and our economic climates. For Jordan and Brittany, Winkler Bible Camp shared with them a belief in the importance of this type of learning and how vital it can be in a young person's development.

Winkler Bible Camp, while having much to offer, formerly did not have a lake or a river to anchor the full camping experience. Thanks to the efforts of volunteers it now features seven acres of lake with full amenities, including beachfront area.

Over three years has gone by since the fateful day in February 2005, and Jordan and Brittany would be happy to know the Memorial Lake project has officially opened. For generations to come this important project will hold our cherished memories of Jordan, Brittany and Jamie. And with the same spirit they brought each day to the Winkler Bible Camp, the lake project will help make memorable experiences for countless kids. Thank you.

St. Norbert Collegiate Grade 9 Students

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize the hard work and dedication of the grade 9 students at the St. Norbert Collegiate. I was pleased to join with 80 grade 9 students and 12 staff on the morning of May 6 as they volunteered their time to clean up and beautify the neighbourhood.

The students worked hard collecting litter and planting green ash trees at various sites around the community. Through their efforts, 150 trees were planted at the St. Norbert Community Club, 100 were planted on the Behavioural Health Foundation grounds and 250 were planted at the St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre.

The project was the product of a wonderful partnership between various groups in the city. Veert Landscaping held a tree-planting seminar for the students the day before the tree planting and provided the tools for the day. Take Pride Winnipeg generously donated the garbage bags used for the clean-up. Additionally, the grade nine students had the opportunity to mentor and partner with the grade two students who joined them in the tree plant at the Behavioural Health Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, we all know the value of volunteers and the effects their efforts can have on the community. I would especially like to applaud

Bruce North for being the leading force behind this event.

As part of a pilot project at St. Norbert Collegiate that seeks to expose its grade nine students to a variety of career options through volunteering and workshops, the event immersed the students in the life of the community and demonstrated the significant role they can play as young people in our city. The students' enthusiastic response made the event a great success that exceeded everyone's expectation, and through the approximately 500 trees that were planted, they have truly left their mark on St. Norbert for years to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I rise in this House to speak to Bill 37, a bill that is currently in front of committee, on a grievance, and wish to indicate to this House that I believe it is, first of all, a bill that was introduced at the most darkest moment when nobody was watching, the last minute possible it was introduced. Unfortunately, it is a bill that really should be broken up into various components, and, frankly, various components of it should be defeated.

It is of great concern to myself and my constituents, the good people of Springfield and East St. Paul who believe that democracy should prevail above all. I've had the opportunity to speak to many people, and I have seen, Mr. Speaker, a concerning precedent taking place whether on the federal scene or here in the province of Manitoba where individuals within a government—the last time was the Chrétien government—started to change election rules to benefit themselves seemingly for the next election. That's what Bill 37 does. It tries to change the way elections and democracy run so that they seemingly will have an easier chance of getting themselves re-elected.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I think that's a very dangerous precedent. I think, if anything, what should happen is these kinds of pieces of legislation, if they don't have unanimous consent of the House, these pieces of legislation should not come into effect until after the next election. That way, a political party or a premier or a cabinet is actually not making changes seemingly to benefit themselves, that it would then come into effect after the people have chosen, after the people have spoken, and it would then come into effect for the next government.

Like I said, we've seen these kinds of changes taking place in Ottawa; it's concerning. Of course, in Ottawa, the case was a little bit different because of the scandal-plagued government of the Chrétien-Martin years. The government was defeated in either case, but the rules really were there to try and change the playing field that was taking place at that time in Ottawa.

Bill 37 does that. It is a substantive bill, and it is, in fact, an attack on democracy. It's an attack on some of the most fundamental beliefs that we hold as a province. To rush this kind of legislation through is imprudent; it's wrong.

We've seen what happened in Myanmar where there was a hurricane hit the country. The military dictatorship decided that they would proceed with a plebiscite to help themselves stay in power so they could retain power. Of course, the world was just aghast at that kind of thing, and it was quite taken aback that this would happen.

Yet here we have a government that brings in legislation and does it, really, in the darkness of night, at the last moment possible, and does it to benefit themselves in the next election.

* (14:40)

We've looked all the way across the world, and, as we look at the span of history, we see this kind of thing taking place. It is an unfortunate precedent that has taken hold, and I think we should withstand this kind of thing.

At best, what the government should be doing is putting together an all-party committee, looking at all kinds of different amendments that might be coming forward, real set-date elections, not the kind of nonsense we see being put forward by the NDP party this time, and looking at what kind of money parties should be able to spend between elections.

More importantly, the fact that, as opposition members, we must vet this through the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his appointed few is really a disgrace to democracy. Never before in a modern political system have we heard where the governing party has the opportunity, has given itself the right, to monitor what the opposition sends or doesn't send out.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that kind of backwater politics is offensive to this House. It certainly is offensive to the people of Springfield. It is definitely offensive to the opposition because it really does, in

the end, hamper what we are trying to do as elected officials.

It is our job to point out where the government has gone wrong and point out to Manitobans where we believe the government should be going. There's a saying that good government needs good opposition, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I know that doesn't always apply because, in this case, we've been an outstanding opposition and we still have a terrible government.

We can't have the government putting handcuffs and putting duct tape over the opposition's mouth, handcuffs on their hands, preventing them from actually doing their jobs. Mr. Acting Speaker, that's what this government has started to do. It is a dangerous precedent; it's a slippery slope. I would look at members opposite and say, in three years' time, when they're in opposition, would they want to live under these same rules?

Look at the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux). Would he want me to have to proofread and vet anything he sends out? I don't think he'd appreciate that. That may someday come, sooner probably than later, within the next three years that it'll be this side of the House that will control who actually has the opportunity to vet brochures going out. I think it is a bad policy. I ask the government to look at that piece of the legislation and reverse it.

Again, what makes it so terribly vexing is that piece of legislation, which has an incredible attack on an individual's right to communicate with their constituents in a free and willing way, was snuck in at the darkness of night, at the last moment possible.

What's even more surprising is this is usually legislation that the Premier (Mr. Doer) brings in. In fact, this particular Premier brought in every piece of legislation where the election rules were being affected, except for this time. Mr. Acting Speaker, he foisted it upon the Government House Leader, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), who, we know, has been struggling in his heart over this legislation. We know that he's got a great crisis in confidence about what the government is doing, as does the back bench.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I look around the back benches and I know that they have grave, grave concerns about legislation that would somehow hamper their right to send out any kind of a brochure.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I look at the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), who right now is challenging his government in the city of Winnipeg on the Disraeli Freeway. He's done that following on the example of myself, who's been taking on this issue. I'm glad the Member for Elmwood has climbed aboard. It's better late than never.

