

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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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.
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BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
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BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
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DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
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HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
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NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
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SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 11, 2009

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

PTH 15

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

In 2004, the Province of Manitoba made a public commitment to the people of Springfield to twin PTH 15 and the floodway bridge on PTH 15, but then in 2006, the twinning was cancelled.

Mr. Speaker, injuries resulting from collisions on PTH 15 continue to rise and have doubled from 2007 to 2008.

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) stated that preliminary analysis of current and future traffic demands indicate that local twinning will be required.

The current plan to replace the floodway bridge on PTH 15 does not include twinning and, therefore, does not fulfil the current or future traffic demands cited by the Minister of Transportation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate twinning of the PTH 15 floodway bridge for the safety of the citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by Lorraine Boitson, Lora Chapman, Dwight Barkman and many, many other Manitobans.

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

Seven Oaks Hospital—Emergency Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The current Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP government are reducing emergency services at the Seven Oaks Hospital.

On October 6, 1995, the NDP introduced a matter of urgent public importance that stated that "the ordinary business of the House to be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the threat to the health-care system posed by this government's plans to limit emergency services in the city of Winnipeg community hospitals."

On December 6, 1995, when the PC government suggested it was going to reduce emergency services at the Seven Oaks Hospital, the NDP leader then asked Premier Gary Filmon to "reverse the horrible decisions of his government and his Minister of Health and reopen our community-based emergency wards."

The NDP gave Manitobans the impression that they supported Seven Oaks Hospital having full emergency services seven days a week, 24 hours a day

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Premier of Manitoba consider how important it is to have the Seven Oaks Hospital provide full emergency services seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

This is signed by R. Francisco, J. Legaspi, F. Legaspi and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

Emergency Medical Services—Rural Manitoba

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:

The communities of Eddystone, Bacon Ridge and Ebb and Flow First Nation rely on emergency medical services personnel based in Ste. Rose, which is about 45 minutes away.

Mr. Speaker, these communities represent about 2,500 people. Other communities of similar size within the region are equipped with at least one ambulance, but this area is not. As a result, residents

must be transported in private vehicles to the nearest hospital if they cannot wait for emergency personnel to arrive.

There are qualified first responders living in these communities who want to serve the region but need an ambulance to do so.

A centrally located ambulance and ambulance station in this area would be able to provide better and more responsive emergency services to these communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider working with the Parkland Regional Health Authority to provide a centrally located ambulance and station in the area of Eddystone, Bacon Ridge and Ebb and Flow First Nation.

This petition is signed by Aaron Beaulieu, Richard Houle, F. Houle and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Long-Term Care Facilities—Morden and Winkler

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

Many seniors from the Morden and Winkler area are currently patients in Boundary Trails Health Centre while they wait for placement in local personal care homes.

There are presently no beds available for these patients in Salem Home and Tabor Home. To make more beds in the hospital available, the regional health authority is planning to move these patients to personal care homes in outlying regions.

These patients have lived, worked and raised their families in this area for most of their lives. They receive care and support from their family and friends who live in the community, and they will lose this support if they are forced to move to distant communities.

These seniors and their families should not have to bear the consequences of the provincial government's failure to ensure there are adequate personal care home beds in the region.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to ensure that patients who are awaiting placement in a personal care home are not moved to distant communities.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider working with the RHA and the community to speed construction and expansion of long-term care facilities in the region.

This is signed by L. Peters, Christine Krahn, Maryann Giesbrecht and many, many others.

Midwifery Services—Interlake Region

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

Residents of the Interlake Regional Health Authority do not have access to midwifery services.

Midwives provide high quality, cost-effective care to childbearing women throughout their pregnancy, birth and in the post-partum period.

Women in the Interlake should have access to midwifery care.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider working with the Interlake Regional Health Authority to provide midwifery services to women in this health region.

This is signed by Tanya Wereschuk, Kathy Janisch, Aline Rossington and many, many others.

Education Funding

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Historically, the Province of Manitoba has received funding for education by the assessment of property that generates taxes. This unfair tax is only applied to selected property owners in certain areas and confines.

Property-based school tax is becoming an ever-increasing burden without acknowledging the owner's income or owner's ability to pay.

The provincial sales tax was instituted for the purpose of funding education. However, monies

generated by this tax are being placed in general revenue.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson) consider removing education funding by school tax or education levies from all property in Manitoba.

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth consider finding a more equitable method of funding education, such as general revenue, following the constitutional funding of education by the Province of Manitoba.

This petition is signed by Anita Moyses, Iris Jamieson, Karen Teague and many, many other fine Manitobans.

*(13:40)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Photo Radar Tickets Construction Zones

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): The government's position on the issue of refunding photo radar fines that were paid by Manitobans, who were travelling under the posted speed limit but posed no threat to public safety, has been evolving over the last week or so from one position to another. They've been flip-flopping on this issue more frequently, Mr. Speaker, than they have on the issue of Manitoba's debt repayments.

I wonder if the Premier can clarify: What is the position of the government today with respect to the refunding of photo radar payments that were made by people travelling under the posted speed limit who posed no threat to the safety of any other Manitoban?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I would note that the Leader of the Opposition, over the weekend, and their Web site, calls on us to repay every one of the 60,000 fines.

If you're going 150 miles an hour in a construction zone, go to Hugh McFadyen—no, go to the Leader of the Opposition. I withdraw that statement. Go to the Leader of the Opposition and get your rebate. The law-and-order party—if you're going 100 miles an hour, get your rebate. Just sign up with the Conservative Web site; that's the position of the Leader of the Opposition.

I'm shocked that he's even contemplating taking away photo radar in schools and playgrounds. Sometimes you have to have the courage of your convictions, and we're going to continue to work with the city of Winnipeg police in this regard, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Almost every point made in that response is inaccurate, Mr. Speaker. If the Premier looks at the request coming from thousands of Manitobans, the request is that for those travelling at or below the posted speed limit, not those who were travelling—and if they read the petition, it's front page, top of the fold on page 3 of the *Free Press*. He just needs to read the wording of the petition to know that it's for those travelling under the posted speed limit, who were ticketed, in a situation where their driving posed no threat to the safety of any other Manitoban.

I want to ask the Premier, who has increased the budget revenue projections for fines by 25 percent over two years based on the photo radar scam, if it is, in fact, the case that his Finance Minister had it as part of his budget plans all along, to increase the amount they would take from Manitobans in their budget by 25 percent over two years.

Will he not admit that this is really about a government that can't balance its budget, has very little to do with public safety?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, on the financial side, the member opposite would note that there's a \$25-million increase in the Justice Department's budget last year, well in exceeding the fine number that the member quotes, and another \$25 million this year.

The member, when he was chief of staff, they cut the RCMP positions in Manitoba. They cut the Crown prosecutor position. They never implemented, Mr. Speaker, the technology that was recommended.

I take great exception, Mr. Speaker, to the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition that he would take away the right of the Winnipeg city police to deploy photo radar in playgrounds and schools. I think that's totally irresponsible.

And the fact that accidents have gone down in intersections by 62 percent, maybe we'll take a hit politically, but maybe less people will be injured at those intersections, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: The point has got nothing to do with intersections. We support leaving red light

cameras in place, and we support the impact that they've had on reducing accidents at intersections, Mr. Speaker.

What we're referring to is the roving photo radar that has increased the bottom line for the government by 25 percent over two years. That's not an improvement in safety, Mr. Speaker, if, in fact, those revenue numbers track what's actually happened and things have gotten more dangerous under their watch, not safer.

The reality is that they're budgeting a 25 percent increase in revenue to the government as a result of their photo radar experiment without providing any benefit in terms of public safety.

Will the Premier confirm that, at the very least, for those Manitobans, thousands of them, who have paid fines while travelling under the speed limit, who did not endanger members of the public—will they look at doing the right thing and will they refund those funds and not use them in order to present the false image of a phony balanced budget?

Mr. Doer: The member opposite, first of all, says all 60,000 have to be refunded. In fact, that's 1,200 more than what was issued. So that assumes that he wants to refund every one of the big speeders in Manitoba, point No. 1.

Point No. 2, he calls the photo radar system a scam. Well, the former chief of police developed this proposal. He proposed it to the government. It was actually an unfettered photo radar system. I don't believe the city of Winnipeg police, in the implementation of this, is a scam, Mr. Speaker.

I'll stand with the Winnipeg city police in terms of the goals of this program. One objective, Mr. Speaker, was to reduce the number of police officers required to be stationed for traffic purposes and have more police officers working on crime prevention and crime enforcement. They were the ones that proposed it.

We, Mr. Speaker, did not want it to be unfettered. We wanted it to be for construction sites, both the barriers, the safety of the barriers, and the workers that are at the site. This is, again, based on advice from people that are much more expert than a lawyer across the way. It's coming from police.

We also wanted it to be at intersections. There's been a 29 percent decrease in accidents at intersections which were chosen. There's been a 19 percent decrease in injuries at intersections.

For the member opposite, he can pander to the politics of this, but to call this a scam, to call the Winnipeg city police, who initiated this program, to be part of a scam, shame on him, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Debt Repayment

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on a new question. The government has clearly mismanaged the photo radar issue. They have mismanaged what's going on in the economy. They have mismanaged agriculture, the impact that their decisions have had on producers, and they're mismanaging the debt-repayment schedule that five months ago the Premier said he was absolutely committed to, a \$110-million payment on Manitoba's debt. Two weeks ago, they dropped that down to \$20 million for two years, and then with Bill 30, zero payments on the debt.

Over the next three years, Mr. Speaker, rather than carrying on with this sort of mismanagement of Manitoba's finances, will the Premier go back and recommit himself to the important principle and the signal of sound financial management and commit himself to a legislated minimum balance of debt repayment for Manitobans?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the person who should go back is the person who says 60,000 unfair tickets needed to be refunded. That means people going 120 miles an hour in a safety construction zone under the Conservatives need to get a refund. That's the law-and-order party. That used to be the law-and-order party. It's now the pandering party of Manitoba.

I also believe strongly, Mr. Speaker, that the economy of Manitoba, not perfect; there are challenges going on. We just had a very good discussion about the bioscience and biomedical sectors. I've had the opportunity of looking at the highest increase in the bioscience and bio-knowledge areas, on a per capita basis, of any province in Canada.

We were at a meeting of the aerospace industry on Friday. When you were working on hand back the 120-mile-an-hour speed limit petition, Mr. Speaker, we were going to an aerospace meeting where Standard Aero is increasing and expanding, where Boeing is holding their own in Manitoba; Magellan is holding their own; the Air Canada maintenance

base is holding their own. In fact, we even have a cold-weather testing station in Manitoba.

That's economic growth. We're very proud of that growth, but the credit goes to all Manitobans, the people that are getting up every day, working hard, the companies that are thinking smart. Every day, the credit for this economy and economic growth goes to hardworking Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is right on one point only, and that is that Manitobans are working hard. They're making their debt payments each and every month and each and every year as responsible people do.

Will the Premier commit today to reinstate a minimum payment on Manitoba's debt in legislation as a way of sending a signal that the government is as committed to sound financial management as the people of Manitoba are, the same people who, even when times are tough, make the commitment to repay their debts, or will they continue down the reckless path of building up debt and saddling it onto the next generation, Mr. Speaker?

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, yes, yes and yes. We are paying down debt in the operating budget. We're paying down debt on the amortized capital, which wasn't even on the books under the former members—wasn't even on the books. We're paying down the pension liability debt; wasn't on the books, didn't pay a nickel, didn't pay a dime, didn't pay a cent. They stand up here in the House and they feign indignation. They didn't pay a red cent in 11 years in office.

Mr. Speaker, we have that debt payment in place, and whoever is premier in 20 years will be very happy that we took action—and it won't be me—to deal with this pension liability. Again, it's something that might not get you a vote, but it's the right thing to do for the future of Manitobans.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, they're drawing down their pension funds in order to meet current obligations and leaving huge unfunded liabilities within Manitoba's pension plans as we speak. The fund that they have set aside for pensions is being used for current requirements, and they're creating massive unfunded liabilities as we speak.

The last time the NDP governed this province, they left a situation for the last government that resulted in a situation where close to 20 percent of

the provincial government had to go toward debt repayment. It was the third largest department of government repaying debt at that time.

That was the legacy they left last time. Why are they taking us down a path toward having debt eat into public services, eat into Manitoba incomes and kill jobs for Manitobans, just as they did the last time they were in power, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I would refer the member opposite to Fred Jackson, the Auditor General's report. Of course, they don't like the Auditor General's report because in '97-98 it didn't get a big front page. Their books were not attested to by the Auditor General. You know, a great big note that we don't know what's in these books. In '98-99, same thing. We haven't had that because there was none of this under-the-table stuff.

I want to ask the member opposite: How many teachers in 11 years got one nickel of pension liability paid for under a Tory budget? I want to know: How many jail guards, how many public health nurses, how many highway employees, how many water inspectors, how many people got a cent in 11 years? The answer is in each and every year, not one cent was paid in terms of new employees and current employees for pension liability.

That was a train wreck, Mr. Speaker, and we're glad we've started to correct it.

Immigration Department Investigation Report

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, in Estimates on Friday, the Minister of Labour and Immigration admitted an investigation had been conducted in the Department of Immigration in 2007 because of allegations of bribery.

Will the minister tell this House when she first became aware of this illegal activity in her department?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Well, Mr. Speaker, I would caution the MLA for Morris in regard to putting that kind of information on the public record about a civil—

An Honourable Member: You said it in Estimates.

Ms. Allan: She said in her question, she talked about illegal activity in my department, Mr. Speaker, and I was very, very clear with the MLA for Morris that that was a personnel issue in my department. It had

been investigated by the Civil Service Commission, and it was not found to be true.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, what the minister said was there's an allegation that an individual in the Immigration branch was approving applications and was receiving financial benefit.

Mr. Speaker, an investigation was done. She claims it was unfounded, but let's remember Hydra House when an extensive internal review was done and nothing was found until the Auditor General's report, and that was scandalous.

I would like the minister to table the investigation that was done in Immigration in 2007.

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker, the investigation was done by the Civil Service Commission. It was arm's length from my department, and the member knows full well—she claims that she's the FIPPA expert in this House, and she should know full well that we cannot make that document public because of the FIPPA legislation.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, we're not asking them to provide a name. We're asking for the report. We're asking for the report, and we know when we get the report, there'll be any names blanked out.

We want to know the extent of the investigation, because we know internal investigations often don't find anything wrong when you're investigating yourself, Mr. Speaker.

If she's got nothing to hide, why doesn't she table that report today?

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that in Estimates, for quite some time the MLA for Morris spent quite a bit of time trying to find something in my department that was of an unscrupulous nature.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing going on. We've worked very, very hard in my department, particularly in the Immigration branch, to make sure that everything that happens in that department is accountable and transparent.

So, I'm really, really, sorry, I have no further information for the MLA for Morris.

Hog Industry Economic Challenges

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): First of all, I want to thank the pork producers for providing us with a wonderful lunch this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba pork producers are looking for some leadership from this government right now, as the industry faces some unusual challenges, but their concerns don't seem to be registering. Instead, this NDP government is busy blowing millions of dollars on boondoggles like the west-side power line, like Spirited Energy and the enhanced driver's licence.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister of Agriculture before and I'll ask again: Where is the plan to help our pork producers weather the economic challenges currently facing them?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Indeed, I was very pleased to be able to invite Manitoba Pork to the legislative grounds to cook the pork, so that people would understand and have confidence that eating pork is safe and H1N1 does not spread through the eating of pork, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that our industry is facing challenging times and has faced challenging times through—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. One question at a time, please.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the biggest challenges our producers have faced is the country-of-origin labelling, which has closed the borders to many of our products, and that's why this government is working very hard to increase slaughter capacity in this province. We know that there are markets right here in Canada that we can be filling.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, a strong agricultural economy is imperative to the long-term economic growth of this province. It creates thousands of direct and indirect jobs, contributes billions of dollars annually to the provincial economy. But instead of looking for ways to promote the growth in the agriculture sector, this government's priorities are sorely misdirected. The government is content to waste millions of dollars on a west-side power line, pay for an advertising campaign that was a huge flip-flop and promote the enhanced driver's licence program, drawing few takers.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture admit that she has no short-term or long-term strategy in order to help Manitoba pork producers weather these recent challenges?

Ms. Wowchuk: I wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) talks to the members of his caucus. The Leader of the Opposition was just telling us that we should use more money to pay down debt, that we shouldn't worry about programming, and now my Agriculture critic is saying, take money and put it into the pork industry.

Mr. Speaker, I wish they would talk. One says, pay down more debt; the other one says, put more money into the industry.

Why don't they talk, Mr. Speaker, because I can assure you that we have been talking to the pork industry and we are working with the industry?

* (14:00)

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, this is a minister that's spending millions and millions of dollars on a west-side line that would pay down their debt, give money to invest in the industry and get ten-fold for their investments. Shame on them.

You would think by now the government would recognize that working with the agriculture sector would be helping to ensure that billions of dollars worth of annual export sales are maintained along with thousands of direct and indirect Manitoba jobs.

We are deeply committed to outlasting these challenges which are coming stronger and stronger each and every day.

How disappointing it must be for them to see the government focussing on misdirected priorities and wasting millions of dollars on different programs, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Minister of Agriculture do the right thing, meet with the pork producers, work out a short-term project and long-term strategies that will help these current producers get through this storm?

Ms. Wowchuk: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the member opposite talks about that hydro line that he calls useless. He fails to mention that the sale of hydro is \$20 billion. That helps us. The member opposite also fails to mention that when they were in government we had a differential rate. Rural Manitobans paid more for their hydro than city people.

