

First 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
First Session—Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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	Riel	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa	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	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	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, September 29, 2003

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Dialysis Services

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. These are the reasons for this petition:

Kidney dialysis is an important procedure for those with kidney failure who are unable to receive a kidney transplant.

Those receiving kidney dialysis treatment are able to lead productive lives despite the continual commitment and time-consuming nature of the process.

Kidney dialysis patients from out-of-province must be able to access dialysis services while in Manitoba to sustain their health and lives.

Although a person's province of origin covers all of his or her dialysis costs while she or he is visiting Manitoba, individuals receiving dialysis are currently unable to visit this province due to the lack of dialysis nurses to oversee the procedure.

The travel restrictions placed on out-of-province dialysis patients due to the growing nursing shortage in Manitoba's health care system presents concerns regarding freedom of movement and quality of life for those on dialysis.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health to consider enhancing training programs for dialysis nurses in Manitoba, such that staffing shortages in this area are filled.

To request the Minister of Health to consider the importance of providing short-term dialysis services for out-of-province visitors to Manitoba.

Signed by Bernie Dolinski, John D. Vagi, Brian Smith and others.

Mr. Speaker: According to Rule 132(6), when a petition is read, it is deemed to be received by the House.

Supported Living Program

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): 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.

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 and many families 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 (Mr. Caldwell) 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.

* (13:35)

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 special-needs dependants at home versus paying to institutionalize them.

This is presented on behalf of F. Billaney, Virginia Ksiazek, Josie Fisher and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read, it is deemed to be received by the House.

Lake Sturgeon

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

Historically, lake sturgeon have been important to Manitoba. Lake sturgeon were once plentiful in Lake Winnipeg and the Nelson, Winnipeg, Red and Assiniboine rivers. Sturgeon Creek, in the west end of Winnipeg, was once a sturgeon spawning ground. Male sturgeon do not reach sexual maturity until they are 15 to 20 years of age and females 25 to 33 years of age. Mature males spawn every one to three years and females spawn every four to six years.

Lake sturgeon have increasingly been caught in the Red River by anglers and in domestic nets.

Overharvesting has depleted the population of lake sturgeon.

Manitoba and North Dakota have attempted to re-establish lake sturgeon in the Red River but with limited success.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Ashton) to consider implementing a

conservation closure for lake sturgeon in the Red River, including its tributaries from the St. Andrews Locks to Lake Winnipeg.

Presented by N. Claydon, D. Houston, A. Shewchuk and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with Rule 132(6), when a petition is read, it is deemed to be received by the House.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations First Report

Mr. Daryl Reid (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Committee on Crown Corporations.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings:

Your committee met on Wednesday, September 24, 2003, at 6:30 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration:

Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the year ended March 31, 2002

Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the year ended March 31, 2003

Committee Membership:

Your committee elected Mr. Reid as the Chairperson.

Your committee elected Ms. Melnick as the Vice-Chairperson.

Substitutions received prior to commencement of the meeting:

*Mr. Dewar for Mr. Maloway
Hon. Mr. Smith for Ms. Korzeniowski
Hon. Mr. Sale for Hon. Mr. Selinger
Mr. Reid for Mr. Schellenberg
Mr. Bjornson for Mr. Struthers
Mrs. Mitchelson for Mr. Reimer
Mr. Tweed for Mrs. Stefanson*

Officials Speaking on Record:

Mr. Bob Brennan, President and Chief Executive Officer

Mr. Vic Schroeder, Chairman

Reports Considered and Adopted:

Your committee considered the Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the year ended March 31, 2002, and has adopted the same as presented.

* (13:40)

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the following: The Property Registry Annual Report of '02-03, the Companies Office Annual Report of '02-03, the Vital Statistics Agency '02-03 Annual Report, the Automobile Injury Compensation Appeal Commission Annual Report of '02-03, the Residential Tenancies Commission Annual Report of '02, the Residential Tenancies Branch Annual Report of '02 and the Manitoba Securities Commission '03 Annual Report.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following annual reports: Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs Annual Report '02-03, Manitoba Water Services Board Annual Report '02-03 and Conservation Districts of Manitoba Annual Report '02-03.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2002-2003 Annual Report for the Manitoba Film and Sound Recording Development Corporation.

I am also pleased to table the 2002 Annual Report for The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, copies of which have been previously distributed.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge to my left where we have with us Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, the former Member for St. Norbert.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Sunrise School Division
Labour Dispute**

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, just prior to the last election a member of Treasury Board, Mr. Lloyd Schreyer, was directed to contact MAST to tell them that the Government was interested in settling the Sunrise labour dispute and they were also interested in putting money on the table to do so.

The Education Minister (Mr. Lemieux) says it was to help the children. The Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) says that the deal was clean because nobody knew, Mr. Speaker, that there was going to be an election call just days later.

If this arrangement was as innocent and clean as they are indicating, Mr. Speaker, one has to wonder why they refuse to tell us who directed Mr. Schreyer to cut the deal. It is a simple question for the Premier: Who directed Mr. Schreyer to cut the deal to put the money on the table and to settle the dispute? Who directed him?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has answered a number of

questions over the last week or so, information such as the agreement included \$2 for every \$1 from the school division itself. Clearly, the minister has answered many of those questions previously.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Doer government used \$428,000 of taxpayers' money to try to buy an election. There was political interference in a constituency the Premier admitted that he was targeting, and his refusal to tell us who ordered Mr. Schreyer proves it. The Premier is hiding something.

Since the money was supposedly to pay for harmonized salaries and not something that was just a one-time cost, Mr. Schreyer told MAST the money the Government was offering to end the dispute would be built into the annual base budget of Sunrise, the budget that they receive from the Province.

* (13:45)

Can the Premier explain to this House and to the people of Sunrise why he changed his mind after the election, decided to flow only the extra money for a few years instead of building it into the base budget? Why did he change his mind?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I understand the answer from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), it was to flow over a three-year period, and as I also recall the Minister of Finance's answer to the House previously, the agreement included money from the school division itself, \$2 for every \$1 that came from the Department of Education.

Mr. Speaker, generally there was very little discrepancy of salaries dealing with teachers which constituted 80 percent of the costs in salaries for amalgamations. There were some different spreads for various support groups. Members opposite railing on about the election or non-election, as I understand the date, this was in early April. I think members opposite will recall the election took place on June 3.

Mr. Murray: Not only did this Government interfere in a labour dispute, they broke their deal after the Premier's candidate did not win the constituency, Mr. Speaker.

Prior to the election, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Schreyer said the extra money was there to help harmonize salary and would be built into the base budget, but after the election the Education Minister (Mr. Lemieux) now informs us that the extra money will only flow for a few years. After that, it will be up to the taxpayers of Lac du Bonnet to pay for the higher salaries through increasing education taxes.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for the Premier to come clean. Tell us who directed Mr. Schreyer to contact MAST and cut the pre-election deal and why is it that he changed his mind after that particular candidate lost that constituency?

Mr. Doer: You know one should be very careful about the issue of targeted seats and election timing, Mr. Speaker, because we, as any good party would, have never subscribed to the theory that ridings are yellow-dog ridings. We have always subscribed to the theory that every riding should be competitive across Manitoba. Secondly, the—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, members opposite should recall that the tax increases in that school division, or the variation of that school division with the old Springfield section, were close to 60 percent over the period of time members opposite were in government. We have flattened out the tax increases and we continue to work in a way to try to support students, teachers and the ratepayers.

If members opposite want to know the politically easy route to take, it is to live with the status quo. The more difficult route to take politically is to make changes in the long term by reducing the number of school divisions for the province of Manitoba. That took political courage, Mr. Speaker, not like members opposite.

Sunrise School Division Labour Dispute

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): The Premier (Mr. Doer), the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education (Mr. Lemieux) all continue to refuse to answer the question of who directed Mr. Schreyer to give cash up front, to

put cash on the table to help end the strike dispute in Sunrise School Division just two weeks prior to an election call.

The Minister of Finance on CJOB, on Friday, when asked what his employee promised, the Sunrise School Division stated and I quote: I am not sure of the details of that. Unbelievable.

Can the Minister of Finance honestly expect Manitobans to believe that he was not aware that his employee promised the school division half a million dollars of taxpayers' money to end this embarrassing strike dispute two weeks prior to an election?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the member from Tuxedo continues to try and develop a conspiracy theory. The elements of the conspiracy theory are that there was a preconceived notion on what day the election was going to be called and, as a result of having a preconceived notion of when the election was going to be called that there was money offered to a school division to solve the strike.

* (13:50)

Mr. Speaker, the facts are different. The strike was already in process on April 8 after the best efforts of both the employer and the employee to resolve the strike. The provincial government employee in question approached the bargaining agent for the employer and offered mediation. Mediation is a very commonly used tool to resolve disputes where both parties cannot come to a resolution themselves. As part of that mediation there was a financial settlement as well.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance said he is not sure of the details of what his employee promised, yet stated and I quote: The Minister of Education (Mr. Lemieux) is working on that. If the Minister of Finance does not know what his own employee agreed to on behalf of the taxpayers of Manitoba, then perhaps the Minister of Education might be able to enlighten us on this. Did the Minister of Education direct Mr. Schreyer to promise the money into the base financing of Sunrise School Division to end an embarrassing strike dispute in

Sunrise School Division just two weeks prior to an election call?

