

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 31, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Pembina Trails School Division—New High School

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Overcrowded schools throughout Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods, Linden Ridge and Richmond West subdivisions are forcing Pembina Trails School Division to bus students outside of these areas to attend classes in the public school system.

Elementary schools in Pembina Trails School Division have run out of space to accommodate the growing population of students in the aforementioned areas.

Five-year projections for enrolment in the elementary schools in these areas indicate significant continued growth.

Existing high schools that receive students from Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods and Linden Ridge are at capacity and cannot accommodate the growing number of students that will continue to branch out of these subdivisions.

Bussing to outlying areas is not a viable long-term solution to meeting the student population growth in the southwest portion of Winnipeg.

The development of Waverley West will increase the need for a high school in the southwest sector of Winnipeg.

The government is demonstrating a lack of respect for the students and families in Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods, Linden Ridge and Richmond West by refusing to provide adequate access to education within the community.

The Fort Whyte constituency is the only constituency in the province that does not have a public high school.

NDP constituencies in Winnipeg continue to receive capital funding for various school projects while critical overcrowding exists in schools in Lindenwoods, Whyte Ridge and Richmond West.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to recognize the need for a public high school in the southwest region of Winnipeg.

To request the provincial government, in conjunction with the Public Schools Finance Board, to consider adequate funding to establish a high school in the southwest sector of Winnipeg.

Signed by Milleta Chambers, Lana MacDonald and Leah Muozdecki and many, many others.

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

Supported Living Program

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government's Supported Living Program provides a range of supports to assist adults with a mental disability to live in the community in their residential option of choice, including a family home. There is a lack of group homes available and this means special needs dependants must remain in the family home.

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

Families with special needs dependants make lifelong commitments to their care and well-being, of

the families they choose to care for these individuals in their homes as long as circumstances allow.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Tim Gadsby, Kelly Quigley, Kerrie Ducharme and many, many others.

*(13:35)

Generally Accepted Accounting Principles

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba's provincial auditor has stated that Manitoba's 2003-2004 budget deficit was the second highest on record at \$604 million.

The provincial government is misleading the public by saying they had a surplus of \$13 million in the 2003-2004 budget.

The provincial auditor has indicated that the \$13-million surplus the government says it had cannot be justified.

The provincial auditor has also indicated that the Province is using its own made up accounting rules in order to show a surplus instead of using generally accepted accounting principles.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider adopting generally accepted accounting principles in reporting Manitoba's budgetary numbers.

Signed by Maripin Europa, Alan Europa and Odessa Ho.

Fort Garry Hotel

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

In 1987, the City of Winnipeg seized the Fort Garry Hotel from its owner, Harvard Investments Limited, a family-owned Manitoba corporation, in what has been characterized as a miscarriage of justice.

Due to deliberate actions of the City of Winnipeg, errors by the Municipal Board of Manitoba and a lack of clarity in provincial legislation, Harvard was denied due process and natural justice that are fundamental to the property tax assessment and appeal process in Manitoba.

As a result, the company was unfairly burdened with a grossly excessive assessment and tax bill that in turn precipitated a tax sale and mortgage foreclosure, effectively bankrupted the company and caused Harvard's shareholders to be dispossessed of their business and property.

The background to this petition was outlined more fully in a grievance presented to this Assembly by the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) on May 18, 2005.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Mr. Smith) to consider conducting a review of the circumstances outlined

and to consider making a recommendation for redress to the Government of Manitoba.

Signed by John Perrin Jr., Colin Irvine, Billy Bigford and many others. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I have a Thirty-Second Report, Legal Aid Manitoba and a report from Victim Services, '03-04.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Lloyd Snelgrove who is an MLA for Vermilion-Lloydminster, Alberta, and also the chair of the Standing Policy Committee on Agriculture and Municipal Affairs.

Also in the public gallery from Horizon's Adult Learning Centre we have eight students under the direction of Mr. Rob Campbell. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickey).

Also in the public gallery we have from Isaac Brock School eighteen Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Larry Beaudoin. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

Also in the public gallery from Warren Collegiate fifty-six Grade 9 students under the direction of Mrs. Nancy Orlesky, Mr. Dan Gregovsky and Mrs. Lori Chamuallaird. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Crocus Fund Government's Inaction

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report on Crocus provided very clear proof that this Premier and his ministers were aware of problems

with Crocus but did nothing. Numerous red flags were raised with this NDP government in 2001, in 2002, and as the Auditor's report suggests, if this Premier followed up on those red flags when they were made available to him and conducted a review, this mess at Crocus would not have happened.

Will the Premier come clean with Crocus unitholders and all Manitoba taxpayers about why he did nothing when concerns were raised in 2001 and 2002? Why did he do nothing, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I would point out to the member opposite that on page 4 of the report it states clearly that we note that the monitoring activities of the Manitoba Industry, Economic Development and Mines and the Manitoba Securities Commission were not designed to prevent or detect issues regarding portfolio investment valuations. It goes on, Mr. Speaker, to talk about other sections of the act dealing with board members. It was a matter that members opposite raised for a number of months, the issue of fiduciary responsibility to the shareholders. It identifies the perceived conflict of that legislative role that was brought into this Legislature in the early 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, some of these issues that have been raised by the Auditor General's report, there are 18 recommendations to the government, which includes the Securities Commission, we take responsibility for. We will be making changes and included in those changes is obviously the issue of the board representative that must represent the shareholders, and we will bring that action forward.

* (13:40)

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, hardly good news for 33 000 Manitoba investors in Crocus.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier, his former and current ministers of Industry, his Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), they were aware that Crocus was in financial problems and was running low on cash and breaking their own governance law. They knew that and they did nothing. The Premier and his ministers ignored opposition concerns. They ignored the red flags that were brought into his department, and they ignored all of the internal warnings from civil servants.

When his Industry Minister received internal departmental analysis in 2001 that identified a cash

flow shortage at Crocus and they also found that Crocus was breaking the Crocus Fund investment act and they did nothing, my question to the Premier is why did he do nothing.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Westsun investment that was made in 1995 was cited by the Auditor General in his report. It was written off by our government when we came into office, regrettably, the co-investment that was made. The Auditor General identifies the change in the legislation in 2001 dealing with fair market value versus the former risk. The Auditor General recommends that this change that was made in 2001 be changed again back to its original form, and we will do that.

The Auditor General also deals with issues of compliance with the law for small business in terms of maintenance of small business, in terms of pacing for small business, in terms of liquidity requirements subject to the prospectus that was filed that is alleged to be in difficulty with the Québec Solidarity Fund. So there are many areas of compliance with the act.

The Westsun project, Mr. Speaker, as I say, was a project in 1995. We took action in 2000. There were public reports and other reports that that was properly written off, but the Securities Commission will deal with that investment and I look forward to their independent advice on it.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, there were internal warnings and numerous other red flags from department officials four years ago. This Premier, a long-time labour leader, ignored them and did nothing. In fact, this Premier was presented with the perfect opportunity to take action in November of 2002, as stated in the Auditor General's report, when he had a meeting. The Premier met with the former CEO and the former chair of Crocus in 2002.

Mr. Speaker, my question to this Premier is, when he met with the former CEO of Crocus in 2002 knowing that his department, his government, had been raised red flags in 2001 about Crocus, why did he not ask the CEO of Crocus at that time if there were problems. Is it because he did not want to know? Why did he not ask him?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we came into office and there was an Auditor General's report—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Well, I think the issue of buddies is an interesting one.

Mr. Speaker, we had an Auditor General's report in 1998 that said that the Crocus Fund had proper disclosure, and it was to be treated as a mutual fund for purposes of risk investment. We always respected that as the operational requirement for the new government coming in. We knew there were problems with MIOP loans, which we took a lot of effort to try to deal with MIOP loans in the Industry Department, and I want to congratulate the officials of the Industry Department for that success.

We also note in the report that the Auditor General's report makes it very clear that valuation and performance were not the functions of the Industry Department. Mr. Speaker, there were requests—

* (13:45)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: There were requests to take, there was a lot of controversy and we agreed to disagree in this Chamber on the True North project which obviously we felt was very important. Mr. Speaker, members opposite criticized that project, they criticized this government and they criticized Crocus Investment. Subsequent to that—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those issues of materials and financial information were made available to the Auditor General. He requested it. It was made available to him. He reported on it. That was the genesis of most of the questions that came from members opposite. I would point out, in February 2002, the member opposite stated, and I quote, "We have no difficulty whatsoever with the way in which Crocus values their portfolio."

Crocus Fund Government's Inaction

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): We, like most Manitobans, were reliant on this government for that information. Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General

makes it very clear that government was warned about problems at Crocus. Questions were raised by government's own staff and by external sources as early as 2001. The question remains why the government decided to turn a blind eye to the red flags that were raised by the civil servants and particularly by those in the Minister of Finance's own department.

I would ask the Minister of Finance to explain if it was simply incompetence on his part, or is it because the government is so dependent on his close ties to the labour movement and the personal relationships that it has with the highest levels of the labour movement that he did not want to question any of the activities of the Crocus Fund?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the member forgets that this report that we have in front of us from the Auditor General is only possible because we changed and modernized The Auditor General Act of Manitoba. Within that act—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, within that act, we provided a specific and unique provision in The Auditor General Act across the country to have the ability of the Auditor General to investigate labour-sponsored venture capital funds. They gave them the power to do that. We followed that up with letters to confirm that. That has created the possibility of the accountability that we see in front of us today, and we have said from the outset when the Auditor's report is tabled we will take all the recommendations and follow up on them. Today I have announced an implementation committee to do that.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, the minister's response is small solace to those 7000 new investors who invested for the first time between 2001 and 2004 based on misleading information that this minister could have and should have corrected. It is obvious from this Auditor's report that this NDP government simply cannot manage complex issues. Furthermore, the NDP cannot put aside its incestuous relationship with labour long enough to look out for the best interests of all Manitobans. What labour wants, labour gets.

Can the Minister of Finance offer any other plausible explanation for not pursuing the sugges-

tions from an official within his department that an independent review of the Crocus Fund was in order three years ago?

* (13:50)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General is an officer of the Legislature. He has been provided with the unique powers that allowed him to investigate this fund and to provide a report through you to the House which we are debating in the Legislature today.

We ensured that in Manitoba, unlike any other jurisdiction, that labour-sponsored venture capital funds would be the subject and come within the purview of The Auditor General Act. The Auditor General said on page 4, "the monitoring activities of Manitoba Industry, Economic Development and Mines and the Manitoba Securities Commission were not designed to prevent or detect issues regarding portfolio investment valuations." The Auditor has said that the Manitoba Securities Commission has since identified allegations with respect to practices, and that quasi-judicial, arm's-length body with all the powers of the Court of Queen's Bench will follow through.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, what has really happened here is the government has held the Auditor at bay for three years. As a result of the personal relationships that existed at the highest level of this NDP government and at the highest level of the fund, this government is totally culpable in this sordid fiasco. The relationships between the Premier, the Finance Minister, Kostyra, Hilliard, Olfert, Dziewit, Kreiner and others have resulted in the fund receiving the tacit support of this government to continue to spend excessively and to continue to make many of its business decisions outside of solid business practices. For this, this government must be held to account.

The question remains for the Minister of Finance. Why did you hold the Auditor off? Why did you subvert the officials from your own department who asked you to look into the fund for three years? Why did you hold all these people at bay? Was it simply because you are so close to labour that you could not stand to ask the difficult questions?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raised a lot of questions about True

North. All of those matters were obtained by the, and the members opposite were opposed to True North—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable First Minister.

Mr. Doer: —and we had a considerable debate in this Chamber on that project. The Minister of Finance provided the Auditor General with more authority to go after labour-sponsored funds in terms of accountability and to go after projects that received government public money into a private sector firm for accountability purposes. We were very concerned about the MIOP loans in places like Isobord, Winnport. We also believe that the labour-sponsored funds should also have more authority under the Auditor General. It was this Minister of Finance that took that action.

Crocus Fund Government's Inaction

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor has stated that there were sufficient red flags presented to this NDP government to justify a detailed review of Crocus in the latter part of 2002. One of the red flags was a repeated request, a repeated request from Crocus for legislative amendments that continued from 2001 through 2004.

I ask the Minister of Finance can he explain to Manitobans where he was when these red flags were raised, what prevented him from acting on them—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I just want to ask the co-operation of all honourable members. We have students in the gallery, we have the viewing public and I need to be able to hear the question in case there is a breach of a rule. I am asking the co-operation of all honourable members.

The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet has the floor.

Mr. Hawranik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Can he explain to Manitobans where he was when these red flags were raised, what prevented him from acting on them and why he repeatedly ignored the red flags presented to him?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, a similar question was asked yesterday. It is important to put on the record that, when the fund was started under the former government, they had no monitoring procedures. In 1997 they put the beginnings of a monitoring capacity along with the promotional capacity into the same department. In 2001 this government brought in legislation which increased the reporting requirements with respect to labour-sponsored venture capital, that increased the reporting requirements with respect to the ability of these funds to meet their public policy objectives while, of course, leaving all the valuation and prospectus questions in the hands of the quasi-judicial Manitoba Securities Commission.

Where were we? We were ensuring the Securities Commission can do its job. We brought in approved regulations, but we accept—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (13:55)

Mr. Speaker: Order. I just reminded all honourable members just about a minute ago that I need to be able to hear the questions and I need to be able to hear the answers.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have accepted the recommendation of the Auditor's report that the situation created in 1997 of having both monitoring and promotion in the same department creates role confusion. That is why we are going to separate those functions. Monitoring will go into the Department of Finance, promotion will remain with Industry and we have the task force to implement those recommendations.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, more than 33 000 Crocus Fund investors lost more than \$60 million due to the mismanagement of this NDP government and the inaction of the Premier (Mr. Doer), the Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister of Industry (Mr. Rondeau). In January 2002 an official from the Department of Finance suggested that Crocus's continuing requests for legislation may be a sign of management issues and he recommended an intimate, independent review of Crocus's operation, and the Finance Minister, the Premier and the Minister of Industry chose to ignore it.

I ask the Minister of Finance why did he choose to ignore the concerns of an official from your very own department.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, nothing was ignored with our unique legislation from the Auditor General's department which gave him the powers to investigate exactly these kinds of situations. That follow up has occurred, and we see that report here in front of us.

As a matter of fact, what the problem was was the monitoring and the promotional confusion was created by the members opposite in 1997 when they located both of those functions within the same department. We have acknowledged that recommendation by the Auditor General. We have put in place an implementation team, chaired by an independent former partner of an accounting firm in Winnipeg, by a senior official who was the same person that cleaned up the lotteries mess that we inherited when we came to government, and two deputy ministers. We will follow through on every one of these recommendations and make sure that the situation created by the members opposite will not occur again.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the officials within the Department of Finance and the Department of Industry raised red flags to the minister as early as 2001 and this continued on until 2004. Yet the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Industry and the Premier all chose to ignore those flags. They just sat on their hands, and now more than 33 000 unitholders have lost more than \$60 million of their retirement funds. The government officials raised the flags, the government ignored the flags.

I ask the Minister of Finance once again why did he ignore those red flags that were presented to him. Why did he not investigate? Why did he not take action?

Mr. Selinger: If the member would read the report carefully, on page 11, we concur that IEDM, the Department of Industry, is not responsible for the CIF's, the Crocus Investment Fund's performance. On page 4, it says, "the monitoring activities of Manitoba Industry, Economic Development and Mines and the Securities Commission were not designed to prevent or detect issues regarding portfolio investment valuations."

The member opposite knows those comments are made in the report. He chooses to ignore them.

He knows that when an allegation is made about valuations, the quasi-judicial, arm's-length body in all provinces called the Manitoba Securities Commission is responsible for investigating that with all the powers of the Court of Queen's Bench. That is what is occurring. That is what will be done.

Crocus Fund Minister's Awareness of Devaluation

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): What a sorry story, Mr. Speaker.

In January of 2005 the Ministry of Industry said that the first he had heard about the Crocus fiasco was when trading was suspended on December 10. As a matter of fact, this was also recorded on CBC television.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister whether he still holds to his story that he knew nothing about this until December 10 when the AG's report, the Attorney General's report, indicates that officials from his department and from the Department of Finance had reported this to members of the government. Is he still saying that he did not know anything about this till December 10?

* (14:00)

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is raising an important question and I would like to clarify the fact that the government was not aware nor I was not aware before December 10 of any problems of valuations at the Crocus Investment Fund. That has been consistent. That is what I said before and that is what I remain. Before the public announcement on December 10 we did not know of issues of valuations.