What did the members opposite do on that? They did nothing. We equalized that rate so that there would be a better program for all Manitobans.

We will continue to develop hydro, and we will continue to export, and, yes, Mr. Speaker, I have met

with the pork producers, and I will meet with the pork producers. We will continue to work with them, but we will not privatize our corporations like they did with Manitoba Telephone that drove up the costs for all Manitobans.

Agriculture Department Hiring Policies

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Well, Mr. Speaker, we've learned that the Minister of Agriculture has hired her old friend and former NDP Saskatchewan agriculture minister, Clay Serby, to give her advice on how to better run her department. What kind of a signal does it send to her departmental staff that she doesn't think they're qualified to give her advice on rural development?

Mr. Speaker, did the minister not know anyone in Manitoba with the expertise to advise her on how to improve agriculture in Manitoba, rather than paying her old friend, the former NDP Saskatchewan agriculture minister?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, economic development is really important in rural Manitoba. My department has the responsibility of dealing with regional development corporations, with economic development groups, as well as the staff that I have in my department.

The Manitoba municipalities came to us with a report where they said that we had to make improvements on how we deliver services in rural Manitoba when it comes to economic development. That's why I decided that we would bring someone in to talk to all of the people that are involved in economic development in rural Manitoba so that they could share their ideas on how we might improve it.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, for \$23,975—and that's the value of this untendered contract given by the minister to her old friend, Mr. Serby—I know there are many Manitobans who could have given her advice on how to do her job better.

The Manitoba Connects report states, and I quote: There is much perceived duplication and overlap of services, and there is much confusion among the client base and grass-roots staff about where to go and who does what.

Farmers already know this, Mr. Speaker. After 10 years as Agriculture Minister, is this her legacy, confusion, no direction, no results?

Does the minister think it's appropriate to make such an untendered contract at a time when her government is running a deficit?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member opposite knows that the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese), now, was appointed to the Municipal Board in May 2006, before he was elected. Clayton Manness worked on the fair tax commission.

Mr. Speaker, we all look for advice, and we look where we can get advice on helping us to make change. I can say to the member opposite, the people that are involved in delivering economic development, whether it be regional development corporations, economic development people, or AMM people, all said that it was a good idea to bring someone in so that they would have a chance to talk to them and look at how we might deliver services better in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Ste. Rose and Mr. Manness were excellent people that she could have gotten free advice from instead of hiring someone from Saskatchewan, her former colleague.

Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Connects report also states, we've been told by stakeholders—maybe she didn't listen to this—that what is required is not more studies, but to move forward.

No results are what you get from a minister offering no direction. It's just like the failed Spirited Energy campaign. In January 2001, this Minister of Rural Initiatives developed a 2010 vision for program delivery in her department. Did it fail, Mr. Speaker? Is that why she had to pay \$23,975 for an untendered contract to her old Saskatchewan NDP friend at a time when her government is running deficits?

Mr. Speaker, while her government wastes millions on projects like—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, if you listen to the questions that the members have asked in the past days, they say everything about Saskatchewan is good, everything about Saskatchewan is good, and then when there's someone else that's brought in—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have some decorum. The honourable minister has the floor.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that it's very important that we be able to look at what kinds of services we deliver and that we are able to seek outside advice. I won't operate in a silo like the members opposite who think that they know that everything is perfect as they see it.

Mr. Speaker, it's quite okay to look at outsiders to give us advice. I remember the opposition brought in Connie Curran. Connie Curran wasn't a Manitoban, but they brought her in. I can tell you that the disaster that they created to that is one that Manitobans will not forget.

Potato Industry Impact of Country-of-Origin Labelling

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Can the Minister of Agriculture update this House on the impact COOL, or country-of-origin labelling, is having on the potato industry in this province?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, the issues of county-of-origin labelling are affecting all sectors and can affect all sectors. That's why we had worked very closely, that's why we hired legal advice and support in the United States. That's why we have lobbied the U.S. government that we need to keep those doors open, those trade doors open.

The major hit right now, Mr. Speaker, is in the livestock sector because of the labelling that is required, but there can be other consequences, and that's why we continue to work with the minister responsible in the United States to ensure that a rule that is put in place is a fair rule that will allow trade to continue.

Mr. Dyck: Well, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the minister really doesn't know. The potato industry is a multimillion dollar industry in this province and puts millions of dollars back in the economy. COOL has given buyers in the U.S. the option to go back or default on some of their contracts.

Will the minister commit to work with the industry to try and resolve some of these issues?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, just as there is the possibility for people to break their contracts in the pork industry, there is that possibility in other exporting. That's a very important market for us, and that's why we have to continue to look and enhance our processing abilities here in this province, whether it is further processing of potatoes that are

clearly labelled, whether it is further processing of our pork and beef that are clearly labelled.

I think we can sell the Canadian label anywhere, but it is confusion that is being created by sending in a raw product that then needs a dual label. This is a very serious issue and one that can affect our industry dramatically. That's why we will continue to work with the federal government and we will continue to work—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dyck: Mr. Speaker, I would submit that the confusion is between this minister and the U.S.

Seeing that COOL is a shared responsibility with the federal government, will the minister commit to working with the federal government to try and resolve some of these irritants? It's a combined effort. Now the minister has done nothing in order to try and facilitate this.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy that the member opposite finally realizes we have to deal nation to nation on this issue. That's why, for months, I have been talking to the federal minister and asking him to continue to lobby. That's why the federal minister has indicated that there will be a challenge on COOL.

But the member opposite also has to recognize that there is a role for the Province to play, and we are playing that role. Whether it is not in the direct negotiations, it's important that we meet with our counterparts and that they understand how we conduct agriculture in this province and how they conduct it, and that their processors and producers will suffer if—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

*(14:10)

Hog Industry Economic Challenges

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see the Minister of Agriculture followed our Liberal lead and initiated a pork barbeque at the Legislature this morning. Thank you to the pork producers and to the Minister of Agriculture for that, but the industry needs a full plan from this government.

I take you to Harry Siemens, for example, in his current commentary he says that the industry is on the brink of disaster. Yet the minister has done very little. Indeed, Mr. Siemens quotes a Manitoba

producer as saying to the Minister of Agriculture, you haven't helped us in any way, shape or form—from a producer.

Last week I asked the government to provide a plan for the industry. Saskatchewan has a plan. Québec has a plan. Where is the Manitoba plan?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, you know, the member opposite makes a statement about the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). The Minister of Agriculture is the one that put some \$25 million into further food processing in the hog industry last year, money into Neepawa, and I would point out the member opposite wasn't exactly doing the "Hallelujah" chorus for hog processing here in Manitoba.

The federal-provincial programs that are in place, most of the money forwarded by the provincial government was well over \$45 million last year, and the year before it was all in the livestock industry. We actually went over our budget because of the need in the livestock industry. We've been working hard on country-of-origin legislation, so the member—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, you know, it's a rather odd paradox at the moment that even while the hog industry in Manitoba is in big difficulty, there are lots of Manitoba retailers who are still insisting on bringing in pork from the United States. Some suspect that the minister is not doing anywhere near an adequate job of promoting to Manitobans the purchase of our wonderful Manitoba pork. Indeed, I think, across Canada, I hear that it may soon be that Canada may become the No. 2 purchaser of U.S. pork.

What's going on? Can the minister tell us how much of the pork consumed in Manitoba is from the United States, and can the minister tell us why she's not doing more to make sure Manitobans know that it's great to have Manitoba pork—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I'm surprised that the member opposite is talking about protectionism. He wants to start protecting our borders to keep our sales here in Canada. Mr. Speaker, we export millions of dollars of products around the world. The pork industry was very concerned, as I was, when we see

countries like Japan and China and others closing their borders to our products.

We can't, on one hand, say we want more product sold in Manitoba and in Canada of Canadian product and then complain when somebody closes a border on us, Mr. Speaker. So the member knows not what he talks about.

The other day, he asked me if I could guarantee the pork industry wouldn't have any diseases. I wonder when he was a practising doctor if—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Red Light Cameras Accident Statistics

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, photo radar and red light cameras were supposed to be all about making our streets that much safer. In fact, more and more Manitobans are seeing it more as a cash grab than a safety issue. In fact, today in question period the Premier (Mr. Doer) indicated that the percentage of accidents in intersections has been decreased by 62 percent.

My understanding is that the overall accidents in red light camera intersections has actually gone up. I'm wondering if the Premier can clarify whether or not the overall number of accidents in intersections has gone up since the installation of red light cameras.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I might take it, therefore, and I want to hear from the Liberal Party now, are they against or for photo radar cameras? Which is the Liberal position?

We have been advised by the city of Winnipeg police that accidents are down. The member opposite has also advised us that we do not need to hire any more police, that we have enough in the city of Winnipeg.

I daresay that we're far better off having photo radar at construction sites, school playgrounds and at intersections with red lights and green lights that allow the police to do their jobs on the more serious offences. That makes more sense than the members opposite—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Provincial Parks Government Initiatives

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, with summer on its way and the long weekend just around the corner, I find myself, like many other Manitobans, dusting off the camping gear and looking forward to spending some time this summer out in the great outdoors with my family.

I was just wondering: Can the Minister of Conservation please inform the House of the exciting initiatives that will both encourage Manitobans to explore more of our incredible province, as well as provide continued service through campground upgrades and facility enhancements under this year's Provincial Camping Initiative?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Whether the Tories like it or not, we waived park entrance fees this year for the next two years. Whether the Tories like it or not, we removed commercial logging out of provincial parks, eight of 81 provincial parks, whether the Tories liked it or not. Whether the Tories like it or not, we launched a Provincial Camping Initiative that will see 12 new yurts at Camp Morton and Stephenfield provincial parks. Whether the Tories like it or not, we're building more shower facilities in places like Birds Hill, Grand Beach, Childs Lake, Wellman Lake. Whether the Tories like it or not, Mr. Speaker, a new water system will be built out at Watchorn and new showers at Nutimik Lake, making those kinds of improvements.

Mr. Speaker, 65 new campsites at Wellman and 35 new campsites at Hnausa—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Cattle Industry Information on Anaplasmosis Disease

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, anaplasmosis has been identified in some cattle herds in eastern Manitoba. Producers are interested in learning more about the disease and how it might be spread.

Can the Minister of Agriculture provide an update on how many Manitoba herds are affected and how many cattle are represented?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, the member is accurate; antiplasmosis was diagnosed in eastern Manitoba in a herd in October 2009. Positive

tested animals were slaughtered. Several contact herds, trace-ins and trace-out herds, have been placed under quarantine.

I want to also tell the member that there was an information meeting in Lac du Bonnet on April 22, and some 50 producers attended that meeting to talk about the issue and to talk about how we would deal with this further.

But I want the member also to know that there are no trade restrictions that have been placed on Canada or Manitoba as a result of this disease.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, anaplasmosis is a reportable disease under the federal Health of Animals Act. Information is very valuable to producers who might be impacted.

Is the minister prepared to arrange a briefing, along with officials of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, to answer questions such as, what is the source of the Manitoba cases and how are the infected animals being disposed of?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, again, I would encourage the members opposite to talk to each other, because my critic, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), has asked for a briefing on antiplasmosis, and when that meeting is set up—and I believe the date has been set—then, certainly, I would encourage the member opposite to come along. If there are others that are interested, we could do a briefing, and I believe the meeting has been set up.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that anaplasmosis can be spread by ticks that bite infected animals. Producers have questions about whether these ticks might also infect wildlife like deer that sometimes interact with cattle herds.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell the House which species of wildlife can be infected with anaplasmosis, whether this poses a transmission risk for cattle, and are there any control measures to deal with this situation going forward?

Ms. Wowchuk: Indeed, the member is accurate when he says the disease is spread by ticks. It can also be spread by biting flies. It can also be spread from contaminated needles. It is a reportable disease and it does occur very rarely in this country, and that's why when it does occur, Mr. Speaker, we have to take the steps that we have taken.

That's why there was a public meeting held for the producers to give them the kind of information that the member opposite is asking for.

If there is a need for further information, as the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) has suggested, we will do a briefing, and I would invite the member opposite to attend as well.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

* (14:20)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Grace Hospital

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the House of a ceremony that took place at the Grace Hospital this Mother's Day. The Celebrate the Legacy service acknowledged the 119-year history of the Salvation Army in Winnipeg and marked the transition of the Salvation Army Grace Hospital to the new Grace Hospital as part of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

The Grace Hospital has been a vital part of the history of west Winnipeg since its founding as the first Grace Hospital in Canada in 1904, and it has been the heart of the larger St. James-Assiniboia neighbourhood since its relocation to the current location in 1967. Now, as the Salvation Army completes its transition out of health-care provision, it is also the last Grace Hospital.

Like so many others in my area, my life and that of my family, has been intertwined with the Grace. We have gone to the Grace in times of joy and in times of crisis. We have given birth to our children there and held the hand of a dying grandparent as they passed on in the arms of the Grace. As we each recounted our stories about our life and the Grace, it was easy to see that the Grace has always been more than just a hospital. She is our Grace, our beloved Grace.

It was fitting that the celebration of this legacy of Grace Hospital was celebrated on Mother's Day, as the work of the Salvation Army and the origins of the Grace Hospital began with childbirth and maternal care but, more importantly, because the Grace has always been like a mother to us. This legacy of caring is a result of the philosophy of the Salvation Army and in the dedication and compassion of the staff and volunteers that have worked at the Grace over the past century.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Salvation Army, especially Major Susan van Durien, divisional commander; Commissioner William Francis, territorial commander; and Commissioner Marilyn

Francis, territorial president of Women's Organizations, for sharing with us this celebration of the Grace and her legacy and for entrusting the ongoing legacy of the Grace to the WRHA, under the guidance of Vice-President Réal Cloutier. I would also like to thank the Honourable Pearl McGonigal for her work with the commissioners to ensure that the Grace Hospital retained her name, further preserving her legacy in spirit.

Like so many others, I look forward to the next century in the life of the Grace Hospital and the continuation of the spirit of caring that it has always embodied. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

National Nursing Week

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the celebration of Nursing Week in Manitoba. This year's theme is "Nursing: You Can't Live Without It."

Nursing Week is an opportunity to celebrate a profession that makes innumerable contributions to our health-care system and to the lives of Manitobans on a daily basis. Safe patient care depends on our nurses, who are the backbone of our health-care work force.

Unfortunately, under the NDP government, Manitoba is short 1,300 nurses, which has led to the increased use of overtime, mandatory overtime, something the Premier (Mr. Doer) called dangerous during the 1999 election campaign. It's also resulted in a sharp increase in the number of heavy workload forms, which nurses submit when their workload becomes so high that it's potentially unsafe.

Nurses work in already stressful environments. A chronic nursing shortage makes their job even harder, and we commend them for the work they are doing under these difficult circumstances.

This year's Nursing Week theme reminds us all that our nurses are an integral part of the health-care system and of our society as a whole. It also challenges us to re-evaluate our perceptions of the nursing profession so that we might be able to recognize more easily the very nature of the work that nurses do. Nurses are active in many different venues, from hospital and personal care homes, to schools and communities. Nurses even have a strong presence in Canada's military and are a critical component of our armed forces.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who has spent many years in this profession, I would like to say a huge thank you to all our nurses here in Manitoba. Thank you for your diligence while we experience a critical shortage of nurses. Thank you for your invaluable contribution to our health-care system, and thank you for your continued dedication to your patients.

I ask that the members of the House join with me in acknowledging the integral work and role that nurses play in Manitoba. Thank you.

Guyanese Association of Manitoba Production

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to share with this House an event I attended on February 28 at the Indo-Canadian Arts and Cultural Centre of Winnipeg.

The Guyanese Association's presentation of *Tales from the Ramayana* was a wonderful evening of theatre, food and dance.

The full Ramayana is an ancient Sanskrit epic by the great Indian poet, Valmiki and dates from 500 B.C.E. to 100 B.C.E.. It tells the story of Prince Rama and his quest to become king.

The tale explores the themes of human existence and dharma and has been a source of spiritual, cultural and artistic inspiration for centuries. The Ramayana is an epic that has had a decisive influence in the shaping of Indian civilization. The story is exceedingly well-known throughout India and has spread to become a part of the tradition of countries throughout southeast Asia.

The night began with a dinner and a welcome from the production organizers. Tara Chitra Dabee then performed a few verses from the Ramayana in tribute to the poet, Valmiki. This was followed by a Ram Leela dance and, finally, the storytellers took to the stage.

The storytellers chose to perform the portion of the great poem wherein Rama is about to be crowned king when he is thrust into exile with his beloved wife, Sita, and brother Lakshman.

The evening was a big success raising \$4,200 for the Three Rivers Kids Foundation dedicated to helping sick children in Guyana.

I would like to thank the volunteers and supporters of the production, including Derek Dabee, Mary Louise Chown and Laura Cowie; and the storytellers, Jamie Oliviero, Laura Cowie, Tom Roche, George Berman and Nigel Baseley.

Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg's Indian community is full of talented people. We are so lucky to live in a city where beautiful displays of art and culture are at our fingertips.

I would encourage all members of this House to take advantage of all the wonderful events the Indo-Canadian Arts and Cultural centre and the Guyanese Association have to offer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hog Industry—Economic Challenges

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I rise today to speak about Manitoba's pork industry. Today, many of us in this House had the pleasure of attending the pork barbecue on the Legislative grounds. We were served a high-quality, tasty pork product—ones that are a favourite on dinner plates around the globe.

We are grateful to have received this lunch and participate in an event designed to raise awareness of our pork industry.

This valuable sector creates about 15,000 direct and indirect jobs and contributes almost approximately \$1 billion annually to the provincial economy.