Mr. Selinger: Once again, the member tries to construct a conspiracy that does not square with the facts. Mediation was offered. Both parties voluntarily entered into the mediation process. That was their choice. If they had said they did not want mediation that would have been the end of the discussion and the strike would have taken its course, but both parties voluntarily entered into the mediation process.

Mr. Speaker, the mediator worked with them to find a solution. The solution included a financial contribution of two thirds of the resources by the school division, and we must remember that one component of that school division was the former Agassiz which had experienced serious financial difficulty before. The remaining third was made up over three years by the Minister of Education's Schools Grants program. So a solution was found that both parties were not entirely happy with but they felt was in the best interest of children.

Mrs. Stefanson: We all know that the Premier (Mr. Doer) wanted to get this embarrassing strike dispute off the table before he called an election.

My question for the Minister of Finance then, seeing as though the Minister of Education (Mr. Lemieux) nor himself can answer who directed this employee of the Minister of Finance to do this: Did the Premier direct him to do this, to make this call, or was the Minister of Finance acting alone?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, when a labour dispute is at a stage where up to 2000 children out of 2700 in the school division do not have access to bus service, which was an important element of providing education in that semi-rural area of Manitoba, then it is fairly common practice for government officials to contact the bargaining agents, in this case the employer's bargaining agent, and to offer assistance.

In this case, the assistance that was offered was mediation. That is fairly standard and has occurred under all governments which have been in government in this Legislature. There is

nothing unusual about that and the member's attempts to construct a conspiracy theory out of that really do not hold water.

Sunrise School Division Labour Dispute

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, the answers to questions today and in previous weeks are absolutely absurd.

Mr. Speaker, Lloyd Schreyer did not pick up the phone and dial MAST on his own. Very simple question: Who directed Lloyd Schreyer to call MAST and put money on the table? Who?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): The other thing that is important to remember here is the members, as part of their conspiracy theory, are trying to suggest that we did this special treatment because it was a swing seat. In fact, I have asked members to consider if there had not been any assistance of mediation offered the members would have then said you are ignoring us because it is a Conservative seat. They like to have it both ways.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, what was offered to the school division employer-employees was a service that is commonly offered to people that cannot resolve a dispute under their own efforts. This offer of service is fairly standard in this province. In this case it was voluntarily entered into by both the employers and the employee group.

* (13:55)

Mrs. Mitchelson: But it seems like nobody wants to take responsibility for Lloyd Schreyer. The Minister of Education (Mr. Lemieux) has disowned himself from Mr. Schreyer. The Minister of Finance, whose employee Mr. Schreyer is, is afraid to stand up and say I directed him. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has not answered the question.

Will someone show some leadership, take some ownership over taxpayers' dollars and indicate who directed Lloyd Schreyer to contact MAST and put money on the table for Sunrise School Division?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we have never shied away from the fact that we offered a service to

this labour dispute that would put children back in school. We think it is a good idea for children to be in school when they have two months in the school year to go. We think it is a good idea for bus services to be available when 2000 of the 2700 children require a bus service to attend their classrooms.

Yes, we have said that this government employee went out to offer assistance. This government employee is a professional labour relations expert. He offered them mediation, a fairly common service. Then he worked with both parties to find a financial solution spread over three years that was affordable by the employer and allowed the employees to go back to work and more importantly, allowed the kids to go back to school.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has finally said the collective "we." Can the Minister of Finance today tell us who is the collective "we"? Is it the Minister of Education and the Minister of Finance and the Premier, or who is it? How high did the direction come from to put money on the table to solve the issue at Sunrise School Division?

Mr. Selinger: Once again, they want to construct a conspiracy theory where there was a pre-conceived date for the election—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

I ask the co-operation of all honourable members. We need to be able to hear the questions and the answers.

Mr. Selinger: Once again, Mr. Speaker, they are trying to construct a theory that because there was a fixed date on an election, an employee went out with a sack of money to solve a problem. In fact, the facts contradict that. The facts are that the employee went out to offer mediation. Mediation was voluntarily entered into. The mediator did a good job with both parties. They found a solution that was spread over three years. Two thirds of that solution was paid for by the employer, the school division in question.

Regional Health Authorities Administrative Costs

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, in 1999, the Minister of Health said he

was so disgusted with the high administrative costs of the two Winnipeg Regional Health Authorities, so he forced them to amalgamate in order to decrease the administrative costs.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health then explain why the WRHA administrative costs have tripled from \$5 million in 1999 to \$16 million today?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): First, I want to indicate we are very pleased that we were able to reduce the number of vice-presidents when there were two regions in one city from 14. We cut that in half, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the WRHA has taken on a number of province-wide programs that members opposite did not do when they were in office: a province-wide palliative care program that is co-ordinated under the WRHA; taking in the VON nurses under the WRHA; taking in Deer Lodge Centre under the WRHA; putting in place province-wide standards with respect to patient care; putting in place nurse-recruitment initiatives, something that members opposite had totally the opposite of; and, in addition, a whole number of central services that had been done by individual institutions and hospitals.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to remind the minister that I am asking questions about administrative costs, not program costs.

Since the NDP formed government, administrative costs to run all of the regional health authorities has doubled to \$37 million. While the minister was disgusted with these administrative costs in 1999, today he calls this, and I quote, a goofy story.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health what he intends to do about these skyrocketing costs. If he truly feels that this is a goofy issue, does he intend to do anything at all? What is his plan to deal with these rising administrative costs under his watch?

Mr. Chomiak: Last week, the members quoted the CIHI, the independent, third-party body that does national reviews of all expenses across the country. In 1999-2000, CIHI said administrative

costs for the province of Manitoba in health care were \$195 million. In 2002-2003, they are \$179 million, Mr. Speaker, which is down \$16 million from when members opposite were the government of Manitoba.

Mrs. Driedger: I would just like to remind the minister that these are all line items out of the audited reports of his regional health authorities.

As Acting Minister of Health on Friday, the Industry Minister (Ms. Mihychuk) rejected our call for a review of regionalization saying that it would waste time and energy on something that is not needed. In another interview on that same day, related to her own department, the Minister of Industry said and I quote: I think it is important to re-evaluate government programs, and, if they do not work, cancel them.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health: Will he waffle like the Industry Minister, or is he going to do the right thing today and call for a review of the regional health authorities of this province?

* (14:00)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, CIHI, the national, independent, third-party body that also did a review of all hospital administration costs across the country, showed that Manitoba had the third-lowest hospital administration costs in the entire country, point one.

Point two is we have taken the regions and now put in place performance deliverables, that is, standards in contracts in recognition of what came out of the Thomas inquiry, et cetera, to match performance and output, something that was never done in this province but allows us to measure outputs in the region. We started that process. I think it is worthwhile seeing that process through to the end.

Finally, when one reviews what happened in Toronto regarding SARS, et cetera, one will see that we are far better off with a regionalized system than hundreds and hundreds of agencies administering health across the province.

Assiniboine Regional Health Authority Review

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, in the last few weeks, we have had

several representations from communities across Manitoba wishing to speak and present to the Minister of Health regarding doctor shortages. The Minister of Health, under pressure from all sides, announced the hiring of Doctor Cram to perform a review of the doctor services in the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority. On the weekend, we learned that Doctor Cram has resigned and the review will now be done by the Office of Rural and Northern Health.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is quite simple: Can the minister tell Manitobans how much Doctor Cram or the office are being offered on top of that to perform this review?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): As I indicated to the member this morning when we discussed this topic during concurrence debate, we asked Doctor Cram to take a look at the historical trends of doctor recruitment, to review the best doctor recruitment and retention practices through new information and recommendations from organizations responsible and to provide realistic recommendations as to how to best improve this situation, even though there are more doctors in that region than there were when members opposite were in government, even though we recorded more doctors, even though we expanded the training of doctors.

We asked Doctor Cram to review that. Subsequent to that, Mr. Speaker, given the number of community meetings and the number of outreach and the number of hours expected, Doctor Cram, because he has a viable family practice, felt that he could not devote that kind of time and energy to the more enhanced, expanded role.

Mr. Tweed: It is obvious with 33 out of 42 doctors leaving rural Manitoba in the last four years that this Government has a problem.

It is very obvious, Mr. Speaker, that Doctor Cram agreed to perform this review, so, obviously, the terms were discussed, and I wonder why he is not prepared to present them today.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the Office of Rural and Northern Health has a budget of half a million dollars, and we know that the minister is increasing this amount to cover this review. The question for the minister is: Can the minister

table the terms of reference and how much more money is being allocated to perform this review?

Mr. Chomiak: What the member fails to note when he talks about his numbers is that there are more doctors today in that region than when the member opposite was working on recruiting doctors.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have expanded enrolment at the college. We have expanded residency positions. We have put in place an IMG program to train foreign medical graduates, and we are providing bursaries to doctors who are residents or in the final year of their studies to go to rural or remote areas to practice, all things talked about for a decade but that went the entire opposite way, which was why for the first time since 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, we are increasing every year the net doctors in this province, as opposed to the 1990s when we lost doctors every single year, overall, overall and overall.