Mr. Derkach: Well, I think we will allow Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, to read between the lines about what the minister knew and did not know. The Auditor General's report indicates that officials reported directly to the government. There is a recorded meeting with the Premier. It is on page 139 of the report between the CEO, the chair of the board and the Premier. Obviously, if the Premier knew, then obviously his minister knew, who was then, as I understand, the Minister of Industry, Trade was the member from Brandon West.

Now, can the Minister of Industry, Trade tell me now whether he received any information from his

colleague, the member from Brandon West, about the problems that were being encountered by Crocus when he took over the portfolio?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): There were I believe two meetings that are in the report. They were dealing with issues such as the retention of pension money as a proposed piece of legislation. It was dealing with the whole issue of assets, the \$15-million issue that went back to 1995 in the Auditor General's report, whether the asset cap was appropriate under gross or net. That is well documented in the Auditor General's report, and it is well documented by the Industry Department in that report.

Suffice it to say following that meeting you will note that the only legislation that has been brought into this Chamber dealing with the issue of pension legislation is the pension legislation that deals with a return on investment that was just passed unanimously in this House in the spring of 2005 and introduced in the fall of 2004. So, when we had meetings, we acted in the public interest.

Mr. Derkach: Acting in the public interest would have meant that the Premier would have directed his ministers to investigate what was going on at Crocus so that no more Manitobans would lose their hard-earned money. This is on the head of this Premier whether he likes it or not. Mr. Speaker, \$60 million has been lost by ordinary Manitobans in this scandal.

Mr. Speaker, the minister who was responsible then was the member from Brandon West. I ask the Minister of Industry, Trade today whether or not he had any warning from the member from Brandon West when he took over the portfolio that there were problems at Crocus. Will he come clean with members of this Legislature today?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we have an example. I already talked about the two meetings I had. I want to say that the meetings we had with anyone did not determine the direction and decisions of the government. Nobody shook us down in terms of making decisions that were not in the public interest. Members opposite talk about friends. I think it is curious that they would use that language today.

I want to say to members of this Chamber that we very much believe that the report speaks for itself. There are only 18 recommendations to

government. Some of them deal with our legislation in 2001. We accept the criticism of the Auditor General in that regard. We accept responsibility, Mr. Speaker, but when Clayton Manness set up this fund he said that it would be managed not in government, it would be managed for purposes of performance by community members, including and especially the Federation of Labour which they signed the memorandum of agreement with.

Crocus Fund Government's Monitoring Process

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, the fund was to be managed independently, but it was to be monitored by this government, clearly a role that they have let down the unitholders and the taxpayers by failing to provide proper oversight for this fund.

The minister talked about the True North project. Well, if he is so proud of it, why did he sign a deal to make it secret for 25 years, and can he assure unitholders today that, in fact, there has been no write down in their assets as a result of anything to do with True North? I will leave that up to him.

The real question is the Finance Minister says today that he is going to move the monitoring process to the Department of Finance, and that is going to take care of everything. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would remind him that it was an individual, an official in the Department of Finance, who said to him hey, we have got to take a look at this. We have got to have an independent review of this fund, because in 2002 his officials said there were problems. What good is it going to do to have the monitoring in the Department of Finance if the minister continues to turn a blind eye every time problems are raised to his attention?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): The member asks what would be the difference. The difference would be we would eliminate the role confusion that the members opposite created in 1997. That is exactly what the Auditor says. The Auditor says that the people in the Department of Industry were wearing too many hats, and that was the situation created in '97.

One of those hats, the monitoring hat, will be moved to officials in the Department of Finance. The promotional hat will remain with the Ministry of Industry and Economic Development. That is the

difference. You guys messed it up; we will clean it up.

Mr. Loewen: The minister's comment betrays his arrogance in this whole file, and the fact that the Premier (Mr. Doer) stood up yesterday after they had the report for three weeks and said he had not even read it is something that this government must be accountable for. The minister wants to blame this side of the House. Well, I refer him to the Auditor General's statements, and I quote, "We believe the department was aware of red flags at Crocus and failed to follow up on those in a timely way. In my view they should have taken a closer look when they saw those red flags."

That is from the Auditor. It is not about what was not done five years ago. It is about what was not done under your watch to protect taxpayers and to protect unitholders. This government has to take responsibility for that.

Again I ask the minister to give us a plausible explanation for the fact that you ignored your official, besides the fact that you and your government are so totally tied to the labour leaders and the leader of the labour leaders involved in the running of this fund that you chose to subvert the process and completely ignore those warnings.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I have answered the question about the weakness in the design of putting monitoring and promotional activities in the same department, and I have also provided the mechanism we have used to make sure this report that has come before us today, to act on it, and how we will have an implementation committee to follow up on all the recommendations. Now the member stands up and says we should have acted. I ask him the question, in the media today—

Some Honourable Members: Oh. Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the media today the Leader of the Official Opposition says he was shaken down by two individuals, one of which worked for the Crocus Fund, one of which worked for Wellington West, and that was never reported for the last three years. I ask the members opposite if they believe they were the victims of a shakedown why did they not bring that forward and report it in a timely fashion.

Crocus Fund Former Minister's Removal

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is well documented in the Auditor General's report that this Premier alluded to in 2001 that there were problems with the Crocus Fund. In 2002 a red flag came in to the Premier suggesting again that there were problems with the Crocus Fund. I would like to ask this Premier is the reason that he removed the member from Brandon West as the minister because he knew that there was a scandal brewing and he wanted to replace him with another minister. Is that why he removed the member from Brandon West from the file?

* (14:10)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe the member is mentioned anywhere in the report. I remember, you know, three weeks ago the member opposite was saying, "Oh, your board member was reporting to the government, a political appointee." They went on and on and on. The member from Fort Whyte was saying, "Oh, it is just spin that they do not report." Now, today, this individual who has been smeared by the Leader of the Opposition has not got an apology from him.

Minister's Removal

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I think I can speak for everybody on this side of the House who should demand that this Premier apologize to 33 000 Manitobans that he fleeced.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am starting to hear some very, very close to unparliamentary language. When making references of "fleecing" directed at an individual member, we are getting a little careless with the words. I want to caution all honourable members in choosing their words carefully.

Mr. Murray: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three years ago when we raised issues about Crocus, this Premier said they were unfounded. He said they were unfounded, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) said they were unfounded, the former minister, the member now from Brandon West said they were unfounded.

We know from the Auditor's report that red flags were raised with this Premier in 2001 and 2002. Yet, this government turned their back on 33 000 Manitoba Crocus unitholders, and in fact all Manitoba taxpayers, by doing nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask this Premier if he will do something. On behalf of all Manitoba taxpayers and the 33 000 unit holders of Crocus, will he do something and remove that minister today?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I believe on February 15, 2002, the member opposite as Leader of the Opposition said, and I quote, "Yes, we trust the way the valuations are done at Crocus Fund." There was lots of other evidence in the public arena in various financial publications that the fund was performing at a level consistent with, if not better than, other labour-sponsored funds. In fact, there were public documentations about the issue of Westsun. We obviously will have to go back on the Manitoba Securities Commission and check and see where Isobord and how it was traded, where Winnport— *[interjection]*

Well, Mr. Speaker when things lose money, it does affect performance. I would point out when Clayton Manness established the Crocus Fund he said that the performance and the decisions on investments would be made outside of government. It would be made under the labour-sponsored fund board of governance system that was set up by previous members. They also hired staff back in the early nineties. We actually trusted the staff that they hired. All members, I am sure, feel they were let down with some of the decisions that were made.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that 33 000 Manitobans were let down by this Premier and his government. The issue is very, very clear. In 2001 a red flag was raised with this Premier. In 2002 a red flag was raised with this Premier. We, three years ago, on this side of the House brought issues forward about Crocus. This Premier gave his assurance that they, our allegations, were unfounded. The Minister of Finance gave his word that those allegations were unfounded. The former minister from Brandon West gave his assurances that our allegations were unfounded.

We now have a current minister who says he knew nothing about this until December 10. Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that 33 000 Manitobans are

being fleeced by this Premier and it is very, very clear—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I just gave a caution to the House about referring to individual members, a member "fleecing" people or "robbing" people, whatever. I will not accept that here, and I am going to ask the honourable member to withdraw that.

Mr. Murray: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker. I was referring to the fact that under this NDP government, the fact that they did not take any action. They turned a blind eye on behalf of 33 000 Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable member for that withdrawal.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of life is that when in 2001 these allegations came forward to the Premier, he did nothing. In 2002 when the allegations came forward, they did nothing. Now we have a minister who says he knows nothing and knew nothing until December 10.

On behalf of 33 000 Manitobans and all Manitoba taxpayers who are suffering because this government is doing nothing, I would ask this Premier to do the right thing and do something, and that is to remove that minister, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I recall in opposition when I had issues of a possible arson, I was threatened with lawsuits. I had many people going after me. I had the media criticizing me. You have to have the courage of your convictions.

The member opposite said in February of 2002, "valuations in the Crocus Fund, in our view, are appropriate. The valuation process is appropriate." Now he is saying with the advantage of hindsight, 20/20 hindsight, he would have maybe done something differently.

Mr. Speaker, we have accepted responsibility for the legislative gaps and the monitoring gaps. I have also said that when we came into office, quite frankly and honestly we trusted the management that was put in place by the former government. The Auditor's report very clearly states that the management staff, the senior management staff, were there from the inception. We trusted them. I would believe

that members opposite who were responsible for hiring them would feel as let down today as all of us should feel in this House today.

Crocus Fund Premier's Involvement

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Premier's fingerprints are all over the Auditor General's report on Crocus. The former CEO, Sherman Kreiner, was on the Premier's Economic Advisory Council. Indeed, he chaired the Premier's investment committee.

We learn of meetings between the former CEO and the Premier and between the former board chair and the Premier. We hear that the Premier and Mr. Kreiner were working together on a vision for a super fund and the activities of Mr. Kreiner in relation to the super fund diverted his attention from properly managing Crocus investments. Why has the Premier been dancing in this way with Mr. Kreiner, and why was the Premier who was so close to Mr. Kreiner unable to spot the problems at Crocus when they were a small fire and stop them becoming a wildfire? As well, is Mr. Kreiner still on the Premier's Economic Advisory Council?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The answer is no. He also was a former member of the Business Council of Manitoba. He was a former member of the investment committee and chaired the investment committee of the former Premier Gary Filmon. He certainly was a member of our voluntary board. We made no secret of that. I believe Prime Minister Martin appointed the same individual to the Prime Minister's task force on cities.

The member opposite had direct dealings with one deal. He announced on behalf of the federal Liberal government the investment of the federal government with Mr. Kreiner, with former Premier Filmon at Isobord, one of the largest losses both for Crocus and for the provincial government.

So he may want to act holier than thou today, but he was involved. I think the press release said, "We are going to turn straw into gold like Rumpelstiltskin's," Mr. Speaker, but when we came into office there was not much gold left.

* (14:20)

Mr. Gerrard: The fact is that the public inquiry would, I think, reveal what the Premier already knows, that there were major problems which started under the Tories and continued under the Premier. The Premier may claim he had no knowledge of what happened at Crocus, but his paw prints are all over it.

The AG's report, on page 146, says, "in mid-2001, the Crocus Investment Fund outlined in a presentation to Industry Department officials its vision for the next 10 to 15 years. Industry Department officials immediately raised objections, but these objections were promptly discounted by the Crocus Investment Fund representative who indicated that the plans had already been cleared by those in higher authority."

Will the Premier come clean with Manitobans and today admit that he was the one in higher authority and that he had a direct finger on what was happening on Crocus? Why was not—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the proof is in the pudding. We did not bring in legislation both on the two areas of meetings that the member opposite talked about. So those meetings took place three years ago. There were no legislative actions. In fact, if the member opposite reads the pension legislation that is within this Chamber, it talks about the whole issue of prudence, the prudence that must be conducted in the same way as a smart person, or intelligent person, in terms of the pension legislation. This was passed unanimously in this House. That reflects the priorities of this government on rate of return.

Mr. Speaker, there is no cold project. There is no co-investment with Crocus that this government made that lost more money than the investment made by the member across the way in Isobord before we were elected, none.

Crocus Fund Government's Inaction

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the issue here is why was there no investigation in 2002. I believe that there was no investigation in 2002 because the Premier's union buddies were more important to him, more important than Manitobans.

They put up their signs, they poll the vote and so much more. We recognize the value the NDP have in terms of appreciation of the union movement, but they put it ahead of the average Manitobans, in particular, the Crocus investors.

My question to the Premier is was the Premier reluctant to launch an investigation when it should have been launched back in 2002 because of his pocket buddies in the union movement.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): The member opposite voted against the legislation to ban corporate and union donations in this province. We have seen that the member opposite is very inconsistent on this point. He votes against legislation to ban corporate and union donations and then he accuses the government of having friends that they are helping out. You do not help out friends by having special powers in The Auditor General Act. You do not help out friends by banning corporate and union donations. What you are really doing is being accountable to the citizens of Manitoba for how public money is being spent. We have done that. They did not.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Heart of the Community Volunteer Awards

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today to offer congratulations to all of the nominees for the Heart of the Community Volunteer Awards.

The 4th Annual Heart of the Community Volunteer Awards ceremony that I sponsor was held in the rotunda at the Legislative Building on February 24, 2005, to honour several Charleswood residents who have worked selflessly to make our community an even better place to live. These volunteers were nominated by their friends, colleagues, neighbours or organizations that have benefited from their volunteer efforts.

The following people were those honoured that evening. Nominees for Youth: Chelsea Ross and Jaclyn Richard for their extensive work chairing the community service committee at Oak Park High School. Chelsea received a second nomination for

her other volunteer work with seniors, tutoring Grade 5 students in peer counselling and attending Manitoba ALIVE which is a leadership initiative in volunteer efforts.

Nominees for Community Group: Beaumont Elementary Grade 4 classes for their volunteer work with the seniors in Charleswood care centre classes. The board of the Charleswood Seniors Inc. was nominated for the amazing job that they have done in the past five years organizing an active seniors centre. The centre has been a shining example of mobilizing volunteers in their community as well as building partnerships and good will in our community.

Nominees for Individual Senior: Roy Botham was nominated for his extensive volunteering with the Charleswood Seniors Inc. and Seniors' Slow Pitch, as well as his past involvement with schools and Boy Scouts.

Lifetime Achievement Award: Bill Knight has had extensive volunteer experience with many non-profit and community organizations ranging from health care, children's charities, performing arts, United Way and local service clubs. He was recently presented with an Outstanding Philanthropist Award from the Manitoba Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Nominees for Individual Adult: Dan Lucovic for his considerable volunteer experience with youth soccer; Laurette Noakes with the Westgrove Parent-Time Healthy Baby Program [*phonetic*]; Missy Dunn and Jack Urbanski with the Charleswood Minor Baseball Association; Dave and Nancy Morris for their involvement over the years with the Charleswood Rotary, their open door to rotary exchange students, Winnipeg South Blues Hockey Club, Nancy's work with Teen Diabetes [*phonetic*] and Manitoba Child Care; Bob and Deanna Croatto for opening their home to the—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mrs. Driedger: May I have leave?

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bob and Deanna Croatto have opened their home to the

homeless, helped strangers who have lost everything due to fire and flood and donated their time as volunteers to their church.

Approximately 120 people attended the reception here at the Legislative Building to celebrate the contributions of Charleswood volunteers. We are all grateful for their gifts of time, talent and commitment to others. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Safer Communities Awards

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, on May 26, the recipients of this year's Attorney General's Safer Communities and Excellence in Law Enforcement Awards were honoured. I am pleased to inform the House that two award winners, Erika Wiebe and Edith Regier, are both constituents of Wolseley.

Edith Regier is the director and resident artist for the Crossing Communities Art Project. Edith received the National Crime Prevention Strategy Award for her many accomplishments helping women in conflict with the law find self-expression through various art mediums. Participants in the Crossing Communities Art Project have a reoffending rate significantly lower than is normally the case, and I was very pleased to congratulate Edith and some of the participants from Crossing Communities at the awards ceremony.

Erika Wiebe received an Honourable Mention Award for her many years of volunteer service to Mediation Services. She regularly mediates conflicts involving victims and offenders, families and community members, and as someone who has taken the training at Mediation Services myself, I fully appreciate the time, effort and skill that goes into those types of projects. Erika has also influenced many crime prevention strategies and discussions through her ongoing leadership role as co-ordinator for the West Central Network in Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring Manitoba's communities remain safe both through crime prevention strategies and our support for the justice system. These include after-hours recreation activities for at-risk youth through 32 Lighthouses and more on the way, passage of The Safer Communities Act which has been used by local citizens to shut down nearly 100 properties

that were being used for illegal activity, and just recently, our 2005 budget made a historical \$9.5-million investment of new dollars for policing. Just this morning we had another historic announcement with Métis and Aboriginal representatives on alternative justice and a historic transfer of justice rights to those communities.