I'm pleased that the member is doing that but, under his government's legislation, that right could be denied him. Mr. Speaker, that could be stripped from him because it could be seen as hostile to the government. The member's good fight and the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), I and others who've been challenging for this Disraeli Freeway would, actually, now not be allowed to do what they want to do, if they were to put that into a franking piece.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude and say I grieve on Bill 37. We see a little piece of democracy dying with that legislation, and its undemocratic principles that are included. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Brandon West, on a grievance?

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Yes, Sir. I rise on a grievance, and I know that the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) will behave himself. I know that he'll behave himself because I behaved myself while he was giving his most passionate dissertation in this House, and I listened very intently to every word that the Member for Springfield was putting forward to this House.

Mr. Speaker, I do have a special grievance with this House. The grievance that I have is that I grieve for the province of Manitoba. I grieve that Manitoba is being left out. As was mentioned at question period today, we're an island, unfortunately, unto ourselves at this point in time where we've got an economy that is booming to the west of us and we've got an economy in Ontario and Québec which amounts to 60 percent of the total GDP of our country coming together. Manitoba is this island. Unfortunately, it's going to soon become a deserted island if we continue to go with the way we're going right now.

Mr. Speaker, I also heard the response from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) when I asked the question today. He said that the Member for Brandon West, myself, was always a fearmongerer, was suggesting that there's always the sky falling. Well, I

don't wish for deficits in the province of Manitoba. I don't wish that we would ever have another deficit in this province as long as I reside in this province and much longer. I don't want a deficit. I want surpluses. I want to be able to fund the services that we provide in this province based on the revenues that we can generate within this province. We do have the opportunity to develop those revenues.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want this province to be seen as the province with the highest taxes. I don't want that. I don't want deficits. I don't want to be known as the province with the highest taxes west of Québec right now. But that's what it is. I would like to see us be competitive with those economies to the west of us right now and that's not happening. What I sincerely do not want, and what I grieve for, is waving goodbye to our children when they leave this province, our well-educated, our young children leaving this province to look at opportunity in provinces to the west of us. I want to stop that.

I would love to have this government stand in place and say, that is what one of our objectives are. They have not done that. They are not stopping our young men and women, daughters and sons from leaving, exiting this province.

When I say Manitoba's left out, I'm going to hear from across the House, oh, that's not true, our GDP's got the highest percentage increase, and we are doing so well here. Well, let me give you two examples, two very good examples, Mr. Speaker, which, by the way, affect my community personally. I take that as a personal affront to my community. I have here an article that's out of a newspaper and it says: Work to begin on Saskatchewan Canola-crushing plant. Well, that's fine, but that Canola-crushing plant could have and should have been located in southwestern Manitoba. I take personal affront to that. I want to read why that Canola-crushing plant is beginning to have construction started on it right now in Saskatchewan. It says the CEO of the particular company is quoted as saying he is convinced building it in Saskatchewan was the right thing to do for a variety of reasons: plentiful Canola, which I can assure you we have and can continue to grow enough Canola to provide this Canola-crushing plant with supply; a good work force—well, the good work force seems to be coming from Manitoba. Why would it not be best to maintain and retain that work force here as opposed to have it sent into Saskatchewan?

* (14:50)

But the last reason—there were three reasons cited—says: and a beneficial tax environment. He said the manufacturing and processing sector faces a 28.5 percent taxation rate in Saskatchewan compared to, and I quote, Mr. Speaker, a 33.5 percent in Manitoba; 28.5 compared to 33.5. In Alberta, it was 29.5; again, less than what it is in Manitoba.

I think that members of the government can take some solace in the fact that we beat North Dakota. We beat them because their tax rate is 41.5 percent. Ours, unfortunately, was the highest in Canada, with the western provinces being our competition; it was the highest in Canada at 33.5 percent. That's the first example of us not being competitive and losing the opportunity here in Manitoba.

The second one was—again, I take personal affront to this, Mr. Speaker—it's another news clipping that came last week and it says, Brandon's loss is Yorkton's gain. We had the opportunity in Brandon, in Manitoba, to accommodate a harness-racing-horse park. There was going to be a private-sector capital investment of \$15 million, capital investment as well as the opportunity of expanding the harness racing industry in Manitoba. It would, then, develop into other peripheral opportunities that we had in my community.

But the former Member for Brandon West, who's the former member, is no longer here because he decided, Mr. Speaker, that this was not one of his pet projects, and they should probably go someplace else. Well, they did.

Let me tell you what Saskatchewan did. The Province of Saskatchewan gave them \$325,000 in provincial funding to maintain and improve its facilities; the government funding supports track operations and local infrastructure. You know what they called it, Mr. Speaker? They called it an investment, an investment in the Yorkton opportunity for harness racing. Because now what's going to happen is—there's only room for one—the harness racing will leave southwestern Manitoba and go to Saskatchewan.

Those are just two very small examples. We can talk about potash, which we have no opportunity of developing in this province because of tax breaks that I just mentioned. We don't have the opportunity of having that opportunity here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, there's one that's right now sitting before us. It's an opportunity, I believe, second to

none. Unfortunately, it's also my belief that this government is going to make it an opportunity lost.

An Honourable Member: Oil?

Mr. Borotsik: No, it's not oil, as the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has indicated. It's an inland port, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) just went and had a meeting with the other three premiers of the western provinces, British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. It seemed to be working very, very well, as a matter of fact, so well that they didn't even want to mention that Manitoba was a part of their little organization. Manitoba just snuck in there because they're not fish, they're not fowl. They don't know if we're east; they don't know if we're west.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is we're going to lose an opportunity for an inland port. We have an opportunity for capital investment, some \$75-million capital investment going to an inland port. We have an opportunity to develop an industry that could be the gateway to the west once again but, if we keep on, as this government is doing with their high-tax regime and, unfortunately, their dislike for business—that's what it boils down to—they dislike business. They certainly embrace themselves with labour, but they dislike business.