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Speaker, we know that the Health Minister signed a deal with a doctor and the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority to perform a service. Unfortunately, today he is unable or unprepared to share that with Manitobans. We know he has now assigned that to the Office of Rural and Northern Health, and he, today, cannot provide us with terms of reference or how much increased money is going to flow to provide that service which they were mandated to do from the very start. No wonder administration costs are skyrocketing across this province in administration.

Mr. Speaker, the minister, will he now admit that the Cram sham has failed and order a review of all regional health authorities in Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I am quite prepared to table the terms of reference for Doctor Cram's review, and, as well, as I had indicated to the member this morning, I should by the end of the day have the terms of reference for the expanded review which I am prepared to share.

But I want to remind members opposite of what has happened between 1999 and now. We have increased the number of doctors. We have created the Office of Rural and Northern Health

which for 11 years the members opposite talked about. That office has been out to high schools. It has been out to secondary schools. It has met and it has taken 65 first-year medical students, put them in rural Manitoba and let them experience rural Manitoba, something that was never done.

We have over 200 doctors, Mr. Speaker, who have taken advantage of the bursaries to return service in Manitoba, and, net, we have more doctors in Manitoba than we did the year before because we have recruitment retention initiatives built into our contract, something that members whined about but never did for 11 lean years.

Department of Agriculture and Food Advertising Campaign

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, this Government continues to fail farm families stricken by BSE and drought in this province. They are continuing to waste hundreds of thousands of dollars on a self-promotional ad campaign while farmers continue to wait for weeks and weeks and weeks for cash that is supposed to flow from these same programs.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture cancel this blatantly political, self-congratulatory ad campaign and put those sorely needed dollars in the hands of farmers now?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, that is a really interesting question. On one hand, these people say they have an interest in rural Manitoba, and then they are opposed to information being provided to rural Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the advertisements that we have put in the paper regarding the programs that have been put in place are very well received. People are using the information, and they are using the programs that we have in place, particularly on the low-interest loan program that the Opposition has been so opposed to. The applications are coming in. They are being processed and cash is flowing to farmers in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, these ad campaigns do not tell farmers how to access one single

program. The pain from the BSE crisis and drought is spreading. I point to the *Hartney-Cameron Newsletter*, a publication from my constituency. An ad explains that the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission has granted a two-month extension for the fundraising effort for the Hartney Arena because, and I quote, "lower than expected ticket sales as a result of the mad cow crisis and local drought conditions." The Gaming Commission seems more aware of the crisis than the Minister of Agriculture. Will the minister cancel her BSE ad campaign, a blatant abuse of taxpayers' dollars to play her own political games, and put the money in the hands of farmers now?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member to read those ads and figure out what the programs are and then talk to his constituents about how they can access money. There is money available. There is \$100 million available through the low-interest loan program, the best loan program in the country. Producers are accessing it. I would encourage him to talk to his constituents who are short of cash right now because they cannot sell their livestock so that they would use the program.

I would encourage him to tell the producers about the drought assistance that we have put in place to help with the transportation costs to move their feed this year. I would encourage him to tell producers that Manitoba has a program that is funded only by the provincial government to top up the costs to slaughter cattle. I would encourage the member to look at those programs and help his constituents with their cash flow problems.

* (14:10)

Farm and Rural Stress Line Funding

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, they just put out an ad on the 1st of October saying farmers should save their straw for this fall.

Others are aware of this Government's shortfall. Groups such as the University of Manitoba agriculture students have been privately raising funds for the Farm and Rural Stress Line.

Yet the Government continues to waste hundreds of thousands of dollars on an advertising campaign that is not flowing money to producers. Surely the Government must see the conflict in their own actions. Will the Minister of Agriculture tell this House why private groups are now raising funds to support the supposedly government-funded Farm and Rural Stress Line?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Is this not interesting, Mr. Speaker? Now the Conservatives are defending the Farm and Rural Stress Line which they cancelled. Farmers and children and students at the university are recognizing the importance of this line. Many private organizations decide that they want to support a service that they think is important. The students at the University of Manitoba recognize this as an important service. I guess members opposite are opposed to volunteers who work to support a service that is recognized as a very important service, a service that the Conservatives cancelled. We reinstated it.

City of Winnipeg Sewer Upgrading

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that the minister had said to the City: "Fix sewers now." But, in his implementation plan, he says this means sometime sooner than 20 or 25 years. We need to know as well what the minister means when he says fix sewers. I have received complaints from Winnipeg residents who say that after a rain the Assiniboine and Red rivers stink from raw sewage being dumped into the river. Manitobans deserve a clear answer. When is the Minister of Conservation going to end the dumping of raw sewage into the Red and Assiniboine rivers?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the question because one thing we have made very clear is that we are going to clean up the Red River. We are going to do what should have happened in 1992 when the government of the day was supposed to call back the Clean Environment Commission six months later to deal with this matter. We are not going to sit idly by. We put in place licensing that will start immediately.

Mr. Speaker, we are immediately putting in water quality standards that will make sure the facilities can operate properly. We are requiring once again that there be opportunity for the public of Manitoba to have input in terms of the licensing procedure within two years. We are requiring the City of Winnipeg to bring in an environmental impact statement.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite who seems to be critical of the Clean Environment Commission, we said they did a good job but we have to go further.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the minister's report says he will recommend that the City of Winnipeg be directed to fix the sewers in some time less than 20 or 25 years. In his first answer, the minister did not even reply to whether he was going to fully eliminate dumping of raw sewage or precisely when. More gobbledy-gook from this minister.

If the *Free Press* got the story so wrong when they said "now," is the minister going to ask for a retraction from the newspaper to clarify his stance?

I ask the minister to come clean. When is the minister going to eliminate the dumping of raw sewage into the Red and the Assiniboine rivers?

Mr. Ashton: I think the member's question shows how little he understands about why the CEC commission hearings were called. In fact, in terms of dumping, because of a flaw in the system, we saw the equivalent of about 40 Olympic-size swimming pools worth of raw sewage literally dumped into the Red River. When the CEC brought in its interim report, we immediately dealt with the recommendations to be dealt with. If he will check the CEC report and our recommendations, we are going to deal with that to make sure that will not open again.

What he is presumably talking about, Mr. Speaker, is in terms of the combined sewer system which the City of Winnipeg had a 50-year plan to eliminate. The CEC said 20 to 25 years. We have said we can do better. In fact, we will. We will act immediately, but also act in the long term in dealing with that situation.

Flight Training Programs Tax Exemptions

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Smith). In order to accommodate flight training in our province, flight training programs, the purchasing of aircrafts has been exempt from paying retail sales tax. That has been the case in Saskatchewan, in Ontario and was the case here in the province.

In fact, I would like to table a letter that will expand upon the issue and ask for the minister to review it very carefully. General Aviation Incorporated had reviewed its tax situation with the provincial government on more than one occasion and had legal and accounting opinions confirming the exemption when it put together its business plan it started back in 1999.

My question to the minister is: How does he justify to the business that you are not only going to take away the retail sales tax exemption but you are going to make it retroactive?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is a proper policy to discuss individual clients' tax situation in the Legislature.

I can tell you the matter is under review by my officials. We have had representations from the industry association and my deputy minister has talked to the industry association and has invited representations from the individuals here. I just do not think it is proper ethical policy to discuss a specific case in the Legislature on tax policy.

Rural Manitoba Government Initiatives

Mr. Peter Bjornson (Gimli): As a member from a rural constituency, I know the value of rural life and understand the challenges being faced by many rural Manitobans. My question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs: Can the minister tell this House about investments, in addition to the measures taken relating to BSE, that the Government has made in rural Manitoba?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I thank my colleague for that question because I think it is important that we talk about what we have done in rural Manitoba. I can tell you that we have worked very hard on the rural economy.

We are the Government that equalized hydro rates to save rural and northern Manitoba \$15 million, opposed by the Opposition. We put \$7 million back in farm operations annually by reducing the portioning of their farmland.

Mr. Speaker, through the Department of Agriculture there have been many initiatives. Through the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs and all departments there have been initiatives to expand broadband service. There have been initiatives to develop ethanol, wind energy, solar energy, geothermal energy in rural Manitoba.

We put in place 23 Telehealth sites.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to share some information with all honourable members. When a Speaker stands, even if you are standing up and still talking, your mike is cut off. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members. If the Speaker stands and asks for order, would members please be seated.

Farm and Rural Stress Line Funding

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I think we have just seen a typical demonstration of NDP waste and what the NDP government is trying to do to play politics with a very serious farm crisis that we are facing in this province.

*(14:20)

Manitoba farmers are angry and Manitoba farmers are demanding that this Government cancel their ad campaign and put that money into a crisis line instead of an ad campaign so they will not have to go to their charitable organization to fund something that they deem is necessary in this time of crisis.

When will the Minister of Agriculture realize that the farmers are hurting out there and

pay some attention to providing proper funding to the crisis line?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Again, Mr. Speaker, very interesting. That was the Government that cancelled the Farm and Rural Stress Line. Now we are saying we should put money in. I want to inform him we, in fact, are funding the Farm and Rural Stress Line, and it is a very important service.