Mr. Speaker, to conclude I want to, on behalf of our government, congratulate both Edith Regier and Erika Wiebe and all the other recipients of the Attorney General's Safer Communities and Law Enforcement Awards. Thank you.

Lake Winnipeg Preservation

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, Lake Winnipeg is the third-largest lake in Canada and the tenth-largest freshwater body in the world. Its watershed stretches one million square miles from the Rocky Mountains east to Lake Superior and south to South Dakota.

* (14:30)

The importance of Lake Winnipeg and its watershed to the province of Manitoba cannot be understated. It supports a \$20-million fishing industry, and its beaches have many attractions that are critical to Manitoba's tourism industry and other related industries in our province's economy as a whole. Moreover, this watershed is a vital life source as it provides drinking water for thousands, supports many Aboriginal communities and is home to over five million residents.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the reality is Lake Winnipeg and its watershed are facing mounting pressure on many fronts from pollution and countless other environmental threats. Indeed, members on both sides of the House, as well as cottagers, beach goers and all Manitobans, have been made painfully aware of high phosphorous and nitrogen levels, a surplus of nutrients, algae bloom poisons, chemicals, E. coli and many other poisons which are devastating to the waterways of Lake Winnipeg and its watershed.

Clearly we must do more to protect Lake Winnipeg and its watershed. The announcement on May 27, 2005, by federal Environment Minister Stéphane Dion and the Honourable Reg Alcock, that the federal government will pledge over one million

a year indefinitely to monitor water quality in Lake Winnipeg is a welcome step in the right direction and signals that the preservation of Lake Winnipeg and its watershed is a national priority. This announcement represents a 1000% increase in annual federal funding devoted to protecting and preserving Lake Winnipeg and its waterways. Thanks to this funding increase there will be increased monitoring of Lake Winnipeg's water quality to help deal with the many threats that it faces.

Moreover, this announcement is a launching point for all levels of government and Manitobans to work together to develop a long-term strategy to protect Lake Winnipeg so as to ensure that future generations are able to enjoy the many benefits that Lake Winnipeg and its watershed have to offer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

General Byng School Bicycle Rodeo

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): It gives me great pleasure to highlight an event that I had the pleasure of helping to organize on Saturday, May 14. The event was a bicycle rodeo for children and was held at General Byng School. General Byng is a kindergarten to Senior 1 school located in my constituency of Fort Garry.

Mr. Speaker, bicycle and road safety is something that we need to teach our children while they are young. Teaching our children bicycle safety is especially important now with the coming of the warm weather this spring and summer, making an event like this even more important.

The event featured a free hot dog lunch, bicycle safety check and obstacle course for children. Additionally, children learnt about proper bicycle and road safety rules. Prizes and gifts were also provided for participants. Each child received a ribbon of participation and a certificate of completion. I am happy to say that approximately 75 participants attended this event. This included both children and parents of all ages. I am also happy to say that Sparky the Fire Dog, mascot for the Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Services Department, was on hand to keep our children entertained.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the South Winnipeg Optimists Club for facilitating this event and for providing the free hot dog lunch for participants. I also want to thank the staff of Alter

Ego Sports, a local sports store in Fort Garry, for conducting the free bicycle safety checks. Lastly, I want to thank all volunteers who helped make this event educational and fun for our children.

The bicycle rodeo was a success and a good event to teach our children about bicycle safety. I wish all children a safe and fun spring and summer. Thank you.

Constituents' Accomplishments

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Today I would like to pay tribute to two of my constituents, Ms. Loreena McKennitt and Mr. Eric Fehr.

Mr. Fehr, who hails from the city of Winkler, was given the honour of being named as the Western Hockey League's Player of the Year at the annual WHL Awards banquet on May 4, 2005. Mr. Fehr also won the scoring championship by finishing with 59 goals and 52 assists for 111 points. These two awards only serve to accentuate his budding hockey career. The 19-year-old Fehr was a first-round pick, eighteenth over all, by Washington, from the 2003 NHL draft. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations and best wishes to Mr. Fehr.

It is also my pleasure to congratulate a former pupil of mine, Ms. Loreena McKennitt, Canadian singer, composer and recording artist, who will be receiving an honorary degree at the 2005 Spring Convocation at the University of Manitoba, on June 1, at 10 a.m.

Doctor McKennitt was instrumental in leading the resurgence of the traditional and modern Celtic music in North America. I often think back to when the band program was first introduced in Morden. I was the band teacher at that time and I can clearly remember one particular student in red pigtails diligently learning to play the flute. She has since broadened her range of musical instruments to include the harp and piano. All this is in addition to being a gifted vocalist and world-renowned composer. Doctor McKennitt has won two Juno awards and has been nominated for eight others. Her audience has even included the Queen of England on the grounds of the Legislative Building in 2002.

The constituency of Pembina and the entire province of Manitoba is incredibly proud, not only

of the awards Doctor McKennitt has won or the number of albums that she has sold, but also of the charity work she is involved in. Doctor McKennitt is an excellent role model, an ambassador of our community in Manitoba, throughout Canada, internationally. Her philanthropic social and cultural work is of noteworthy importance. She was appointed to the Order of Manitoba in July 2003 and the Order of Canada in May 2004.

I offer my heartfelt congratulations for all that she has accomplished. Her career is an example of caring, creativity, tenacity and immense musical talent. I wish Doctor McKennitt continued success. Thank you.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, on a grievance?

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to be able to bring forward on behalf of the citizens of Manitoba some discussion around the number of the issues that this government has failed to deal with in Manitoba. Of course, the priority amongst all Manitobans, as we have heard in the last few days, is the shortfalls of this government's ability to manage its affairs around. I am going to mention a whole host of areas but particularly around the issues that are faced by the Crocus Fund.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Of course, anyone that has been following this whole issue found it most preposterous last night after the Crocus Fund report has come out by the Auditor General's report on this issue that the present Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines would still be in a situation where he would acknowledge and admit that last December that he did not know anything about the affairs of the Crocus Fund until December 10 when the trading stopped on the shares of the Crocus Fund.

That is preposterous considering that he made that statement on January 10. He had had a month to determine whether or not he would have been able—and he made that statement publicly on television in an interview, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I find it preposterous that a month after the trading had stopped the minister in charge would still be saying that he did

not know anything about it until the day that the shares were frozen.

Now, never mind the fact that in the early 2000, 2001, 2002 period, those shares were worth over \$15 a share to the shareholders in the Crocus Fund. Under this minister's watch and his predecessor, the member from Brandon West, who is now the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Smith) in this province, between the two of them there does not seem to have been any kind of discussion in the change-over of the portfolio that would have allowed the new minister, never mind the previous minister from Brandon West, to have taken care of the 33 678 shareholders in Manitoba, Crocus Fund investors, who have been impacted by the loss of around 50 percent, 48 percent, I believe the Auditor's report indicated, in the Crocus Fund. I find that preposterous because for a minister whose job it was to be in charge of this particular portfolio, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker, pardon me—is astounding, to say the least, and an abdication of the minister's responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, for these ministers to have not been able to report a 2 or a 3 or even a 5% change in the value of the portfolio would have been perhaps somewhat more acceptable, but to have a fund that has been written down by some \$60 million, virtually half of the value of the fund, is preposterous and very, very hard for any of those 33 678 investors in Manitoba to comprehend.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, if it had not been for the fine work of the members in this House, the leader of our party and the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), who raised this issue some time ago, this may never have come to light, because, of course, the ministers did not bring it forward on their own. Neither did the Premier (Mr. Doer). Certainly, the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) and other members of the government were not able to bring this forward as well or, certainly, did not until our members of the House brought it forward and made these concerns more publicly aware than the government did.

They were chastised at the time some years ago for concerns around this area, but I think it is important that we have seen a complete change in the board of directors on the Crocus Fund. The

government in their wisdom, after the fact, has changed some members. It is a labour-sponsored fund, and so there were many of the Premier's former union boss friends on that board.

This is not to put down the average, if you will, shareholder or investor in this fund. Many were members that belonged to unions and many were not, of course, but even for those who did, it is not to say that they were not hardworking Manitobans and deserved their income. It is to say that the concerns around this kind of a fund, it is a venture fund, there is a risk, and perhaps even more of a risk in this kind of fund than a regular investment, certainly in a bond or a regular company.

The concern that I think should be raised here, has been raised and now has been made public, the red flags that the Auditor General raised, Mr. Speaker, are around the fact that the government of the day, the Premier and some of his Cabinet members who should have been in charge of this did not take action on behalf of those 33 678 shareholders in Manitoba to protect their investment. The labour-sponsored fund is brought about by a bill of this Legislature, and therefore, with a minister in charge of it and a government-appointed representative on that board, they should have had reports on a regular basis on this fund in there being, certainly to the minister if not to the Treasury Board itself, particularly to Cabinet, but those areas were devoid. It appears, at least, that they were devoid in responsible reporting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we move forward, we will continue to, as was done today, try to make the government aware of the importance of this issue and the fact that they should be reporting more of the information that has even come out now. They could still come forward with more voluntary information if they wished to and try to clarify this fund for the hundreds that have formally gathered together of shareholders to perhaps launch a legal action against the fund and the government minister.

I think the important issue here is that this Auditor General's report, as it pointed out in the very early parts of its report, showed that there were red flags that the government should have been aware of. As the members of the private sector left the board from issues that arose around reporting of last September and October, there was concern there, and that these private individuals who have had some

business experience left the board, I think, certainly was a flag that, as pointed out by the Auditor General, should have been, the minister should have been more aware of.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues that I wanted to speak about in this grievance because of the mismanagement and misleadingness of this government. I want to say that I thought that the title in one of the papers today, the headline about it is very derogatory, I would say. But, you know, under this kind of a circumstance, it might be quite factual. *The Winnipeg Sun* had a headline whose subtitle was "Clueless NDP." I guess the point that I would like to make is just who did not see the clues that were on the horizon in regard to this issue. The Auditor General may have referred to them as red flags. The paper referred to them as clues.

The fact that the NDP ministers did not see this, and I put more than one minister in charge of this, Mr. Speaker, because, of course, the present minister only took over last October and nobody seemed to forward anything on to him. Of course, the previous minister, the member from Brandon West, the now Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and trade as well, certainly does not appear to want to bring forward any kind of information for the public around this area that he was responsible for throughout much of the time, recent times, that the damages in this particular fund were occurring. *[interjection]* Well, yes, it has been pointed out that there was misappropriation of funds, in regard to a number of expensive items, that developers of this fund seemed to have spent. It has been reported publicly, but it has been pointed out and certainly hope that the ministers were not involved in any of these trips or any of these activities. That is what I say. They could come forward and put the true positions on the record.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that, you know, the Premier (Mr. Doer) seemed very agitated in Question Period today in regard to the answers that he and a number of his caucus members were asked on this issue, in fact to the point where he would not let a few of them get up and answer the questions directly. He had to jump up and intervene as he has had to do any time there was a scandal or an issue in this House caused by the inaction of the NDP and the mismanagement of their affairs. Of course, this is

parallel, this misspending by some of these areas also came out around the Hydra House issue and that the issues of misspending were pointed out there as well. Just another prime example of mismanagement by this government.

I think that those citizens of Manitoba deserve a more secure place for investing and a more secure divulgence of issues around their government ministers, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to, not with great anticipation, because I do not suppose there will be any more voluntary answers coming forward. The government does not want to call, or has not, at least at this point, called, a public inquiry on this issue. I believe that, as our members have called for, that would more clearly delve into the issue further and provide more information to Manitobans as we were to move forward on this.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other issues. I just want to refer to a few of them before my time is up in regard to this grievance, and that is around the floodway. This Crocus mismanagement is not the only issue in Manitoba today that will be damaging to Manitobans in the long run. The forced unionization of the floodway is certainly another expensive promise to the union bosses that this Premier (Mr. Doer) has made, like the Crocus Fund that devalued the investments from 33 678 Manitobans directly.

There was also a loss from other Manitobans by the fact that there was a 30% tax credit on those investments. Those Manitobans benefited from those, 15 percent from the federal government and 15 percent from the province, but it was at the expense of Manitoba taxpayers and others, where the money has to come from, from the provincial government to provide that 30% tax credit in the first place.

So the issue of the forced unionization of the floodway is parallel to the same area because, of course, when you add close to \$3 an hour on every hour that is worked in the floodway over this period of time, then it is going to add an estimation which could be upwards of between \$30 million and \$60 million. We do not know the final price tag on it, Mr. Speaker, but it will add, suffice to say, well over \$30 million and perhaps as much as \$60 million in unexpected costs, added costs. The only way that a worker can get a hold of those funds is if he joins the union before the project is over.

Mr. Speaker, this minister, this government as well has provided shortfalls in areas of agriculture. With other provinces already building slaughter facilities and the BSE issue, the CAIS premiums have now been moved back, but it was only through forcing the issue in the House and other lobbies from farm organizations that got this minister to move on that at all. The government still has not removed the CAIS premium issue from the table. They have just deferred it.

* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker, the issue of failed slaughter plants and no slaughter plants in Manitoba, the government continues to say that they are putting dollars forward, but we have no spades. There is not a spade in the ground. They still have not even gotten the environmental process finished on this new plant that they project for Dauphin, never mind the ones that are proposed in other areas of Manitoba in discussions with the government today.

I think that is an extreme detriment to the future of this province because in a few years Alberta will completely be self-sufficient, not only through their taxation processes but in the livestock industry as well. They will be completely self-sufficient in slaughter facilities with the expansions that are presently taking place in their province, and we will be left second fiddle, so to speak, to use a colloquial term, I think, in regard to one we can all understand, in relation to the fact that Manitoba, if they have any slaughtering facilities, will have a very limited amount of slaughter facilities if this government does not begin the process of getting this plant built very, very quickly.

Certainly, I doubt that at this point there will be any culled cows killed in Manitoba with this slaughter plant this fall, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, if you would call concurrence at four o'clock and go into Supply? Would you

please call the following bills: 9, 11, 24, 37, 38, 39 and 25?

Mr. Speaker: We will resume debate on second reading of Bill 9, 11, 24, 37, 38, 39 and 25, and at 4 p.m. we will move into Committee of Supply.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 9—The Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Act

Mr. Speaker: Right now we will resume debate on second reading of Bill 9, The Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Fort Garry—I mean, Fort Whyte.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, it is hard for me to understand how you could have that slip of the tongue, but I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 9, The Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Act. I do think it is time that the act was updated to be more reflective of governance and issues that the Centennial Centre Corporation is facing today, and I do think that it is important that it be updated to include all of the space that is being used by the Centennial Centre as well as the Artspace and other areas that are involved in this project.

I would say, basically, in general principle, I am pleased that the government is acting on this legislation, but I have some very deep concerns that, I think, upon reading this bill indicate to me that the government is certainly going in what is traditionally an NDP direction, and one in which I would recommend strongly that members on the opposite side of the House certainly reflect on and rethink because I do not believe that they are doing any service to the Centennial Corporation or to anybody associated with the Centennial Corporation with some of the changes that they have incorporated into this updated act.

In particular, I want to put on the record my disagreement with the clauses surrounding the appointment of a board of directors that is considerably larger than the previous board. The minister has decided to take it from five to fifteen members, not more than fifteen members, in the new legislation. I do not think an organization of this size requires a board that big in order to be effectively managed.

When I look at the reasons behind this, it becomes obvious that other changes in the act are simply saying that this government is more interested in turning the board of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation into a board of political patronage as opposed to one which will function in the best interests of not only the corporation itself, but, in fact, the three major institutions in this province that are reliant on the Centennial Corporation, particularly the Concert Hall, with regard to the future direction of the Concert Hall.

Now, in addition to being landlords for the Concert Hall, the Centennial Corporation is a landlord for the museum, planetarium and Artspace, the building at 11 Lily Street, and the Manitoba Theatre Centre. I am not particularly concerned about any effects that this act might have on the museum, on the Lily Street address, on Artspace or on the theatre centre, but I am particularly concerned with possible ramifications to the Centennial Concert Hall and its three main users, being the opera, the ballet the symphony, and in particular, the symphony and the ballet.