However, this valuable industry has faced some challenges of late. Low commodity prices, the high impact of the Canadian dollar, high input costs, country-of-origin labelling, Bill 17, and now the H1N1 situation have created challenges for Manitoba's highly dedicated pork producers.

As I pointed out in my questions earlier, Mr. Speaker, all these circumstances have dealt a devastating blow to the pork industry. Pork producers need a helping hand right now—more than ever—if they're going to survive this latest challenge. Many have put in their lifesavings to stay afloat as they try to combat the challenges over which they have no control.

We, on this side of the House, have repeatedly called on the government to do the right thing and to put in place a plan to help the industry move through these challenges.

Our producers have been struggling. The business risk management programs and cash advances help to a degree, but, unfortunately, they may not be enough to save a number of our producers.

As I stated before—simply just place Bipole III on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. The money saved

could go towards investing in programs to help our pork industry which would save us a ten-fold return on our investment.

We know when we have a strong agriculture sector our economy grows and creates the wealth that we need in this province. Help us pay down our debt, invest in our province and make us all proud of our pork industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Cecil Rhodes School 100th Anniversary

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I am so delighted to stand here today and to share my wonderful experience at the 100th anniversary celebrations of Cecil Rhodes School located in the constituency of Wellington. I am proudly wearing the CRS pin, a memento of this milestone celebration—one which brought me great joy and pride.

The celebration started last Friday evening with a wine and cheese reception at the original school building on Cecil Street. The next day, at the open house, I had the honour of bringing greetings on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson) to a gym packed with former graduates, their families, friends and school staff. A dinner and dance that evening culminated in this centennial celebration with over 600 people in attendance.

* (14:30)

It was an overwhelming experience to view the memorabilia and displays at the ceremonies. Upon entering the school, I was greeted by autographs of alumni from 1909 to 1929 who attended the 75th anniversary celebration in 1984. The next display of signed autographs was of former students from 1930 to 1970. After signing their name, many had added their present addresses. While some indicated out-of-country addresses, many of them still reside in Canada. A good number of former students still live in the Weston—Brooklands area.

I have the privilege of meeting some of them in my work as their representative in the Legislature, like Les Slingsby who was in grade 10 in 1939. Les is one of the founding members of the Keewatin/Inkster Neighbourhood Resource Council and is currently the president of the Weston Seniors Club as well as a committed member of the Brooklands Pioneer Senior Citizens Club.

At the opening ceremony, the Cecil Rhodes School Choir under Ms. Donna Mauthe sang the song "You Raise Me Up," which said it all about Cecil Rhodes School and how past and present staff have served the community and made a difference in the lives of its students. It brought me tears of joy to hear the beautiful melody and lyrics of this song.

The school staff headed by principal Marcey Dveris and the 100th anniversary committee composed of former alumni chaired by Donna Fidelak and the students of this school did a fantastic job of putting on the magnificent celebration for the 100th anniversary of Cecil Rhodes School, one of the most precious gems found in my constituency. I want to thank them all for the efforts. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, in terms of government business, it is the intention to complete Estimates today with sittings in the Chamber, rooms 255 and 254.

Following Estimates, we'd like to turn the attention of the House to debate on second reading in the following order: Bill 30, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2009; Bill 8, The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act (Enhanced Manitoba Hydro Employee Benefits and Other Amendments); Bill 9, The Social Work Profession Act; Bill 12, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act; Bill 14, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Payday Loans); Bill 19, The Mortgage Dealers Amendment and Securities Amendment Act; Bill 22, The Cooperatives Amendment Act; Bill 16, The Police Services Act; Bill 11, The Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act; Bill 15, The Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act; Bill 27, The Gaming Control Amendment Act; Bill 28, The Private Investigators and Security Guards Amendment Act; Bill 21, The Labour Mobility Act; Bill 25, The Statistics Amendment Act; Bill 26, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act; Bill 13, The Medical Amendment Act; Bill 18, The Regulated Health Professions Act; Bill 17, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act; Bill 23, The Buildings and Mobile Homes Amendment Act;

Bill 20, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Public Utilities Board Amendment Act (Electricity Reliability); Bill 24, The Colleges Amendment Act and Le Collège Universitaire de Saint-Boniface Amendment Act (College Degrees); Bill 29, The Environment Amendment Act; Bill 31, The Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act; and Bill 32, The Centre culturel franco-manitobain Act.

And if we're not finished, Mr. Speaker, I'll return with other business today.

Mr. Speaker: The order of orders of the day, the order of business will be, we will do Committee of Supply; we have one hour and 34 minutes remaining. Once that is completed, then we will do second reading in this order: Bills 30, 8, 9, 12, 14, 19, 22, 16, 11, 15, 27, 28, 21, 25, 26, 13, 18, 17, 23, 20, 24, 29, 31 and 32. If we complete that, then the Government House Leader will give us further instructions.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business?

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on House business, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if you might repeat that order again. I didn't get all of it.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. I'll repeat it. Second reading will be 30, 8, 9, 12, 14, 19, 22, 16, 11, 15, 27, 28, 21, 25, 26, 13, 18, 17, 23, 20, 24, 29, 31 and 32; and, if we complete that, then the House leader will give us further instructions on what order of business we will undertake.

So right now we will resolve into Committee of Supply. Will the Chairs please go to their respective rooms.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business?

Mr. Hawranik: Yes, on House business, again, Mr. Speaker.

Considering that we may be into concurrence tomorrow, I'd like to table the list of ministers to be called for concurrence for tomorrow, May 12, being the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), who will be questioned concurrently.

Mr. Speaker: If we are in concurrence tomorrow, the ministers that are requested to appear will be the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Agriculture and Food, and the Minister of Health concurrently.

Orders of the day. We will now resolve into Committee of Supply with one hour and 34 minutes remaining.

In the Chamber will be Civil Service Commission; Room 255 will be Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat; and Room 254 will be Family Services and Housing. Would the appropriate Chairs go to the rooms that they will be chairing, please.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

FAMILY SERVICES AND HOUSING

* (14:40)

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Family Services and Housing.

As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): To the minister. The minister has got a partial implementation of Jordan's Principle with the federal government through an agreement. One of the measures of how successful that would be, would be the number of cases which are falling under that and the number of communities which are now covered.

So could the minister tell us how many cases are now falling under this new federal-provincial agreement and how many communities would be represented?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I suspect the federal government would disagree with the member. I believe it was their position that Jordan's Principle was about medically complex needs of children based on the experience of Jordan himself. It is our view that the interim arrangement and the conclusion of dispute resolution process, which, I understand, is well under way, I understand the working group has been meeting and is near finalization of that mechanism, but it is our view that this is a first step to what we see as the basis for discussion for a larger mandate or scope of Jordan's Principle. But at least we are now the first province in Canada to have the agreement of the federal government to recognize the

principle at least as it applies to medically complex needs of children.

The answer to the question in terms of the number of cases, we'll make inquiries. Kerri Irvin-Ross is the lead minister on Jordan's Principle—

Madam Chairperson: Order. Just to remind the member that we do recognize members by their constituency.

Mr. Mackintosh: Oh. The Minister for Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) is the lead on this, particularly, recognizing that with the principle being pursued with medically complex needs of children, there's disproportionately an interest by the health-care system in the application of the principle. So we'll determine whether, with the interim agreement, if there have been any cases in dispute. It is only for cases where there was not dispute that the interim arrangement would apply.

I can also assure the member that, in the case of Norway House, I understand the federal government has come to the table there. We were certainly at the table, as well, but it's my understanding that there was an assessment of the children in question and there has been an arrangement determined.

Mr. Gerrard: Can the minister provide information as to whether there are now children being covered in other communities as of today?

Mr. Mackintosh: I don't think it would be fair to characterize Jordan's Principle as applicable only to Norway House children at all. Norway House was a unique circumstance that developed because, some time ago, the First Nation put in place a pilot program. The Province wasn't a party to that and, I don't think, was involved in any way, actually, in the development of that initiative. So that's an initiative that is unique out there to my understanding. Jordan's Principle is a principle that should apply to the provision of medically complex medical services in respect of children that do have medically complex needs.

Mr. Gerrard: That was exactly my point, that my understanding is it covers all children, so I'm asking, as of today, how many children in other communities and how many other communities are there children being covered under this agreement?

Mr. Mackintosh: First, with regard to Norway House, we understand there are about 30 children there the federal government has now agreed to support for services in that community. In no small

part I think the Province was involved, or the Province's role, I think, was instrumental in helping to move this along.

In terms of the application of Jordan's Principle generally, because it's not community specific whatsoever, the case managers that would deal with questions about who's responsible for the payment of those medical services are tasked with resolving that matter. If there have been any circumstances where that has not been resolved, we can advise the member because we recognize there will likely be cases where the matter is not easily resolved, in which case we do need a dispute resolution mechanism. Otherwise, it's simply an offloading onto the provincial government. I think that would be the outcome.

In the case of Jordan, it was the payment of medical services, so if there are any that have not been resolved, we'll let the member know. It may be that the development of the principle, the recognition for medically complex needs of children has spurred case managers to indeed resolve this matter at the first instance.

Mr. Gerrard: I look forward to receiving that information.

* (14:50)

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Just as we were ending the day on Friday, there was an issue we were discussing that appeared to have the southern authority taking the lead responsibility for responding to the Gage Guimond report and recommendations. I know the minister didn't have a chance to respond. Maybe he could respond now.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, two things. First of all, it should be noted that the—I just looked at those remarks in the *Hansard*. The Ombudsman has been given, by authority of legislation a role to review section 10s, not section 4s, but section 10s, now called special investigation reports or reviews, so that is in the legislation. So I wanted to clarify that for the record.

In terms of the section 4 review of Sagkeeng Child and Family, the southern authority ordered that review. It was done by the persons that we noted last time, and the Province has agreed that it would be important to include in the southern authority's report on the status of implementation of the recommendations a piece from the Province. So we'll be passing on the Province's review on the status of

recommendations as they affect system-wide or issues that are within the jurisdiction of the branch.

There were, I understand, 144 recommendations. A majority of those were directed at the agency, but some were directed at the authority and some were directed at the department or system-wide issues. So we've agreed to be a part of that. We'll be sending in the overview from the department. That's been completed.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, the last time I looked it was the Minister and the Ministry of Family Services that were responsible for the delivery of Child and Family Services and child protection in the province of Manitoba. So, when the minister says he's going to be handing over the department's responses to the southern authority so they can develop or draft a report, it is ludicrous. This was the death of a child in care under this minister's watch, and he is now saying that the southern authority has the lead for responding and for holding the department accountable. Again, the last time I looked, it was the minister that was supposed to hold everyone within the system accountable. So I have difficulty understanding when the first 47 recommendations in the report refer to either systemic problems across the authorities and across the agencies or specific direction to the department, the minister's department, the branch of Child Protection.

So the minister is now, in essence, shirking his responsibility, trying to hide behind the southern authority when, in fact, he has the obligation to stand up and be accountable for every child within the system. When responsibility is delegated to one of the authorities under his watch, I have extreme difficulty with understanding how the minister can sit here and say he's going to feed, or his department will look at feeding information into the report that the southern authority is going to be releasing.

Will the minister today try to explain to us how that can wash with Manitobans who believe that he has ultimate responsibility under legislation for the protection of children?

Mr. Mackintosh: The legislation is what sets out the accountability mechanisms and the responsibilities of agencies' authorities in the branch. When it comes to section 4s specifically, the act sets out both a role for calling a section 4, either on the part of an authority or the branch, and, in this case, the authority took that leadership role, which was agreed to by the branch. It's very important, in our view, that the authorities that are directly accountable for the

actions of agencies do take that role seriously, and we're seeing that happen across the system, whether it's section 4s, whether it's operational reviews or quality assurance reviews. So, in this case, the authority went further than we had seen historically and said not only would they be making the recommendations but they would report publicly for greater accountability on how those recommendations are being implemented. The department agreed that it would, as well, contribute then to enhance accountability to the response on recommendations that were made, that were system-wide or department-based.

So we really see, I think, a growth in the recognition of authority responsibilities. I think that this should be celebrated when we have an authority that has made an effort to report publicly on the actions of the agency and the authority. To make it one document we're going to be putting in the actions that have been taken system-wide as well.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chair, I just cannot believe the minister's answer. I mean, again, The Child and Family Services Act is an act of the Legislature introduced by the minister and brought in, and, ultimately, he has responsibility and accountability.

Yes, we do believe that agencies should be accountable for the children that they serve and authorities should be accountable for those agencies that they oversee, but it ultimately is the minister and his department that should be overseeing the legislation that he brought in and that this Legislature passed.

It wasn't the southern authority that brought the legislation in. It isn't the southern authority that has responsibility for holding all other authorities accountable, which appears to be the kind of answer that the minister's given me today and, yes, we do want to see that accountability. But we don't want to see the minister try to deflect his responsibilities for his accountability for every child in the province of Manitoba, and that appears to be what he's doing today.

Now the recommendations in this report—and there are several recommendations in this report that refer to the branch and what the branch should do and what the branch must do. Again, I ask the minister: Why on earth would he be reporting to the southern authority what action the branch has taken? He should be reporting to the Legislature directly, and it should be his department's report that is being

tabled. It shouldn't be the southern authority, and I'd like him to try to explain to me why now the southern authority has control over the department and control over every other authority in the province of Manitoba. What gives them that power and that authority?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the member is ignoring the legislative scheme that's in place.

Authorities are not accountable for actions of the branch. The minister is, of course, where the buck stops, and the minister, pursuant to the legislation, is accountable and I'm accountable as the minister for branch actions. That is the law and that's the reality, both politically and in law.

But as the member says, the one thing I agree with, the authority, indeed, should be accountable for the actions of agencies. I would say they also are accountable for their own actions, to a certain extent, although they're accountable to the branch for that. That doesn't diminish the branch's or the minister's accountability role whatsoever.

So the information is not being provided to the authority because it is requiring it or because there's accountability there. I think the member is mixing up the provision of information from the department to the authority so that it can be made public, but the accountability is the other way; the authorities are accountable to the branch. That's the law and nothing changes.

It's very important, though, that we think that there should be an accounting, publicly, for action on all the recommendations and that's what's being accomplished here. So the department will have a section in that report that enhances, I think, accountability to the public and does nothing in terms of the relationship, it does nothing to detract from the accountability of authorities to the minister.

* (15:00)

Mrs. Mitchelson: But again, Madam Chair—and I'm not going to belabour this much longer—it seems unbelievable that the department would have a piece in a report that the authority is putting out.

Ultimately, every authority should be accountable through a report that the branch puts out. So I'm not going to belabour it anymore, but I just think that with the whole process that has been set up, it's a government and a minister and the department that's trying to deflect responsibility away from themselves to the authorities, and have

the authorities try to account an answer for issues that are systemic, that are province-wide. We all know that there are lots of issues in the Child and Family Services system. It's never been a perfect system and it never will be. But, when you've got a minister and a department who have used legislation to deflect accountability away from themselves, then we have significant issues.

So I'm just going to go, possibly, recommendation by recommendation in the Gage Guimond report. There's one, specifically, that I have used, and the minister will know that I have used it in correspondence to him, and that is recommendation 47 in the Gage Guimond report. I would think that this is a critical recommendation that speaks to good child welfare practice and good child welfare decisions. That recommendation states, and I'll quote: that any decision to move a child when there are no protection concerns contain a written reason for this decision including reference to the impact on the child, the appropriateness of the move in accordance with the child's stage of development, and the degree of attachment to the caregiver.

Now, ultimately, that recommendation makes a lot of common sense, good sense, and it should be just good child-welfare practice. We all know, in the case of Gage Guimond, that nothing was put in writing that indicated that it was in the best interests of the child to be moved out of the foster home that had cared for him, and into several different unhealthy homes and circumstances. To me, ultimately, this makes good sense.

Now, this doesn't just relate to the Gage Guimond case, and this wasn't just a specific one-time incident within the system. I'm hearing from foster families right throughout the province of Manitoba that are being left out in the cold, not included and not given anything in writing from agencies that would indicate that it's in the best interests of the children to take them out of a long-term foster placement without any preparation and move them into unfamiliar circumstances and, many, many times, against the wishes of the children. Children, whether the minister believes it or not, should have an opportunity and an ability to have their voices heard when it comes to major decisions around their lives and their future, and their well-being and their safety, and their happiness.

So I'm asking the minister—and I'm going to go through a few recommendations, but I'm asking the minister specifically on recommendation 47: What

has been done. Does he agree with this recommendation? Because he's indicated, publicly, that he's accepting all of the recommendations. Does he agree with this recommendation, and what has he done to implement this recommendation?

Mr. Mackintosh: Staff are advising they don't have the recommendation-by-recommendation breakdown from the Sagkeeng review in respect of the death of Gage Guimond. What I'm advised in terms of the specific recommendation, the—and so if there's more information that's available, I'll give it to the member.

In terms of the specific recommendation that the member raises, when there are decisions to move, it was recommended then that there be written reasons considering a number of factors. That was a recommendation that was accepted by the department. It is one where work has gone into the development of its implementation with a view to getting this into protocols for the fall. The challenge here is that this is going to significantly, of course, change practice on the front lines, that there is now a new consideration that front-line social workers have to—and a new task that they have to complete.

One of the challenges in getting any protocols concluded, I'm advised, has been the role, and this is an issue we raised—that we were talking about on Friday, the role of foster parents in the development of the decision to move and therefore the written reasons. I'm assured that that is a matter that is under development.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But, I mean, this recommendation is—again, ultimately, this makes practical common sense, and if that kind of information had been available to the foster parents and that kind of assessment had been done, we wouldn't have seen Gage Guimond placed in unsafe circumstances.