We're going to lose the opportunity to develop the gateway to the west with our inland port because Saskatchewan is sitting at the table right now with the federal government saying, we can do it; look, we're doing business in our province; we want to expand that business in our province, and we can do it in either Regina or Saskatoon.

We're not even at the table. Alberta, Mr. Speaker, is also at that table saying, if they can't do it in Manitoba, give us the \$75 million for an inland port; we can assure you that it will be developed, and it will be operating before this government can even get off their seats.

I saw you grimace; I said seats.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier today said that 70 percent of our trade goes east. Of course it does, because we don't have any trade openings to the west of us. That's where it should be going; that's where they should be developing the trade.

We should be expanding our manufacturing, our commodities. Mr. Speaker, we should be expanding our transportation industry in order to go west, but we can't because this government cannot even get together with our compatriots, our neighbouring provinces, to make sure that we open up those trade agreements through TILMA. This government wants to shut us off, Mr. Speaker, and they're doing a fine job of it, I'm sorry to say.

I don't want to see deficits. I don't want to see high taxes. I don't want to lose our children. Thank you very much.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, I'd like to make committee announcements, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet at 10 a.m. and again at 6 p.m., on Wednesday, June 4, to consider the following bills: Bill 6, The Securities Amendment Act; Bill 25, The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Amendment Act; Bill 29, The Business Practices Amendment Act; Bill 38, The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act.

I'd also like to announce, Mr. Speaker, that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., on Wednesday, June 4, to consider the following bills: Bill 14, The Criminal Property Forfeiture Amendment Act; Bill 26, The Legal Profession Amendment Act; Bill 35, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2008; Bill 37, The Lobbyists Registration Act and Amendments to The Elections Act, The Elections Finances Act, The Legislative Assembly Act and The Legislative Assembly Management Commission Act; Bill 39, The Court of Appeal Amendment Act; Bill 40, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet at 10 a.m. and again at 6 p.m., on Wednesday, June 4, to consider the following bills: 6, 25, 29, 38.

It's also announced that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., on Wednesday, June 4, to consider the following bills: Bill 14, 26, 35, 37, 39 and 40.

Any grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Formal Vote

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to remind members that we have a recorded vote that was deferred from last Thursday due to the agreement to have no recorded votes between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. The vote will now be held as the first item of business under orders of the day.

The recorded vote will be held on the question of whether the ruling of the Chair shall be sustained. I had ruled on a matter of privilege raised by the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) on the issue of scheduling of committee meetings for Monday evening and ruled that there was no prima facie case of privilege.

We shall now proceed to ringing the bells to summon the members into the Chamber for the vote. So call in the members.

Order. The question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained.

Division

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

Yeas

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Borotsik, Braun, Brick, Briese, Chomiak, Cullen, Dewar, Doer, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maguire, Maloway, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Mitchelson, Oswald, Pedersen, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Rowat, Saran, Schuler, Selby, Selinger, Stefanson, Struthers, Swan, Taillieu, Wowchuk.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 52, Nays 0.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could call concurrence and committee of supply.

Mr. Speaker: Concurrence and committee of supply. Okay, orders of the day, committee of supply.

Madam Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

* (16:00)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY Concurrence Motion

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

The committee has before it for consideration the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

On May 12, the Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Hawranik) tabled the following list of ministers of the Crown who may be called for questioning in debate on the concurrence motion: Conservation; Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives; Education, Citizenship and Youth. These ministers can be asked questions concurrently.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Madam Chairperson, I have a question for the Minister of Conservation in regard to terminology. If he would clarify for the House whenever he put the pause on the hog industry in November, I believe, of 2006, under what authority was the pause put under?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): It was put under the authority of our provincial government to make decisions in terms of protecting water.

Mr. Eichler: Could the minister outline a regulation or authority of which the pause was put under?

Mr. Struthers: We did that through a regulation that flows from The Environment Act. We did that under the authority of the provincial government to make such regulations.

Mr. Eichler: So, just for clarification then, Mr. Minister, you're saying you're doing it through regulation for the time being and back until 2006. Why would we need Bill 17 if you can do it through regulation and with a pause rather than through a permanent moratorium?

Mr. Struthers: For one thing, Madam Chairperson, by going through the legislative route, by introducing a bill in the House, the Member for Lakeside has much more opportunity to give us advice on what we

should be doing in terms of the hog industry. I have enjoyed many conversations with the Member for Lakeside, and that is made possible because we've come forward with the bill.

I'm also looking very much forward to the advice that we will receive from Manitobans should the Conservatives ever get serious about bringing us forward in terms of Bill 17. So, by introducing a bill, it gives all of us a very good opportunity to hear from Manitobans.

Mr. Eichler: Madam Chairperson, in regard to the moratorium and the permanent ban, would it not be, in the minister's opinion, a lot easier to change any of the municipalities that are named in Bill 17 if that was done through regulation rather than through the bill?

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I'm having a little trouble following the conversations. If you're having conversations, could you please use the loge. Thank you.

Mr. Struthers: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I'm not as interested in finding the easiest way to do things. I'm interested in finding the most effective way to bring forward legislation that's going to protect water in Manitoba. I've always been taught that sometimes extra work is involved. Sometimes you have to kind of buck it up and make sure you do that extra hard lifting: something that I've never, ever been afraid of, something that my parents instilled in me.

I think, and our government thinks, that we can do more service to protecting Lake Winnipeg and other lakes and rivers in this province by going the route of Bill 17, more so than we can by simply doing it through regulations. So we're looking for the strongest framework that we can find to protect Manitoba's water.

Mr. Eichler: If there is a municipality that needs to be added, for example, in Bill 17, the way it currently stands, you'd have to bring the bill back in order to get that municipality added on, because it's done through bill rather than through regulation.

The minister feels very comfortable in that decision that, if we find for some reason there's another area that needs to be added, in particular a municipality, then that bill would have to be re-introduced to the House in order for that to be added to the bill.

Mr. Struthers: I want my friend from Lakeside to realize too that, as we accepted the recommendations and the report of the Clean Environment Commission, we put in place this moratorium. I brought the legislation forward to enable that moratorium to be put in place. Madam Chair, outside of the moratorium which covers the area that the member has just questioned about, we're looking to strengthen all of those R.M.s, outside of the hog-moratorium territory, with changes to winter spreading and other measures recommended by the Clean Environment Commission.