By turning this board into a paid political patronage appointment, the centre itself runs the risk of not having the type of individuals appointed to the board who have a deep and full understanding of arts and how those arts organizations operate. Just from my own limited experience on boards of some arts organizations in this community, I can assure members opposite that these arts organizations are very complex. They operate in a manner which is very different to virtually any other organization which I have had the opportunity to come across. As a result, they need some special attention from time to time, they need some special nurturing, they need some special understanding by their landlord. I do not think that they will be served well by a board of 15 people which will be appointed by the government primarily on the basis of their political affiliation as opposed to their deep commitment to the arts community in the city of Winnipeg.

Again, I would remind members opposite that the arts community, particularly the symphony, the ballet and the opera, is an integral part of this community. They provide the citizens of Winnipeg, and in fact, all of Manitoba with outlets that without which this city and the province would be considerably diminished. So we must, as legislators,

ensure that everything possible is done to ensure that these organizations and others survive.

I will just also say that it is because of the three major organizations that many other smaller arts organizations are able to thrive and survive in this community. For example, members of the symphony orchestra who seek other outlets for their musical creativity other than their work at the symphony orchestra. They play in quartets, they play for Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, they play in many other different venues within the city of Winnipeg. This not only helps the arts community to thrive and helps to nurture some of our local talent, but it makes sure that there is a diverse opportunity for the individuals involved in these organizations to display, I guess, their artistic talents in other venues other than their work for the symphony, the ballet or the opera.

So it is important that as government, we nurture these organizations and we do everything we can to make sure that they thrive. Having said that, we are pleased to have the opportunity to put this bill forward to committee to hear from presenters that may appear and give us in government some advice in terms of the effectiveness of this legislation and maybe some pitfalls.

I think what I also find disturbing, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that government reserves the right not only to appoint a member of the Legislative Assembly, which no doubt will be someone from the governing party to this board, but by changes they have made to the act. That individual will now receive remuneration from the Centennial Corporation over and above the remuneration that they receive as an MLA. I think that sets in this case a dangerous precedent.

* (15:00)

Again, we may now have a situation where the corporation gets so totally focussed on its own revenue and expense lines and the fact that these extra payments are going to have to be made by the board that it has some economic ramifications on the other major organizations, the symphony, the ballet and the opera, that, as we all know, from time to time, in this community, struggle, and, as we have just been through in the last couple of years, require the support of not only the community but also the government from time to time.

We have just heard in the last year or so how the government has had to step up to the table and provide some funds for the symphony to help deal with some of its deficit situations. This happens from time to time. That is the nature of arts groups. You know, we must, as legislators, be always mindful that, while sometimes they do come looking for support over and above the normal operating grants that government gives them, we must continue to have an open ear to their plight because of all that they do for this community and for this province.

We are better off for them, and we would be better off if they were allowed to operate in an environment where their landlord's primary objective was to ensure that they had reasonable access to the building when they need it. We see an example of that right now where the Centennial Corporation has in fact, from the latest reports, agreed to basically eliminate the symphony from its main building over a period of a couple of months. I think it is in the fall of 2006—it may be 2007—in order to bring in a production that they think will generate more income for the corporation. While those things have to be taken into account, what is more important is the long-term negative ramifications that an agreement like that signed by the corporation will have on our institutions such as the symphony and the ballet.

So I do have some very serious concerns about aspects of this legislation. I would recommend to government that they rethink the size of the board, that they rethink the remuneration involved with the board and that, regardless of how this act proceeds, the government understand that in appointing a board, this is not a place to take care of political friends, to appoint political loyalists. This is a very delicate organization, and the organizations that rely on the Centennial Corporation are from time to time in very delicate states. They need to have experienced, knowledgeable people in the field of arts on the board of Centennial Corporation. They need to have individuals on that board that can be empathetic to the plight of the symphony or the ballet or the opera in any particular time and can do what is necessary to bring that message back to government that maybe those organizations might need, from time to time, some special attention.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, before the passage of this bill into the committee

stage, I, too, want to put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 9.

Mr. Speaker, I question, in terms of what is in fact the driving factor, why it is that we have this particular bill before us today if in fact it is a government initiative, or is this something that is being requested and where it might be coming from. I would look to the government, maybe possibly in committee or even if it is not formally, informally give some sort of indication as to why we actually have it before us.

In principle, the bill is something which we can support going to committee. There are a number of concerns that we do have. The member from Fort Whyte makes reference to some of those concerns. If I go into the mandate of the corporation, I would raise the issue of—and if I may just quote from it, "with the minister's approval, develop and maintain buildings and property, and provide property management services, outside the centennial centre."

Mr. Speaker, very much interested in knowing in terms of why that would be a part of the mandate. Again, would look to the minister to provide some explanation. In fact, in regard to this bill, I think it would have been preferential to have actually seen some sort of a map of the Centennial Centre to give MLAs a better sense of what buildings and properties we are actually talking about in terms of its mandate.

The member from Fort Whyte made reference to the board. I concur with many of the comments that he has put on the record as to wanting to get a better understanding from the government as to why it is that they feel it is necessary to put an MLA appointed to the board. We just finished going through a huge discussion in Question Period in regard to government's appointments in regard to, let us say, for example, the Crocus Fund, where government has actually appointed someone to the board. The opposition and the government of the day seem to have a misunderstanding as to what they believe that appointment is there for. I would like to get a better assessment in terms of why it is the government is looking at appointing an MLA to this particular board.

I, for one, have always thought, Mr. Speaker, that boards, whether they are of corporations that the government has mandated in a very formal way to

other possible boards, that the government should, in essence, keep a book. I believe in some American states, I have heard the terminology a "blue book" where they actually list off all the boards in which the government makes appointments to. I think this is something in which we should be moving forward on provincially, is some sort of a posting of sorts that clearly indicates what sorts of appointments are made and possibly even the rationale behind those appointments. I think it would be better for the process and little bit more transparent.

I had talked about the Film Classification Board as another example, Mr. Speaker, where someone makes an inquiry as to, well, can they be put onto the Film Classification Board. It would be wonderful to be able to believe that in circumstances of appointments that individual's credentials are going to be taken into consideration, first and foremost. I am not entirely convinced that that is in fact what has been happening with government appointments. That is one of the reasons why I think that we need to get more of a formality, more transparency in the way in which government makes appointments to these boards because in most part I think board members do a wonderful job on many of these different organizations. I think that the motivation is of an honourable nature, and we need to support that.

Having said those few words, we just recognize the reason why we have this corporation is because of the celebration of being a part of Canada. We see the value and we want to be able to maintain the corporation because we recognize the important role that it plays today, yesterday and well into the future, the role it is going to be playing.

I know, for one, it was just I think about a week, week and a half ago, that I was in the Centennial Hall, Mr. Speaker, had opportunity to visit this facility on several occasions. It is a beautiful facility, a facility that I believe has a wonderful future here in the city, for our province, and would encourage that we do give it attention at times legislatively, but we want to make sure that at the end of the day that the legislation is going to make it stronger and not more political.

With those few words, we are prepared to see it go to committee.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to put a few words on record in regard to Bill

9, The Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Act. Looking back, this corporation was established back in 1968, and not that I can remember it because I was just a little shaver then, but it is responsible for the Centennial Concert Hall. It is responsible for parking lots. It serves as the landlord for the museum and planetarium, other places. The Artspace has been moved into it, I believe, right now under the umbrella.

It was time for a remodernization, if you want to call it, of this bill, and that is one of the reasons, I guess, it was brought forward. As has been mentioned by the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) and the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), there are some things there that are of concern to us as outlined by both of my colleagues in the fact that the board is increased to 15 members up to not more than 15 members, that they now become paid board members, and the fact that also an MLA is appointed to the board and he also or she also receives remuneration for sitting on the board.

* (15:10)

A lot of the other things that are involved with the act are sort of housekeeping, if you want to call it, in a sense, Mr. Speaker. They referred to the by-laws and they referred to the chief executive officer, the duties, that it has some relationship to staffing and the other areas, and it actually also has updated the financial practices in regard to the corporation borrowing money so that they are in compliance with the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Selinger) requirement and The Financial Administration Act. These are some of the things that I think that they are wanting to have brought into line, and I think that it is something that has to be done from time to time, especially when, as I mentioned, the corporation has been around for a long time and that some of these things maybe have to be addressed.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are other small provisions in regard to the annual report and the fact that the financial statements have to be tabled in the Assembly, which is good, and that way we get to see exactly what and how the act has been adhered to.

With those short words, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to move this bill on to committee. If there are presenters, then we will see what the situation is when the bill is before committee. So, with those

short words, as I say, we are willing to pass this bill on to committee.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 9, The Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Act.

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

Bill 11—The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Justices of the Peace)

Mr. Speaker: Bill 11, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Justices of the Peace), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan).

What is the will of the House? Stand?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: It has been denied.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today, this afternoon, to speak on The Provincial Court Amendment Act, which has been brought in by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh).

There are a number of issues with the act, and I understand that the impetus is for bringing forward the three separate levels of justices of the peace, formerly called magistrates before changes to the Criminal Code act, that the impetus is because of a constitutional case that was brought forward, I believe, out of the province of Alberta. Certainly, I understand that there is a rationale and a reason for an independence of the role of justices of the peace who do quasi-judicial matters, those matters that, one would suggest, are at a high level within the court system.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that there needed to be an appropriate level of independence for those justices of the peace who did such things that affected people's liberty, who would allow search-and-seizure warrants to go forward and who would be doing contested motions. So, certainly, the

Supreme Court's ruling that there needed to be independence of those justices of the peace is something that we respect. We know that in the parlance of the Supreme Court, and I have had an opportunity to read the decision, they refer to independence as being the similar type of independence for those justices of the peace doing his roles as a judge would have in a court of law. That independence was seen as being independence of salary and being independence of tenure.

So, under this particular legislation, the new classification of judicial justices, which is the highest justice of the peace, which would be in our province, and which is the justice of the peace that has to have the level of independence, that individual who is appointed to that position will have an independence of salary because it would be tied to that of a provincial court judge and they would have an independence of tenure because they will not be able to be removed except under the process that a current justice is removed in the province, and that is, by all recognition, a fairly arduous process.

So the fulfilment of the Supreme Court of Canada ruling on the independence of the justice of the peace by the creation of the judicial justice of the peace is not in contention here, Mr. Speaker. We support that aspect of the bill and of the ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada. Where we do take some exception with the legislation, I have raised this publicly outside of this Legislature, is the appointment process which had been put in place for judicial justices.

It is important to recognize, I think, that these judicial JPs will have a very, very high level of independence, obviously, as mandated by the Supreme Court, but they will be performing a function that is quasi-judicial, and that really, really affects individuals who are in the court system. They will be able to supervise contested motions. They will be able to grant protection orders. They will be able to grant warrants to go into an individual's home if there is proper cause. These are all issues, and, of course, they will be able to do judicial interim releases, these are all issues which are really at the top end or near the top end of the judicial perspective.

So the individuals that we have in these positions, because they are essentially life-term positions unless somebody would be able to be

removed through the judicial removal process and because they have independence of salary, it is very, very important that we have the right people moving into these positions.

I know that in other jurisdictions such as Alberta and British Columbia and Nova Scotia, who have gone to this multi-level of justice of the peace, they have set up a much higher standard for who can be appointed into this position. I believe, and I could stand to be corrected, but I believe that in Alberta, an individual has to have been a lawyer for five years before they could be qualified for the equivalent of our judicial justice of the peace. In Nova Scotia, the requirement is five years. I believe in British Columbia that the requirement is ten years' experience, not as a lawyer, but just in the justice system, so that could be another position within the justice system other than a lawyer. I think that there was good cause for those jurisdictions to look at this requirement for more experience.

We could certainly have the debate in this House. I know it is not a time for debate, but if there ever was such a time in the Legislature that we could have a debate on what the qualifications would be, I do not think that I would propose that it would necessarily be a lawyer, but certainly I do think that there would be a higher standard for qualifications than what is set out in the act. In particular, I do want to say that the eligibility requirement for the judicial justices under this act that the minister has put forward is that one has to be 18 years old and residing in the province. Certainly not a high standard to me. Certainly not a lofty bar to pass.

In fact, I did do a little research about different occupations in the province, and I notice that if one was a hairdresser, for example, in the province, the qualifications would be much, much higher and much more difficult to become a hairdresser in the province than to become a judicial justice of the peace under this particular piece of legislation, despite the fact that these judicial justices would be dealing with very high levels of issues in the court system dealing with a person's liberty and a person's privacy.

I would ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), and I have done so publicly, to review these criteria to see if there is not a higher bar to be set. I think it is particularly true now, and the Minister of Justice would, I am sure, say that this

sometimes happens with the current government, they sometimes look at what happened in the 1990s. Every once in a while they take a glance back. I know members opposite will be surprised to hear that or surprised to learn that, but no doubt they would point to what happened under our government and whether the qualifications were much different. I would say that the situation is very different because under the former system it was not difficult to remove a magistrate or a justice of the peace who was not performing their job up to standard.

Under the new legislation, Mr. Speaker, it would be practically impossible to remove a justice of the peace who is not performing their role appropriately. It would be almost impossible to remove them from their position. So one does have to ensure that we are ensuring that there is a proper monitoring of individuals on the front end because there is no real mechanism to remove them from the back end. I do want to say that that is the main concern that I have with this particular bill. There needs to be higher eligibility.

* (15:20)

I think that, and I have said this both publicly and within the House before, the perception of justice in the province is important to protect. I think all members would agree it is not just the rulings that come forward from the justice system that we have to ensure have integrity but indeed that all those who are participants within the justice system, whatever side they are, whether there is a criminal or civil case, whether they are a litigant or a defendant, have to believe that the justice system is working in an impartial and unbiased manner. What this system allows with the low eligibility, in fact probably virtually none, in terms of being able to be appointed to these high-end positions, is it does leave the perception that they could simply be political appointments into those positions.

We know, in fact we have heard it over the last couple of days, the difficulties that sometimes happen when there are potentially questionable people put into positions. I refer, of course, to what happened at the Crocus Investment Fund, Mr. Speaker. There have been questions, allegations raised about whether or not there were appropriate people put into certain positions to operate and to manage the fund and whether or not there was that proper oversight. Well, we do not have in the justice

system that same kind of oversight from the government obviously as we would have with Crocus. The justice system does not have that same type of intervention. Of course, there are things that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) can do within his role in terms of giving direction in certain ways, but they do not have the same kind of supervisory role as they might in other particular departments.

So I would say, Mr. Speaker, that we need to ensure that the legislation is such that there can be no question that the individuals who are put into the role of judicial Justices of the Peace are independent from government, that they are not there because they are friends of the New Democratic government and that they are not there because they are relatives of the New Democratic government.

I raise that in the context of what happened a few weeks ago. The Deputy Premier's niece, I believe, was appointed to a judicial position within our province. Certainly, I did not question her qualifications. I raised no issue about her qualifications. The only issue that I raise was about the process by which she was put into that position. In fact, I had suggested a way that would have been better for the Minister of Justice, that he simply could have instead of taking four names and selecting three from a nominee process, could have simply asked for three names and then appointed the three, and there would at least remove to some extent that perception of a potential conflict because it was raised in the media about a potential conflict. I think that that is unfortunate that any justice goes and begins their new role on the bench with any kind of questions of impartiality but, again, we did not raise on this side of the House within our party any questions of qualifications. That was not the issue. It was simply the process by which the minister allowed that appointment to go forward.

Here again then under this legislation, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, Bill 11, it opens that same kind of dilemma. It allows the same kind of problem to come forward because, with such a low eligibility of 18 years old and a resident of Manitoba to be appointed, there will clearly be some appointments that people will say that they were only brought forward because of their relationship with the government, Mr. Speaker. We know that this is a small province in terms of population relatively. It is difficult not to have those interconnections that could

have been avoided by having a higher standard of eligibility. We could have had that discussion with the government. I am not fixated or locked into one particular standard.

I would not suggest that it necessarily had to be a lawyer, Mr. Speaker, but there could have been another way. In fact, one of the suggestions that I put forward, and it was only a suggestion, but one that I wish the government would consider before this bill becomes law is to make a requirement that the individual who becomes a judicial justice would have had a year or two experience in one of the lower levels of justices that are set out in the act. In fact, if somebody had been a staff justice for a couple of years, or had they been a community justice for a couple of years, they then would become eligible to become a judicial justice. We could have seen, of course, their skills in action, and there would have been much less question about whether or not they actually had the appropriate skills.

One might suggest that I say this in a political sense, but I would like to say quite the opposite, Mr. Speaker, that it is not that at all. In fact, what I am trying to do is I am trying to protect the government from having those accusations levelled against them, that they are, in fact, appointing people not on the merits of their qualifications but, in fact, on other criteria such as their relationship with the government.