* (15:10)

This report is almost a year old, and Gage Guimond died in July of 2007. So we're looking at two years ago now, and we've got common sense, just very basic common sense practices that should be put in place, and the minister is still talking about giving foster parents a greater role. I mean, that recommendation and that response by the minister was back as a result of Phoenix Sinclair, so it was even before Gage Guimond. The minister is still talking about what he's going to do to provide some support to foster parents and give them at least

something in writing so that they know what the plan is and they know what to expect.

Again, I ask the minister, and he's talking about maybe this fall, something being implemented and that it has to be a fundamental change. Why isn't it a fundamental change that this minister has directed through his department to the authorities and to the agencies? I go right back to the report and having the report not come to the department, but to the authority. So the minister hasn't taken any of these recommendations seriously, and I'd like to ask him why it's taking so long to implement something that should be good practice, good social work practice and common sense?

Mr. Mackintosh: It should be corrected that the report on Sagkeeng with respect to Gage Guimond in fact did go to the department.

Madam Chairperson, as the Changes for Children agenda is being implemented, we are also acting on the 144 recommendations of which some are system-wide as the member knows. While I know the recommendations will be important to some and others may not be important to others, we're moving in a co-ordinated way to ensure that there is action taken on these recommendations. I understand that implementation has been concluded or significant progress has occurred on most of the recommendations already, but it's important that it all be done in a way that recognizes that every recommendation may be important.

But an action plan is under way and we'll see from the final tally and the work that is being done in the system with regard to the Sagkeeng report recognizing, as I say, that it is one report, a very important one, but it is also in the context of the systemic changes being made with Changes for Children in terms of more staff resources, better training, development of stronger standards, CFSIS and so on.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I am interrupting the proceedings of this section of the Committee of Supply because the total time allowed for Estimates consideration has now expired. Our rule 76(3) provides in part that no more than 100 hours shall be allowed for the consideration of the business of Supply. Further, our rule 76(5) provides that when time has expired, the Chairperson shall forthwith put all remaining questions without debate, amendment, or adjournment. I am, therefore, going to call in sequence the resolutions for the Department of Family Services and Housing.

Resolution 9.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,244,000 for Family Services and Housing, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$60,076,000 for Family Services and Housing, Housing, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$614,220,000 for Family Services and Housing, Disability Programs and Employment and Income Assistance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$435,631,000 for Family Services and Housing, Child and Family Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$127,494,000 for Family Services and Housing, Community Service Delivery, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,417,000 for Family Services and Housing, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.7: BE IT RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$931,000 for Family Services and Housing, capital investment, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes our consideration of the Estimates in this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254. I would like to thank the

ministers, critics and all honourable members for their hard work and dedication during this process.

Committee rise.

MANITOBA SENIORS AND HEALTHY AGING SECRETARIAT

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister responsible for Seniors): No. With the time constraints, I'll pass on my opening statement.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much. Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): No, I don't. Thank you. I just want to go right into the questions. I appreciate the minister agreeing to that as well.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Thank you both for that.

Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department chronologically or to have a global discussion?

An Honourable Member: Global.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Agreed.

Mr. Chairperson: Global, okay.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Can I welcome my staff to the table?

Mr. Chairperson: You most certainly may welcome your staff to the table, and introduce them once they get set.

Just for the record, it is agreed, then, that questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner with all resolutions to be passed once questioning has concluded.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Chair, we are privileged today to have the deputy minister of Health, Arlene Wilgosh, with us, as well as Patti Chiappetta, who is the acting executive director.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for that. The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, I want to welcome the staff from the seniors secretariat, as well as the deputy minister. I appreciate all that you do in support of the area of seniors wellness and health and well-being. I want to thank you also for all the support that you provide me when I do have questions or correspondence requests.

I'm going to go right into questions quickly. In the Expenditures book on page 11, there's an area that I just need some clarification on from the minister, and that's the expenditure summary. Salaries and employee benefits has increased since last year from 692,000 to 724,000, yet it appears that grants to external agencies is actually down from 773,000 to 756,000.

Can the minister explain to me the discrepancy in those numbers?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The increase as far as salaries and employee benefits is we have one new staffperson that has been hired, as well as the staff at the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat were reclassified.

Regarding the external agencies funding, the money going to external agencies has not decreased. They're getting the same dollar value that they received last year.

Mrs. Rowat: Could you indicate to me the total number of salaried staff in the secretariat from last year to this year, and then also who this new individual is, what their salary is and what their roles and responsibilities are?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: All right. Thank you very much. We have: the resource co-ordinator, her name is Jeannine Carriere; acting director of policy development is Vicki Toews; administrative secretary, Marlene Cooke; administrative secretary and also responsible for the Manitoba Council on Aging is Christine Jeannin; elder abuse consultant is Shannon Kohler; consultant is Mariam Omar; consultant, Betty Brand; consultant, Teresa Snider, and we also have the new position that we referred to is Phaedra Miller. She is working on Age-Friendly and she is a PM3.

Mrs. Rowat: So, going to the grants to external agencies, you're indicating that the expenditures in that area have not changed. The Estimates show a reduction in grants and other operating. There have been reductions in both of those areas. So can the minister then—if there is no reduction, can she provide me with a list of the external agencies that

received grant funding from the secretariat through that area?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The grants that have received funding through our Advancing Age project is the Manitoba Society of Seniors, Manitoba—

Mrs. Rowat: Just based on time, if the minister would be able to table that list for me, that would be great. With half an hour, that would take up most of the half an hour.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the minister for that. Minister, did you have any closing comments you wanted to make or the tabled document will do?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The tabled document lists the agencies in which we fund, and they work very closely with us at the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat to deliver services to Manitoba seniors.

Mrs. Rowat: It does appear that the administrative costs have gone up. There's been another staffperson, but the grants to external agencies, still I haven't seen the document yet but appear to show that there's been a reduction.

So the minister is telling me that there have been no reductions, no funding cuts this year within her department for grants to external agencies?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: What we are doing administratively is finding the dollars from within another budget line so we can ensure that all agencies get the money that they've received last time.

Mrs. Rowat: So another budget line, meaning through the Department of Health or is that—can she indicate to me where their additional dollars are coming from?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: It will be through the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat budget. I'll just add that it's a re-allocation from other funding such as our Age-Friendly dollars that we will be working on moving it forward.

Mrs. Rowat: I'm assuming, then, that it's going to be coming through other operating. There's also a reduction, \$317,000 to \$271,000, so could the minister indicate to me what is included in this item line and is this the budgetary line that the dollars are going to be coming from?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The \$317,000 that is represented under other operating was related to expenditures which we thought we would have to spend money on relocating and renovating an office which we did not and the actual amount is \$271,000.

Mrs. Rowat: I have some additional questions with regard to Services to Seniors. We had some dialogue on this last year. I'm wanting to know if the minister can indicate to me whether she's got some new information that she can share with me at all on this initiative.

It appears that the RHAs have specialists in place. There's been some question about the role that these specialists play with regard to Services to Seniors. Again, the issues continue to be the same. There's concern that the Services to Seniors who do an amazing job in the communities that I represent, and I'm sure that's across the board, across the province, but there seems to be some concern about the support that this position would have within the RHA and how the expectation and role of that individual would have with Services to Seniors.

*(14:50)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I just ask the member for clarification. The RHAs have hired, is that what you're—are hiring senior specialists—

An Honourable Member: Correct.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: —that are working with the senior support staff?

An Honourable Member: That's what I'm going to be asking you. I want to know what their role is. There seems to be some confusion and concern within Services to Seniors as to what exactly that person's role would be.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So your question to me is what is the role of the seniors specialists that RHAs are hiring. All right. Okay. Thank you.

I just want to clarify for the member that these positions with the regional health authorities aren't new. They've been in place for a while now. What their role is is to provide guidance to seniors services across the region that they represent, as well as community development, getting people working more collaboratively together in providing those necessary services, speaking with seniors themselves and identifying what some of those issues would be. Some examples of programming that they would be implementing could be a fall prevention program.

The Support Services to Seniors is very valuable, as you have mentioned already, to the services that we provide in Manitoba to the seniors population, and you'd asked about is there any new information about what we've done as an agency and what we've accomplished. We've completed an

environmental scan of the Support Services to Seniors to help us understand the concerns which they've been raising around their salaries and benefits, as well as looking at what kinds of responsibilities that they have across the board.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, with regard to the statement that these positions have been in place for quite a while, I know that Assiniboine's position is new. It's fairly new. There was nobody in that role a year ago. This individual, I think, is fairly new, a seniors program specialist for home-based services.

I know that Central Region has one. The Services to Seniors has never met this individual. They have no idea even, really, what that role is, so there seems to be a disconnect with the Services to Seniors and the seniors program specialist.

Some of the things you're indicating the role of these specialists, that's the exact responsibilities of what a Services to Seniors co-ordinator and board would be responsible for. So there seems to be some overlap, and if there is some way they could be working together, I strongly urge that.

I know that specifically to one region, when they asked to have a meeting, the Services to Seniors officers asked for a meeting, the individual from the RHA indicated they have no direct expectation of working directly with the Services to Seniors person and refused the meeting.

I'm raising this as a red flag to the minister. This is not exactly how, you know, you would think a specialist who's supposed to be providing advocacy and support for the workers out there should be operating. I don't think it's—I'm not even going to say it's one region because I'm hearing it from several regions, that there seems to be a disconnect and some concern about the role of this individual.

Segue to that, then, is the funding that goes to the RHAs for senior programming. Then the questions begin to be asked of, you know, are these dollars that could be going to support seniors? Could it not be used more wisely in providing supports for the Services to Seniors co-ordinators and their boards, who have identified the needs within the community? The seniors know who to go to 24/7. I had a conversation, not too long ago, with a Services to Seniors person. We spoke about the role of being a public servant. They, in a lot of ways, get the calls at home at 7 o'clock on Saturday night because they need something, so they respond to. So if there are

ways that this can be corrected and improved upon, I think that would be most useful.

With regard to the environmental scan, what is the status of that scan and when will the people that were involved in that scan be notified of the results of that scan?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The scan has been completed. Right now, it's in the process of a summary being completed and will be shared with the community members, the Services to Seniors.

I just want to follow up on your comments that you made about the role of the senior specialist at the regional health authorities and how they're working with the Services to Seniors co-ordinators. I do concur with you that yes, they need to be working collaboratively. So we will working with our colleagues at the regional health authority, as well as our contacts within the communities and the Services to Seniors co-ordinators in ensuring that there is no confusion about roles and responsibilities and that there is a clear definition of what people will be doing to provide the necessary supports to seniors across Manitoba.

Mrs. Rowat: I encourage the minister just to keep the dialogue open with me. If you need further information, I'd be more than willing to share that, and also what she does share with the Service to Seniors, I would appreciate a copy or be aware of anything that's forthcoming.

Can the minister explain to me—I'm going to go in, now, into the congregate meal program. I know I'd asked some questions, at one point, on the congregate meal program and the funding for that program. The FIPPA that I received back from the minister shows a three-year to five-year wait list for congregate meal programs. Can the minister explain to me why there is such a long waiting list for a program that is so important to the independence of seniors?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We know the benefits of healthy food for all Manitobans, and the congregate meal program provides a special service to older Manitobans.

So, just for the member's information, regional health authorities provide annual funding to the community and tenant resource councils and seniors centres, which operate the meal programs. The annual funding is over \$6 million and we are very aware of the wait time that is occurring for some applications, but you need to know that the process is

prioritized by the RHA. They determine who is going to be receiving the service based on the funding that they receive.

Our government is committed to making our province one that meets the needs of our seniors, a segment of our population which is increasing, and this is demonstrated by the many programs we have specifically for seniors, such as Age-Friendly Manitoba. Congregate meal programs provide reasonably priced meals for the seniors, which promotes health, nutrition and social interaction and this government is in support of congregate meal programs, as illustrated by our investments.

* (15:00)

Mrs. Rowat: It appears that there have only been a handful of new congregate meal programs established in the city of Winnipeg alone in the last eight to nine years. I believe there were six new programs. Obviously, this is falling further and further behind. The population of Manitoba is aging, and there is definitely a strong need for these types of programs to keep seniors living independently. I know that I've been approached by several organizations wondering where the government's commitment is on this initiative.

So the minister's aware. She says they're working hard at this, but I do see that there's a lot more to be done in this area. I encourage the minister to visit that program and look at ways that there could be more meals implemented.

On page 19 of the Estimates book, one of the activities identified is: Consult with key senior serving organizations in the Advancing Age Strategy, including the Francophone and Aboriginal seniors' communities, to gain knowledge of the diverse needs and concerns of the aging population.

Can the minister indicate to me who has been consulted, when they were consulted and how they were consulted?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to inform the member and put on the record that we do have 105 congregate meal programs across the province of Manitoba. We are working with our partners, the agencies and seniors-serving organizations, as well as the regional health authorities, to try and deal with the wait list.

So, around the consultation around our Advancing Age Strategy, the list that I provided to the member, of the agencies, that's a place where we

have done thorough consultation with those groups. But we also need to talk about the Manitoba Council on Aging, where we have membership from across the province, and who provide advice to the minister on a regular basis. On that group, we do have Francophone and Aboriginal membership.

We also are working with the Age-Friendly Manitoba, as an initiative I'm sure the member is familiar with, where we have made many investments across the province, along with our partners, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, as well as the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce. We have now 29 communities that are designated as age-friendly, and when we're working with these communities, that, too, is a consultation with agencies, businesses and seniors themselves. We often have staff that are going from the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat to many communities across Manitoba. Recently, we were in Gladstone and participated in a conference there.

We have our 1-800 line, which is accessed by agencies and individuals themselves, where they can provide us with information.

So we continue to gather information around services, whether it's recreation, health, educational services, support services, to ensure that we're providing the adequate services for older Manitobans.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister explain to me what Advancing Age Strategy is and the status of its implementation?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The Advancing Age Strategy has been an important strategy in which we've been providing financial support to the agencies and which I distributed to the member. Through that funding that they receive, that's to build capacity across the board and to provide necessary services to promote the quality of life for older Manitobans.

Other aspects of the Advancing Age Strategy is the Elder Abuse Strategy where we have a 1-800 line for service providers to access information about services that are available to them, but we also have a counselling line that is available for victims of elder abuse as well as the safe houses that we have.

So that's one part of it. Another piece that we're doing is we're working across departments and making sure that we're adding the seniors lens to a number of different initiatives. Older Manitobans are represented in all departments of government, and I think that it's really important, when we're looking at

policy and program development, that we take into account the needs of older Manitobans. Some examples of cross-departmental partnerships are with Housing, around Health services and Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

Around the Housing, you will be familiar with the Assisted Living Strategy, which we have implemented and have just recently developed housing units with Family Services and Housing at Elizabeth Road; the development in Health, the opening of the Neepawa personal care home, which is close, I know, to the member's constituency; then in Culture, Heritage and Tourism, looking at recreation and sports opportunities for Manitoba seniors.

What I'd like to put on the record as well is, as we have adopted Age-Friendly Manitoba initiatives as a priority for us, we are looking at Age-Friendly to become the umbrella, and there will be different programs and Advancing Age would be one of those programs that will fall under that initiative.

Mrs. Rowat: Advancing Age and Healthy Aging strategies seem to be overlapping, so I'm assuming that they're all of one almost. In a sense they seem to be doing the same thing; they're just different strategies that get announced for press release and become something new.

Back to the minister's comments with regard to her statement with regard to Healthy Living and activities. When I was in Estimates with the Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, I identified a funding reduction of almost \$250,000 in Sport. So I'm wanting to again ask the minister if she can indicate to me a breakdown of the reductions in other operating. There's been a reduction of over \$46,000 here in the Estimates book. Because I'm very concerned about this government indicating their concern and support for healthy living and activities, we see a reduction of over \$200,000 in Sport, which, I think, one of the areas was cross-country skiing, which is a sport that I know many seniors in my constituency enjoy participating in.

So I want the minister to comment on the \$46,000 reduction in other operating that I just need some clarification on.

* (15:10)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, I'd like to reiterate our government's commitment to the seniors of Manitoba, and we've proved that in many different

ways. Around the operating reduction that the member speaks about, again, I will say that there was money that was in the budget, \$30,000 for renovations, one-time renovations for our office space which we did not spend, so that was money that was one-time funding that was placed. The other \$16,000 that she refers to has been built in to our salaries department or salaries line.

Mrs. Rowat: So what we're seeing, I'm going to summarize, is that we're seeing more dollars being put into salaries and a reduction in programs and support services. It's a \$32,000 increase in salaries and employee benefits and a reduction in grants and external agencies in other operating. So what we're seeing is the seniors of Manitoba are going to be getting less out of programs and supports, but, obviously, seeing an increase in their tax dollars going to programming or employees, salaries and benefits, which I think is unfortunate because I think this government does have a role to play in assuring that seniors receive supports.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

I'm interrupting the proceedings of this section of the Committee of Supply because the total time allowed for Estimates consideration is now expired.

Our rule 76(3) provides in part that not more than 100 hours shall be allowed for the consideration of the business of Supply. Further, our rule 76(5) provides that when time has expired the Chairperson shall forthwith put all remaining questions without debate, amendment, or adjournment.

I am, therefore, going to call in sequence the resolutions on the following matters: Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat; Healthy Child Manitoba; Enabling Appropriations and Other Appropriations.

I would remind members that these questions may not be debated, amended or adjourned according to the rules of the House.