We have put over \$180 million that is in place through many programs that will help farm families. I would encourage the member to listen and look at the programs that we have and talk to his constituents about how they can get cash to help them through this difficult time until the border is open, until more animals start to move through the auction marts and until additional money starts to flow through the federal government's funding as the federal government has indicated through APF.

Minister of Agriculture and Food Resignation Request

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, in 1997, the then-Progressive Conservative government flowed money to people who were in crisis. In 1999, the people of Manitoba demanded that the Government of Manitoba intervene in a crisis in western Manitoba when there was flooding, and we served that need.

There was no need for a crisis line during the time of Tory administration in this government and it is time that this Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) realized that she has a responsibility to the people of Manitoba and the farmers of Manitoba, because they are hurting.

When will this minister resign and let somebody else do her job for her?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Just because the member raises his voice does not mean he is raising the level of debate in this House in terms of the issues, Mr. Speaker. He attacked us for cancelling the rural stress line when we, in fact, had to reinstate it. This Minister of Agriculture reinstated the rural crisis line that you closed. I think you should be standing up in this House

and applauding a Minister of Agriculture that reinstated that rural stress line.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Don Maye

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of speaking about a hard-working, caring, dedicated individual from Assiniboia. I am proud to inform members of the Legislature about the tremendous impact Don Maye has had on the community and at Golden West Centennial Lodge.

Mr. Speaker, Don came to Winnipeg in 1993 from St. John's, Newfoundland, to be director of spiritual care at the Salvation Army Grace Hospital. In that position, he continued to develop their Bereavement Care program and served on several committees regarding palliative care and ethics. It was very appropriate to see him at the opening of the Grace Hospital Palliative Care Centre this weekend.

While director of spiritual care, Don also was a member of the directors of pastoral care committee of Winnipeg. He was involved in the Manitoba association of interfaith pastoral care, including two years as vice-president and two years as president. Don was a member of the Canadian Association of Pastoral Practice and Education and actively represented Manitoba on the national board of that organization for two years.

In 1998, Don was appointed executive director of the Salvation Army Golden West Centennial Lodge. In this position, he was involved and concerned about the improvement in residential care through a variety of initiatives. Don led the restructuring of nursing programs to provide more consistent care for residents and better communication with resident families. He also implemented electronic charting and worked to build a beautiful outdoor garden accessible to all the residents. I have been pleased to volunteer to work with the auxiliary, barbecuing on this wonderful outdoor area on a number of occasions. Under his leadership, Golden West Centennial

Lodge was awarded three-year accreditation on two occasions from the Canadian College of Health Services.

Besides his excellent record of leadership in the workplace, Don Maye believes community involvement was essential. He has served for five years as a member of non-profit terminal health care. In spite of this busy schedule and community and workplace involvement, Don has always been accessible to residents and their families and continues to serve on the board of Hope Centre. He also has made Golden West Centennial Lodge a home for guests, volunteers, staff and residents. It feels just right. He knew everyone by name and took great time to share a few words and memories with many people. I will always remember the image of Don singing to residents on many different occasions. He really cared. He made a difference for a community and Golden West Centennial Lodge. Thank you very much.

RCMP Constable Dennis Strongquill

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Today, I arise to make a statement with respect to a ceremony that was held in my community just yesterday. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday afternoon I had the privilege of attending the cairn dedication ceremony at the Russell Community Centre in honour of late RCMP Constable Dennis Strongquill.

Members of Constable Strongquill's family, RCMP partner Constable Brian Auger, fellow RCMP officers and peace officers from various communities and organizations plus more than 450 individuals attended the moving ceremony. The cairn dedicated to Constable Strongquill featured a beautiful etching of Dennis Strongquill's face beside the Royal Canadian Mounted Police insignia and a brief inscription. The cairn dedication was part of a ceremony to commemorate all police and corrections officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Dennis Strongquill, a 52-year old father of six, was stationed with the Russell and Waywayseecappo RCMP detachment. He was killed a little less than two years ago while making a routine traffic stop just outside of the community. Two young adults were charged and

convicted with the violent and senseless murder. Acts of violence such as this cannot be tolerated in our society. Constable Dennis Strongquill worked tirelessly to protect his community and his family. Members of the Russell constituency are privileged to have been served by this courageous man. Every day, police and peace officers put their lives on the line to ensure public safety and safety of our communities. This is often a thankless job. Today, on behalf of the Assembly, I acknowledge all of their hard work and dedication. These officers deserve our respect and thanks for their selfless acts of public service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Spirit Park

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): It is with great pleasure that I share today with this Legislature a wonderful success story from the West Broadway community in Wolseley constituency.

This past Friday, I had the honour of representing our provincial government at the opening of Spirit Park, an innovative urban green space project funded in part by the Neighbourhoods Alive! program. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the West Broadway Development Corporation and in particular its Greening West Broadway program, along with key support from the City of Winnipeg, Spirit Park now stands in place of four vacant lots that once held only boarded up, derelict buildings. Instead of an eyesore and safety risk, Spirit Park now provides the energetic West Broadway neighbourhood with a children's play structure, pedestrian corridor, picnic space, attractive landscaping and two dozen urban garden plots for local citizens and their families to enjoy.

The innovative process used to create Spirit Park deserves special recognition. Rather than decide on its own what should be done with the four properties, the West Broadway Development Corporation conducted an extensive round of consultations with the local community to ask what should be done. By giving control over the outcome to the community, many local residents were engaged in an important decision-making process. This has generated significant local support for Spirit Park, as witnessed by the large turnout of over 70 people at Friday's official opening and the fact that most of the garden plots have been booked for next year already.

Mr. Speaker, our Government was pleased to provide some of the funding from the Neighbourhoods Alive! program to help make Spirit Park a reality. This support is in addition to funding already directed to other important programs in West Broadway for affordable housing, environmental improvements, building murals and renovations at Art City. By working in partnership with local communities and groups, our provincial government is not only making a positive difference in people's lives, it is also creating opportunities for local citizens to decide what those changes will be. It will be my privilege as MLA for Wolseley to witness what these innovative partnerships create in the days ahead. Thank you.

Nursing Graduates

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I rise today on a very serious matter. This past week in the *Steinbach Carillon*, a letter appeared from the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers). In the letter the MLA, the legislative assistant for the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), questioned comments that had appeared three weeks earlier that stated that nursing graduates had decreased from 500 to 200 in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the original comments to which the legislative assistant for the Minister of Health took offence came from the chief executive officer of the South Eastman Health Authority, Reg Toews. Mr. Toews was commenting on the fact that the Vita hospital was forced to close from July 25 to July 27. He noted that the number of nursing graduates had fallen in the province of Manitoba.

In his response to these comments, the legislative assistant to the Minister of Health said that these comments are out of touch. Here we see another example of a government that simply does not care, a government that is looking to point the finger of blame everywhere but at itself.

When a long-time health bureaucrat raises concerns about nursing numbers and the closure of a rural hospital, these comments should be listened to, they should be considered. Instead, the legislative assistant for the Minister of

Health takes shots at the comments of the CEO. He calls the comments out of touch.

Well, it is clear that the only persons who are out of touch are those involved in the current government. They blame the federal government for problems in Agriculture. They blame others for problems in Justice. Now they blame health officials for hospital closures and a shortage of nurses. The Government should be ashamed. Manitobans deserve better and they deserve better than the comments that appeared in the *Steinbach Carillon*.

Helen Glass Nursing School

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce the 60th anniversary celebration of the Helen Glass Nursing School, which was held at the University of Manitoba on Saturday, September 20. Those invited included special guests, former deans, directors and alumni.

The Helen Glass School was established in 1943. For 60 years since, it has been furthering teaching and preserving the art of nursing at the University of Manitoba. Graduates of the various programs that are offered by the school have advanced to become professionals in a variety of health care settings. It has, therefore, played a pivotal role in the education of many nurses throughout the province of Manitoba.

This history of the development of this faculty is one fashioned by the hard work and dedication of its staff. Over those 60 years, it has grown and expanded to include many new interesting programs which met the ever-changing needs of the health care profession.

One of the first programs offered by the faculty was a one-year certificate program for nurses. In 1963, this particular program was extended to a four-year baccalaureate for registered nurses so as to provide a more advanced general education in nursing. Seventeen years later, the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba began offering a master of nursing so as to meet the more specialized research needs of the growing nursing field.

* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker, the faculty also offers adult intensive-care courses which serve to educate nurses in the ever-changing advances relating to the medical and technological fields of nursing.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, one of the newer additions of this outstanding program is the Manitoba Nursing Research Institute which was established in 1985.

I would like to thank the Faculty of Nursing for providing such an outstanding quality of nursing education, further for helping in the formation of individuals who upon being educated at this faculty will be and are adept and skilled in providing quality health care, health care that maintains the well-being and health of all people of Manitoba.

I would also like to offer my congratulations for attaining this 60th milestone of achievement.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate in Committees of Supply in two sections.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

Concurrence Motion

* (14:30)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Doug Martindale): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 has before it for our consideration the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Chairperson. We have heard, during the last number of weeks and months, a tremendous amount of rhetoric from the Government of Manitoba, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), the Premier (Mr. Doer) and others about how they are intervening in the crisis that emerged on May 20, and since then, how they are trying to deal with the hurt that the

farm families in this province who are involved in the livestock industry, namely the ruminant industry in the province of Manitoba, and then have tried to intervene on their behalf with the announcement of numerous programs in this province, probably the likes of which we have never seen before.