One would hope that the Justice Department and the judiciary do not become the de facto home for NDP friends and family. That is certainly not what the justice system is intended to be, Mr. Speaker. I think it would also be a good measure for those individuals who are appointed into those positions because they could take up their new roles with the knowledge that in fact they were appointed because of their qualifications and not because of any other criteria such as a relationship with the government.

One could expect, or one could surmise, under this particular legislation if there was somebody appointed who had a long history in the NDP party or was involved with labour for an awful long time, those kinds of accusations could come forward, not necessarily just from members of this House and from opposite parties but really from any other individuals who would have thought themselves to be qualified for the appointments of the judicial justice. So I bring forward what I would consider to

be a friendly amendment, Mr. Speaker, not a formal amendment that I am moving at this point but maybe a friendly suggestion to the Minister of Justice that he look at this qualification.

I understand that in the media when this question was asked, officials from the minister's department had suggested that there were, in fact, other criteria that would be looked at but they did not really elaborate on them other than to say that an individual should be analytical and be able to learn on the job. Well, being analytical and being able to learn on the job, if we went to the classified section of the newspaper, would probably fall into 80 or 90 percent of different jobs. Virtually any employer, regardless of the occupation from an engineer to somebody who is working part-time as a teenager in a fast food restaurant, I would suspect that having some analytical skills and being able to learn on the job would be a benefit to any of those employers, Mr. Speaker. So it certainly is not a high bar to pass, and it clearly is not a high standard when we are dealing with our judicial system.

So I feel that I need to put those kinds of warning remarks on the record so that the minister can consider them, and in the future if there are questions raised, we can certainly point back to this debate and suggest that the minister had opportunity to change a few different things.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I am willing to listen to other presenters on this particular bill, and I look forward to hearing comments that might come forward from presenters at committee in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, we do understand in terms of why it is that we have this bill before us in terms of the elimination of the magistrate and creation of the justices of the peace, recognizing that there are going to be in essence three different flavours, if you like, or three different types of justices of the peace that are going to be created, both the judicial justice of the peace along with the community justice of the peace and staff justice of the peace.

Concerns that have been expressed by the member from Steinbach, I think, are valid in good part, Mr. Speaker, and what interested me in his

comments in listening to him was the fact that when he made an inquiry, he was told that in fact there were more criteria. I know I had heard that a probation officer was being used as an example of what would be appointed and I appreciated his comments.

The concern that I have, Mr. Speaker, is in looking at the three different types, it seems to me that the community justice of the peace, along with the judicial justice of the peace, is in fact appointed through a provincial body known as, or through the chief justice if you like, who would, in essence, provide a list from which individuals would then be appointed. If that is in fact the case and my interpretation is correct, I would think that that is a positive way of going about doing it.

* (15:30)

The staff justice of the peace, on the other hand, is a bit different in the sense that that is just an appointment that is made through L-G, and it lists off in essence that it has to be a civil servant, and it talks in terms of what sort of duties that it would have. One of the duties that concern me greatly is the issue of ordering or discharging a person from custody. When you start dealing with issues like that, Mr. Speaker, and there are obviously others such as hearing dates and so forth that they would be responsible for; but, when you start dealing with issues of that nature, I think that it does beg the question in terms of what sort of background knowledge an individual brings to the table. That is why I say that I do have a great deal of sympathy in terms of what it is the member from Steinbach is saying.

Mr. Speaker, there is, as I indicated, a fairly simple reason for why we have the bill today; we support it in principle going to committee and look forward to how the government might be able to address the concerns that have been made.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading, Bill 11, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Justices of the Peace).

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

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

Mr. Speaker: I will call Bill 24, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Cost of Credit Disclosure and Miscellaneous Amendments), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Carman.

What is the will of the House? Stand?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Okay.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to put a few remarks on the record with regard to Bill 24, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act.

Prior to putting my comments on the record, I take this opportunity to thank the minister's staff, the staff at Consumer and Corporate Affairs, for taking part of an afternoon to brief me on the intricate parts of Bill 24. I would have initially thought it would have been an extremely difficult bill to sort of comprehend because the bill in itself is 70-some pages, but when you have the departmental staff walking you through, if you will use that terminology, page by page, basically what they have done is taken it back to 1996 where there had been an agreement on internal trade where the provinces and the federal government, that they agreed to actually harmonize the consumer protection measures, and we are basically falling in line.

In addition to the telemarketing, Internet commerce, advertising standard, the consumer and measure committee also agreed to harmonize the cost of credit. In this particular bill, the new provisions that had been set out for Part II basically give us some sort of comfort in knowing that individuals who have to go to great lengths to secure credit will have some sort of protection, if you will, from, I am not going to use the word "unscrupulous," but individuals who, at one time or another, might have taken opportunity of a situation where an individual who needed credit on short notice or a short amount

of time, well, he had to pay an arm and a leg, if you will.

Under this particular agreement which was signed in 1996, the Manitoba Consumer Protection, the Cost of Credit Disclosure amendment, it follows a previous act, which Alberta and Ontario, I believe, are the two provinces that basically have implemented such legislation. British Columbia and New Brunswick, I believe, have also passed it, but had not enacted it, similar to what we are going to do here in Manitoba. We do not expect this bill to come into force until some time in 2006, but I understand, Mr. Speaker, that once Royal Assent is given or the bill has passed, there will be public consultations for the regulations that have not been enacted at this present time. So the residents of the province of Manitoba will have a forum where they will have that opportunity to put forward some of their concerns on this particular piece of legislation.

The amendments basically include consumer mortgages. The Consumer Protection Act now applies to mortgages, and providers are now required to disclose the cost of accessing this service to clients. Also, I believe The Farm Machinery and Equipment Act and the mortgages act, there will be some consequential amendments because of this particular piece of legislation being enacted. There will be a consequential amendment to those particular acts.

Disclosure of advance fees and lease details. Currently, Mr. Speaker, borrowers must be given access to details of fees and charges before they agree to obtaining credit from a particular lender. The disclosure must be provided two business days before agreeing to credit, as I understand it, although a borrower, if he or she so chooses, they may waive this cooling-off period.

The APR calculations, or better known as the annual percentage rate. The value received and the value given, these are fundamental concepts in the annual percentage rate calculations and they are defined. Value received is a cash value and associated optional services a borrower receives when they are receiving credit or buying something on credit. Value given is the value a borrower pays for a service including cash costs and associated charges which may include administration fees, finance charges or insurance costs.

The open credit calculation part of it, some loans are open, where a final, if you will, pay-off

date is not set. There have been issues related to calculating interest and disclosing how that interest is assessed. Open loans will need to have their credit limits, required pay periods, minimum payment, initial interest rates and compounding periods, administration and finance charges, brokerage fees and maximum liabilities clearly stated at the time of the application.

The opportunity, I believe, to direct a default for individuals in cases where a borrower is involved in a rent-to-own agreement, that that certain individual would ever miss a payment on a specific date, but remedies the situation before the end of the agreement, the borrower will not be considered to have violated the agreement and will not have forfeited right to an ownership of that item in question. Basically, an individual who, unfortunately, would miss a particular payment of, indeed, one month would still have the opportunity to, as long as it is prior to the end of the agreement, catch up, if you will, on his payment, will still have that opportunity to purchase said object at the end of that time frame.

The compliance part. While the provinces have agreed to a basic standard and included businesses and loan vehicles for inclusion in their consumer protection, each province can set their own compliance and enforcement standards. Where a lender has been deemed to violate the terms of the act, Manitoba will maintain its current practice of rolling back the affected loan rate to the legal rate of 5 percent. A person may appeal this administrative penalty to the courts, as I understand it.

The enforcements and the penalties, Mr. Speaker, are interesting because they have raised the amounts drastically, if you will, and rightfully so, I might add. Fines under the act are increased from \$3,000 to \$10,000 for the first offence and from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for subsequent offences for individuals. Fines for corporations are increased from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for first offences and, subsequently, from \$25,000 to \$100,000 for subsequent offences.

The regulation power. Again, details on the exact form of disclosure statement, the advertising standard and other details will be set out in the particular regulations. Following the passage of this bill, public consultations will be held on these regulations, as I stated previously.

* (15:40)

Mr. Speaker, at this point in time, I, and indeed my caucus, we are supporting this legislation, Bill 24, because, indeed, it would benefit individuals who attempt to secure credit. Unfortunately, each and every one of us, at one time or another, whether you want to purchase car, house, TV set or whatever you may, we have had to find a way to try and convince certain individuals that we are indeed, or we could be, a valuable customer of theirs and that we would like to secure some of their money to purchase a particular TV set, if you will, or a car, but all we are doing here is protecting the individual from, and I like to use the word, being "gouged." The individual will not be gouged, if you will.

So I thank the minister and his staff. We are prepared to move this bill on to committee in case there are certain individuals who might want to come, make a presentation and maybe enlighten us a little bit further.

So, with those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to support this legislation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will keep my comments brief. I understand that we will probably be going on to the workers compensation bill. I just want to highlight Bill 24, as a consumer, what would appear to be very much a consumer-friendly bill that at the end of the day it is a piece of legislation in principle that we can support. I think we can all relate to the fact of how advertising can have a huge impact on people in terms of the way in which something is billeted, and I just use this as an example of furniture stores that will have all sorts of flyers, advertisements and so forth. You do not pay for a year, and all this kind of stuff, and then the credit implications of this are fairly significant.

I think that when I look at this particular piece of bill, even though there are some areas in which I do have questions, when we make some minor changes in definitions I would look to, in particular, say, a clause like 8(3) within the legislation, Mr. Speaker, or the whole authority of our consumer service officers. Those are things in which I do have concerns. Given the will I think to see this bill pass, and given that it is a very, in principle, favourable piece of legislation, I am prepared to let it go at this

point so that we can get on to the workers compensation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 24, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Cost of Credit Disclosure and Miscellaneous Amendments).

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

House Business

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, further to this afternoon's business, just as a result of some further discussions, I wonder if you could change the order of bills and now move directly to Bill 25, workers comp, with concurrence to start at 4:30 rather than at 4 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave in the House to change the sequence to debate Bill 25, resume debate on second reading, Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, immediately, and to defer concurrence till 4:30? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

Bill 25—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: So, on that agreement, I will now call Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

What is the will of the House, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Carman, on a point of order?

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if there would be leave of the House to allow the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) to speak now and allow the Member for Turtle Mountain to speak after. Would that be agreeable?

Is there leave, Mr. Speaker, to allow the Member for Ste. Rose, then the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) to speak, and then allowing the Member for Turtle Mountain to speak after?

Mr. Speaker: To make it very simple, all we have to do is agree to allow the Member for Ste. Rose to speak, then River East, and followed by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain. Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

* * *

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, let me say a few positive words on the record about this legislation. Frankly, a review that was undertaken and with a hundred recommendations, that in itself is no small achievement. That in itself does a good job of vetting, from both the employer and the employee side, the issues as they may have accumulated over the years around workers compensation.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that always happens, of course, when there have been reviews and when there is legislation that follows, is whether or not the minister of the day and the government of the day decides that they are going to accept all the recommendations, accept a portion of those recommendations, or whether they will indeed strike out on yet another path.

It would appear that, in the main, government has followed the majority of the recommendations, but as I think you would appreciate, there are some slight nuances that when examined a little bit further become a lot more than just a nuance in terms of implementation of this legislation. The one that I think needs further discussion and debate and, I would suggest, needs further clarification from the government is just what is their intention or what is the *raison d'être* behind changing the manner in which an industry is included or not included in workers compensation coverage. There are some

industries out there who have wanted in. There are some industries out there who are, I would suggest, content to remain out. In between, I would say there are a significant number of employees who recognize this as a valid benefit that they can and, I would suggest, should seek for their own betterment and for the protection of their families and themselves.

Government seems to have thrown this up in the air, if you will, and they are waiting to see which side of the coin lands face up. There may be some reason to do that, but it would make it an awful lot easier to debate this bill and to understand where the government is heading or where they are coming from on this bill if they would be a little bit more forthcoming about their comments and what their intentions are of dealing with the authority that they are seeking through the amendments in this legislation.

My concern, of course, is probably self-evident, Mr. Speaker. I have to indicate that it does create some concerns in the agricultural community, and I think, as well, in some other employment communities. I will raise them from the perspective that I have been given from people that I represent, and it goes along this line. There is insurance available out there now that provides coverage and provides protection that agricultural employers can purchase. Those employers that have it believe that it provides at a more economic rate better coverage for their employees and protects them as an employer perhaps better than they would be protected in any other way.

* (15:50)

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, when put forward as a benefit, workers compensation does have a cost to it. With the government maintaining by Order-in-Council all variations on eligibility or requirement to be part of the workers compensation program, then it seems to me that the government has an onus to explain where their intention is. Otherwise, it leads people to believe that there is another agenda at play that the government is not being forthcoming about. That other agenda can be as simple as they intend to fortify and improve workers compensation coverage across the board in the province, and that is, of course, where this legislation is leading to. It is an across-the-board position that appears to be unfolding from this legislation. If that is the case, if that is the government's direction, then it would be appreciated if they would be more forthcoming, if

not in this Chamber, at least in discussion around this bill in committee.

We know that there will be a lot of people who will come out in support of certain aspects of these proposed changes and that is entirely fair. That is what is expected, and both sides of the House, I hope, will be listening to the presenters. Further on, when we come to looking at situations such as taking funds from the Workers Compensation Board to pay for safety programs and safety inspectors, there has always been an element of that occurring. The board that reviewed this act chose to say that they did not believe that was appropriate, perhaps that should be a government-mandated responsibility. It is government-mandated, and government should, in fact, take further financial responsibility for it; come from the general revenues and from revenues that government acquires from sources other than simply the employer in this province.

The government ignored that recommendation. That again raises flags about what is the government's agenda when they chose to ignore that. To cherry-pick, if you will, or to not follow all of the recommendations raises the question about whether or not the government is on its own agenda and is simply using the report generated by Wally Fox-Decent and the other members of the committee, such as Chris Lorenc, Susan Rogers and Pete Walker, whether or not their recommendations are now somehow going to be only partially accepted and used as a backstop to support a government agenda that was not necessarily envisioned by the committee doing the review and writing the report.

Mr. Speaker, the requirement by government to exclude by Order-in-Council specific industries, employers and workers by regulation means that government now will be exposed to lobby efforts by those who want out of the program. It is a reverse onus that is not common in this type of legislation. Reverse onus always to me seemed to be a situation where if you wanted something to happen when you were in government and you were a responsible decision-making authority, if you really, really wanted something to happen, you used the reversed onus capability that you could put within legislation in order to make it happen because people to a large extent will not exercise a negative responsibility.

It becomes increasingly troublesome when you look at this type of legislation. Employers in some

industries will argue that they can, through the private sector, provide protection for their employees and themselves in a more favourable way, at a more favourable rate and with better protection. As I stated earlier, there are those who have that argument in hand and believe that it is the appropriate way to deal with the issue. They will now be forced, if they want to stay out of the workers compensation program, to make an argument that is, indeed, negative argument. They will have to say we can do better, or conversely and by implication, we do not want the services and the coverage provided by Workers Compensation Board. We have had taken away from us the option of purchasing from a different source.

That is an interesting way to situate this. I believe, by comparison with other jurisdictions, that is a bit of an odd man out in terms of how this is managed here in Manitoba. I suspect that there will be a few companies who might be considering where they intend to locate who will question whether that reverse onus puts them at some sort of a disadvantage in coming to work within this jurisdiction. That would be the one concern that I would like to see answered.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The other issue that I think is of some importance, certainly, it is obvious that raising the benefits carried by those who have been on benefits in excess of 24 months, raising that to 90 percent of wage loss as opposed to keeping it at 80, I think those who look at long-term benefits would look at that as a hope for an appreciated benefit.

What we will not get from this government, and I do not anticipate, given their past record, that they are going to change the way they operate, what we will not get is an anticipated demonstration of what, if any, impacts this could have on reserves and on costs. No one would argue against the value of this benefit being put forward. What it needs to be put forward with, however, is supported by appropriate numbers, an actuarial calculation, that this is not in and of itself going to be an impact on rates. I suspect that information is available, and if I have missed it somewhere in the debate that has occurred before or in explanations from the government before or if it, indeed, is buried in the report, I am not as well versed in the report as I should be, if it is indeed

buried in the report, then I regret making the remarks that I just have, but I wanted to say on the record that that information is important for not just us but for those who will be looking at this legislation as a template under which they will be expected to operate in the future.

I would look forward to this bill being in committee. I understand there are a fair number of presenters who intend to make their views known, and we look forward to hearing from them.