So, moving to resolutions:

Resolution 24.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,751,000 for Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,000 for Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

HEALTHY CHILD MANITOBA

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 34.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$28,393,000 for Healthy Child Manitoba, Healthy Child Manitoba Office, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 34.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,000 for Healthy Child Manitoba, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

ENABLING APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 26.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$108,618,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Enabling Vote, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,400,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,250,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Justice Initiatives, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,640,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Internal Service Adjustments, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$12,753,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Capital Assets—Internal Service Adjustments, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

OTHER APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 27.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$28,000,000 for Other Appropriations, Emergency Expenditures, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 27.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$500,000 for Other Appropriations, Allowance for Losses and Expenditures Incurred by Crown Corporations and Other Provincial Entities, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes our consideration of the Estimates in this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255. I would like to thank all the ministers, critics and all honourable members and that of staff for their hard work and dedication during this process.

Committee rise.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

* (14:40)

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

Before proceeding with the Estimates for the Civil Service Commission, I would like to inform the committee of a correction that needs to be made for the record.

On Friday, during consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs, the Chair read an incorrect dollar amount when putting resolution 13.4 to the committee. The amount was read aloud as \$174,606,000 instead of \$174,706,000. To ensure that the correct amount is approved for the resolution, I will read it again and ask the committee if the resolution shall pass.

Resolution 13.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$174,706,000 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Financial Assistance

to Municipalities, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister responsible for the Civil Service): No.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing as there is none, does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou), have any opening comments? No?

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not the official—

Madam Chairperson: Oh, excuse me. You'd have to ask leave to speak, not being the critic.

Mr. Borotsik: I would ask leave, Madam Chair—ask for leave to speak.

Madam Chairperson: Does the Member for Brandon West have leave to speak? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you, Madam Chair. The official critic for the Civil Service shall return very shortly, but it was my understanding that not only will it be the Estimates book that was tabled for the Civil Service but, also, there will be the Estimates book with respect to the Manitoba Employee Pensions and Other Costs will also be dealt with, of which I am the critic, and I would like to start with some global discussions on the pension costs, if I may?

Madam Chairperson: Is there agreement with the committee to allow that, to allow the Member for Brandon West? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you, Madam Chair.

If I may, to the minister responsible for the Manitoba employee pensions and other costs, I would ask, as the minister has done in the past, to talk with respect to some global issues on the pensions and then look at line by line on the Estimates book. If the minister would allow some global discussion, I would ask the minister, Madam Chair.

Mr. Selinger: Yes.

Madam Chairperson: That will be allowed.

Mr. Borotsik: Thanks to the minister for allowing that global discussion.

Speaking to that, I wonder if the minister can tell me when the annual report of the Civil Service Superannuation pension will be tabled. I do know that in some previous years, the table for the CSSB annual report has been in June, but we're sitting now in May. I wonder if the minister has some indication as to when that report will in fact be tabled.

Mr. Selinger: I'm going to ask that the staff enter the room so we can facilitate the discussion, but in response to the member's question—while the staff are coming in, maybe Blake, you can check the doors and see if the civil servants are there. The report is required to be made public six months after the year-end, and they operate on a calendar year, so, before the end of June.

Short answer, the answer I gave you is the correct one.

Mr. Borotsik: That's been the history in the past. As the minister recognizes, however, this is not a typical year, certainly not a normal year. We recognize that there have been some substantial reductions in pension plans and pension funds. The minister recognizes that there are some major issues.

The TRAF account—and I know the minister doesn't have any control over the TRAF account—but its year-end is the same year-end as the superannuation fund, and they have already identified what their year-end results were, effective December 31, 2008. They've shown that their overall portfolio returned a minus 11.7 percent and it shows that this compares favourably to the weighted benchmark of minus 14.3 percent according to the BNY Mellon Asset Servicing.

Can the minister give me some indication, perhaps, that the superannuation fund would be on a similar basis of the TRAF account?

Mr. Selinger: The short answer is that they will have, first, their annual meeting of the Civil Service Superannuation Fund. They have to have their annual meeting and I understand that's being scheduled for the latter part of May. After that, the board will decide when they want to release the report before June 30, which is their statutory requirement, to do it six months after their year-end.

I believe the member will recall that the fund said that they felt their experience for the year would be between minus 14 and minus 18. That was sort of—they gave general parameters on that and I have no reason to believe that it'll be other than within those parameters when they've finalized and make official the number.

I'm kind of in a situation where I have to let them follow their regular process of going to their annual meeting, presenting the report to their board of directors and the people at the meeting and then, after that, it's up to the board to decide the specific date when they will release it but, as soon as it's out, I'll get a copy and I'll get the member a copy.

*(14:50)

Madam Chairperson: Now that the staff are seated, would the minister perhaps like to introduce the staff in attendance?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, I have with me the senior assistant deputy minister of Finance, Bruce Gray as well as Larry Grant from treasury board, labour relations. Scott Wiebe from treasury and Collin Cassidy from the public accounts managers in the comptroller's office.

Mr. Borotsik: Once again welcome to the staff. We've had this opportunity to have this discussion on a number of occasions over the last couple of weeks and it's always a pleasure to have all the members of the staff here with the minister.

Mr. Minister, you had indicated that the annual meeting for the superannuates will be the end of May at which time when they approve the report. It will then be given to yourself and then distributed to the rest of the Legislature. In saying that, does the minister, and we talked about the minus 14 percent as being the suggested or proposed amount of reduction in the plan, has the minister received any indication at all from the plan and its management that, in fact, is a reasonable number to expect for a decrease in the plan?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, I said that after the annual meeting then the board will decide when I receive the report. There's no guarantee that it will show up on my desk the immediate day after the annual meeting. I also indicated that the loss experience they had indicated would be in the range of minus 14 to minus 18 percent. I also indicated that there's no suggestion that it will be outside of that range at this stage of the game but I didn't suggest it would be

minus 14. It will probably be higher than that in terms of the losses, in other words, minus 15, 16, 17, somewhere in that range. So as soon as I get the information—I mean, they've indicated that to me, they've given me some idea around that, but I'm trying to follow the proper process here of respecting the fact that the superannuation fund technically is in charge of its own business. I actually can't tell them directly what to do. It's one of those classic examples where you're responsible for them but they actually follow their legislative mandate and they will provide me the information in due course according to the legislative mandate.

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you. That is, in fact, correct. The superannuation fund looks after their own pension but the minister does have a substantial investment into that plan as the pension asset fund for the superannuances actually placed under their management. So the minister does have some of the cash as defined on his own balance sheet being administered by that fund. I appreciate that there are rules that are legislative requirements. I'm sure the minister is probably as equally as curious as to the situation of that plan as I am at the present time so I look forward to having that report as early as possible.

In saying that, the pension asset fund is identified to the number of \$2.889 billion in the 2009-2010 budget on page 22. There is a pension asset fund which is controlled by the Department of Finance. It's \$2.889 billion. Can the minister tell me what portion of that fund is identified as TRAF and what portion of that fund would be identified as the superannuation?

Mr. Selinger: The member I believe was referring to an amount of about \$2.8 billion and of that, the TRAF amount would be about \$1.77 billion and the sup fund amount would be about \$1.1 billion.

Mr. Borotsik: I thank the minister for that information, Madam Chair. Of the \$1.77 billion, there was \$1.5 billion that was borrowed, and that was borrowed in the 2007-2008 fiscal year. Is that correct?

When reading the budget book, it says that the cost of borrowing—it's a sound fiscal decision to borrow the money to offset the unfunded liability, and the minister and I have talked about this on a couple of occasions. It says here the cost of borrowing is less than the actuarial determined expected rate of return over the plan assets and the rate of growth in the pension liability. So basically

what they're saying is it's cheaper to borrow money, pay it off over a period of time because the ROI, or the rate of return, on the asset itself, or the fund itself, will be greater than the cost of borrowing.

Under the circumstances of today's economy, would the minister still hold fast to that particular rule that the cost of borrowing may well be less than what the rate of return on that fund would be?

Mr. Selinger: It's a long-term investment. That's the short answer. In any one year, you're going to have the possibility of the rate of return being below the rate of borrowing for that one year, but the view is that based on an actuarial analysis and past experience, the fund has—I think the overall experience of the fund in the last—I'll have to check the number on this—has been pretty much double-digit returns for at least the last decade, maybe the last couple of decades.

The five-year rolling average—[interjection] Well, just for example, in '03, the return on TRAF was 13 percent; in '04, 12.1; in '05, 14.8; in '06, 15.6; in '07, 5.7; and this year, minus 11.7. So, if you take the rolling average for the last five years, it's still above the cost of borrowing. I believe it's in the low sixes. I'd have to just verify that, but if you took those five numbers and averaged them out, by totalling them and subtracting by five, you'd get a rate of return higher than the cost of borrowing.

But, generally, the view is that actively managed funds will beat the cost of borrowing for the 1.5 we put in, and the member will know that last year was an *annus horribilis* and this year's doing a lot better. We'll have to see where it goes because the one characteristic that we do know we're experiencing during this recessionary period is volatility.

Volatility's probably the most significant variable, but, as we continue the discipline of an actively managed fund with the fund managers over the next several years, they are, based on actuarial estimates, expecting to do a rate of return averaging about 6.25 percent. That 6.25, as the member knows, is well above the rate of borrowing, which is in the 4.7 range approximately.

Mr. Borotsik: When the minister borrowed this \$1.5 billion back in 2007, was there an actuarial report based— or was there an actuarial report that was tabled that showed that the \$1.5 billion over that period of time—I believe it was a 30-year debt for the \$1.5 billion—is there an actuarial report attached to that that's available to be tabled?

Mr. Selinger: First of all, there's regular actuarial reports done on the expected experience in the fund and secondly, before the decision made, there was advice sought from an actuarial firm that took a look at the idea of doing this and endorsed it based on their actuarial analysis.

Mr. Borotsik: Based on that actuarial analysis report, could that report be tabled? Would the minister be prepared to table that report?

Mr. Selinger: I'll have to take that under advisement. It may well be in the nature of advice to the minister, but I'd have to take it under advisement and see what I can do about that.

* (15:00)

Mr. Borotsik: Well, thank you, and I do appreciate that times change, and the minister has indicated that we're in some fairly turbulent times. They're times that we don't know where we're heading to at any one point in time. However, at that window of time, the decision to borrow the \$1.5 billion was based on an actuarial report.

It would be interesting, certainly for myself, to know exactly the advice that the minister was given. If it wasn't ministerial advice, it was simply a matter of advice placed before the Legislature to make sure that this was the right decision to make, it would be nice that, if the minister could, in fact, table that report, to see where we are right now and where we're heading to that.

In doing that, there is a proposal right now, and I know I'm not going to talk about any legislation, but there is a proposal right now with respect to the superannuation fund to enhance the COLA fund for some \$145 million which is going to identify full COLA for some 30 years. Is there an actuarial report available now to identify the ability of that \$145 million going forward and how that's going to fund the COLA?

Mr. Selinger: The actuary for the superannuation fund is recommending that we put that money aside in the COLA account. That's his advice to the fund and to myself.

Mr. Borotsik: And is that in the report, an actuarial report that could be tabled?

An Honourable Member: I'd have to check the date here—

Madam Chairperson: Just a reminder, Mr. Minister, sorry, but your mike doesn't come on until I do recognize you.

Mr. Selinger: I'll try to dance more in step with the Chair.

Short answer is that he recommended it. I'll have to check how he wrote the recommendation down but I do remember meeting with him and I do remember him recommending to me that we proceed with that.

Mr. Borotsik: The 145—is there a surplus currently in the superannuation fund itself? I do appreciate that there are two funds, the fund A, which is the benefit fund, and the COLA fund. Is there a surplus in the superannuates fund that you can transfer \$145 million out of that fund?

Mr. Selinger: The short answer is the money is not coming out of the fund. The money is staying within the fund but it's being allocated to the COLA account.

Mr. Borotsik: Actually, I do appreciate that and I do understand the fact that the money stays in the fund but there are two funds. One is the benefit fund and the other is the COLA fund. So, effectively, \$145 million will be allocated to the COLA fund. Will that leave the benefit fund in surplus or will it be in deficit?

Mr. Selinger: As the member might know, the recommendation by the actuary is given to us with the full knowledge of what's happening with the fund right now. The fund will lose between 14 and 18 percent this year and for several years, actually, even before the current recessionary year. The actuary has been suggesting that both the employers and employees consider increasing their contributions to the fund and that advice has not—up to now the fund has not felt that they needed to move on that right now, until recently, because of the excellent returns they've been experiencing.

Mr. Borotsik: With a 15 percent loss anticipated for year-end, December 31, 2008, that's a \$450-million loss in the \$3-billion fund. Another 145-million transfer adds almost \$600-million deficit in the fund. Now the minister has indicated that there has been, also, a request to increase contributions to make up for that deficit. Can the minister explain just how those increases in contributions will be received and acquired?

Mr. Selinger: I just have to say that the member may have misunderstood me again.

I said the range of losses is between 14 and 18 percent. I didn't say it was 14; I didn't say it was 15. I said it was between 14 and 18 and the money within the fund doesn't actually—the money put aside in the COLA account doesn't leave the fund. It just goes into the COLA account so you can't add it on top of that and then say that the fund is short that amount of money. It stays within the fund to look after the COLA obligation, but the reality is that there is no direct linkage. The fund has said this themselves. There's no direct linkage.

The benefits, that are agreed to, are paid for on an ongoing basis through the resources of the fund, and there is no cash flow problem right now. It's also the case that the actuary has recommended an increase in contributions from employers and employees to continue to make sure the fund stays strong in the future.

For several years, as I indicated earlier, the fund had delivered double-digit returns, and that experience allowed the board of directors of the fund to not want to move on increased contributions even though the actuary was recommending that. Now, of course, we've had this horrible year, all across pensions and pension funds everywhere pretty much in the world, and the reality is that there's now a greater willingness to consider how they will increase contributions. The details of that obviously have to be discussed between the employers and the employees. There's no formula worked out there. It comes down to sorting that out between the employer representatives and the employee representatives.

But, just to give the member some perspective. OMERS, the Ontario fund lost 15 percent; La Caisse de dépôt in Québec lost 25 percent. No, there's another one here. There's other ones. They're all in that range. They're all somewhere between about 14 percent or 12 percent here up to 25 percent. So, everybody's looking at these challenges and deciding how they're going to continue to strengthen their funds as they go forward.

Mr. Borotsik: Yes, and I would use 15 percent simply because it was easy to calculate on a \$3-billion fund, Madam Chair. I wasn't using 14 or 18. So, I do understand that there's that level of between 14 and 18. I've heard that.

The last question that I have and then I'll turn it over to my colleague from Portage la Prairie.

In the budget for this year, there's identified \$330 million being borrowed, new cash requirements for the civil service superannuation plan.

Can the minister tell me why \$330 million will be borrowed, under new cash requirements, for this fiscal year?

Mr. Selinger: Essentially, that same thinking, over time, that getting money, to making up the obligations, on part of the employer for the liability by putting money into the fund, if you can get the funds at a good price, at a good, reasonable price, over time will generate net benefits to the beneficiaries, as well as savings to the employers, because the fund will earn a greater return than the cost of borrowing the money.

That's still a fundamental analysis that drives this kind of activity. So, that's where the 350 comes from. It's just part of a long-term plan to come up to about 75 percent of the employer's contributions to be actually placed in the fund. There's several advantages to that, if you can get the money at a reasonable price. It allows you to know what your cost is of that money you put in the fund. It doesn't vary because of retirement experience or fluctuating costs of borrowing. You get a good price for it. You put it in there, and then you let the investment managers manage it.

When you think about a defined benefit plan, probably the best way to characterize it, it's a collective annuity, and an annuity plan makes a commitment to the beneficiaries to pay out a certain stream of revenue, under certain conditions, for a certain period of time. Then the collective annuity, in this case the defined benefit plan, has to find the best business way of supporting that annuity commitment that they've made to all the members.

So, funding the employer's portion is one strategy, as well as a reasonable contribution rate from employers and employees, to ensure that this fund stays effective in meeting its obligations over the expected life of the beneficiaries. So, it's part of that overall strategy.

Other jurisdictions have done this, as well, based on advice that they've received, and the member should know that the alternative is just to have a pay-as-you-go approach where, as each beneficiary elects to retire, the government pays it out of current

contributions or cash contributions, and that has a rising cost to it too.

So, the idea here is to stabilize costs for the employers, i.e., government, and to give greater certainty to the beneficiaries that the defined benefit plan is there for them, and that includes the COLA account.

* (15:10)

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Chairperson, I think we have all of two minutes for the Civil Service Commission.

Does the honourable minister need to change staff?

Mr. Selinger: I'm hoping that staff will wisely enter the room as needed [*inaudible*] and if there's any questions we don't get time for, we can make other arrangements to answer any questions he has. But I don't know if the Chair would allow us extra time. We can push the envelope for leave there, if you will.

Madam Chairperson: No.

Mr. Selinger: No, the Chair will not allow us extra time. She has that military bearing about her and she's going to take a firm position on that, being our envoy. But if there's any additional questions, I'll undertake to get the information for the member.

Mr. Faurichou: Okay. I'd like to start right in then. What is the total number of employees of the Province administered by the Civil Service Commission? Secondly, I'd like to know the current total vacancies that are in the civil service at the present time. I'd also like to ask, being that the Civil Service Commission is responsible for what is affectionately known as the whistle-blower act, is the number of cases that have come forward. Maybe I'm getting a little bit ahead of the minister right at the present time, because his staff have yet to arrive.

Mr. Selinger: Not to feel too vulnerable, but I hope the staff will enter the room very soon.

We answered all those questions in Estimates with the Member for Brandon, and so it's on *Hansard* already. It should be available to the member. I believe the number of civil servants was about 15,000 and some additional number to that. I'll just round that out for the member very soon, and then the member would want to know what the

vacancies are for government on a global basis, and then—what was the third thing that you were asking?