However, it is also noteworthy that many of the farmers and farm groups that I meet with are telling me that most of the criteria on most of the programs that have been announced are so stringent that many of them are having a great deal of difficulty qualifying for these programs.

Secondly, this province is known Canada-wide as a cow-calf province. Most of the calves and cows are only now starting to come off pasture and will over the next two to four weeks come in and be segregated. Therefore, decisions will have to be made by those operators, those owners, when they look at their herd and decide what they will have to do in order to be able to remain viable until next year.

Mr. Chair, No. 1, they are going to or should have a long time ago, when the forage harvest took place and/or the grain harvest took place, made decisions on how and what form their feed supplies would be able to be held on their farms or acquired and brought on to the farms to be able to feed those additional numbers of cattle that they are going to have to feed this year on their farms.

I refer in large part to the minister's comments. In many, many cases and on numerous occasions she has said, I believe that the borders will open soon. The one time we came back from South Dakota, she indicated then that within a week or two she thought the borders might open. Later, at another occasion when she came back from Ottawa, she said I have reason to believe that the borders will open within a month or so. Those kinds of comments from ministers of the Crown, I think, have led in large part to maybe a false optimism that was prevalent.

Therefore, farmers were saying, well, if the border opens that quickly, we are not going to have to lay feed in for those calves that we bring off pasture. We will be able to market them.

That has proven not to be the case. There is clear evidence now that we might well be into Christmas or way beyond before any border will open to live cattle.

Mr. Chairperson, I asked the minister this past week whether she had any clear indication that Ann Veneman, the Secretary of State for Agriculture in the United States, had in fact already called the process into being and I did not receive an answer from the minister. We are quite certain that Washington has yet to even start considering the process of border opening, the assessment process and the public consultation process that is required under the American set of rules that they have implemented for themselves, which is significantly different than Canada is, by the way. Canada, I believe, adopted the recommendations of the World Health Organization when the Epizootic agreement was signed. Canada decided that our process would involve the closure of seven years of borders to countries that were proven to have had BSE in their cattle herds. So the Americans, at that time, according to Dr. Sam Holland, who was at the meeting in South Dakota with us, clearly indicated that they had a somewhat different process. Their process involved the allowance for a presentation to be made, a written presentation to be made to their government by a government that was experiencing one or two or three cases, I believe is the term that he used. Then the United States would have to make the decisions and would have to enter into a 30-to-90-day period of time of assessment. A public consultation process was part of that assessment, was required under law by that part of that assessment.

* (14:40)

The reason I raise this is because the minister has on numerous occasions clearly stated that she believed that the borders would open soon. If the minister would have studied the process under which the Americans operate and the requirement by Canada to even start the negotiations, she would have noted that until there was public notification in the United States of a process starting, nothing would happen, and that, of course, was the case.

Mr. Chair, I think the opening to boxed beef is an indication of how significantly problematic

an issue can become in the White House if issues are brought top down instead of the normal route of presentation to the White House via means of legislation and/or senatorial provisions of notification. I believe, if the information I have is correctly given, which I have no doubt it is, it was the president that brought the issue to the White House. I guess that it caused some significant debate and concern and took much longer than had been anticipated to open even for boxed beef. I believe now, under the terms of reference that they have adopted, it might take some significant time before even the consideration is made.

Therefore, I think it is unfortunate that the minister has left some people, many people, I would say, with the expectation that the borders would soon open and they would not have to lay in feed supplies for their calves that they were coming off the pasture. Many of them have sold good quality alfalfa.

As a farmer told me in southeast Manitoba just last week, he said, I sold my second-cut, quality alfalfa at a hundred bucks a tonne. He said it is good money for good quality, second-cut alfalfa.

However, I think now we are asking ourselves, should we have kept those feed supplies in Manitoba to feed the additional herds that we, obviously, are going to have to feed? I think the minister has caused herself and her Government some difficulty in not recognizing soon enough that there was a strong possibility that we would have to feed those additional herds. There could be as many as a half a million extra head of cattle and maybe even more fed in Manitoba this winter than we have traditionally fed.

If the markets will determine whether the cattle will go into lots outside of this province and the border to the U.S. does not open, I think that will fairly soon become very clear what then will happen to prices and farmers will then have to make the choice whether they will attempt to feed those cattle on their farms or not.

I think the minister should have been, and I think probably was, made aware that this eventuality could in fact come to be. I think it is important to note then that the minister should have

been astute enough to recognize that very early on and be very careful and make very carefully guarded comments in regard to border openings and/or perceived border openings.

I think Doctors Holland and Preston both made it very clear what Canada's rules were at that meeting, and what the American rules were. We were not left with any misconception about that when we left that meeting.

Similarly, I think at other times there have been clear indications that the Americans are going to be very cognizant of their markets and how they are able to access those markets. The Japanese are a strong customer of the United States. If the Japanese are telling the Americans that they will not buy cattle that might include Canadian product, or beef that might include Canadian product, then I think the Americans will be very, very careful before they open, unless they have a clear signal from the Japanese that it is all right.

We are in a position where we are facing a later fall now. We are in a position where we know for a fact that many farmers do not have adequate feed supplies on their farms to feed those additional cattle and herds of livestock. What does government do then? What should we be required to do? We should (1) make sure that cattle will not starve on farms; (2) we should ensure that the farmers have enough monetary resources to lay in the feed supplies; and (3) we should ensure that it be done in such a way that we recognize that government made some mistakes. Therefore, government has some responsibility in allowing this to happen.

I think the minister must take some personal responsibility as a minister for having maybe not chosen her words as carefully as she might have leading us to a position where we are now. Therefore, I would strongly suggest that she might want to consider some other options than what she has presented so far to ensure that those herds of cattle will in fact have adequate feed supplies on our farm.

If she would have chosen to implement a cash advance system, it would have done three things. No. 1, allowed those farmers to manage their herds properly and to properly care for

those herds, and it would have done another thing. It would have given them the resources to buy the feed supply that they needed. It would have also done another third thing, which, I think, the minister has not considered when she says it has said no to the cash advance process. It would have provided a value to those cattle.

Mr. Chair, it would have not forced those farmers to sell cattle at fire sale prices in order to get money to pay for their hydro bills, to pay for their children's shoes and to pay for feed supplies into the farms. It would have added virtually a floor price and would have prevented the fire sale pricing of cattle, which might in fact occur now. We do not know that, but it might in fact occur.

We on this side of the committee simply have said time and time again that cash advances, the only real viable option to allow the management, to allow the security of feed and to allow sort of a floor price to be initiated that would eventually come from a cash advance system and would not require farmers from using or accepting fire sale prices.

Mr. Chair, I want to ask the minister whether she would be willing to now re-evaluate her position and give serious consideration to putting a cash advance program in place.

* (14:50)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Indeed, there are a lot of comments that have been put on the table.

Mr. Chair, I want to, first of all, begin by giving a lot more credit to farmers than the member of the Opposition is willing to do. He talks about farmers, because somebody said the border might open soon, that they decided not to put up a feed supply for their cattle. Well, I can tell you and members of this committee, that is absolutely not true. Farmers have been talking since early summer about the fact that they may have to winter more than one season's cattle and they have been making those decisions accordingly.

There has never been as much straw rolled up in Manitoba as there was this year. There has

never been as much work done by my staff and livestock specialists working with producers to ensure they have proper rations in place because feeding with straw and grain is certainly different than feeding the hay rations that are traditionally fed.

Producers are making those decisions. There is no doubt these are very, very difficult times for producers. Having to make decisions on wintering more cattle, make decisions on feed, make decisions on where they are going to house these cattle, water supplies. All of these are very important decisions they have to make.

When I was in southwestern Manitoba, we talked about these issues. Producers at that time, early in July, were telling me about how they were hauling hay greater distances and that they needed some assistance in the transportation of that hay. They said they needed some way of getting cash. They also talked about the need for special assistance for the young producers.

We put those programs in place, ladies and gentlemen. We participated in the slaughter program that was implemented by the federal government, we put in place the Drought Assistance Program and we put in place a program that would allow cash advance to producers in the form of a low-interest loan, lowest interest across the country. If you do comparisons to other provinces, the programs are—

An Honourable Member: It is a security on their farm. That is what you are doing.

Ms. Wowchuk: Pardon me? Mr. Chair, the programs are working. The money is going out through the loan program. Money went out through the first slaughter program. There is money going through the second slaughter program. This is provincial money. It is not the federal government that is participating in them, other than the one slaughter program.

Producers are taking steps. They are also slaughtering their cattle. The price of cattle right now is very reasonable. In fact I had a note from an individual who did an average of the past five years of what they sold their calves for and it is just very close to the average. Of course that price is not going to hold when more cattle start

to come onto the market. I am sure it is going to come down, but to imply that this Government in some way has misled people on the opening of the border, I can tell you, and the member knows full well, it is not the Province that is doing the negotiations. It is the federal government that is doing the negotiations.

We are told that Secretary Veneman is working in an expedited fashion. She has the ability to shorten the consultation period. We are waiting to hear that.