I appreciate that the member from Turtle Mountain is sitting on the edge of his seat anxious to share his thoughts on behalf of our caucus and I will relinquish the floor to him.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 25, of course, changes to The Workers Compensation Act.

I know there have been some minor changes over the years, but this is a fairly major rewrite of the act. Obviously, this particular piece of legislation has a lot of changes. We certainly do not agree with every change in this particular piece of legislation. We do know, we do recognize, that there are some good parts to this legislation and we certainly look forward to working with the government after we hear from the public in the committee process. We look forward to working with the government, possibly making this particular legislation better so that it can work in the benefit of all Manitobans in the business community and the employees as well all throughout Manitoba so that this workers compensation can remain beneficial for all of Manitobans.

I know in Manitoba we are fortunate in that we do have a fairly low premium rate charged on workers compensation, so we do have a bit of a competitive advantage in that regard. We certainly want to keep that competitive advantage here in Manitoba.

*(16:00)

I think it is important to remember the process that was involved here prior to the implementation or the advancement of Bill 25, and that was the Legislative Review Committee which was struck some time ago. Wally Fox-Decent was the chairman

of that committee, and the committee was made up of the employers, members from the workers as well, the employees, and, of course, the representative from the public interest. So, obviously, all members were involved in the committee. They held public hearings across the province for about three months in 2004. At that point in time, over 200 submissions were submitted to the committee. There were certainly a number of suggestions that came forward from those committees.

I guess based on those submissions, the committee submitted 100 unanimous recommendations. I think it is important to recognize the important part here is that they were unanimous. The employers, the employees, the public at large all agreed with the recommendations put forward in that report. They certainly did a lot of work in that regard in hearing submissions from everyone across Manitoba.

I think what we have to look on is this is really part of the historic compromise between employers and employees that has gone back years and years on workers compensation where the employers are paying the premiums on behalf of the employees and the employees are covered under the workers compensation. I think it is very important. I think the other thing that is very important is recognizing those 100 unanimous recommendations. I think it is important that the government take note of those. Obviously, it was a real consensus-building effort that the employers and employees put forward. I think the onus is on the government to make sure that those recommendations are adhered to.

Approximately 22 of those recommendations are policy directives which will certainly have to be ironed out by the Workers Compensation Board itself, the board of directors. There will certainly be some onus on them to make sure that those recommendations are adhered to, and I think both the employers and employees want to make sure that the monitoring of the board and those particular policies are carried forward into the future. That is a very important part of it.

One of the issues that came forward in Bill 25 that really was not raised in the recommendations was the review of the expansion process and how that might play itself out. The current legislation shows that any business can be added or any industry can be added to the list of coverage under workers

compensation, but that is at the will of the Workers Compensation Board. Bill 25 will kind of take the reverse onus where the list will be put forward and then every industry will be included. The board will not have the decision, but the Cabinet will have the decision who will be excluded from coverage.

Certainly, that has raised some red flags within the community. Certainly, on our side it has raised some red flags. We hope that the government will take notice on this particular red flag. We know in the past they have a history of not recognizing some of the red flags before them, but we certainly hope that they will recognize this important issue which, in my discussion with quite a few different organizations, communities, business communities and industries across Manitoba, they recognize this as being a fairly significant change in how the workers compensation is delivered in Manitoba. So I think it is something that the minister and the government should certainly take notice.

Again, I think we want to bear in mind it is a compromise, workers compensation, where the employers are paying the premium on this. Obviously, employees gain some benefit out of it. Approximately 70 percent of employees are covered in Manitoba. I know some of the labour movement, the union people want to have everyone included in this. That is not necessarily the case with, you know, some of the business community and some of the people that are actually employed by the business community. They have alternative means to find compensation in their workplace. So I think that is something that we certainly have to take very seriously when we start putting coverage on people and business communities that may not otherwise enjoy it.

So I certainly hope when this bill goes to committee that the minister will take note and hear what the people have to say in terms of the expansion of coverage, who will be covered, who will not be covered and how that is done, and at the same time maybe take note of some amendments that might come forward from this side of the House.

Another issue, of course, that is near and dear to everyone's heart in Manitoba and, I think, across Canada is the coverage for firefighters. We were, on this side, of course, quite happy when the volunteer or part-time firefighters would be included in this coverage, although not retroactive to 1992, as some

of the full-time firefighter coverage will be. I certainly think it is a step in the right direction. I think those in the volunteer area, there is close to about 3600 volunteer firefighters across Manitoba, they too are subject to the same kinds of illness that other full-time firefighters in Manitoba are covered for. So we certainly look forward to having that included in there as well.

I guess what the government has done here, and they do sometimes, is that there is always the good with the bad. Clearly, this is one of those tokens they brought in here and brought the firefighters in to support the bill. I realize that the firefighters probably did not realize that there were quite a few other changes to The Workers Compensation Amendment Act in here. Some of them, of course, they will like, and we, of course, brought forward our own legislation here to move the coverage for the firefighters as well. So we certainly recognize the importance of firefighters all across Manitoba and the tremendous role they play. We certainly hope that this coverage will enhance their coverage for all parts of this throughout Manitoba.

The other issue that was put forward in the legislative review recommendation was in terms of the Workers Compensation Board paying coverage for some of the Department of Labour's Workplace Safety and Health issues in terms of policing business communities. There was a very strong recommendation from the report that the government should be paying for that part of their policing, if you will, of industries, and the premiums paid by employers should not be used to do the policing or the regulation of industries. I think last year that was to the tune of almost \$6 million, and I believe this year we are probably looking closer to \$8 million. So there is a direct transfer from Workers Compensation right over to the Province of Manitoba, and it is certainly something that we will be monitoring as time goes forward as well.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Also in terms of workers compensation and other things that we will be monitoring, we will be certainly watching the government if they decide to bring forward any other changes to the workers compensation coverage in terms of significantly expanding the definition of stress. We certainly see that it could be an issue in the future.

Again, I think we want to keep the workers compensation rates reasonable. They are one of the lowest in Canada. We certainly want to keep our competitive advantage here in Manitoba, but I do think because it is an insurance program, the onus is on us as government to make sure that the people who do run these situations with Workers Compensation and have a claim, we have to make sure that those workers, those employees are covered adequately. If there is a situation, they certainly have to be taken care of, and we certainly hope that the government will monitor those policies so that the Workers Compensation Board and their claims supervisors, their claims people can handle those claims in a very diligent and in a very expeditious manner. It is certainly important that be done for the sake of all the employees around Manitoba and also for the business community at large.

Certainly, we must do what we can to deal with the claims in a timely fashion, get these people back to work as quickly as possible when necessary and make sure that their claims are handled in a very thorough manner and in a passionate manner where their injuries are addressed as quickly as possible and not only to their benefit, but probably to the benefit of their family as well.

* (16:10)

I just want to remind the minister that this whole process is really a consensus-building process, both the consensus report put together by those three elements of our society, and I want to make sure that the minister pays attention when the people come to committee and bring their issues forward.

Obviously, we are a little concerned at a couple of the issues, as I discussed, that were not implemented in Bill 25. We hope that over the next little while here we can come to terms and certainly have a look at some of those issues and maybe make this bill a little more user friendly. We wonder why the Premier and Cabinet would want to have complete control of who is covered under this. We believe that there should be consultation with the industry, with the employees. We feel that by leaving the control of that, who is included in the coverage under Workers Compensation Board, leave that in control of the board of directors at Workers Compensation for them to do the consultations, and they would make the correct choices in terms of who is going to be covered and who is not.

We recognize that other provinces are going to the exclusion group as well, as suggested in Bill 25. I guess we are probably not totally opposed to that concept, however, we are opposed to the concept—

An Honourable Member: 11 out of 13.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you very much. The minister pointed out 11 out of 13. I guess we are going to be following in line. I know she said some time ago that good things are happening in Alberta. I assume we are probably following some of the good things that are happening in Alberta and we look forward to hearing that. Again, we do not necessarily want to be the first one out there where the Premier and Cabinet have full control of who is going on. We do not think, on this side of the House, that that has to be done. We are a consensus-building party and we feel that those issues should be dealt with in a consensual manner.

So, without anything else at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we certainly look forward to moving this particular bill, Bill 25, the amendment to The Workers Compensation Act, into committee recognizing that there are, I believe, at least 66 presenters coming to speak to the bill, so it will take some time to hear all the people. Obviously, they must have some issues with this particular piece of legislation. We look forward to hearing from them in committee, and we look forward to moving this bill on to committee. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act.

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

Bill 37—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Now we will move to Bill 37, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina.

What is the will of the House?

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I just wanted to put a few comments on the record regarding The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act. It certainly is something that we are looking forward to hearing the presenters or if there are any issues out there regarding this bill to allow the general public to come to committee and to, you know, bring their comments. I know that there are always concerns when there is new legislation that is introduced.

Certainly, when I look at my area, and as we—

An Honourable Member: Especially this government. You never know when there is a hidden agenda.

Mr. Dyck: My honourable colleague from Ste. Rose has mentioned, especially with this government you do not know what the hidden agenda is. So, Mr. Speaker, we do have some concerns. On the other hand though, we also want to hear to see what the municipal bodies have to say regarding this issue and even those who will be private people who will be affected by it.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few comments, I am prepared to move this to committee. Thank you very much.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I want to put some words on the record prior to its passage.

Municipalities have a need to be able to vary, and I will just quote right from the bill, Mr. Speaker. "They vary the percentage of assessed value for prescribed classes of accessible property for the purposes of determining the portion to value."

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that this is in good part what we have for the city of Winnipeg and we want to be able to extend that. It is a pretty straightforward bill. Even though it has a fairly significant impact on the municipalities, it is not the biggest bill that we have before us. Having said that, I did want to take the opportunity just to give comment and to reinforce what I believe the Manitoba Liberal Party and the Leader of the Liberal Party have talked consistently about over the last number of years. That is the issue of property tax, and just to highlight the fact that the government, over the years, has had substantial increases of provincial general revenues.

Manitobans as a whole are very upset and frustrated with the level of taxation at the property

level, and we have been calling and continue to call on the government to address the property tax issue. We see, in part, in terms of some of the half measures to try to appease what Manitobans want.

At the same time, what we want to be able to see is a government that is more committed to dealing with the property tax issue. As indicated, the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party has talked quite widely about the importance of addressing the issue of education tax and for many years, in fact, we have wanted to see the growing reliance of funding. Public education should not be put on the property tax roll. Rather, it should be put on the general revenues, even though we have been seeing some shifting toward that. It is not enough, and we would encourage the government to do more in terms of public education because we do recognize the value of it.

As I say, with those few words, this is a bill that should be relatively non-controversial, and we anticipate not only will it pass here but it will likely pass quite easily through the committee stage. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 37, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act.

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

Bill 38—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 38, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen).

What is the will of the House? To remain standing?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Been denied.

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the opportunity to debate, on second reading, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, as proposed by Bill 38.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is an effort, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, to bring concerns from both the landlord and the tenant perspective in trying to address many of the outstanding issues that come forward throughout the year, and it has been quite some time since The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act has been amended. I will say that there are many positive attributes to this legislation.

However, I do have concerns in a number of areas, especially when compensation can be awarded to tenants in regard to repairs that have been delayed or considered delayed by the director of the Residential Tenancies Branch.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is rather a non-definitive amendment to the act and draws great concern, because what is a repair that would be deemed important enough to be compensated for. I know that there is no definition afforded in this amendment insofar as it is a cosmetic crack in the drywall of an apartment, and the landlord takes some time to repair the crack in the wall versus perhaps a plumbing leak. Both come into play in this particular amendment, and to some the cosmetic crack in the wall is important and should be repaired. But is that something that should be awarded compensation if that repair does not take place in a reasonable length of time?

* (16:20)

Again, Mr. Speaker, what is determined as reasonable? For one person, a couple of days after one moves into the apartment and it has yet to be repaired, perhaps that can be considered unreasonable. To others, maybe the crack in the wall did not get repaired for the entire year.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this particular amendment leaves it wide open, for without definition, and I know that the City of Winnipeg, when they were looking at similar definition, considered this type of amendment as almost unworkable because it is in the landlord's best interest to repair a plumbing deficiency in the shortest of time frame because it could cause for further repair costs in the apartment or in the rental structure, and I know that persons that would like to preserve their property and do work on it in an expeditious fashion, without a definition as to what might be considered urgent versus cosmetic repairs, perhaps of very little consequence to the structure or to the actual

liveability of the rental property, I think that this particular section is going to draw considerable concern by everyone, not only a tenant but a landlord as well. I think without amendment, this particular clause is going to cause significant concern for everyone. I hope that the government will abandon that particular section, which is referred to as 59.1, Compensation for Delay.

This does allow for various considerations of rental. A significant change would be the extension of five years to a total now of twenty years for new construction here in the province that would be available to renters and that rental controls do not apply. Also, too, the flexibility for rehabilitation of properties and for the forgiveness of the rent control component of the act for properties that a significant investment has been made by the property owner to improve the properties, and dependent upon the extent of the amount of investment, that two-, five-, ten-year type of increments of rent-control-free status would be granted by the branch. I believe this is a significant step forward in this regard.

Now there are other considerations within this legislation that pertain to The Life Leases Act as well and do recognize that there are costs that can be afforded the landlord for administrative purposes, that if somebody was to terminate their contract or to leave without notice the rental properties and that the landlord incurred administrative costs to advertise and to, essentially, find another renter for the properties, that this compensation could be awarded for administrative costs to the landlord.

So the bill in itself is something that I believe is positive, but I have mentioned one deficiency that I see. As well as that, I question the government that if they are moving to have all current developments go rent-regulation-free for 20 years, I wonder why this cannot be extended back to persons that had previously constructed rental properties here in the province of Manitoba, like the previous legislation made changes to go to 15 years. It would only be a matter of one year, and then all properties that had been constructed in the province of Manitoba and occupied prior to April 9, 2001, would be essentially on the same footing. So I encourage the government to try and bring consistency to the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, without further commentary at this time, I look forward to the public presentations that I

know are forthcoming on this bill, Bill 38, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to put this statement in the debate this afternoon.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, it is actually with pleasure that I get to comment on Bill 38. It was a number of years ago when I was actually first elected back in '88 that I had the opportunity to be the Housing critic. I enjoyed it tremendously, I must say.

One of the things that I found was this particular legislation, if I may, Mr. Speaker, was always one that was being challenged. It was being challenged from landlords, and it was being challenged by tenants. If I reflect, one of the biggest concerns that I had from landlords was their ability to be able to maintain property in a rent-controlled atmosphere where over the years properties have depreciated. I should not say depreciated, required more fixing in order to bring them up to what they classified was a good-quality standard.

So you had landlords on the one hand that were genuinely concerned about their buildings. On the other hand, you had tenants that also looked at the legislation and saw that certain rights that were there that were protecting their interests, controlling through rent controls, I should say, they were able to budget. Once you move into a complex, it is very difficult to relocate because a landlord arbitrarily decides I want to increase rent by 5, 6, 7 percent or whatever it might be. So for the tenant the rent control was a positive thing.

Mr. Speaker, as someone that can recall campaigning back in 1981 in the Fort Rouge area, I can very vividly recall the passion of tenants and the voters at the time saying that we want and we support rent control. I think that, in most part, political parties virtually since the mid-eighties have been very supportive of rent control and continue to be.

One of the things that I found as the critic back then was that if you got complaints or received complaints from landlords and you received complaints from the tenants, and they are all somewhat interrelated to a certain degree in terms of conflict, it somewhat eased the mind in the sense that we had a feeling that it was being fair because we were hearing from both sides, Mr. Speaker.

When I look at the legislation that we have before us, it is actually fairly substantial. I would be very much interested in seeing in terms of what sort of response that we get from the public going into the committee, ultimately believing that any time you change The Residential Tenancies Act, Mr. Speaker, that you want to ensure that there is that balance that takes place, that the landlord and the tenants and their interests are both being addressed.

I met a landlord the other day that was concerned about water, Mr. Speaker, huge water bills. We do have slum landlords, but we also have some bad tenants. We need to recognize that fact and not put others into a disadvantaged situation. So that is why when we look at legislation of this nature, on the surface it appears to be good.

We would like to see it be able to go to committee so that we can hear presentations. Hopefully, the government has done its homework and has looked and canvassed before bringing this legislation before us.

* (16:30)

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 38, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act.

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

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the list of ministers required for concurrence on Wednesday.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I would like to announce the following bills will be referred to Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, Thursday, 6:30 p.m.: 9, 11, 24, 37, 38, and 25, referred to Standing Committee on Human Resources, 6:30, Thursday night.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the following bills will be referred to a meeting of the

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs for Thursday evening at 6:30 p.m.: Bill 9, Bill 11, Bill 24, Bill 37, Bill 38 and Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, on Thursday evening to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, also at 6:30 p.m.