Mr. Faurshou: Well, I was wondering about the number of considerations by the Civil Service Commission board that handles the legislation regarding whistle blower. I wonder how many cases had been handled by the board.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I'm interrupting the proceedings of this section of the Committee of Supply because the total time allowed for Estimates consideration has now expired.

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Chairperson: Our rule 76(3) provides, in part, that not more than 100 hours shall be allowed for the consideration of the business of Supply. Our rule 76(5) provides that when the time limit has expired, the Chairperson shall forthwith put all remaining questions, and that such questions shall not be subject to debate, amendment, or adjournment.

I am, therefore, going to call in sequence the questions on the following matters: Civil Service Commission; Employee Pensions and Other Costs, and Legislative Assembly.

I would remind members that these questions may not be debated, amended or adjourned according to the rules of the House.

Resolution 17.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,382,000 for Civil Service Commission, Civil Service Commission, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 17.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$52,000 for Civil Service Commission, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

EMPLOYEE PENSIONS AND OTHER COSTS

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 6.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,124,000 for Employee Pensions and Other Costs, Employee Pensions and Other Costs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 1.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,679,000 for Legislative Assembly, Other Assembly Expenditures, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,674,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Auditor General, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,901,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Ombudsman, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,470,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,384,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Children's Advocate, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$80,000 for Legislative Assembly, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes our consideration of the Estimates in this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber.

I would like to thank the ministers, critics and all honourable members for their hard work and dedication during this process.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

* (15:20)

IN SESSION**SECOND READINGS****Bill 30—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2009**

Mr. Speaker: Order. As previously agreed, we will now deal with second reading, and I will call second reading of Bill 30, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2009.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. McGifford), that Bill 30, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2009; Loi d'exécution du budget de 2009 et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, briefly, throughout Bill 30, members will find measures that are part of the Manitoba government's 10-point economic plan to ensure a steady economy while building for the future.

Part 1 suspends for the '09-10 fiscal year and the next two fiscal years annual transfers to the debt retirement account, instead allowing such transfers to that account as is feasible. This change is made in response to the current economic uncertainty and allows the government to bolster the Province's economic stimulus plan, allowing needed resources to be redirected toward the cost of infrastructure renewal.

Part 2 amends The Corporation Capital Tax Act to ensure that a manufacturer is a member of a partnership, benefits from the elimination of capital taxes for manufacturers since July 1, '08, and clarifies that accumulated other comprehensive income is to be included in the corporation's taxable paid-up capital.

Parts 3 and 7 amend the gasoline and motive fuel taxes to help support the development of CentrePort Canada. The tax on fuel for domestic cargo flights is reduced from 3.2 cents per litre to 1.5 cents a litre and provides for a refund of tax on fuel for international cargo flights, and it helps to secure the future of the forest industry in Manitoba. The tax exemption on fuel used for commercial logging operations is extended to include fuel used for several forest renewal activities.

As well, part 4 amends The Income Tax Act, thereby reducing the small-business income tax rate from 1 percent to zero effective December 1, '10 and increases the basic education property tax by \$50 to \$650 in '09 and prevents registered disability savings plans withdrawals from clawing back refundable education property tax credits as well as seniors schools tax, assistance benefits and personal tax credits.

It also is providing greater flexibility for obtaining share level assessments for the purpose of the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit in recognition of programs administered by Family Services and Housing as well as extending the Co-op Education and Apprenticeship Tax Credit for co-op students and graduates and for newly accredited journeypersons to the end of 2011 as well as allowing money in the tax-free savings accounts to be invested in shares of a labour-sponsored venture capital corporation or in eligible investments for the purposes of the community enterprise development tax credit and it further implements measures by extending the Mineral Exploration Tax Credit to the end of 2011 and increasing the tax credit rate from 10 to 20 percent on April 1, '09 and to 30 percent on April 1, 2010.

Part 5 amends The Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Act, removing the restrictions on who may be issued a tax creditable class A share in order to allow Manitobans to acquire these shares through their tax-free savings accounts.

Part 6 builds on the improvements done under part 4 to the Mineral Exploration Tax Credit by amending The Mining Tax Act to further ensure the long-term viability of mining in Manitoba in recognition of the current depression in world mineral prices and the impact on mining companies in Manitoba. Bill 30 reduces and restructures the mining tax rate by replacing the single 18 percent

rate with graduated rates of 10, 15 and 17 percent, depending on a mining company's profitability and it is also facilitative of mining by increasing the portion of tax revenue for a year that may be transferred to the mining community reserve from a maximum of 3 percent to a maximum of 6 percent of that tax revenue.

As well, part 8 amends The Municipal Assessment Act providing a property tax exemption for sports and recreation facilities that are located on university land and which are used by non-profit organizations or by the university and community groups. Examples of venues which will benefit include the soccer complex at the University of Manitoba and the future stadium to be built on the Fort Garry campus.

Part 9 amends The Retail Sales Tax Act by helping farmers and making permanent the exemption for manure slurry tanks and liners for manure lagoons, providing a refund on the purchase of a hospital bed or lift chair for the benefit of persons with disabilities and by exempting services performed by a veterinarian and by police and fire departments.

Part 10 increases the ceiling on court costs that may be prescribed under The Summary Convictions Act from 35 to 45 percent of the prescribed fine. The additional provincial revenue will be invested in additional police, courts and prosecutors.

Part 11 provides for improvement in administration enforcement measures under The Tax Administration and Miscellaneous Taxes Act by enhancing various enforcement measures to combat the smuggling of contraband tobacco in the province, including increasing the penalty and fine amounts and enabling the seizure, impoundment and forfeiture of vehicles used to transport contraband tobacco, as well as enabling the use of investigative techniques and procedures, as authorized by an investigative warrant and facilitating obtaining a warrant by allowing for a warrant to be obtained by telephone or other means of telecommunication.

In addition, part 12 amends the retirement savings beneficiaries act to enable a tax-free savings account plan holder to designate a beneficiary outside of a will, saving the plan holder's future estate on probate fees and probate time. Also, in recognition of the broader scope of this act it is renamed The Beneficiary Designation Act.

Then, part 13 amends the tobacco tax, effective March 26, 2009, by increasing the tax rates on tobacco as announced in the budget. The basic tax rate per cigarette has increased from 17.5 cents to 18.5 cents per cigarette. The tax rates on fine-cut and raw-leaf tobacco are to increase proportionately. In order to further address the ongoing problem of contraband sales in Manitoba, Bill 30 clarifies that the sale of any unmarked tobacco, including the sale of a single cigarette, is prohibited.

Part 14, provides for a new waste reduction and recycling support levy to be imposed on operators of waste disposal grounds. Proceeds of the levy will be deposited in a special fund to be used to provide support or incentives to municipalities for recycling, and to support other recycling programs and improvements to waste management in Manitoba, particularly with respect to e-waste and household hazardous material waste.

Other budget '09 measures include several measures announced that are not found in Bill 30, have been or will be implemented by way of regulatory amendments, including doubling the amount of investments under the Community Enterprise Investment Tax Credit program and doubling the value of the shares a company can access under the Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit program; and broadening the Green Energy Equipment Tax Credit to add solar thermal systems in addition to geothermal systems currently allowed; doubling the benefits under the Riparian Tax Credit; and expanding the sales tax exemption for books to include educational workbooks.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recommend this bill for consideration by the House.

*(15:30)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this bill. It deals with the implementation of the budget, and I have some significant concerns about the approach and the direction that the government is taking in terms of saying that they have a balanced budget, but they have brought in a budget which, in many respects, is anything but balanced. I have talked about this before, that the core operations of the budget show an \$88-million deficit, and yet the government is insisting that spending \$88 million more than you're

bringing in is actually a balanced budget. Well, a lot of us disagree and that's part of the reason that I'm up here today speaking on this bill.

I think that this government, as I've already referred to, has overestimated things like the revenue from the corporate income tax for the coming year. We've all seen what's happening to some of the important media companies, Global, CTV, so on, that their advertising revenues are far down. It's pretty easy to predict that the corporate income is going to be down and that the corporate income tax revenues to the government are likely to be down a lot more than they're predicting at this point.

But it is not just this area where the revenues are likely to be down. In this budget, when I look under fines, which I presume cover things like photo radar, they've gone up from something like \$45 million to pretty close to \$52 million. That's about \$7 million in extra new dollars. They certainly were planning on a huge cash grab from the photo radar and other fining processes. Given what has happened in the last two weeks, we've seen what kind of a mess the NDP have got themselves into with photo radar, trying to use this as a cash grab when it's not a safety issue at construction zones in the middle of the night when there's no construction, or at times when there's no construction. It's just a pure and simple cash grab, and I think that what we're seeing is that Manitobans are protesting.

They're saying to this government, look, we agree with you. Let's have some safety, but this should not be a cash grab. Part of what's happened is that the fines have been jacked way up from where they were initially, so the government is using this as a cash grab. I don't believe that's acceptable, and I think it's important that Manitobans know that there are members in this Legislature who are opposed to this sort of a cash grab, and that we were actually opposed to photo radar to start with because we felt that there were some legitimate questions. Those questions now have come to be. We've seen the huge problems that exist. The cash grab is there in the budget and Manitobans are now speaking up. When the government gets its head around the 60,000 tickets, some of them are legitimate with cars going far too fast, but many of them, I am sure, were cars that were going by when there was no construction activity and, in fact, when the cars were in the right speed zone for the area, if you weren't considering the construction zone.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

What we're talking about here in terms of planning and management, we've got a big problem with the way that this budget is being implemented. I'm just standing up here to lay the facts on the table that this budget, as this government is implementing it, there are some major problems. Therefore, we are going to oppose this legislation. We're going to oppose this legislation not only because it does this, but because this government didn't use good management processes in looking at how to manage dollars, that they're spending a lot of extra dollars here and there and wasting money. The result is that they are now putting in this legislation, the fact that they will no longer pay down debt.

We are in agreement with this government in that there needs to be some approach to ensuring that there is a strong approach in terms of physical infrastructure and human infrastructure. I've certainly talked about this on other occasions, but what this government is doing in terms of poor management overall just can't be condoned. Who knows how many other places there are problems in terms of the revenue estimates, but certainly it's areas not only in terms of revenue estimates, but in terms of how and where this government is spending and how they're trying to manage or not manage the expenditures which are pretty darned important.

I have spoken before of the fact that when you're making investments and you're going to get a return on investment, that you need to be careful and wise about how you're making those investments.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I've given, as an example, the huge cost, personally and in terms of the provincial treasury, of conditions like diabetes. When we are not preventing diabetes, as this government has been remarkably ineffective in their efforts to prevent diabetes—we're not sure whether it's because they're not up to speed with what's happening or they just don't know how to get things done. We think it's probably the latter, that they may have some reasonable intentions, but that they just have been remarkably ineffective in their efforts to prevent new cases of diabetes in this province. So the numbers are going up and up, and the future costs are going up and up. These are future liabilities to the government. They are health debts incurred as a result of the actions of this government, and yet they are not being included in the budget,

even though these are recognizable expenditures that have to be made in the future, just like other types of expenditures.

Certainly, when this government is failing to recognize burdens from inaction, the burdens of lack of investment in critical areas like preventing diabetes and other health conditions, then they end up putting a lot of extra money into treatment because they have not prevented the problem in the first place.

There is an old story of the people who were standing along the edge of a river and as they were standing there, there was a person came down the river, waving his hands, shouting help, and so somebody went in and grabbed him out. A few minutes later, there was another person and, pretty soon, it was a regular activity, grabbing people, rescuing people. This continued until somebody was smart enough to go around the bend and to realize that somebody was pushing them into the river. Not until they got on top of—you know, prevented this guy from pushing people into the river, did they realize that, you know, that was a much more sensible answer to prevent the problem than to continue rescuing people after the fact.

What we have to do, Mr. Speaker, is get smarter. Sadly, this government is not being nearly as smart as it should be because they're still diving in and rescuing people instead of trying to prevent the problem in the first place, which is really what needs to be done. This is good planning, but we're not seeing this kind of good planning, sensible planning from this government.

There are concerns about the way this government is spending and managing expenditures, and let me talk a little bit about some additional ones. The debt of the government, not only in terms of what's happening from the management of core operating expenditures, where they're spending \$88 million more than they're bringing in, in revenue, but there are areas of capital investment and health facility investments where there are accumulating debts being put on the books as a result of the way that things are being managed.

I think that the problem that we've got here is that it's not adequately known or appreciated how this government is managing things because what they've done is to bring a process to the books which sort of disguises some of their activities, makes it a little harder for people to see and to understand. This year, alone, for example, I believe that the capital

investments, the money that the NDP is borrowing, goes up by something like \$450 million. That's quite a bit when you think of that's adding to the debt of the Province. The expenditures on health facilities, the debt incurred to build and expand hospital and other health-care facilities is going up by \$172 million. When we're looking at debts, we need to look and have a full understanding of the fact that the government is actually getting us more and more into debt. While this is a recession—and we can understand that in a recession you may have to be in a position where you need to support critical activities, physical infrastructure, human infrastructure, but at the same time we also know that it should be clear to all Manitobans how things are going and there should be a plan moving forward.

* (15:40)

One of the things which was not adequately there, clearly not adequately there, was an approach which is showing improved management of expenditures. We are not opposed, in fact we support the appropriate investments in physical infrastructure, preparing for the future, but we also need management of expenditures so that some of the operating expenditures moving forward are not going to be as high as they are now.

That can be done in a whole variety of ways in terms of the way the investments are made. In terms of physical infrastructure, we could provide a good example of this in the area of health information technology. For many years, Manitoba has been far behind other jurisdictions when it comes to health information technology; the use of systems that would replace paper. Compared to other jurisdictions, we have not made the investments. The result is, we have a lot of extra operating expenditures, cumbersome time delays, problems within the system because there wasn't adequate attention to making sure that we were moving forward appropriately and well on electronic medical records. On the provision of telemedicine, ensuring that there was broadband access all over Manitoba and so on and so forth.

The result of the lack of investment in this area is that some of our operating costs are far higher than they need to be. We're using an outdated model in terms of areas where we're delivering health care in older ways rather than using the latest in terms of information technology. We had a problem, for example, in communication between hospitals and family physicians. It's because when compared to

other provinces in part, we are behind in terms of the electronic communications. So that, when I talk with family physicians, all too often they are not getting the information up to date, adequately, quick enough of what's happened when somebody is in hospital. That result, Mr. Speaker, is there are extra delays, there are extra tests ordered, all sorts of extra costs and duplication because there's not a quick electronic system for making sure that the critical information in looking after people is shared quickly. It's just inappropriate, archaic. When, in fact, what happens, is that a family physician doesn't learn about a patient who's died until they read it in the obituary. This is what has happened. Surely to goodness in this age where we have BlackBerrys, where we have information technology and so on, that we've fallen behind so that these modern communication methods are not being used adequately in our health-care system to make sure that we have rapid communication.

What's happening with somebody who goes into hospital. Compare this with other jurisdictions, where sadly, we are so far behind that what's going to happen is that where our health-care costs are ballooning because we're not using, we're not up to date, we're not using what we could be in terms of the best and the most optimum for sharing information, for making sure that people in hospital know what's happened in the family physician's office, that family physicians know what's happened in the hospital. It's just basic common sense which, in 10 years, it just doesn't seem to have permeated the understanding of the NDP government in any way, shape or form. It's sad and it's showing up in this budget implementation act because there is not a good view of how to balance resources properly and how to make sure that there is in place a long-run plan to spend wisely and well and in an affordable way, so that we're coming out of this recession stronger and better positioned.

I think I was talking earlier on about a situation in the hog industry, and we had many producers here. Here's another example where we are likely to see big drops in revenues from corporate taxes on hog industry corporations. Sure, a part of this has to do with international prices, which have been down, but today's prices on, for example, the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, they're some 38 percent below what they were a year ago, and they were low then. So you have companies in this business who are struggling. As Harry Siemens has said, this is an industry in crisis. But, at the very least, there are

going to be some dramatic drops in corporate income tax revenue coming to the government, and quite a bit of it, sadly, is related to the government's fault in not managing their approach to this industry.

Mr. Speaker, there are certainly some threats, as we all know, the problem of H1N1 flu, added on to the poor management by this government of the country-of-origin labelling. Country-of-origin labelling, they've just offloaded this to the federal government to look after and, in fact, what we believe is that this government should have had a plan B, that is, what do they do when the country-of-origin labelling is there and is being used, and in the United States there's a way of making it more difficult for us to get access to the U.S. market. Well, there was no plan B. In fact, what has happened is that the way this government has approached the industry, they've made it much more difficult in terms of trying to put a hog plant in the middle of Winnipeg where there was tremendous opposition, and then putting a moratorium on the hog industry at the very time when they needed to make changes to improve their approach to the environment and to animal husbandry, and yet the government was taking the investment capital, the equity, right out of the industry and making it more difficult.

Here is an example of how the government should have been thinking of the future, how government could be making sure that the industry is positioning itself well to come out of this recession. Instead, the government has been doing very little. Only after we pushed, last week, did the government actually decide that they were going to have a barbecue. We're continuing to push for an adequate plan that looks and provides people with a vision of what the light is at the end of the tunnel, how to get there and how we're going to make sure that we have an industry which comes through these difficulties and comes through pretty strongly.