It may be that any of the municipalities which the member talks about will look to see what kind of a framework we bring forward for them outside of the moratorium. Then they can make a determination as to whether they're happy with that level of protection as well.

We have, as I noted in question period today, there's an R.M.—De Salaberry—which has indicated to us—and this is an R.M. right in the moratorium area—they have come to us and said that they support what we're doing. They think it's a good step.

Madam Chairperson, we need to see that there are R.M.s that fall within the hog moratorium and there are R.M.s that fall outside of that moratorium, but every single R.M. that's interested in a development in terms of hogs in this province have a higher standard that they need to meet in order to protect Manitoba's water.

Mr. Eichler: Madam Chairperson, when Bill 17 was being drafted, could the minister outline for the House the advice received and from whom in regard to drafting Bill 17?

Mr. Struthers: The drafting of Bill 17 was guided by a number of years of discussions. When you look back to the 1990s and the fact that the hog industry grew at an unfettered rate, that the hog industry in some parts of our province grew much quicker than other parts of the province, that meant different implications in terms of our environment and water.

The drafting of Bill 17 is a culmination of years, since 1999, of this government hearing about unfettered development in the hog industry and that we needed to be able to take a pause, take a look at what the implications are for this industry on our environment. So we asked the Clean Environment Commission to take a look at this.

They came back with their report in which they very clearly indicated that the unfettered rate of

development was not only unprecedented, but it was also uneven and there were certain parts of our province that were being inundated at a faster rate than other parts of the province.

*(16:10)

They really raised questions as to whether or not that was sustainable. What they said to me very clearly was that some growth in some parts of the province was okay, planned growth. They said very clearly that, in some parts of our province, this kind of growth could not be sustainable. That's where we began when we drafted the legislation. We know that, as I said earlier today, 28 percent of the total hog production in Manitoba comes from two R.M.s in the southeast part of this province, and that 54 percent of the nutrients that load into Lake Winnipeg flow up the Red River.

Now, I'm not going to—as a friend of mine across the way pointed out, that not all that 54 percent is Manitoban and some comes flowing across the international boundary. We know that, but we have the ability to make decisions on our contribution to the nutrients going into Lake Winnipeg. I'm not going to, as minister, shirk my responsibilities by saying, well, it's all the Americans' fault. It's all them. It's all Ontario, all Saskatchewan; we're not going to do anything about it. We're taking responsibility for what we produce and what we add into Lake Winnipeg, and so, Madam Chairperson, that's the thinking that went into drafting Bill 17.

Mr. Eichler: In regard to the consultation process with our neighbours to the south, our neighbours to the west and neighbours to the east, was there any consultation done with those governments and, if so, with whom?

Mr. Struthers: Madam Chairperson, we have, especially at different conferences and different meetings, lots of opportunity to speak with all of those who contribute nutrients into the Hudson Bay watershed. We bring these issues up all the time, whether they be water quality issues or whether they be water quantity issues. We bring our concerns to the table when we deal with every jurisdiction that contributes to the Hudson Bay watershed. That makes good common sense and that's what we do.

We've been very clear that for some time we've not supported the kind of unfettered, unprecedented growth that has taken place in our province. We have contended that we need to deal with certain parts of our province where it's more of a problem than other

parts of our province. We've made that clear to any and all that want to talk to us about these issues, including our neighbours who share the Hudson Bay watershed. We take our responsibilities to protect water very seriously, and we certainly would not be in much of a position to turn to our neighbours and say, you got to clean up your act, if we're not willing to clean up our act within the boundaries of our beautiful province.

Mr. Eichler: In specific with the province of Saskatchewan, were there any discussions in regard to putting the permanent moratorium on with the new Saskatchewan government?

Mr. Struthers: Madam Chair, we're open and have been open for a long time to talk with any government, whether it's the new Saskatchewan government or the government that preceded them. We've had transboundary proposals. I'm thinking of, in specific, the Big Sky proposal that was being considered to the west of us with the watershed that ran east into our province. We've had discussions with Saskatchewan in terms of their contributions to the Hudson Bay watershed.

Saskatchewan is an important partner in protecting all of our water whether it be the water that flows through Saskatchewan into Manitoba or whether it be the water that eventually flows up through the Nelson River and into the Hudson Bay. We do have discussions with other jurisdictions including Saskatchewan.

Mr. Eichler: I know that the Saskatchewan government's made it very clear that, if Manitoba doesn't want the hog industry, they're certainly open for business and love to have any of those operations move there, along with the Canola industry and the rest of the industries we see move towards Saskatchewan.

What documentation can the minister provide us in regard to basing the decision of putting the hog moratorium, a permanent hog moratorium on, as far as documentation? What science-based evidence can the minister provide this House based on the information that's been provided to him so he can table it in the House for us so we can see, based exactly on what determined this permanent moratorium?

Mr. Struthers: First of all, Madam Chairperson, the Province of Saskatchewan, whether it be the previous government or the new government, has every right to make decisions on its priorities. It's got

its mandate from the people of Saskatchewan, and I'm not going to presume to be able to tell them what to do, but that government in Saskatchewan has many responsibilities. They have a responsibility to provide jobs for the people that live in that province. They have a responsibility to encourage investment in that province. They have responsibilities, as we all do, to the farm community and rural life in Saskatchewan. They also have a responsibility to protect, not only their sources of water, not only the water that's contained within the boundaries of their province, but they do have a responsibility as well to not pollute water and send it to Manitoba. I am confident that we can work with whoever the Premier and their Cabinet and their caucus is because my assumption and my understanding is that the current government in Saskatchewan would be co-operative in working towards a Hudson Bay watershed solution to what is a serious problem.

There are Saskatchewanites—I hope that's the right—or Saskatchewanians or whatever—

An Honourable Member: Saskatchewanites.

Mr. Struthers: –Saskatchewanites, okay, I've been corrected by a former Saskatchewanite. Being a former Saskatchewanite, I thought I'd know that.

Madam Chair, people from Saskatchewan—there's a responsibility on their government to protect them when it comes to water, so I think that the government of Saskatchewan takes that seriously, and I think we can work with that government to make sure that we protect the water in the Hudson Bay watershed.

Mr. Eichler: The specific question is then: Can the minister provide us with any documentation that in fact would address the issue, based on sound science, that it is the hog industry that is, in fact, causing the pollution into Lake Winnipeg?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, my apologies, I intended to—if I hadn't gotten wrapped up in the Saskatchewanians versus the Saskatchewanites debate, I would have remembered. I also forgot to add in that our CFL football team is better than them and that we will extract revenge this year.