As well, Mr. Chair, I wanted to indicate to the committee that Canada could do the same thing. Although it is not a written rule, I am told that if a country made application to have their BSE restriction lifted, then Canada could do it as well. The interesting point is that everybody talks about Japan, but in fact, Japan has never made an application to Canada to allow for the import of beef. If they would make that application, Canada would go through a very similar process as to what the United States is going through.

So we are very proud of the programs that we have. The programs are working for producers, and we will continue to work with people in this industry. I hope that additional money through the APF will be flowing very soon.

Mr. Penner: The *Manitoba Co-operator* on September 18 had an editorial, and the editorial's headline was "Cattle Producers Face a Wall." In this editorial the question is asked why a loan that would give government an ironclad agreement as a general security agreement, which it says it looks like it might not get much money into cattle producers' business either, in other words, it might not need much money from the Government. I think most farmers are experiencing that one. I talked to a lot of the farmers. They tell me that, yes, my loan was okay, but I have to bring my bills in to MACC and then the bills are assessed by the staff at Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation and if they are deemed fit they will then say you can either choose to pay it yourself. We will issue you a cheque for the amount of the bill or we will pay the bill for you. Farmers are finding this process somewhat of a different kind of a process than

they have ever seen from their own banks and/or credit unions. Farmers are saying to me that this really is something out of the extraordinary that—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Doug Martindale): Order, please. I am having difficulty hearing the Member for Emerson.

An Honourable Member: Well, I thought I was loud enough.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Doug Martindale): It is your colleagues. Proceed.

Mr. Penner: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. I will try and speak up a bit, so you should not have any trouble hearing.

These farmers are saying this is somewhat out of the ordinary. They are not used to having somebody go over their finances, bill by bill, in order for them to get a loan that has been approved, yet not approved until final payment is made on those bills.

The other thing that one should take note of is that if I go out and buy feed, hay from a farmer, that farmer will want a cheque for it. If I say yes, I will take it, that farmer will want a cheque for it. Under this process, the farmer cannot write the cheque. He will ask for the bill, and then he will have to take it to MACC and get it approved and then they will say, yes, we will pay for this or, no, we will not pay it. We will pay it directly for you or we will issue a cheque and then you can go and pay for it.

The minister says no, that is not so. It is so. It is exactly how it works, and I think the minister should have taken a good look at what she was doing before she said, well, this is the same as a cash advance, only with a small interest clause attached to it. It is not. This is not a cash advance. Cash advance, the way I experience cash advances on my farm are, when I go to haul my grain to the elevator and the elevator says no, elevator is full, cannot haul, I can go back to that elevator and sign a form and take it to the bank. The bank issues me a cheque for the amount of money of advance that I want to take, and I then make the decision to what I want to

buy, and I make the decisions where I want to spend that money. My only obligation is to make sure that that grain will be hauled in so that the Government gets its money back. There is a huge difference between this process and a cash advance.

If the minister would have, as I said before, implemented the cash advance, she would have found out that she was actually putting a floor price on those cattle and giving those farmers better value for those cattle than they might get now—I should not say that they will get now, they might get now—because we do not know yet what the markets are going to do when the full rush, cattle rush comes in within the next week or month and when they hit the auction marts. I think we need to be very vigilant as to what the prices will do. I understand that over this last week in one of the cattle auction marts, the prices came down substantially over the previous week's prices. That does not surprise me. It did not surprise the producers there either. I think the minister could have gone a long way in ensuring some stability in this whole marketplace had she chosen to go the cash advance route.

*(15:00)

I want to ask the minister whether these kinds of editorials that we see in the *Manitoba Co-operator* on the 18th are what she and her Government had wanted to see. Is that the kind of publicity, is that the kind of press that she was hoping for, to the general public, indicating clearly that it was in the general security agreement that farmers were required to sign, was a hold on everything, on all the property that those farmers possessed, including the baby carriage, and whether that is the kind of model she wants to portray as their Government being to the rest of Manitoba society?

Ms. Wowchuk: When we were working to address this issue, we worked very closely with the industry on what they thought would work for them. I can say very clearly that when I was at the Hartney meeting, and the member was at Hartney as well, Betty Green, the president of the Manitoba Cattle Producers, put on from her computer a slide that said they were talking to the Manitoba government about putting in a low-

interest loan program like the Producer Recovery Loan program that the previous administration put in place for the hog industry and for other producers.

A loan program, I might remind everybody at this table, that was at the prevailing interest rate, not a reduced interest rate, a loan program that required the same terms as our BSE recovery program. The money could flow into a line of credit or have the bills paid under the program put in place by the previous administration. So I can tell everybody at this table that under the Conservatives, when they put in a program to help out the pork industry and others, it was at the prevailing interest rate, not a reduced interest rate, and, yes, MACC was paying bills for farmers at that time as well.

Mr. Chair, to imply that this program is somehow taking far greater security than any other program in the past, the member is wrong. For the member to imply that he can get a cash advance without any security, that is not true either. When people are lending out money, it has to be a secured loan as well, just as this one has to be.

It is very interesting that now they are talking that only cash advance will work when their leader wrote a letter to all residents of the Interlake, and I am sure the member from Lakeside got a copy of this letter as well, where the leader of the Conservative Party said that they would suggest a low-interest loan or a cash advance. Then I read in the paper just recently, too bad I have not got the article here, that the situation has changed, so they changed their mind about whether it should be a low-interest-rate loan or a cash advance.

No other province has a cash advance. Manitoba has the best loan program of any other province. We have interest rates for this year at 2.25 percent for young farmers. For the other farmers, it is at 3.25 percent, and we have said that that low interest, again, will be reduced for the second year.

Money is flowing through producers. I have talked to many people who are accessing the loan, others who are saying that they are waiting to decide whether they should access that loan

now or wait until they sell some cattle this fall, wait and see how much money they are going to get under the APF.

So, Mr. Chair, people are looking at the loan. People are making decisions. The loan program has the same terms as other loan programs have. There are cases where the money will flow into a line of credit, and there are some cases that bills have to be produced. However, to say that an individual cannot buy their feed without bringing the bill in is not accurate either. In this day and age, there are ways to get your feed and bring your bill in and have it go through.

Every case is handled on an individual basis, as it was with the producer recovery loan.

Mr. Penner: This editorial goes on further and it says: Grain farmers and cattle producers are great at keeping the money moving, and when they do, every five or six or seven farmers can easily help keep at least one more local business alive, but if those five or six or seven farmers stop moving money around, another business will likely die.

The round table discussion around the NDP tables must be quite interesting these days, he goes on to say. Some members see that losing a large part of the cattle industry will hurt the very tax base the Government relies on for a cash flow. For others, the concept is likely so far from personal or political philosophies that they cannot even imagine why a provincial government should do anything for a business if it risks even one welfare cheque in downtown Winnipeg.

So, Mr. Chair, I think the minister needs to respect what the views are out in rural Manitoba on her way of administering, her Government's way of administering a program that could have been made quite simple.

Then this goes on to say: So requiring a GSA on a farm loan, a guaranteed security agreement on a farm loan should not surprise anyone. It is one legal and quite likely expedient way to allow a government to say it is making a lot of money available to a troubled cattle industry, but the idea of signing over the whole farm just to get one loan does not sit well with most

free-willing cattle producers. After all, most cattle producers are good for it, meaning most farmers pay their debts. So why should this Government want far more security than most commercial lenders would require?

That is really the question that is out there. I hear this time and time again at the coffee table. Does this Government not trust our farmers? I think the minister should take a very close look at this, and when they decide—it is not if they decide, it is when they decide to put out a cash advance, they will get an applause from our side of the House, because that will mean they have finally come to realize that this cattle industry is important to the economy of Manitoba, that it is important to all the economies of rural Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg and all the other cities. We believe that it is reasonable to invest from time to time in an agricultural industry to keep it alive and well over the long term. That will keep our cities alive and well over the long term as well.

So I want to ask the minister whether she is contemplating some time in the near future to set aside her biases and make available—and she could be a model for the rest of the country—a cash advance system that would be much, much more amenable to keeping the cattle industry in this province alive and well. It might in fact encourage farmers in this province to feed out their calves ready for market and might develop a feedlot industry which would lead toward adequate supplies to build a processing industry. I want to go to that point next in my questioning.

Is the minister prepared to make those kinds of considerations, and soon?

* (15:10)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chair, we recognized the need for a cash flow. We talked with producers. Producers told us they needed cash flow and we put in place the low-interest loans, which are flowing cash to producers. The money is flowing.

We have also put in money that has helped the slaughter industry. Those people who are taking their animals to slaughter now have a support that is funded only by the provincial

government, particularly. It is the only province where there are funds in place to help people get their cull cows to slaughter. No other province has the kind of support that Manitoba has.

We have put in place drought assistance that was called for by particularly people in the Interlake and in the southwest part of the province. We have recognized the need for a cash flow and we have put it in place. I believe the program is working.

The member is quoting the words of one editor. If one editor wants to make those comments, he should go and have a discussion with that editor, but I can tell you that is not what I am hearing in rural Manitoba. I am hearing from producers that they are very concerned about when the border will be opening but they are very pleased that boxed meat is starting to move. They are very pleased that there are facilities that are starting to buy cull cows and some of those animals are moving. They are pleased that we have put in place the support to help them with their transportation costs.