But, in the meanwhile, to expect corporate tax revenues to stay up under these sorts of problems is certainly not something that we would anticipate. I think the government, in how they have outlined the budget, have made some major mistakes. They have tried to imply that they have a balanced situation, that they're in good shape when, in fact, they are hiding the fact that they're going deeper into debt and that they're positioning the Province so that there is not an adequate plan coming through, with light at the end of the tunnel, in terms of where we need to go and where we need to build for this industry and

for other industries in this province as we move forward.

So I bring, and I'm talking about this budget implementation act, because I think that, in this occasion, the government is heading in the wrong direction. The government is not providing as transparent an approach to look at the budgeting process. They are saying that they have a balanced budget at a time when, in fact, we have, even in core operations, they presented a budget which is spending \$88 million more and in other areas there are built in additions to the debt without a plan to how these are going to be paid off so that all we're seeing is a gradually increasing set of problems going down the road instead of a government which, as we should have expected, would have provided some sensible solutions.

*(15:50)

As we get into where we are at the moment with the real problems in areas of revenue and in areas of expenditure, this government, and this is why I'm up here today, needs to take a very careful look at where it's going because this budget implementation plan is, quite frankly, not good enough for what we need in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, we need something which is better, something which shows clearly how the investments are going to lead us to a situation where we won't have these ever escalating operating core expenditures in all areas. What we need is a plan which is going to look at how we manage things so that in time we'll get out of this situation where we have a big, big and growing debt and get out of the situation where we have increasing problems.

We recognize that Manitoba has been relatively spared some of the problems with the recession, but this is not an excuse to run a budget which is going to get us into trouble. It would have been an opportunity to do much better in terms of how this budget and the budget implementation act was approached.

I have talked about diabetes. It is not the only healthy area where the budgets are ramping up. I talked not long ago about fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. For every child where we diagnosed with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, what's happening is that you have a lifetime cost of about \$2 million. We still don't know accurately how this is going to play out in the long run, but part of the reason is that we don't still have an accurate identification of the number of children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders in this province.

There are guesstimated to be 150 such children born each year. The accuracy of that number is really in question and so we don't know what our future liabilities are and the attempt to prevent the development of new children or children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders has been hopelessly inadequate.

Time and time again we've prevented a bill that would call for labelling of alcoholic beverages that would call for notices to be put wherever liquor is sold. These are just two measures of many that could be taken and have a much more effective plan to address conditions like fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and in so doing decrease our future costs. Decrease our future cost not only in terms of health care, Child and Family Services, decrease our education cost because of the need for putting costs into the education system, extra costs because of the nature of the condition, the health condition, the brain condition of somebody with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. They can learn. That's the wonderful thing, but it takes extra resources and so if we can prevent these problems, we will have a healthier population and at the same time we will not have the future additional expenditures.

So we need—should have had a budget implementation act which lays this out step by step how we're going to get to a future where we're not spending these enormous resources on treating very expensive conditions when we could have been spending much less up front and made a big difference in preventing these extra costs. That's part of what this should have been about: making the investments in the right way so we didn't have to have this huge burden in the future. This government is putting a huge liability on the future by the fact that it's not acted. That is why this should have been a much better bill and provided a much better view of how we could implement this budget, this questionable budget, this questionable bill.

It didn't, and that's why I am here today to send a strong message to the government that, no, this is not good enough. We need something better. Our province is worth something much better than this. The people of this province demand and should have been given something much, much better than this bill. That is why it is so important that we have this debate today and that we move forward because there are much better options than we were presented with in this bill. We should have had those options in the bill instead of having a bill which uses what I think is really more of sleight of hand in covering up

some of these financial problems and suggesting that it's not as bad as it is by covering up the extent to which we're not paying down the debt, covering up the extent to which we're getting into more and more debt. So, you know, it's a credibility problem, it's an honesty problem, it's a real issue, I believe, for this government. That's why they need to get the message that they need to smarten up because our province should have something which is much, much better than this.

I think we got today—I will just close with this—some Canadian cancer statistics. If we had taken the approach of treating polio in the '50s with just more and more iron lungs, we would never have had enough money to afford it, but what we did was to provide immunizations for polio, prevented the condition. We changed the paradigm and created a situation where we didn't have the enormous costs in the future because we invested at the time. We need to make those kinds of future-thinking investments. Absence of those investments in this budget, shocking. That's why I'm up here today opposing Bill 30.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurouchou), that the second reading debate on Bill 30 be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on House business.

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

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if I might have leave of the House to switch the private member's resolution that is scheduled for tomorrow from Transcona dealing with housing to Thursday and instead, tomorrow, deal with the PMR dealing with Disraeli Freeway from the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) tomorrow? In other words, switch the PMR that was scheduled for Thursday to Tuesday and from Tuesday to Thursday by agreement.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to change tomorrow's PMR to Thursday and Thursday's PMR to Tuesday, just to switch them around? One is Transcona on housing and the other one is on Disraeli Freeway. There's agreement to switch

Tuesday to Thursday and Thursday to Tuesday?
[Agreed]

Okay, we'll continue.

Bill 8—The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act (Enhanced Manitoba Hydro Employee Benefits and Other Amendments)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister responsible for the Civil Service): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 8, The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act (Enhanced Manitoba Hydro Employee Benefits and Other Amendments); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pension de la fonction publique (prestations améliorées à l'intention des employés d'Hydro-Manitoba et autres modifications), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Motion presented.

* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker: His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of this bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this bill proposes several amendments to The Civil Service Superannuation Act. Approximately 50 percent of employees covered by this act are provincial civil servants, while the remainder are employees of various Crown corporations, boards, agencies and commissions. Participating employers include: Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Liquor Control Commission and Manitoba Public Insurance, as well as a number of smaller boards and commissions.

One of the key changes incorporated in this bill is an amendment to provide for a transfer of 145,000,000 from the Civil Service Superannuation Fund's indexing reserve to the superannuation adjustment account to be used to fund cost-of-living adjustments over a 30-year period, Mr. Speaker. The superannuation adjustment account is a separate account in the fund used to finance the employee portion of cost-of-living adjustments for pensioners. The Province's portion of cost-of-living adjustments, approximately 50 percent, is funded on a pay-as-you-go basis. This proposed amendment is pursuant to an agreement in 2006 between the liaison committee, representing employees and pensioners, and the advisory committee, representing participating employers.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the bill enables the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to establish, by regulation, enhanced benefits for eligible Manitoba Hydro employees. This proposed amendment is pursuant to an agreement between Manitoba Hydro and its unions to establish an enhanced Hydro benefit plan for eligible Manitoba Hydro employees. The amendment provides that when the specifics of the enhanced Hydro benefit plan are determined by the Hydro advisory group, the provisions recommended by the advisory group would be implemented through a regulation. Implementation of the provisions would be subject to providing an actuarial report confirming that the provisions, with respect to the funding of benefits, are financially viable.

Mr. Speaker, this bill includes an amendment to enable the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to designate a non-matching employer as a matching employer in respect to some or all of its employees. A matching employer is required to make pension contributions matching those made by their employees to the fund, whereas a non-matching employer is permitted to finance employer pension costs on a pay-as-you-go basis. To change this designation currently requires an amendment to the act. The proposed amendment would permit the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to change an employer's designation without the requirement of a legislative change.

In addition, this bill includes an amendment to update the annuity options available to employees on retirement. The act currently provides joint survivor options for two-thirds or one-half or normal forms of pension. The proposed amendment will not eliminate these options, but it will allow the Civil Service Superannuation board to include additional options for employees to consider when they are planning to retire. As well, there is an amendment to allow employees to accrue pension benefits up to the end of the year in which they may—in which they reach the age of 71 years, consistent with recent changes to federal pension laws. In 2007, the federal Income Tax Act was amended to allow employees to continue to accrue pension benefits up to the end of the year in which they reach the age of 71. Previously, employees could only accrue pension benefits up to the end of the year in which they reached 69 years. This proposed amendment will harmonize the provisions.

This bill amends the definition of employee to exclude employees under a collective agreement under which the government is required to make

contributions to another retirement savings or benefit plan. During negotiations in 2008 between the Province and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, agreement in principle was reached to allow Family Services and Housing employees represented by CUPE who are currently not members of the Civil Service Superannuation Fund to join the fund.

The bill also contains a number of amendments that have an administrative or housekeeping nature. These amendments serve to clarify the meaning of various sections and provide for a more streamlined and responsive administration of the plan.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recommend this bill for consideration by the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would like to, I guess, put a number of thoughts on the record in regard to Bill 8.

The pension issue is a very serious issue for all Manitobans. Whether you work in the public sector or the private sector, people are very much aware of the importance of pensions. In fact, what I've found is that age tends to have an impact on a person's thought process when it comes to pensions. In fact, I can recall even for myself personally, and if I was to personalize it a bit, when I was first elected in 1988, at that time, pensions and the issue of pensions was the furthest thing from my mind. I was more concerned about the take-home pay, how much money I was going to be bringing home, and serving my constituents and so forth, Mr. Speaker.

What I have found, and I believe that I would be a good example of what most Manitobans would be thinking. There's a stage in your life in which you're not as concerned about pensions as you could have been had you had others having more dialogue and talking about the importance of pensions. In fact, back when I was 26, there was this whole concept about MLA pension. At that time, MLAs actually had a fairly decent pension plan. You would get elected three consecutive elections and/or eight years—I believe that was the requirements for it, Mr. Speaker—[interjection]—and the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) puts it right: Poof, it disappeared.

Anyway, at that time, at 26, I was thinking, you know, whatever happens, happens. I was quite content to see, and there were some suggestions that were made that we need to change the pension program. What happened was there was a committee

that was established. David Northcott was one of those commissioners. They were charged with this responsibility, with coming up with an idea to have more public favour about how pensions are given to MLAs, to try to improve the image that was there because, back in the late '80s, early '90s, the public perception of politicians' pensions was very negative. The political leadership at the time felt that we'll have this commission, and the commission will come up with ways in which we could come up with future MLA pensions. What they did, at the end of the day, is, they said, we're going to scrap the pension in its entirety and have matching RSP contributions. So, as an MLA, you can contribute so much towards an RSP and the government would then contribute equal amounts, up to a certain limit. MLAs weren't provided a choice of any sorts, it was imposed arbitrarily on all of the MLAs.

Well, a year or two later, we started to kind of get a sense—and this is again somewhere around that '97-98, where MLAs were starting to wonder, well, why is it that we made the change we made, because the impact was starting to already be looked at? Individuals that were maybe a little bit wiser than myself were starting to look in terms of the future and the impact it was going to have on their retirement.

Mr. Speaker, ultimately, that plan stayed in place for quite a number of years. It wasn't until after 2003 where the whole issue came to a head again. What we found was that the MLAs, including myself, with hindsight, were saying that the MLA pension change back in the mid-'90s, was ultimately to the detriment of the individuals that were putting in so much effort in terms of being able to represent their constituents. There was a comparison that was done across Canada, and Manitoba didn't fare all that well.

*(16:10)

I remember some MLAs saying, gee, if only I could have, after working 20 years, a pension similar to a teacher's. There was a great deal of concern in terms of, well, maybe it's time that we leave in order to try to incur a pension. I remember Gary Kowalski, a former MLA, who had an issue in regard to a pension where he was put into a position where he had to, in essence, not run again in order to be able to maximize another pension that he was involved with, with the Winnipeg Police Department, Mr. Speaker. It was an important issue, important enough that it ultimately, I believe, led to a change in career. So

what I know is that for many people the pension issue is career-changing. It has a huge impact, and even for those individuals that at an age in which you don't necessarily think about pensions, it still is important, even in those early ages, at that early age, to reflect on how very important pensions are because at some point in time you might be relying on that pension in order to be able to sustain yourself in your senior years.

So, ultimately, we did get the chance to revisit it and the commission went out and it came back and it reinstated—it recognized that it was a problem. And the commissioner, I believe, actually met with a number of MLAs, if not—definitely MLAs from all caucuses, Mr. Speaker, and I know—I believe I had a discussion, and I'm not sure, but I thought my leader had had a discussion, and I know many other members had a discussion. So this individual realized that it was having an impact, and the impact was not positive for Manitobans as a whole because, ultimately, you want MLAs to feel comfortable in terms of their career decisions.

So we, through the commissioner, an independent commissioner, were able to see the pension program reinstated. What I thought was telling was the number of MLAs that actually bought back into the pension program. Well, in many ways it was a question of affordability, but the point that I'm getting at is that the number of MLAs, I suspect today—and I don't know the actual number—but I suspect that you could probably count on one hand or a couple of hands, the number of MLAs that opted out of the current pension program. I suspect that you will find that a vast majority, 50-plus of the MLAs, have likely bought into the new pension program. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm one of those MLAs, and I suspect that most of us would realize just how beneficial it is to be able to have the opportunity to be able to invest in a pension program that we have.

I don't know if members opposite over the weekend—CBC had a report on pensions and RRSPs, and the conclusion of the report, and I'll comment on more of the details of the report, but the conclusion of the report was that for the average investor, it is far better to have a set-defined pension program, whether it's employer, whether it is government, than to have to rely on investments of your RRSPs and your financial advisers, Mr. Speaker. That was a very strong conclusion. I know the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) has an interest, and I don't know if he saw the documentary, but it is—it was an excellent documentary, and I would highly

recommend members to watch it because it goes beyond MLAs; it talks about the importance of individuals, everyday Manitobans that are investing money into a pension, into their retirements. You would be absolutely, totally amazed by the lack of safeguards that are in place by the hundreds, if not thousands of individuals that invest money, thinking that they're going to have great pensions when it comes time for retirement.

I found that this documentary, and it was on CBC, was very informative. At times I question a lot of the things CBC does, in particular around the CFL, but many other issues. But I found this particular issue and this documentary was absolutely excellent, and I wish that the constituents that I represent, or Manitobans as a whole, would have a far better understanding and at least be cautioned by being able to watch that particular documentary, Mr. Speaker.

We, sometimes, take things for granted, and we're now in a position, as many in society are, of feeling comfortable in knowing that because it's a government pension we're going to be protected well into the future. As long as the province is financially viable and doing well, and if we continue to put money aside to protect the integrity of the future pension programs, Mr. Speaker, we shouldn't have anything to fear. We are, in fact, fairly well covered and protected.

This bill is a bill that will make, in most part, a positive difference for a number of people that are receiving pensions. But, Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to be thinking outside of the box on this issue.

I had the opportunity to raise it during Estimates, not the bill but regarding pensions, and you look for government to be as bold, thinking outside of the box and coming up with legislation that's going to help the average person, the average Manitoban, that's trying to save for the future or put money to the side and to protect that.

You know, it was really interesting, on the 24th of April, when I had asked the minister a question regarding private pensions and so forth—I just want to take one relatively small clip, but just to read what it is that the minister said, and I quote from the 24th of April, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) said: "In those areas, we don't directly regulate, but we have made moves under this government to protect people more and that's through the Manitoba Securities Commission. It's not well known that most

people's mutual funds that are invested, often in a retirement plan, do not have that kind of protection that, for example, a credit union provides to your deposits, the deposit guarantee or a bank provides through the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation."

The Minister of Finance highlighted what I believe is a very serious legitimate concern, and I heard that concern yesterday or, I believe it was last night, it could've been Saturday night, on the CBC report, and that is that those consumers, those future seniors, that are going to be looking for their money into the future. Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the Minister of Finance could be doing Manitobans, as a whole, a huge favour by starting to look—and when I say the Minister of Finance I'm really talking the government as a whole—is to start to look at the legislation that goes beyond our Crown corporations and the civil service. I realize that this changes some of the accrual opportunities for seniors, but we need to start looking at how can we protect private investors that are putting money aside for their retirement funds.

* (16:20)

I think that's something that we need to look at because, quite frankly, if you take a look at it, and I'll use an example that was illustrated in the CBC report. If you're a private investor, let's say, for example, you work at Wal-Mart—and it's not to discredit Wal-Mart or anything of this nature—they might even have a private pension plan, I don't know. But let's just use—you happen to work at Wal-Mart, and you're making \$12 an hour, somehow you're able to take some of that money out of what you're making, and you're putting it into an RRSP contribution. Well, sadly, the types of fees that you're going to be incurring are going to take away from the monies that you could be making if, in fact, it was some form of a registered pension plan, via example, government or an employer that has a registered pension plan, and to the degree in which it could almost be 50 percent less in terms of actual benefit going into the future as a pensionable income. Which means, at the end of the day, from what I understand, is that—and I'll give a specific example. Let's say you're working for the Province and you're making \$20 an hour and a portion of that is going into a pension and at the end of the day, you're going to get, let's say, \$1,200 as a pensionable income. Compared to someone that is working in the private sector and is just putting money away in terms of RRSPs, but the same amount of money that you put away as a government worker, Mr. Speaker, they will likely

make somewhere between half to maybe as high as two-thirds of what it is that you will be making in terms of pensionable income.

So we need to be concerned about that. You know, I talked about a lady in my community that I had assisted in bringing over to the local bank. This is an individual which I really felt for. She went out on the slipperiest, iciest day—I believe it was in January, I could be corrected on this, but I believe it was in January—there was ice all over the roads and, in fact, that's how she ended up in my car, because she had fallen from a slip on the ice. I had asked her, why would you go today? And the lady is virtually in tears saying, it's the economy, it's the investments. She's losing so much money on her RRSPs, she's now thinking that she's going to have to be going back to work in order to acquire more money to give into RRSPs, because of her loss of investment, because she's at that age in which this is a critical time of her life and she wants to protect her investments, Mr. Speaker.