Madam Chairperson, I would encourage the Member for Lakeside to take a good hard look at the Clean Environment Commission's report. There are 48 recommendations and there's the body of the report that talks about regional imbalances.

The Clean Environment Commission did a very good, I think a very thorough job of contacting people at the University of Manitoba, for example, to talk to them about questions that they had of a scientific nature. They've reached out to scientists around the province and some scientists who believe that we don't have the case to go forward with the moratorium, and some scientists who think that we have actually the case to go further than what we did with the moratorium, and some who think we got it a little bit like the three bears—some too much, some not enough, and some just right.

So I think that the Clean Environment Commission did a very good job of incorporating that scientific information that was there from people who came to present. Plus, they sought out from different groups, like the George Morris Centre, information that they required to be able to give me a document, to give all of us a document that we could then make some decisions on and be very secure in knowing that they covered the scientific bases. So that Clean Environment Commission report, I think is a very good document. The process they went forward with to put that report together was very thorough and very clearly suggests that we cannot ignore the kind of regional balances that we have, that we have to act, and that's what our government has done.

* (16:20)

Mr. Eichler: Truly, in the CEC report, there's nowhere in the CEC report that, in fact, says there should be a permanent moratorium placed on hog expansion within the province of Manitoba. Nowhere in the report does it say that. Clearly, there's no documentation; otherwise, the minister would have tabled it or spoken specifically about it. He did mention the University of Manitoba. Well, the University of Manitoba has been very clear on their position, that there is no need for a permanent ban on the hog expansion within the province of Manitoba, and we have been very clear on our side of the House that we, in fact, do want good science based on the information that's provided to us and this House of where the ban should be, in fact, expanded or not expanded.

Why would the government want to put a permanent ban on expansion in the province of Manitoba, specifically in those regions when the soil outside the area is, in fact, not even conducive to hog operations? The CEC report did a wonderful job in their presentation without having to put a permanent

ban on. You have a pause now. You have the manure management regulations that were put through. A lot of it hasn't been enacted yet. I think the government is premature in their bringing Bill 17 forward without having an opportunity for them to actually see how, in fact, they're going to be worked out. So, basically, there's no need for Bill 17 because the government has everything at their tools right now in order to make those sound judgments.

As the minister has pointed out, he has every right, through regulation, in order to put a pause on, which they have done and is still, in fact, still on. So he had talked about the George Morris Centre. Is that the documentation? Obviously, there's no clear documentation that he can refer to that says: There it is; the hog industry is definitely the one that's causing the pollution into Lake Winnipeg.

Mr. Struthers: It's interesting to hear the Member for Lakeside talk about having the tools already put in place, and he actually mentioned the phosphorus regulation that we brought forward. We brought that forward in November of 2006. He's saying, on the one hand, that the Clean Environment Commission report is a good one. I appreciate him saying that. He says it's a good report. But that report very clearly said that the regulation that we had put in place was not strong enough, a regulation that his own leader said he was against. His own leader, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), when we brought forward the pause and the phosphorus regulations, said it was too strong. Well, in Brandon he said, oh, it's too strong, when he was surrounded by a group of farmers. In Winnipeg he kind of fudges that a little bit to be a little bit more of a good guy with his neighbours in the city of Winnipeg.

But, essentially, the Member for Lakeside is saying the report is good, the report that said that regulation was not strong enough, and his leader is saying that regulation was way too strong so we're not going to support it. They oppose it. So, Madam Chairperson, it's hard to get any kind of consistent position out of the opposition on this except they say to us that we don't have the good science. I guess members opposite think they should be the arbiters of what is good science and what isn't, and if the good science fits into their particular political bench, then I guess it's good science and anybody else who disagrees with them, well, that ain't good science.

Madam Chairperson, we can't afford that kind of sticking our head in the sand and using science to do nothing, because the Leader of the Official

Opposition hasn't agreed with a single, not a single initiative that this or any other government has brought forward in terms of restricting or limiting any kind of development to a sustainable framework. They've just opposed everything. They've just said no to everything. That might be okay in opposition, and you might be able to play those kinds of games, but, in government, we have a responsibility to protect Manitoba's water, and we're going to do it.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Madam Chairperson, I'd like to ask the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) a few questions. I know that both the Minister of Education and I have spent some time together in committee, Justice Committee, dealing with issues surrounding Bill 37. I know that the Minister of Education listened very intently to the presentations, as did I. There certainly were some questions that I felt should be posed to the Minister of Education because he didn't either take the opportunity or have the opportunity to put any comments on the record as he was listening to presentations, but there were many, many presentations that were made. I'd like to just read parts of those presentations into the record here in the House and ask, maybe, for the minister's comments.

Many of the presentations were well rounded and spoke to several parts of the legislation, but the ones that I'm going to read from are probably those that are retired teachers who have been attempting to get the ear of this government in dealing with the whole COLA issue around their pension plan.

If I can just quote from one of the presentations regarding CPI and it says, I quote: it is interesting how this present government can use the CPI indexing to assist them when and wherever they would wish to use it for their own purposes. However, in this province of Manitoba there is presently a large contingent of seniors who have amply paid for inflation protection throughout most of their careers. This is a group of retired teachers. This presenter goes on to say: I'm not speaking for the group; I'm speaking as an independent citizen. The sums they have each paid amount to thousands of dollars, money that has earned good returns and is kept in a fund.

The presenter goes on to say that this group was recognized by the Conservative government in the 1990s and by the Schreyer government previous to the 1990s, but that the present NDP government chooses to ignore the situation and that people of this

senior group who would not be in poverty if the act prepared them for what was read and dealt with fairly. There are people who are not quite at the poverty level, but getting closer every year with the shrinking dollar due to high inflation, and that many attempts have been made with the Doer New Democratic party, but to no avail.

This presenter felt that seniors have suffered bullying and abuse this past year from this government. This government has now linked itself to the union head of MTS, and it appears that both the government and MTS seem to want to keep money from the seniors that have invested in their own inflation protection to use in the future for those in the same present careers.

I will just go to the last line that says: NDP justice is no justice at all. If they cannot recognize the correct spirit of the legislation for deserving seniors regarding CPI, they should not contemplate any amount of CPI for their own concerns until they can reasonably bring justice to this group of seniors.