As previously agreed, we will go now into concurrence. The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Committee, come to order, please. When the committee met last time the following motion moved by the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) was under consideration:

THAT the following words be added to "the full Committee": but that this House condemns the actions of the Minister of Family Services for her refusing to provide information to this House which is of a public nature, and that the minister apologize to all Manitobans for her inexcusable and insulting conduct.

The floor is now open for questions, comments.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Chair, I want to indicate to the government that, in the spirit of trying the move the business of the House along, we would like to get on with the debate on concurrence rather than simply stall the process through, you know, these types of motions. I would be prepared to withdraw this motion on the basis that the minister would come forward and provide for the House the information that was requested of her, which, I believe, is information that is of a general nature.

We do not want, Mr. Chair, I will repeat, we do not want personal information at all. Instead, we want just general information. This is a body that was funded and is funded by government. It is something that a minister asked the body to do. It is an action plan that they requested of the body. What I am asking is that if the minister were to try to cooperate with us in this Legislature, we certainly would show our good will by asking leave of the House to withdraw this motion, but I guess I have to

wait until I hear a response from the minister before we can take that action.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I yesterday acknowledged that there was a request from the opposition for a document, that I was concerned in section 17 and 18 of FIPPA. I have asked for an expedited legal opinion. I, unfortunately, have not received that opinion yet. This is an active file. We are working on the concerns. I would like to be very careful in releasing information, making sure that I have a legal opinion that would support the release. Certainly, if the opinion supports the release of the information, then we will release it. I am hoping to have that opinion very soon.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, then I suggest that the House recess until such time that the minister is able to get that response because that certainly is important. I do not want it left on the record that we are condemning a minister when, in fact, she tells me that she is prepared to table the information if it is legal to table it. I have more respect for the minister than to do that.

But, Mr. Chair, I do want to indicate that I think this is a fairly serious motion on the floor, and I do not want that as a reflection of our attitude toward a minister of the Crown if, in fact, the minister is genuinely seeking legal advice as to whether or not she can share this information. I think that would be wrong on my part and wrong on our part to do.

So, therefore, I am going to ask, Mr. Chair, that we recess the House until such time that the minister is able to table that information, which I think is pivotal to the discussions on concurrence on this matter.

* (16:40)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): On the same issue, I understood from the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) that he would be prepared to withdraw his motion when the minister was in a position to provide particular information to the House. The minister has responded by saying she is prepared to provide information. She is seeking legal advice, which the member knows from his experience in Executive Council, is a process that may take longer than all of us often would appreciate.

Secondly, she has also said that this is a work in progress. So I would suggest that, based on those acknowledgments by the minister, perhaps a preferred course of action would go on to other lines of questioning. We are going to be in concurrence for a period of time pending the receipt of the information that the member has requested and will enable us to both do our activities during concurrence as well as determine whether or not the documentation can be tabled.

The member knows full well, as I do, that in some cases information cannot be provided for third party and advice and other reasons, and I think it is prudent of the minister to ensure that those matters are respected given the sensitivity of a potential inappropriate disclosure of information. So, based on that, I am wondering if the member can—rather than adjourn the House, perhaps we should utilize the time that we have to move on to other areas pending receipt of this information that the member has indicated she will provide upon receipt.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Chair, too often what happens in a situation like this is that we have limited time in concurrence, and so we go on to other issues in the minister's area of responsibility and answers never come back to us, to this House until after the House adjourns for the season. I have had no assurance from anyone that that in fact is not going to happen, and I know that legal advice can be obtained fairly quickly. Now, the minister took under advisement this issue yesterday. She had all of yesterday. She had all of this morning. It is now 18 minutes to five o'clock. She has had most of the afternoon to get legal advice.

So, Mr. Chair, I have some questions about the efforts that are being made to seek this legal advice. You should know for the House's sake that in good faith I worked with the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) today to make sure that we would extend the time for debate on bills to allow bills to be passed so that they could be dealt with in committee on Thursday night so that we could give notice. I think there was a fairly good spirit of co-operation to try to move the agenda of the House along toward the deadline of the session.

But I am not prepared today to go much further because at some point in time a stand has to be taken. I have also indicated to the members in this House that we are prepared to withdraw this motion if, in

fact, legal advice is such that the minister cannot table any of the information. But, Mr. Chair, I am not prepared to go on with debate in concurrence on other matters until I hear that the minister has some advice for us. So it is on this basis that I am asking that the House recess until the minister can go back to her office and get some legal counsel, their best efforts in terms of advice that they may have to offer. This is not a complex matter, and I am sure that if pressed legal counsel would be able to provide her with the legal advice that she is seeking. I cannot foresee why it has taken longer than a day and we still have no answer. So, for that reason, I fear that we will gloss over this issue. It will never be resolved, and it will just drop off as the House adjourns for the season.

Mr. Chomiak: In the same spirit of co-operation moving along matters in this House, I want to reflect on what the member has indicated. The minister has committed and has taken under advisement the fact that she will provide information subject to receiving legal advice. The matter first came up about 24 hours ago, Mr. Speaker, and the member knows when he was a member of Executive Council that matters can be both complex and there are other matters that have to be attended to by civil legal services that are of an urgent nature, particularly at this point of time in the Legislature as we deal with matters of statutory amendments, et cetera.

The member knows full well that we do not have unlimited access to legal advice at all times, and the member knows full well, I think, that it can be time consuming to provide legal advice on complex issues. If it is a matter of the minister simply getting a legal opinion on a point, that is one issue, but for the member to get a legal opinion on a complex issue, a complex topic and on information that is wide ranging and varied, is a much more complex undertaking than can be done in 24 hours, even if it was on an urgent nature, Mr. Chairperson.

So I suggest that perhaps in the spirit of co-operation that the member has talked about that we move on. The member has undertaken to provide that information, has indicated they will provide it as soon as possible, and then we move on and continue the line of questioning. The member certainly has the ability to call the minister back for concurrence at some other date, some other time. We know that we will be sitting in this Chamber for a period of time yet. I think that would be a reasonable compromise

in the spirit that has been exhibited in this House this afternoon, that we move along. The minister has made a commitment to provide that information to the House when the information becomes available.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Chair, I am concerned with a remark made by the Minister of Industry—the Minister of Energy, sorry—in regard to this being a work in progress. So my concern is, is this just a stall tactic. Is there actually a plan that has been made and has been submitted to the minister? She says that there has, but now is this just a stall tactic? Is this just a work in progress that is not completed, and if it is not completed, then there is still funding. We know that the funding is still flowing to the corporation under question here, and therefore, we do not have much confidence to think that there will be a legal opinion coming. Perhaps it is just a method to deflect this even further because there is no plan.

We are not asking for something that is very complex, as the Minister of Energy was trying to make this a complex issue. It is not a complex issue. We are simply asking. We know that in the operational review report that there is information in there. We know that there is information about board members and their remuneration. We know that there is information around insurance. We know that there is information around policies and procedures, tenant files. We know there is information in regard to leasing and tenant relations. We know there is information in regard to maintenance and accounting principles. So we have information already that is not deemed to be a private matter, Mr. Chair. We are simply asking for the other part.

This is the operational review. We are simply asking what the response, the plan that was submitted to the minister in response to this. It is not complicated. We are simply asking what was the response. We are not asking for private information here. To go to the legislative counsel and get an interpretation on two clauses in the freedom of information act should simply not take this long.

*(16:50)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, this report, the operational review, I believe, was provided to the minister some months ago. The minister should have legitimately expected that there would be requests for providing this document, that

it is a public process. The government should have been ready, quite frankly. There is just no reason for this kind of delay in providing this document. I mean there is a lot of experience under this sort of circumstance on the other side of the House. They have been there for five years and eight months. This is a straightforward operational review and it should be made public. There is not the sort of complexity that the Minister of Energy (Mr. Chomiak) is talking about.

There may be some issues of confidentiality and sensitivity that do need to be dealt with but this should have been done based on discussions, quite frankly, in planning that the minister had some months ago with her staff at the time that this first came up. It should not have had to wait for this time to now go and get a legal opinion on something that the minister should have been prepared for because this is the expectation when we are dealing with issues like this before the Legislative Assembly that such documents would be made available and there should be public scrutiny around these sorts of actions.

Mr. Derkach: I am really in sort of a dilemma here because as I have indicated in our attempt to be cooperative in how this House moves along and in how we deal with these matters. I know the minister does not respect the concurrence process. She as much as said that yesterday, but this is an important process to us as opposition. We cannot continue with this kind of attitude. Our responsibility to ratepayers, to taxpayers, to people out there is to ensure that we hold government accountable. That is our job, and in doing that we have to have certain information to be able to ask appropriate questions.

Right now we are stalled. We do not have information on a very important issue. We have asked for that information. The minister should have known, as the member from River Heights said, that this kind of information would be requested and she should have been prepared. It obviously shows, again, the chaos that is occurring in her department because not only is she not prepared, it appears that her department is not prepared to give her the information that we are requesting. So, Mr. Chair, it is a sad state and a sorry state of events.

I should not be reflecting on the House leader, but I think there was a fair attempt to move the

agenda of this House forward today in my meeting with the House leader. We moved, I think, five bills through today to ensure that our legislation could proceed to the next stage. Mr. Chair, our attitude is that we want to fulfil our obligations as we had signed on to them with the government, but it makes the job very, very difficult when I cannot get members to co-operate.

Therefore, I cannot go on with our concurrence debate until such time that I have this information, so I am going to leave it in the lap of the government to tell us where we are going.

Mr. Chomiak: I am advised that the minister attempted to obtain a legal opinion today, but I have got assurances that there will be a legal opinion available by tomorrow, so it seems to me that—or as soon as possible. It seems to me that on that undertaking it makes sense, with that on the record, to continue.

I again add, particularly to the member of River Heights, that (a) one does not seek legal opinions on every single matter that comes across one's desk—the member knows that from his experience in Executive Council; and that (b) these matters can be complex and can be difficult to obtain. However, the member has indicated that she had hoped for it today and anticipates that that legal opinion will be available tomorrow. I believe we are meeting in concurrence tomorrow so I would hope that ought to deal with the issue and allow us to effectively utilize time this afternoon and tomorrow while we are in this Chamber.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I am afraid that does not provide any satisfaction. I have called for two ministers to be in concurrence tomorrow. In agreement with the House Leader, and in exchange for other issues to be dealt with, we agreed that we would have concurrence tomorrow, but that concurrence session would be dealing with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), and the minister of industry, trade and economic development.

That does not mean, Mr. Chair, that we can indeed continue with the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) tomorrow because we have already made our commitment, and so I find this a very difficult situation. I do not want to move on the motion right now. I am only saying that because I want to save the respect of this House, or keep it

intact, so to speak. I am serious about the motion, but because we cannot seem to move forward, I would suggest that this House adjourn until the minister can find that information for us and then we can move ahead.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, it would seem to be a real disappointment if we have to adjourn because the government cannot provide the information. Surely the government can. You know this report has been around for several months. *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker, I think I have the floor.

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

Mr. Gerrard: This report has been around for several months. This government is clearly stalling. We can only go so long because we have only got so many days left, and I think it is about time that we had some action from this government. If we have to adjourn, that is too bad because we should be working here, and if we are adjourning really because the government is the one who is stalling here and not providing information which should be provided.

Mr. Derkach: The member from River Heights does have an issue here, and he is correct, but once again the government has shown that they are not capable of continuing a reasonable debate in this House to progress toward a contract that was signed on by both the government and ourselves.

Mr. Chair, it is okay to sign contracts, but if you do not want to fulfil your obligation toward them, it makes them meaningless. It is this kind of action that is going to again motivate the opposition not to ever sign another agreement with government or not to live up to an agreement, because the government cannot seem to live up to its end of the bargain.

So, in the spirit of trying to continue this debate on Estimates, I am going to ask the House leader to call the minister of highways forward. I am hoping that he will consider that this is not the end of calling the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) to answer questions, but, indeed, it is a postponement of her concurrence questions.

I am going to ask with leave of the House and with concurrence, of course, from the member from

River Heights that we proceed with questions of the minister of highways who is also on the list.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it agreed that we proceed by calling on the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux)? *[Agreed]*

The floor is now open for questions on Transportation.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask just a few questions of the minister of highways here in regard to some of the issues that have been raised and to see if he can indicate to me some of the Building Manitoba program, and just how much dollars he expects to be raised under that program for his department.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Just to put on the record, Mr. Chairperson, that it is the Department of Transportation and Government Services—

Mr. Chairperson: —and Government Services.

* (17:00)

Mr. Lemieux: The reason I do that, Mr. Chairperson, is because Transportation is more than just highways. We talk about bridges, and we are talking about roads, and we are talking about airports, planes, trains, automobiles. So it is more than just the highways themselves.

I have to tell you that this year, as Minister of Transportation, and having the members opposite vote on the budget and having a \$16-million increase to the transportation infrastructure part of the budget was very, very important, or a \$16-million increase was tremendous. I know the member opposite, my critic for Transportation, and I have had these discussions before with regard to the issues related to gas tax. Prior to the vote that took place in Ottawa a number of days ago, I pointed out to the member that I wanted to know where the federal Conservative Party sat with regard to giving more of the gas-tax revenues back to the province of Manitoba because, as we know, Prime Minister Martin allocated and made assurances that the cities and municipalities would be receiving monies from the federal government with regard to that.

In Manitoba alone, I might add, it is approximately \$160 million the federal government takes out of Manitoba in motive fuel taxes and puts

back approximately \$13 to \$15 million. I know we do not begrudge the municipalities. In fact, we applaud the municipalities for their hard work to ensure that they get dollars and receive dollars rightfully so in order to improve the roads and bridges, for example, in the city of Winnipeg. I just want to say though that the province of Manitoba has approximately 19 000 kilometres of highways. The province is certainly wanting to receive a larger portion of motive fuel taxes coming to the province because I know every time I see the members, and I do not want to be too pointed on this, but you have the MLA who represents the Winkler area, you have the MLA for Steinbach and many other MLAs including many of my own MLA colleagues who are also having a lot of challenges in their constituencies and wanting more dollars being put toward transportation.

I agree, but the fact of the matter is the federal government is sitting with a large pot of money from motive fuel taxes, and we feel as a province that more of those dollars should be coming back. We had a consultation process that took place in Manitoba, the 2020 process, transportation vision process that took place, and the MLA for Transcona, the MLA for Selkirk and the MLA for Flin Flon participated on that with many of the stakeholders. A lot of the recommendations that they kept hearing coming from those consultations was that you need to get more money from the federal government whether that is a federal Conservative government, a federal NDP government or a federal Liberal government, they need to give more.

So, whether it is the member from Lac du Bonnet wanting Highway 340 or many of the other MLAs wanting work done on Highway 304 or other highways, Highway No. 2, Highway 200, they know the need. We could go through a long list, which we do not have time, quite frankly, Mr. Chairperson, today to be able to do that. But the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) knows that the need is great. Not pointing the finger at any particular government, successive governments have not addressed the transportation infrastructure deficit.

We as the government are trying to and have since being elected in '99. Arguably, we have not done enough, I know, but on the one hand we are getting arguments from members opposite about, you are spending too much, and then the next day they ask us to spend more because they want more roads

and bridges done, so it is a real dilemma. We are doing the best we can, Mr. Chairperson, to try to address the situation, and quite frankly, we need a partnership that is developed between the federal government and ourselves to address this infrastructure deficit.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Chairman, I believe the question I asked was can the minister tell me how many dollars there are in the Manitoba building fund for roads for Manitoba for the coming year.

He went all over the map in regard to how many dollars the federal government has got, how much gas tax. He repeated those answers. I think the minister and I have had quite a few discussions in regard to that, so I would not ask those questions again, but this was specifically to the Building Manitoba Fund, that they were announced. I wonder if he could indicate to me how many dollars they feel that they will have in that fund for the Transportation section of government.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Chairperson, there are other departments where the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) or other ministers, Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade, I believe, that dealt with the Building Manitoba Fund. I could certainly take a look and see what dollars are designated, but I do not have that at my fingertips today.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister tell us where the funds will come from in that fund?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I tried to be delicate, Mr. Chairperson, but that is not within my department, within my purview. I will certainly try to acquire as much information as I can for the member. I will be pleased to pass that on to him.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate how much money will be raised by the gas taxes that were talked about in the budget? There was a program put forward, and they talked about 2 cents a litre equivalent of gas, 1 cent on diesel, or 3 on gas and 2 on diesel. Can he clarify that for me and indicate what it would be used for?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Chairperson, I will be pleased to talk to the Minister of Finance to see what kind of dollar figures we are talking about.