What does the government—or how can the government assist, Mr. Speaker? What we do is we rely virtually, solely—solely on financial advisers, and financial advisers do have a conflict. There are many good, excellent, wonderful financial advisers; I don't question that, but consumers need to be aware that the consumer is not the one that's often the first consideration for a financial adviser. Yes, and if you question my statement, look at the CBC document that was broadcast across Canada last night. Quite often, as an investor, as a financial investor, you benefit more financially, if, in fact, you're having multiple transactions that are occurring. Or, quite often, it's the institution that you represent will be guiding you as to what it is that you should be recommending to your clients.

The minister needs to watch the report and I'd be interested—and I know I said to the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) once about a CBC report and I don't know if he had the opportunity to see it. I must say, I very rarely watch CBC or CTV or any sort of television programming. *[interjection]* No, I haven't watched hockey for a good period of time.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, it takes me a little bit off course. The point is that there is a role for government to do what it can in terms of pension issues, not only within our civil service, but also within the private sector. I realize that that might spook a number of people by making that sort of a statement, but there was a time in which we felt that

certain things were strictly in the private domain, but we have seen the benefits by bringing it into the public domain, at least in good part. I would suggest to you that there are cases—I really do think that—you know, this provides me, and I realize I don't have very much time left, but I do believe that it provides me the opportunity to talk about an important issue that many people have invested in. Last night—and it demonstrates to the degree in which people are thinking about retirement. Last night I was involved in a discussion where someone had indicated that they had made a bad decision when they had invested into the Crocus Fund, and when you look at the numbers, there are a lot of pensioners that have, in fact, invested in the Crocus Fund, that are actually receiving pension today but still don't even have access to the funds that they had invested. There were a lot of financial advisers, a lot of individuals that pumped out the Crocus investment fund. I tell you, my heart goes out to those individuals that have invested literally tens of thousands of dollars, and they have not received a penny of it because that fund has been frozen since 2004. Where, can you imagine, if you're, again, you're a labourer working at Flyer Industries or any manufacturing industry or any private firm that's out there, even government employees, that invested thousands and thousands of dollars in that fund and you look at it today and, if you invested \$10,000 at the wrong time, you'll be lucky if you get \$5,000 of that money back, if and when that money comes back. That is the reality of it. You know, we're talking somewhere between \$4 to \$6 a share, and some people paid in excess of \$12 a share, and that money is still being tied up. There are people that have had that money in there that have died since, and they've never received it.

Pensions are an important issue, an issue in which we, I believe, need to give more attention to, Mr. Speaker. This bill increases it, so now you're going to be able to put in more money from—at one point there was a limitation, I believe it was age 69—now we've increased it by a couple years, 71 now, it goes up to. Well, again, you know, if you take a look at a business cycle, because we're at this stage in our business cycle, there's going to be a number of people that—an age group—that they'll be able to recover from it in terms of pensions. But could you imagine if you're 65, 67, and you've had to go through—your RRSP accounts had to go through this particular pension, even the civil service pensions that are out there, and the huge decrease in value of these pension funds, massive pension funds. Well,

much like that senior lady, you're going to feel it and you're going to feel it quite significantly.

So, for some of them, the increase in age, as this bill is doing, can be perceived—you know, it provides a couple of more years, it allows individuals to, ultimately, contribute a little bit more money. Those types of things are positive. That's why I say the bill itself, as a whole, is a bill that does make some sense—raises some concerns, monies that are being transferred, how it's going to be accounting, and so forth, but at the end of the day, those are the concerns. At the end of the day, the bill in itself is likely a small step forward. They don't have to worry about meeting any sort of huge progressive expectations of a vision on pensions, and those are the types of things which one would think that the government would be able to bring forward, Mr. Speaker. There are many different issues that Manitobans have to face day in and day out. They should feel comfortable in knowing that when they do retire, there are going to be funds that are there and that they don't have to worry to the degree which they have to today because of inadequate government regulations. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has even said it himself, that there's really nothing there.

* (16:30)

If I have \$30,000 tied into a particular RRSP—and again, I'm probably a poor example in the sense that I have a government pension—but if there's a \$30,000 RRSP contribution and someone goes AWOL with the money, good luck. We've seen that. There are documented cases of white-collar crime where individuals have invested millions of dollars. It might be against the law, but I can tell the minister that there are individuals that have gotten zero, not a dime, out of a lot of pension investments where white-collar crime has been involved. The government will go ahead and they'll protect deposits in banks, but they put a cap in there. There is, from what I understand, nothing of equal protection for individuals that have invested in pensions.

I think this is the nice thing: you're never too late. You still have—what, just two years? Maybe a couple more years—just over two years of your mandate. You don't have to wait until you're in opposition before you start coming up with good ideas. You might want to consider acting on some good progressive ideas now, Mr. Speaker.

An issue that I've raised, and it has seemed to have picked up a little bit more attention, was that—

[interjection] no, no, no, no, it's the set price for milk. I look to the new Member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead). I think there was an interesting article in the *Opasquia Times*, the local newspaper, on this very issue. It's a good issue. I'll be more than happy to be the seconder of a bill if the member wants to re-introduce it under the NDP banner. But anyway, I digress, Mr. Speaker.

You're never too late to come up with good ideas that could really make a difference, can ease the minds of thousands of Manitobans that are looking at retirement, ease the minds of thousands of employees today that are working and concerned about their future income, Mr. Speaker.

There are many ideas that are out there. You don't even have to re-invent the wheel. You can look abroad. To the government, I say, Mr. Speaker, look abroad and see what other progressive ideas might be out there that would actually make a difference. I suspect if you spent a little time outside of the NDP Cabinet table—I would say caucus, but I don't think the caucus is really involved in all the discussion—but if you start thinking outside of that Cabinet, you might find that there are a number of ideas. If you make a commitment to sitting more days inside the Legislature, you can debate many of those ideas. You should, at least, allow for and encourage members to bring forward those ideas and, at least, allow them to see the light of day.

This is one of the areas, I would ultimately argue, Mr. Speaker, in which we need ideas. We need ideas on how we can reform our pension regulations and laws that ultimately will lead for more protection and higher sense of education amongst our young people as to the real value. I'll tell you, if you're 18, 20 years old and you're going into the work force today, today is the time to start looking and putting aside something for pensions because 20 years from now, you'll be glad that you did that. That's advice that I can recall being given and I guess I wasn't—

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

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I move, seconded by the Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), that the second reading debate on Bill 8 be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 9—The Social Work Profession Act

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 9, The Social Work Profession Act; Loi sur la profession de travailleur social, be now read a first time and be referred to a committee of this House—read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 9, The Social Work Profession Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Selinger: This act modernizes—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on a point of order.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Point of order, Mr. Speaker, although it may not necessarily be a point of order, perhaps a point of clarification.

I would ask that the Minister of Finance during his debate on Bill 9 include in his debate why, in fact, the Minister of Finance is introducing this bill when, in fact, it likely should be the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh). If he could clarify that during his debate, that would be appreciated.

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

Mr. Selinger: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Under rules, any minister of the Crown can introduce a bill that is brought forward by the Crown. That's the rules of the House.

The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now we will go to Bill 9.

Mr. Selinger: I might tell the member at the end of my speech, just to keep him in suspense.

This act modernizes the governance of social workers in Manitoba. It's timely, because under amendments to chapter 7 respecting labour mobility in the Agreement on Internal Trade, the act will allow for the recognition of Manitoba social workers

in other provinces and the recognition of social workers from other provinces in Manitoba.

Currently, a social worker can voluntarily choose to register with the Manitoba Association of Social Workers/Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers which is governed by a 1969 statute. Unlicensed persons can practise social work without adhering to the standards of practice and ethical requirements of registrants. Under the proposed act, the 1969 act would be repealed, and MASW, MIRS, continued as the Manitoba College of Social Workers. The act would require that only a person who is certified by the college may hold themselves out to be a social worker. The act does not restrict the practice of social work in Manitoba to registered social workers.

The college would be managed by an elected board with regional representation of registered social workers from across Manitoba, including a student representative and public representative. The proposed objects of the college are: promoting and increasing the professional knowledge, skill and proficiency of its members of social workers; regulating and governing the professional conduct and discipline of its members, students and professional corporations consistent with the principles of self regulation and protecting the public interest; promoting and fostering in the public a greater awareness of the importance of social work; and advancing the professional interests of the members.

In order to better serve and protect the public, the college would maintain a register of all social workers, students, and professional social worker corporations including private practitioners. The register would be available to the public and include the following information to help protect Manitobans: any conditions or limitations on a social worker's practice; the results of any disciplinary proceedings where a social worker's certificate of registration was cancelled or suspended or had conditions imposed on it; or any disciplinary proceeding where the social worker was required to pay a fine or censored.

The public register and the requirement to include public representatives on the college board are examples of how the proposed new act would protect the public. In order to apply for certification, an applicant must have either a degree in social work from an accredited post-secondary institution or a degree in another educational program, for example,

psychology, approved by the college or a combination of education and/or training or a combination of work and/or volunteer experience. There would be a three-year period after which the act comes into force during which persons who do not possess the academic credentials may qualify for registration if she or he has a recent and acceptable experience functioning in the role of a social worker.

* (16:40)

A continuing professional competence program must be established including reviewing the professional competence of members, requiring members to participate in programs for ensuring competence, and conducting reviews of social workers' practices. A complaints committee would be established consisting of members of the college and public representatives to formally review complaints by clients.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the executive of the Manitoba Association of Social Workers, Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers, Child and Family Services authorities, my colleagues, the Honourable Irvin-Ross, Minister of Healthy Living, and the MLA for St. James, Bonnie Korzeniowski.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The rule in the House is that when mentioning other members of the House is to mention them by—the ministers by their portfolios or other members by their constituency, not by name.

Mr. Selinger: Okay. With this, Mr. Speaker, I almost conclude my remarks except to answer the question raised on a point of order, which you established was not a point of order, but was a matter of curiosity by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik). That would be that the department has the expertise to develop this type of legislation, having developed it in the past. There's legal and expertise within the department and they had some experience doing this. We were requested to develop and facilitate this legislation to advance this project on behalf of social workers in Manitoba in order to provide better protection for the public and better professional education for the people who are in the profession of social work. As the member might know, I am myself a social worker, so I have some interest in this. As well, there are other members of the House that practise that profession as well.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to put a few words on the record in terms of Bill 9, The Social Work Profession Act.

I want to begin by saying some very positive things about social workers who have contributed to a quality of life in Manitoba, who help in a wide variety of circumstances. I know personally at the time that I was looking after children with blood problems and cancer that we had a pediatric oncology team looking after kids with cancer that included a social worker. She played a tremendously important role in ensuring that we were not only treating the cancer, as it were, but that we were making sure that the child was looked after in a holistic point of view, that the situation with the family was addressed and that we were able to provide circumstance that would provide the best opportunity for the child to not only be treated for cancer, but also to be able to do well in school, be able to be sure that the other factors which can be tremendously important in the child's response to treatment were being looked at at the same time.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

This is just one small example of where social workers are playing a vital role in our province. Certainly, we all know, because of the coverage of the situation, the importance of social workers and making good decisions with regard to children who've been brought into the care of Child and Family Services, making sure that families are looked at so that the problems can be prevented as well as looking after children who come into care. Social workers play a tremendously important role in helping with children who are—families who are having some difficulties. So I will start by stressing the importance of the role of social workers in Manitoba; I want to pay a compliment and give credit to the vital role that they do play in making sure that things go as well as they possibly can, often in difficult circumstances, in our province.

The second consideration that I want to bring up—we're ready to support this bill, certainly in principle. I would suggest that there are some things that could have been done better in bringing forward this legislation. In my view, when we are looking at an act like The Social Work Profession Act that all too often the emphasis within the act is on the problem side where there is a problem that we are call the social worker forward. We have got page after page which deals with—for example, starting on page 14, complaints committee, where there is a concern that there is a problem that has arisen and it goes through the registration, the enquiry process, when there is a problem and decision of the panel. A

whole variety of things being looked at—how the decision is treated and all the way through to page 25 so that 11 pages out of 34 are devoted to addressing where a social worker has done, or is perceived to have done, something which was wrong or which a complaint was raised about that problem.

Madam Deputy Speaker—

An Honourable Member: Great observation, but what's that all about?

Mr. Gerrard: Well, let me get to the point here. All right, the point here is that when you look at where we should be going, it's not just to get people to a minimum level where there are no problems. It's to get to a level where we have people who are social workers all over Manitoba working at the highest possible level, employing best practices, making sure that we are reaching for the highest possible standards. What I would compare this to—11 pages there part 6, which is Continuing Competence, is about four lines.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Gerrard: When we are talking about continuing competence, and trying to make sure that we have people working to the highest standard, we have an understanding of best practices and people using the best possible practices that, I think, we should be doing and have a lot more emphasis on this area.

In the language here, it talks about the competence of members, it doesn't talk about how we achieve best practices. All too often when we're talking about the competence of people, whether it's social workers or health professions or others, we're talking about really trying to achieve what is minimum or a basic level of competence. We're not necessarily—and we certainly haven't got in legislation that the goal here is to have excellence; the goal is to have the best possible practices. I can tell you that from dealing with many people who have come forward with problems, that we need to be striving for the best possible practices. We should have in here much clearer processes for establishing best practices and standards.

* (16:50)

We should have, as well as a section on complaints, a section on how we recognize social workers who are doing really well, who are role models. Because where we should be going is setting the bar and emphasizing and recognizing the people who do really well—not just recognizing the people

who have problems, because that's what we're going here, spending 11 pages of this, a large proportion of the act, in trying to single out, identify and look at areas where there are problems. What we should be doing is spending a lot more attention in terms of identifying, using, expanding on best practices and making sure that we've got a system that will take us to a level of excellence which puts us at the pinnacle of what can happen anywhere in North America. I notice the puzzled look on the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) because this seems to be a totally foreign concept to him, but it has always seemed to me that we need to make sure in the professions act that the fundamental goal here is to reach best practices, to recognize people who are role models, to make sure that we have processes.

Let me give you an example. When we are looking at the complaints process, when there is a complaint, when there is a problem, there should be a process in the system so that you can identify processes which were not done optimally. Then you can take those processes and say, look, how do we prevent suboptimal practice, not just by taking away people's registration, but by putting in processes which are going to improve the quality of what we're doing, making sure that the—into the educational reforms, the ongoing learning, that people who are in social work learn about good and bad things that are being done, but that, overall, we are improving. If there's an error, call it, and somebody is disciplined. There's no clear process here for taking that information and then putting it into a process which establishes what should be best practices, what should be standards for the delivery of social work services around the province.

There are many areas where there are important personal judgments. I think the Member for Kildonan would admit, that right now we have far more kids in care than we should have. I think we have more kids, proportional to our population, in care than any other province. When I ask questions about this, I get the situation—I run into the situation where kids are being put into care because the alternative, being able to provide better support for that child, their home and their community so that they don't have to come into care, is not adequately being considered.

I give you an example. A girl who would be nameless in a community which I won't even name—because I think it's important that there be anonymity—who, I believe, was around 14 years of

age, had a bit of a run-in over doing chores with her parents. At school, she told one of her teachers, well, I don't want to go home because my parents have told me that I've got to do some chores or I may be grounded. The reality is that what happened was that a social worker was called in to assess this teenager who had said, well, I don't want to go home, and the next thing you knew—this was on a Friday afternoon and it was close to 5 o'clock—and guess what? I was told this child was taken into care because it was 5 o'clock and the social worker didn't want to be delayed in going home and having a good weekend because it would take some time to try and work things out rather than just to put the child into care and put her in whether it's a hotel or find a foster home or what have you.

Clearly, as this situation played out, it became very apparent that this was not the right decision to have taken. It was a mistake. It's a judgment call, and, yes, we have to be careful in terms of the lives of children. In this instance what happened was that the child was put in a foster home. The next thing you know is that this child was out partying all night at 14, because the foster home wasn't better than what the parents were. In fact, there was a lack of discipline, a lack of the appropriate support, and it ended up with the child going into care, but a worse situation than the child had been before.

There are important judgment calls which we can all learn from in terms of best practices, but we need to have the process. It should have been here, I suggest, in the law, that takes a problem, something that was not done optimally and be able to take and understand what went wrong, and what could have been done better so that we can say, look, under these sorts of circumstance, there is a best practice. There is a way of achieving a better result, a result which is better for the child. In this case, it would have been hugely less costly for the system, because this child ended up in foster care, at taxpayers' expense, for about two months before the whole thing was resolved. It is the sort of extra expense that happens when you don't do things using best practices and you don't make sure that we have a system which enables us to improve continuously.

It's all about trying to have a system which gives us the best possible improvement.

I'll give another example of an area in this legislation, which, I think, could have been done much better. I think that it is important that there be accountability, not just on the social worker who's working out doing their best that they know how in the field, but that there be accountability for the college, the board, and so on. So this clause which provides protection from liability goes too far. It says that no action can be taken against the college unless—for anything done by a person in good faith. I would suggest, and we have before and under the circumstances that somebody could be grossly incompetent if they do things in good faith, and yet they are not liable. They are not accountable. There needs to be some accountability for gross incompetence as well as situations like this, that it is not enough to have good intentions. You actually have to have some ability in terms of dealing with a situation, some competence in dealing with a situation, and we should demand competence, not just from social workers, but from the college, the board, the registrar and so on.

In the past the NDP have brought in legislation which protects Cabinet ministers from these kinds of problems. Well, there needs to be some accountability, and this, we believe, is a little too far, and that this accountability, if this is going to work, has to be both ways. Then you can have the checks and balances which give for good legislation and better operation of that legislation instead of—what I'm saying is, I believe this can be improved, and I hope that the minister who's looking with a very puzzled look on his face will look at ways that this can be improved. That's what this is all about—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter's again before the House, the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) will have 11 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 11, 2009

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Statutes Amendment Act, 2009		Selinger	1954
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The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>