Of course, there are always other things that might be helpful. We continue to listen to the industry, but I can tell you and everyone at this table that our cash is on the table and has been in place for some time. Rather than continuing to harp on a cash advance, I would encourage people at this table to go and talk to producers about how the loan program has worked, because I have found that once you sit down and have a discussion with people and talk about how this program will work for them until such time as other monies start to flow, whether it be money from CAIS, whether it be money flowing from the slaughter program, money flowing from other programs, that they can use this money as a bridge and producers are using it.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Can the minister tell us what the time line is on being able to access the payments that were put in place for slaughtered cattle?

I am hearing there are some producers out there who seem to get a fairly quick turnaround and there are others who cannot understand why they are waiting as long as they are. I would

assume the minister has some kind of a time line. I wonder if she could share it with us.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that the turnaround is quite quick. If the member has some individuals who have not been able to get their payment in an expedited way I would ask him to share that information with us and we could check into it, but the turnaround time has not been a long time period to turn those applications around, to my understanding.

Mr. Cummings: Well, these producers have phoned in. Presuming that they phoned the right office, they have basically been told we will get to you when we can, but we are five weeks or more behind and your application is way down in the pile.

I am paraphrasing, but those are the words the producers used to me. So they were paraphrasing the response again. I am not trying to hang any particular civil servant. I am, however, curious about whether or not the minister has given direction to the people who are administering the program on her behalf to put some resources in place. The amount of money is quite significant, and the people were very confident that they had properly qualified for it. How is it that the minister believes these have been rapid response? Is that what she is being told?

Ms. Wowchuk: I would again say to the member from Ste. Rose, if he has specific cases that I could check on him, I will, but my understanding is that the turnaround time is between two to three weeks. I can check in more detail on that. Again, if there are specific cases, I would be very pleased if he could later share that information and I could check into it as well. It is a matter of getting the bills in. They have to have the sales slips that they actually went to slaughter, and once those sales slips are in the turnaround time should not take very long.

Mr. Cummings: I will go back to these individuals and find out. When I have three different producers who tell me that they find it very slow coming and in fact have phoned and were given the answers as I indicated, I will double check now to see if they have in fact received the money. But this leads into the

question that follows on what my colleague was asking, and that is that I am somewhat offended by the Government's advertising program out there to promote \$180-million worth of involvement in the industry.

I asked this question, I believe, in Question Period or in the House earlier: Has she any indication from the department about what percentage of this money is actually moving? Would 10 percent be a reasonable figure?

Ms. Wowchuk: I am sorry, which program are you referring to?

Mr. Cummings: Generally speaking, we have been making the case, and I think with a great deal of justification, that the Government to be putting out the statement that there is \$180 million available to the industry, that is a characterization that I would love to stand behind, as I am sure the minister does. What I am led to believe is in actual administration and eligibility and participation in the programs, that something around 10 percent might be generous as to how much of this money is actually flowing.

Ms. Wowchuk: There are a variety of programs that are out there. The Drought Assistance Program has just come into effect. Those applications and the drought assistance, I believe there is \$12 million. Of course, that money will not have flowed yet because those applications are just coming in. Under the slaughter program, the provincial one that came into effect as of September 1, those monies will just be starting to flow. However, under the Canada-Manitoba Recovery Program, there was a little over \$10 million that flowed through that feed program, and of course that was split 60-40 with the federal government. So that money has flowed.

Under the slaughter deficiency payment, of course, we did not get nearly as much as we should have under that program because we did not get equitable access to market. That money, over \$10 million, has flowed in that program as well. Those programs, the Canada-Manitoba BSE Recovery Program, which was a slaughter deficiency and inventory payment and the Manitoba feed assistance program, the majority of that money has flowed already. It has not all flowed, it has been allocated, but there is still the

second payment that has to come because you could not calculate it all at once, because we were not sure how many animals there would be on feed. An initial payment was made and then a second payment will be made on that as well.

The other programs, as people make their applications, that money will flow. Under the BSE Recovery Program there has been a total of \$11.6 million that has been approved to this date. Applications are coming in on a regular basis and each day new applications are approved.

* (15:20)

Mr. Cummings: I guess it is known as the BSE Recovery Program, which is the low-interest loan. What I believe is occurring there is there are about three different categories of producers out there. There are those who will proceed to manage their own affairs as best they can with the resources available to them. There are others who, with their back to the wall, will access this because they see no other way of getting money into their pocket. The third group are those who have enough flexibility and the willingness to take these loans out because they see it as a quick way of reducing their interest costs if their normal operating loan could be 5.5 percent or 6 percent, given today's going rates at the regular institutions. They are taking it out not as a BSE recovery but as a cost containment.

I think therein lies the concern about producers out there who saw a cash advance process as one where their chattel, in this case their calves, would have provided some quick relief. They would have moved more quickly to buy feed.

I want to tie this to the drought assistance. I hope the minister will be careful in terms of how she refers to that because as I understand the program it is a transportation assistance program.

I know she seems puzzled some days by the vehemence upon which we attack this program and the advertising of her programs, but I think it reflects on the fact that there were people out there who saw problems, her people in the field must have seen the problems that were arising with the drought. The fact is an assistance

program in terms of getting in feed would have made so much more sense earlier in the season. We now have virtually a retroactive transportation assistance program.

I am aware of people in my community who are mixed farmers and the crop was not as short in our area as it was further north, I am talking the south end of my riding versus further north versus the Interlake versus the southwest. They made their purchases because they were able to make purchases early in the year because their cattle were not their sole source of revenue and they had alternate sources they could tap into. The ones who are being short-changed the way this has unfolded are those who rely so heavily and totally on their calf sales in the fall and whether or not they were able to find sufficient feed early on or whether they delayed.

I heard a trailer on radio, following one of your advertisements—I do not know if it was thrown in gratuitously by the radio station, whether it was intended to be part of the body of the ad, or whether it was a comment that was thrown in because of the work of the local extension people—talking about, and this was just yesterday, encouraging people to save their straw so that those producers who were short of straw could access it. In this part of the world, anywhere south of the Swan River Valley at least, the harvest was pretty well done in August. That is why there is very little defence for the minister in terms of why was this program not introduced earlier.

I appreciate the comment on the amount of money that has flowed. I have one simple question that I want to ask the minister. It is not directly related to these programs but is directly related to her comment about the optimism of the border opening on January 1 or early in the New Year.

Madam Minister, if that was an optimistic comment, unsubstantiated, then I say God help you if it does not come true, because there are people out there who hang on every word of their elected officials right now as to the decisions that they are going to make.

I wonder if you can share with us how much credibility you can attach to the possibility of the

border opening in the New Year, because, as you said I believe in the Question Period that just went by or earlier, this market may not sustain itself if we get a large volume of calves on the market. Those are the people who need some assurance. I will be all ears to hear what your answer might be.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the border is one of the most important issues facing our producers, because should the border not open, and we have said this many times, to live animals, there is going to have to be—if we are looking at a domestic market for a long period of time, then we will see a restructuring of our industry in this country, because we are an exporting country.

I have indicated many times that it is the federal government that is negotiating. The discussions that I have had with the federal minister and the information that we have been provided with is that Secretary Veneman has said that they are going to move forward with this in an expedited fashion. The U.S. government has the ability to have a shorter consultation period. It does not have to be the 90 days, it can be a shorter period. But we have not been given a clear day as to when the border is going to be opened. Certainly, nobody has been given that, but we are told that the U.S. government is working on it and the Canadian government, the CFIA is involved in this.

I think it is a good signal that boxed meats are starting to move. The U.S. government does have the ability to make additional changes to allow for different products to go in, but I anticipate that the next move will be the live animals moving. How soon will that be? Well, we have been given different signals. Now the federal government is saying that it is their hope that by the New Year there will be some movement of live animals. There is no way for anybody to predict when it is. I am going by what the federal government has told us.

I think that producers are making decisions accordingly, because if the border is not going to be opening before the New Year, they are going to have to make decisions on how to house those animals over the winter and they are going to have to make decisions on feed.

Again, I think producers have been making those decisions for many months now, planning on how they will house these animals, where they will move these animals if they have to, what kind of feed supplies they will bring in.

Producers are also talking about how we can increase the slaughter capacity in this province, because even if we get animals under 30 months going, there are still the older animals. I am very proud of the producers in this province for working with the Government and coming up with ideas as to how we might increase the slaughter capacity in this province and move forward and not be at the total mercy of exports. In this province, certainly, there has been in the past 10-15 years basically no work done on enhancing our slaughter capacity. It has been going down.

I give credit to the producers for that. I think each of us is hoping that very soon we will see live animals moving across the border, because that is our traditional market. Having that border closed does put a tremendous pressure on our producers.

*(15:30)

Mr. Cummings: Just one comment and I do not necessarily expect the minister to respond, but I am very sincere when I say there are people out there who are making monetary decisions on what she may say as a responsible minister. To say that she is only repeating what the federal government is saying puts a cold chill through me. It seems like our current federal government is anything but trustworthy.

So I guess I actually do have one question to the minister and my colleague from Emerson has been hammering this and I have not yet heard the exact answer that I was hoping to hear. Is she aware of whether or not Secretary Veneman has actually started the process?