That was presented by Mrs. Karen Boughton at the committee.

I'm wondering what the minister would say to Karen Boughton about the comments that she has made and the dealings that she and other retired teachers have had with this government around COLA.

* (16:30)

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Madam Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to put some information on the record for the member, and I thank the member for the question.

First of all, her assertion that the Retired Teachers' Association hasn't had an ear with the government is incorrect. I've met very often with the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba. We've had delegations to caucus and to individual ministers and a number of ministers sitting at the same table to hear their concerns. There is a retired teacher that is currently on the TRAF board. RTAM had been active at the Teachers' Pension Task Force table, and there is a process that had been undertaken by the Teachers' Pension Task Force to assess what would be fair and equitable and what would be a good balance to achieve the desires of the active teachers and retired teachers in improving the cost of living adjustment and the benefit.

I did appreciate the words that Mrs. Boughton put on the record. I did actually have an opportunity to talk to her afterwards, and I did say to her that, when she mentioned that they were recognized by the Conservatives in the 1990s, I had some information which she might find rather interesting. That information was the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund reports that had been tabled in this Chamber year after year after year, and I'd like the opportunity to read into the record what was contained in those reports.

The member is correct in saying that the teachers had been recognized by the Schreyer government and the Pawley government, and this is what was said in the reports that were tabled in the House through the TRAF board.

It starts on page 17: The pension adjustments granted since 1984 reflect the full increase in the cost of living. This practice reduces the amount which would otherwise be available to finance future pension adjustments. The object of the present rate of contribution is to finance pension adjustments which would reflect two-thirds of the increase in the cost of living in a year up to 9 percent. The current practice is using part of the amounts needed for the future. As a result, the amounts available to finance future pension adjustments will not be sufficient to permit this objective to be realized in the future. We are currently preparing a cash flow projection of the account. This projection will indicate the amounts needed to finance the expected pension adjustments in the future, and we will be pleased to discuss this report at your convenience.

It's signed by the actuary, Louis Ellement on June 23, 1988. Now, essentially the same message almost verbatim is given by Louis Ellement on June 7 of 1989. The same message is repeated in the TRAF report June 12, 1990, by Dennis Ellement. The same message essentially is repeated: The possibility becomes a certainty if the rate of inflation is significantly higher in the future than it has been in recent years that you'll fail to achieve the objective of the full COLA and that two-thirds of the increase is what the account was designed to do. That was submitted June 11, 1991.

Page 16 of the TRAF report: The objective of the present rate of contribution is to finance pension adjustments which would reflect two-thirds of the increase in the cost of living in the year up to 9 percent. Each decision to grant full increases uses amounts that would be needed in the future. As a

result, the amounts available to finance future pension adjustments may not be sufficient to permit this objective to be realized in the future. Respectfully submitted, June 5, 1992.

So, after several actuarial warnings, several actuarial warnings in the late '80s, early '90s, I would suggest to the member opposite that it was the government of the day that did not listen to what would happen as a result of the funding. Throughout the report there are suggestions that they would be pleased to meet with the members of the Teachers' Pension Task Force, with the TRAF board, to meet with the government to discuss this, and I would suspect that the minister of the day would have done due diligence in looking at these reports and I would hope that the minister would have acted on these reports.

It would appear that that was not the case but, having been a teacher advocate during the 1990s, I saw that the government wasn't prepared to listen to much of anything that teachers had to say in the 1990s and didn't make any improvements to the pension. Regrettably, we've inherited a situation where the warnings had been made repeatedly to the actuary, saying time and time and time again the fund will be in trouble if no effort is made to increase contribution rates or if the benefit isn't adjusted to reflect the rate of funding.

Now the intent of the legislation, it does talk about paying full COLA if the account can afford to do so. Clearly, after several, several warnings from the actuary, the account could not afford to do so, yet it was allowed to continue to do so. That was done so under the watch of the members opposite. I know the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) had been minister at the time when many of these reports were submitted, so I would suggest to you that we are listening to the retired teachers and their concerns. We are trying to find a solution. The Teachers' Pension Task Force had met.

The Teachers' Pension Task Force had come up with what was perceived to be a good compromise and that would address the needs of active and retired teachers, and as the member knows, there's been a plebiscite conducted to see how the plan holders feel about the recommendations that have been brought forward in the Sale report.

But to suggest we're not listening, I would suggest that we have been listening. I just wish that we wouldn't find ourselves in this situation had

members opposite been listening in the late '80s and early '90s.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chair, it's become a habit of this government after almost a decade of them being in power to blame someone else for all the issues that they have to deal with instead of taking some leadership and listening to what retired teachers have said to them. The minister can attempt to wax eloquently about all the meetings that he's had and all the discussions that he's had with retired teachers, but, when we get them out to committee and they publicly state and I quote: In my opinion, as a retired teacher, I feel that I am being Scrooged by my own employer.

Now this isn't the Filmon government or the Schreyer government or the Pawley government. This is the Doer government that's been in power for nine years. These teachers are feeling they're being Scrooged by their own employers.

Obviously, this presenter goes on to say, when the NDP want to line their own pockets with taxpayers' dollars through Bill 37 and give themselves a full COLA when they aren't addressing after nine years the issues that retired teachers have been bringing forward to their attention, this one presenter says, what is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander.

These aren't my words, Madam Chair. These are the words of retired teachers who have time and time and time again been rejected. To add further insult to injury, what they are wanting to do is ensure that there's no discussion around teachers' pensions for another 10 years. That's nine years of this government and another 10 years that they want to silence retired teachers.

What again I will ask the minister to do is to reply to me, what does he say to Louise Porteous, who was at committee, and says, and I quote, I feel that I am being Scrooged by my own employer? What comments does he have to Leslie Porteous? I might have said Louise, but it's Leslie Porteous who made presentation at committee.

Mr. Bjornson: I have said, as I've said to all retired teachers, that this is a government that has listened and continues to listen and will continue to work to improve the pension for teachers both active and retired. Certainly, the recommendations in the Sale report were a very good compromise, and the member should know that the No. 1 concern for active teachers for the longest time was the integrity

of the main account. I was a teacher on the Manitoba Teachers' Society annual general meeting convention floor, advocating that the unfunded pension liability compromised the integrity of the main account which would be the main benefit of the plan, the fact that it had been unfunded since the 1960s and the fact that the unfunded pension liability was going to grow exponentially with more teachers retiring. As an advocate, we know that that fell on deaf ears, and it was this government that had committed to fund the unfunded pension liability. It was this government that opened up The Teachers' Pensions Act four times to make improvements that the Teachers' Pension Task Force had made recommendations to government to make.