Mr. Maguire: So the minister does not know how many dollars would be used from that fund for Transportation?

Mr. Lemieux: What I do know, Mr. Chairperson, is that we have a \$16-million increase and the members opposite voted against it, and yet they want all kinds of highways and transportation infrastructure within their constituencies dealt with. But, on the other hand, when there is an increase with regard to transportation in this year, arguably one of the largest increases in recent time, they vote against it. I mean, they cannot have it both ways.

I know the member from Lakeside said, "Oh, yes, when you are in the opposition, you absolutely can have it both ways." Well, we are having a discussion with regard to finances, the amount of dollars going to Transportation. I know the member opposite feels quite strongly that more dollars should go into the system. I would tend to argue as well that that needs to be done, but over time it will have to be addressed.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister tell me if any funds out of the Building Manitoba Fund will be used for Transportation?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Chairperson, members opposite had an opportunity to speak to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and others with regard to this particular area, and I am sure they will have an opportunity again to be able to address it. The Minister of Finance is probably more knowledgeable with regard to this particular area than I, and I would ask the member opposite to direct the question to the Minister of Finance or I can try to obtain the information for him.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Chairman, it seems kind of odd because the minister has always indicated that we should be getting more money back from the federal government in regard to the taxations that go out of Manitoba to the federal government. I could not agree with him more on that statement, but it seems to me that if funds are going to be put into a Building Manitoba Fund from fuel taxes, and motivation in those areas, that would he not think that, you know, when I ask a reasonable question of how many of those dollars will be used for Transportation, does he not think that any of them should be?

* (17:10)

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Chairperson, what I can advise is that municipalities will have municipal dollars for

infrastructure and roads because of the Building Manitoba Fund. All the municipalities that I have met with certainly have their own challenges with regard to infrastructure. I mean, rolled over year over year, they are going to have more dollars to be able to put into their own infrastructure challenges.

I know that the member opposite also has talked to municipalities and had this discussion with a lot of the municipalities with regard to their challenges. I know that all the roads they have and the bridges they have, when the previous government offloaded a lot of roads in the mid-nineties, the previous government, that is, not the members opposite, because many of them have changed since 1999, but when the government of the day, the Conservative government in the mid-nineties, offloaded a lot of municipal roads, that is something that they had to do, they found that those roads were more suited to being municipal roads.

So they have their challenges and, I am advised, approximately 2000 kilometres' worth of highways were, essentially, offloaded onto the municipalities of the province. So we are hoping that the Building Manitoba Fund will be able to assist in many, many different ways, but I noticed that, I believe, anyway, that you have a lot of organizations that certainly want the federal government to come to the table with regard to more dollars, not just to the municipalities or cities and towns, but also to be providing the provinces, the provinces themselves, with more dollars.

I know the member opposite has a lot of influence on his federal colleagues and there will be an election someday and should the federal government be a Conservative government, I would like to hear from them, to see where they stand on this, on the motive fuel tax and gas taxes back to the province, because right now they are hiding in the weeds and not saying anything about it. We know the federal government, where they are standing, and they are looking at all the options and they are looking at, they know the provinces are having challenges on the transportation side. We are just saying there needs a national vision coming out of Ottawa.

I know the member opposite has a lot of influence on a lot of the members of Parliament for Manitoba, but not only here, but could have a say with regard to other members of Parliament from the

Conservative party and should get a commitment out of them to find out where they stand on giving the provinces more motive fuel tax in years to come.

Mr. Maguire: Well, I would agree with the minister on one thing. Government will change some day, and I agree that the next federal government should be a Conservative government. Many people tell me the same thing here in Manitoba, that the next government in Manitoba should be a Progressive Conservative government, and I believe that it will be. The minister has even indicated that, in some of his presentations to me in the past, he knows that the government will change in Manitoba, and I guess the difference between him and me is that I believe it will happen sooner than he does.

Mr. Chairman, I find it very interesting that, as I said earlier, the minister indicated in his rambling comments in the reply to my first simple question that there is \$160 million leaves the province in fuel taxes going to the federal government every year and \$15 million comes back now, you know, so therefore, obviously, we agree that there should be more, that these tax dollars that are collected, if there are dollars collected on taxes on fuels, they should be used for the development of roads and highway systems and infrastructure projects in the province of Manitoba, but then, when we come to a Building Manitoba Fund that the government has announced, where they have indicated that they will use some of those funds for roads, and some of those funds do come from fuel taxes, can the minister not give me some indication of how many dollars would be in that fund?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Chairperson, no matter how you cut it, it is an increase and it is going to be year over year. The municipalities are going to be gaining, which is great. I think that they have applauded that. That is why you have got the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and others saying that they applaud more money coming to them as municipalities.

I have to tell you that we are, I believe, the first government in the country to bring in legislation that is saying that our motive fuel tax, our road fuel tax, will be spent on transportation infrastructure. All of that money will be spent. Other provinces do not say that. They collect the money, but they do not earmark it, and they are not putting it toward transportation, for example.

I will give you an example of Transportation and Government Services. Road-related expenditures in '03-04 were approximately \$230 million. This was about close to 8 percent more than the provincial road fuel tax revenue of about \$217 million. What we are saying is, even though we brought in a law to say that the motive fuel tax, the road fuel tax, that we collect is going to go into transportation infrastructure, we have put more in than what we collect. So what we are asking from our federal colleagues and federal government members is that we feel that in order to address the transportation infrastructure deficit that we currently face, we are going to need a greater input involvement from the federal level.

We need a transportation vision in this country. All the provincial ministers of Transportation have repeatedly lobbied the federal government and Minister Lapierre, and previous to him, Minister Valeri, were great. They listened to us.

The problem was that what came out of those discussions were monies to the municipalities. We do not begrudge that at all, because year over year they will be getting increasing dollars, but that is fine. Now we are saying is that there is one piece missing to the puzzle, and that is the piece that has to be addressed that should be directed more at the provinces, the dollars directed more at the provinces, Mr. Chairperson.

That is the only way we can realistically tackle the transportation deficit that we have. Through a national transportation vision we believe that this can happen, but not without the dollars coming back from the feds back to the provinces. I am not talking about just Manitoba, but there are many other provinces that are saying the same thing to the federal government and wanting a partner involved in transportation and trying to deal with the transportation infrastructure deficit that we have.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairperson, I believe, obviously, other parties in government, and I do not know what the New Democratic Party has said in its coalition with the federal Liberals in regard to how they would support these kinds of endeavours in the future, but the Conservative Party has certainly indicated that it would honour the contracts and agreements made by a Liberal government. That was prior to the budget being passed, and so now we do not have to worry about that. The government has their budget passed,

and we will determine how those issues should be dealt with in the future.

Mr. Chairman, there is, as I said, an area here where we agree that the federal government should put up funds. Can the minister indicate that he agrees that more funding should come from the federal government for these highways services?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, we have worked very, very well with the federal Liberal government. There are many positive initiatives that have come out of Ottawa from this federal government, but we will also work with any federal government, whether it is a NDP government or Conservative government, that would be in that particular position.

But I have to tell you that I know I would like to ask the member opposite is he prepared to talk to his federal counterparts to ensure that a federal Conservative government would put more monies back into the transportation system, back to the provinces, not just to the municipalities.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Chairman, when I am a member of the government and, hopefully, have the opportunity to be a Cabinet minister, and if it happens to be in the area of transportation, then I will lobby the federal government for what is required at that time. But I will have some vision in regard to how those funds are used in Manitoba and look at the management process that we go through to determine how those funds should be spent and what priorities they should be on.

Safety and economic development are two of the key areas that would have to be taken into consideration when, not only new roads but upgraded roads in Manitoba, are to be dealt with.

So, Mr. Chairman, I am not going to answer a hypothetical question that the minister has just put to me, because it is my turn in this House in concurrence to ask him questions and have him try to supply us with some answers. I would look at the first thing I want to say is that there are, you know, the minister has indicated a couple of times that if we really had a national transportation vision, we could really get on with things.

* (17:20)

It would help to have a vision of where money is going to come from, from the federal government,

even though he partnered with this group or his party. Pardon me, he did not personally; I know he would not do that, but personally it is the party that he represents nationally partnered with the federal Liberals. So I mean, if anybody is supposed to have a relationship, you would think it would be he who would not have to go cap in hand to try to convince them to put more funds into these areas.

Can the minister tell me if there are any other sources of revenue that he feels he would look at seeking rather than just continuing to call on the federal government to put more funds into this area? I know that he and his western counterparts have put the western coalition together in regard to transportation. That is fair ball. I know that we have both agreed that there need to be dollars coming from the federal government on this. But can he provide me with some assurance that he is not going to just not do anything if we do not get any more federal spending on this area?

Mr. Lemieux: Transportation, I believe, is on the federal as well as provincial radar screen, which has been, quite frankly, long overdue. Education and health will always be a major priority in the country, and I understand that, and I think our citizens understand that. So there was a dilemma for, I believe, a number of years where people did not, or I should not say did not, but certainly were looking at where transportation fit with regard to priorities of citizens of this country and the citizens of Manitoba.

You do not have to look very far from this particular building to see that we have some challenges with regard to transportation and transportation infrastructure, whether it is the roads or bridges, and we are going to be addressing that through time. We have already, just by increasing the budget by \$16 million alone and wanting to tackle some of the challenges that we have.

But I have to tell you that I have heard members opposite say that they would like to put tollbooths on roads and things like that. Well, certainly, we are not looking at tollbooths on roads. I do not know if the member opposite would like to see a tollbooth right by Virden, but I know they have mentioned often that that is what they would like to do. Maybe that is something that they want to do, put a tollbooth on 18th Street in Brandon, but we are certainly not considering that.

We are looking at all of our options. We are continuing to work with all levels of government to ensure that we are fiscally prudent. We have lived with a balanced budget since we became government. We continue to live with a balanced budget. Members opposite, one day are asking to spend more, the next day they are asking us to cut. I wish they would make up their minds, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Maguire: Just to set the record straight, Mr. Chairman, no one in this House has formally asked the minister, I certainly have not as well, for tolls on any highways. He is fictitiously making up an answer that is putting words in our side of the House. If he wants to retract that, I would accept his retraction in regard to tolls on roads, tolls on Virden, tolls on Brandon. It is because of mismanagement of having to do the same road twice by the previous Minister of Transport in Brandon West, in regard to that area, that might look at why some of these issues cost so much money.

Mr. Chairman, what I am talking about, for the minister, is what are his priorities. Does he have priorities in regard to where roads should be built and how they should be funded? What is his priority for funding of transportation other than the federal government supplying him with funds? I will leave it at that for that question.

Mr. Lemieux: I know the member opposite, he can look out from his deck behind his house, and he can see that highway being twinned west of Virden, and that asphalt, the steam and the smoke rising from that asphalt, the smell of that asphalt is fantastic. I know the member opposite, the member from Arthur-Virden, is very appreciative of it because he was a strong supporter of twinning the highway to Saskatchewan, and we are doing it. But, you know, every time they vote against the budget, they are voting against projects like that.

I have to tell you, to be serious for a moment, the member raises a very important question because there have been discussions going on for a number of years, I know going back to the previous Conservative government in the nineties, about do you partner with the private sector to build roads, and how are you going to do that to ensure—in the short run, the private company might build the road, but then essentially what you are doing is you are leasing that road back from that particular company.

We have not considered that, but I know that those discussions have been going on because of the shortage of cash and the shortage of money that governments have found themselves in.

I know I mentioned about tollbooths on roads. I know the member from Arthur-Virden, certainly, I can say he has not mentioned this. He is correct, he has not. But there have been a lot of discussions because I think the frustration people are finding is that the lack of federal contributions to the pot of monies that are needed to go to Transportation infrastructure deficit are great. So it is something that those discussions have taken place over a number of years and people taking a look at the advantages of all the options. The 2020 committee that went around doing their consultation around the province was on the receiving end of a number of different suggestions from people. People made suggestions such as increasing gas tax revenues, partnering with the private sector, letting the private sector build the road and then maybe government should lease it over time. All these options were being thrown out at a lot of these meetings. It is something that this government certainly has not contemplated, looked at, having the private sector building the road and then leasing back or looking at tollbooths on roads.

I know the member opposite feels quite strongly about a lot of those issues. I am not sure where he stands with regard to tollbooths, as a party position or as he has commented on, about whether or not he feels the private sector should build the road, for example, then we should lease back, and those kinds of initiatives.

Mr. Maguire: It is unusual that the minister would be talking about tollbooths at a time when there is a potty booth on No. 1 highway in Pine Grove there that he has been dealing with quite extensively lately. If he wants to know the difference between a tollbooth and a phone booth that he has as a biffy on No. 1 highway, Mr. Chairman, I think he can probably tell what the difference is.

The federal contribution to the pot of money that is available, I am surprised the minister would even bring it up at a time when his government has been the recipient of one of the biggest transfer payments in the history of Manitoba, \$359 million, Mr. Chairman. It is embarrassing that the minister would indicate to me that, you know, well, we need to have

a bigger contribution here. We do not know where we are going to get that money.

It is in his lap. It is in his Minister of Finance's hands. If his Minister of Finance cared about this minister's department in regard to Transportation and Government Services, then his government would have taken a greater proportion of those funds and put it into highways, and \$16 million does not cut it. I mean we are looking at a \$7-billion infrastructure deficit in this province. We are looking at a \$3.4 billion, well, probably closer to a \$4-billion deficit in highways right now and maintenance itself.

So I think the minister talks about consultation. He talked about the federal government needing a national transportation vision coming out of Ottawa. Well, Manitobans have been waiting for the 2020 Manitoba Vision on highways and transportation in Manitoba for over two and a half years, and this minister is the one that indicated it would be available last September. It still is not public. So he can talk about all the consultation he wants. The tour has been made in Manitoba. The member from Transcona was the chairman of it and made the tour.

Can he not indicate to us today when he will be releasing the transport vision of 2020 for the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question. I am really surprised to hear the member from Arthur-Virden say that he does not want any more money from Ottawa for Transportation. He is saying we have enough. That is it. You have got it. We do not need any more money.

I am shocked. I am actually shocked to hear this. I have to tell you, though, once again a member opposite has raised all kinds of questions in this House to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). He raised a question to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Smith), raised a question to the Minister of Industry (Mr. Rondeau), raised a question to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), continually get their facts wrong. I will give you an example. The draft report on 2020 has been out, I understand, for two weeks, and the chairperson—you know, I understand there is a draft document out to the steering committee which they are contemplating in making their comments on. So you know I regret that the member does not know this.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5:30 p.m.,
Committee of Supply will rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House
is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m.
tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 31, 2005

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
		General Byng School Bicycle Rodeo Irvin-Ross	3102
Petitions		Constituents' Accomplishments Dyck	3102
Pembina Trails School Division–New High School Loewen	3089	Grievances Maguire	3103
Supported Living Program Goertzen	3089		
Generally Accepted Accounting Principles Lamoureux	3090		
Fort Garry Hotel Rocan	3090		
Tabling of Reports			
Annual Report of the Legal Aid Services Society of Manitoba for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004 Mackintosh	3091		
Annual Report of the Victim Services Complaints for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004 Mackintosh	3091		
Oral Questions			
Crocus Fund Murray; Doer Loewen; Selinger Loewen; Doer Hawranik; Selinger Derkach; Rondeau Derkach; Doer Gerrard; Doer Lamoureux; Selinger	3091, 3097 3092, 3096 3093 3094 3095 3095 3099 3099		
Members' Statements			
Heart of the Community Volunteer Awards Driedger	3100		
Safer Communities Awards Altemeyer	3101		
Lake Winnipeg Preservation Rocan	3101		
		General Byng School Bicycle Rodeo Irvin-Ross	3102
		Constituents' Accomplishments Dyck	3102
		Grievances Maguire	3103
		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
		Debate on Second Readings	
		Bill 9–The Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Act Loewen Lamoureux Reimer	3106 3107 3108
		Bill 11–The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Justices of the Peace) Goertzen Lamoureux	3109 3112
		Bill 24–The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Cost of Credit Disclosure and Miscellaneous Amendments) Rocan Lamoureux	3113 3115
		Bill 25–The Workers Compensation Amendment Act Cummings Cullen	3116 3118
		Bill 37–The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act Dyck Lamoureux	3121 3121
		Bill 38–The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act Faurschou Lamoureux	3121 3123
		Committee of Supply Concurrence Motion	3124