It's funny because, in the last budget process when we had borrowed the money for the purpose of funding the unfunded liability, members opposite voted against that and didn't recognize that this was actually a more transparent and more appropriate means of dealing with the unfunded pension liability, which would have grown exponentially, as I say, to approximately \$8 billion. That was the figure that we had been told would be the case.

*(16:40)

So the \$1.5 billion to maintain the integrity of the main account is a very significant step. Funding new teacher pensions on a go-forward basis is a very significant step. Opening up the act four times to make significant changes is a very significant step. So we've addressed the main concern that had been the concern of teachers 15 years ago when I was on that convention floor lobbying the government. Unfortunately, that fell on deaf ears.

The leadership that we have demonstrated with the recommendations that are in the Sale report are quite substantial. The amount of money that would be necessary to fund the recommendations in the Sale report are approximately \$130 million. Now, I know, during the election last year, the last weekend of the election, that was the first time that I saw any inkling from the opposition that they were talking to retired teachers at all, was a suggestion that they could guarantee full COLA with a \$10-million or \$11-million infusion in the first year and an additional \$10 or \$12 million over the next 10 years. Well, that math is only off by approximately \$110 million, and to suggest that there be a guarantee of full COLA for that amount of money, quite frankly, is irresponsible.

Now, Madam Chair, the member mentioned that this particular teacher might have felt Scrooged by this government. I can tell you how I felt when I was a teacher under the Tories. It wasn't Scrooged, but it was a very similar-sounding word.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Madam Chair, and again, the minister goes back, as he tends to always do, and not take responsibility for his own actions. I mean, this is not a game. I'm sure that retired teachers are going to be extremely interested in the minister's responses and the way he tries to pass the buck rather than taking—there's something to be said for ministerial accountability. You're not a minister of the Crown unless you take some responsibility and are accountable for the actions that you, personally, take in that job, that responsibility that you have been given.

Again, I just want to go back to comments that were made by Manitobans, and again, these aren't words out of my mouth, these are Manitobans that were—*[interjection]* Well, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) says, oh yeah, in a manner that's very condescending to taxpayers that have taken the time to come forward. Retired teachers. I would hope that she would have a little more respect for retired teachers than to make those kinds of off-handed comments when I'm asking very serious questions.

I'm putting on the record comments that were made by people that were prepared to stand up publicly and make presentation to committee. I would hope that there would be some respect from government members. I know that the Minister of Education is sitting and listening and I would hope that his colleagues would take the opportunity to listen also because this is on the record and it doesn't show much respect, as we've seen sometimes, to presenters when they've made these presentations at committee.

I'll quote again from a Manitoban, from a taxpayer, from a retired teacher when speaking about Bill 37. Madam Chair, when the NDP wants to line their own pockets of their political party with a full COLA attached to that, when they're not giving consideration and respect to retired teachers, some of them who have been retired for a great length of time and are living almost below the poverty line as a result of their pensions not being indexed, it does fall upon the shoulders of the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) and a government that has been in power for nine years now.

Madam Chair, I'll quote from a presentation from Bev Reeves who says: Bill 37 is an excellent example of the hypocrisy of this government, not former governments, but this government, in its built-in provision for the \$1.25 per vote to political parties, carrying with it an automatic raise each year based on the full CPI. This government is proposing, on the one hand, to increase its own political party coffers by \$1.25 per vote, plus CPI, while, on the other hand, coercing teachers in the province into acceptance of the all-or-nothing-at-all Sale report on teachers' pensions that calls for a reduction in teacher benefits from a full CPI COLA up to a two-thirds COLA. Where does the gouging of taxpayer dollars end? Since retiring in 1998, my pension dollar is now worth only 90 cents, in spite of the fact that I paid for a full COLA benefit years ago when the provision was passed into law.

These are very legitimate comments and legitimate questions. This teacher retired in 1998. This government has been in power since 1999. What does the Minister of Education say to Bev Reeves who has put these comments on the record in regard to Bill 37?

Mr. Bjornson: I will reiterate for the member: If the shoe fits, wear it. She talks about assigning blame. I read into the record no less than six examples of where the actuary said, if you do not do something, this will happen. Quite frankly, this has happened because they did nothing. It begs the question: Why would they ignore the advice of the actuary from 1988 to 1993? The actuary said that the account would be compromised because the amount of money in the account is not sufficient to support a full COLA. Actuaries look at the retirement patterns. They look at the anticipated number of teachers to retire. Perhaps they didn't anticipate that so many would have to retire so quickly when members opposite were in government.

I remember an article in the *Brandon Sun*. In fact, I have a copy of it here from May 11, 2005, saying, 10 years ago today—so May 11 in 1995—54 school divisions cut 243 full-time jobs because of the funding announcements and the impact that that had on the teacher profession. I believe it was a total of 800 teachers. More teachers are choosing to retire at 55. Did the members opposite do any analysis of what impact that would have on the pension plan when they're told repeatedly that adjusting the COLA to two-thirds, as it was designed to do and designed to perform, how would that impact the pension adjustment account when so many teachers are being

asked to leave the profession early so school boards could save money in hiring younger teachers who came in at a lower rate?

I always wonder what would have happened if the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck)—and I believe Ms. Render was on that commission—where they were going out talking to teachers about the potential to grandfather existing salaries and suggesting that maybe we pay entry-level teachers too much money. I remember that conversation and how teachers rallied to say how insulting that was to be told that they're getting paid too much money to do one of the most important jobs that we have in this society to do.

Now the member talks about games. Well, let's talk about games. I remember seeing on the Web site, in fact, I have a copy of it here when Stu Murray was the leader, and January 25, 2006, the headline: Is teachers' pension money at risk? The response that was sent to the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), who was my critic at the time, from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, in the last couple of paragraphs: Our pension is a well-managed and secure plan. It continues year after year to provide excellent returns.

There are a number of other lines in here, then it goes on to say: The teachers of Manitoba, the plan they can be proud of, it is there for them today and will be there for them tomorrow. It is irresponsible for you to make unsubstantiated claims about our plan. If in the future you have any questions, perhaps you should contact our CEO or board chair of TRAF to clarify your concerns.

* (16:50)

Well, let's talk about playing games. Had they contacted the board chair and the CEO? Had they talked to Manitoba Teachers' Society? I talked to the Teachers' Society over the weekend when I happened to be attending an event for the general secretaries of all teachers' federations and associations across Canada. The general secretary for the Manitoba Teachers' Society thought it would be wise to host them in Gimli, and it was certainly a beautiful day when I was there yesterday. The general secretaries were all aware of Bill 72, which the government of the day had introduced when I was a teacher, where they stripped teachers of all their collective bargaining rights.

As a teacher, that's what motivated me to get involved in politics and become part of a new

democratic team that truly stands up for teachers and advocates for teachers. So I have a difficult time listening to the questions from members opposite when they pretend to be advocates for teachers.

When you talk about games, as I said, this is not a game. We take this very seriously. For members opposite to suggest otherwise is quite insulting. We are listening.

We have a very positive report that's been tabled by the Teachers' Pension Task Force; that report has made very good recommendations that the teachers have voted on. I understand that this has been a very divisive issue, because there was no action taken in the '90s when you were warned over and over, over and over again, that, if you don't put more money into the account, then the account will be in jeopardy, and you do nothing—when you don't cut the benefit back to pay the way it was designed to pay, the account will be in jeopardy.

I would ask the member if she's read the Sale report that came through the Teachers' Pension Task Force and looked at the actuarial analysis that retroactively said, if two-thirds COLA had been paid the way it was designed to do, then the Pension Adjustment Account would actually be sitting in a surplus situation right now.

That is what the account was designed to do. The account was not designed to pay full COLA. Members were told that repeatedly; members ignored that. We've inherited their mess; we're working to clean up that mess. Madam Chair, the member shouldn't underestimate the value of the \$1.5 billion contribution that we made to the integrity of the main account and the feedback that we received from that.

I'll quote then-president, Brian Ardern saying, our members applaud this government's commitment to putting our members' pensions, their futures on solid ground. The long-term savings for Manitoba taxpayers that will result from this investment shows solid management leadership on behalf of the Manitoba government.

Actuarial firm, Hewitt Associates, asked by the Province to provide independent advice on the impact of Manitoba accelerating the funding of its pension obligations and projection of the province's pension costs for the next 50 years, confirmed that, due to the low cost of long-term debt financing, accelerated funding is financially beneficial to the province.

Members opposite, all they could talk about with the teachers' pension was that money was at risk. It was posted on their website. The Teachers' Society said, you're wrong. You didn't listen to the Teachers' Society then; you didn't listen to the Teachers' Society 20 years ago. I don't expect you to listen to the Teachers' Society today.

I know for a fact that the bill which the members have introduced with the management structure, the TRAF board—they've introduced the bill three times. On all three of those occasions, they've yet to talk to the Teachers' Society and they are the principal proponents of the TRAF board, because they are the ones who are currently paying into the TRAF account.

I really must take strong exception to the member suggesting that there are any games being played in this regard.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I'd like to direct my questions to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), if I may, although the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) has given me great foundation in which to build on commentary, having been a trustee at that point in time.

I will say that we do share one thing in common, that the minister in 1995 is the reason that I ran for elected office as well, as I was school board chair at that time. We'll talk about that at a little later date. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to represent Portage la Prairie for the past 10 years.

We spoke in regard to the Department of Agriculture expenditures, the transferable of monies from the infrastructure development grants to the Rural Economic Development Initiatives.

One of those initiatives is Hometown Manitoba. The minister was going to review and provide me with information as to the time of intake for applications and whether her department was considering a second opportunity.

What is the status currently of the Hometown Manitoba grants?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Under the Hometown applications, we have one intake per year and, at the present time, we are not looking to have a further intake. That intake date is in March, so, if the member is looking as to whether we will have additional intakes, we will not.

Although, while I've got the floor, and talking about Hometown Manitoba, I want to talk about how well received that program is. There are communities that it is making a big difference to the landscape, through their main streets and their community. It's making a difference to recreation in the communities, and there have been very good applications. And I think those communities that are able to rally their communities together and get three or four or five applications in one community—in fact, the city of Portage la Prairie is one of those that has been able to get enough applications in that they are able to make a significant impact within one year, and that's what I encourage municipalities and towns and villages to do, is get all of the people involved and have a greater impact. But, specifically to the member's question, we, at this time, are staying with one application form, one intake per year.

Mr. Faurshou: Could I ask about the allotted resources and whether the applications that were received in March of this year, did they completely deplete the budgeted monies in that program?

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes. All of the resources that were allocated were distributed under the program.

Mr. Faurshou: Madam Chairperson, yes, it does speak volumes in regard to the acceptance of the program, and I will say that in Portage la Prairie, through the significant efforts of the Portage District Chamber of Commerce, businesses were made aware of the program. I understand there was upwards to 14 businesses in Portage la Prairie that received varied amounts to improve the aesthetics of their businesses. I will say, though, that because of the popularity of the program in Portage la Prairie, the question has been asked on more than one occasion as to when might we apply, coming from those that did not apply. I would like to encourage the minister that potentially for those that either were not fully satisfied with the grants allocated or for those that had not known of the program, I would suggest that, potentially, a second intake at another time of the year might be very, very beneficial.

Can the minister tell me exactly how much money was allocated to the Hometown Manitoba program for this year?

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I would take the member's comments and advice seriously.

It is, indeed, a good program. There are many people that participate in the program—communities—

and his suggestion that we have another intake, or that we allocate more money to the program, are certainly valid suggestions and certainly I will take that into consideration as we move forward and put the—but, of course, before we know it, we will be into next year's Estimates and we will be again looking at how we can enhance the services that we provide in rural Manitoba. I would take the member's comments seriously, and if the member wants to put a further question I can then get him the number that he is looking for.

Madam Chairperson: The time being 5 o'clock, according to the rules, there's supposed to be an indication at the end of each day of sitting in concurrence whether questioning for the listed ministers has been concluded, or whether the questioning will continue. Is there an indication of

whether the questioning for the ministers of Conservation, Education and Agriculture is concluded, or whether the questioning shall continue on another day?

An Honourable Member: Another day.

Madam Chairperson: It shall continue on another day.

The hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise. I call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 2, 2008

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