I want to put on the record that thank goodness our American neighbours did not sign on to the same trade agreement that so many of the other world meat traders did. We so often make good politics occasionally in this country, some people who, I think, should know better make good politics out of hammering our American neighbours. At times like this it proves that

perhaps they are not as shortsighted as some would say; and, as we clamour for the border to be opened, is it not convenient that they in fact have a process as opposed to a seven-year moratorium?

My question is then is she aware of whether or not, or can she advise whether or not the process has in fact begun stateside? I understand it is a type of risk analysis that they enter into to potentially reopen the border.

Ms. Wowchuk: I just wanted to say to the member from Ste. Rose that in fact the U.S. and other countries and Canada have signed the same agreement. The U.S. does not have a different agreement on BSE. We are all in the same agreement.

If a country has a case of BSE, there is a seven-year ban. The U.S. has a written rule where they have a process, but I am told that Canada could do the same thing. For example, if Japan wanted to start to export into Canada, they do not have to wait the seven years; they would have to make application. But Japan has not made an application, so Canada does not start the process. Canada has made an application to the United States based on science and based on the international committee's report and applied to have an earlier acceptance of the product.

Canada, United States and Mexico have all joined the agreement and are going to the OIE to have the rules reviewed and changed. We are all under the same agreement. The U.S. has a written rule. My understanding is that Canada, although it does not have a rule spelled out they have the ability to make the same case. So if there was a case of BSE in the United States, they could make an application to Canada and Canada would follow a process of how that product would come into Canada.

With respect to Secretary Veneman, my understanding is that it is being worked on. The rule is not written but they are in the process of work.

The member is asking whether the process has started. I can get further verification for him on that but my understanding is that the process has started. I would like to come back and verify

that for the member from Ste. Rose because my understanding is that it has started but they have not got a written rule yet that they can then take to their consultation period but are in the process of doing it.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): In regard to the \$12-million, as you refer to it, Drought Assistance Program. Can the minister tell us why you call it the Drought Assistance Program when in reality it is not for drought? It is just a transportation program.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, I would say that people have to move additional feed because of the drought, so it is to help those people get the feed supply that they need into a drought area. That is what producers asked for.

In fact, even when I was in Hartney, people said that they were having to move their feed supplies greater distances, that they were looking for some assistance. That is the form of assistance we have put in place after consulting with the industry.

Mr. Eichler: Just further to your Drought Assistance Program, last week when you were away, I had brought up during Question Period other ruminant animals, and especially in the drought-stricken areas, I feel some of those producers are being shortchanged, specifically in the PMU business.

It is a \$40-million, \$50-million industry, and the feed costs for them to transport feed and straw is of the utmost importance. Without the Drought Assistance Program, these producers are in big trouble.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Doug Martindale): Before I recognize the minister, I would just like to remind members that we do not refer to the presence or absence of members. It is one of the rules of our Legislature.

The Minister of Agriculture and Food, to respond.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, this program was put in place because of the compounding effect of the drought and the BSE situation. There is a situation where producers have lost

their market, and, as a result of losing their market, they cannot make a decision.

Producers would normally, if they were in a drought situation, reduce their herd. This year they cannot reduce their herd, so we put in assistance to help them maintain those herds, get their feed supply in place.

The PMU industry has not lost their market. They are still selling their product, so they have an income. The cattle industry does not have an income, so the assistance is to help them maintain those herds over a period of time, to help them until such time as they are able to access the market or the border opens. That is really what the issue is.

It is not just the drought because if it was just the drought, many farmers would have sold cattle off and reduced their herds to the amount of feed that was available to them. The PMU industry can market their product. They have a good market. They have contracts, so they have guaranteed income and they are able to make those adjustments.

Mr. Eichler: I just beg to differ with the minister on this, and I guess it is more a point of view, but the PMU contracts have been cut back 13 to 14 percent. Granted, the PMU business does have kind of a fixed marketplace, but the farmers who are living in the drought-stricken areas are still being hampered because they have the transportation problem, to get their feed transported from a non-drought area to a drought area.

So I think you are totally missing the point, Madam Minister.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, I guess I would beg to differ, and I would say that the member is missing the point. The point of this program is to help those people who have lost their market and have to carry a larger herd of cattle. They are not able to sell part of their herd and make the adjustment.

The PMU producer still has a market for their product. They have a contract. They are still able to sell their colts because there is a market. Yes, they have some higher feed costs,

but they have not lost any market, whereas the cattle producers cannot make a market decision, cannot reduce their herds.

This program was put in place to help the compound effect of the drought and the BSE situation.

Mr. Eichler: I can see we are not going to get anywhere with this. Maybe let us move to the elk industry. I was wondering if the minister could go on record and tell us where the Province's plans are in trying to assist the elk industry in getting their elk processed? We are looking at in excess of over \$600 per animal, mainly because of the testing.

These tests that are required by the Province of Manitoba are not required anywhere else, including Saskatchewan, our neighbouring province, where most of the problems have been created. We are so far ahead of the other industries that it is an unfair testing that you are imposing on the elk industry.

* (15:40)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, this situation with BSE is causing pressure in a lot of sectors and the fact that we have no slaughter capacity in this province for these animals is a serious concern. It is unfortunate that our slaughter industry has degraded to the point where it is, that everything has to be exported out of the province, but I can tell the member from Lakeside that we are having discussions with the elk industry and discussing the situation that he has raised with us.

Mr. Eichler: I will make this my final question. We do have other people that want to ask. The compensation program under the slaughter guidelines of \$250 for bison, bison is down at an all-time low. They are to the point where they are getting anywhere from 5 cents to 15 cents depending, and that is more if they go and beg these processing plants to take them; \$250 is about all they are getting out of this animal. Maybe not even that by the time they pay the transportation cost to Alberta to have them processed. Is there some way we can compensate, or through your program, the bison industry more than the \$250?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chair, the bison industry has struggled for some time. Many of them are involved with the bison co-op in North Dakota, and it has been a huge struggle. That market was just starting to turn around. Then we have the ruminant, the BSE situation, where they are not able to export it, and it is another one that is facing a difficult challenge because of slaughter capacity. Again, just as with the elk industry and the bison industry or other species, we do not have the slaughter capacity, and producers are forced to ship these products to another market. I think we have to really, as we get over this BSE situation, work closely with the bison industry and look at how markets can develop because it is seen as a very natural product, and I believe that there are markets there.

I met recently with the representation from the bison industry to talk about marketing, to talk about how this industry can grow, but again, there is no slaughter capacity in this province. They have lost the access to the U.S. market and they are having great difficulty with accessing the market in Alberta because there is enough supply there. So there is work to be done with this industry.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question to the Minister of Agriculture deals with an announcement in the press release from the federal Minister of Agriculture, I think it was August 11 or 12, which indicated that there were going to be advances available on a bilateral basis. I would ask the Minister of Agriculture when she first became aware of this approach by the federal minister.

Ms. Wowchuk: The federal minister put that announcement out on August 12, indicating that he was planning to put out an interim payment. I believe we were at a telephone conference either the day before or the day after, but what happened was the federal minister put out that announcement and then found out that he could not deliver as he had said in that news release. As a result of that, he had to work out mirror agreements with the provinces that we then signed just last week, I believe it was. What was in that announcement he had not delivered on, because, had he been able to, Alberta and British Columbia and other provinces had signed their APF agreements, but he was not able to flow the

money. He had to work out a different mechanism that flows money outside the APF, there had to be agreements signed, and now that process has been completed. The federal minister has told us applications will be available very soon and payments should flow by the end of October.

Mr. Gerrard: The Minister of Agriculture has been talking about the press release of August 12 and what was in that press release and what was announced. It is true it took a little bit longer to deliver, but what was provided for in that press release, which was advances, the press release specifically talks about advances, I think that is a fair comment, as the minister herself knows.

The press release also talked about bilateral agreements. The intent and what was covered under that press release, the bilateral agreements, which the minister refers to as mirror agreements, yes, it took some time to actually be able to deliver those, but what was announced on August 12, after a little bit of delay, took a little bit longer than all of us would have liked. In fact it is quite clear the intent did not waver, that the minister seems to be delivering and we hope will deliver the advances in the next few weeks.

The issue, in a sense, we have discussed this a little bit but I think it is worth coming back to, the minister became aware of this situation and the nature of what was being done at the federal level, yet on September 8 in Question Period she said things had been totally negative in terms of any cash advances from the federal government. It was quite clear that agreement was there, that the process was moving forward. The minister's office was confirming on a regular basis that things were moving forward.

So the question is: Why would the minister say on September 8 that there was nothing positive in terms of cash advances through the federal-provincial program?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Chairman, there are two different issues here. There is advance on the Agricultural Policy Framework and there is the issue of cash advances. We had talked to the federal minister about whether or not he was going to put in a federal loan program, whether he was going to be putting in place a cash

advance. We asked him those questions and he said, no, he was not putting in place a cash advance; they were putting in place an advance on the APF. Those are two very different issues because what the producers were looking for was a program similar to what the grain producers get where they get an advance on their grain.

The federal minister had said they would not put in a loan, although very early on he did float the idea of a loan program and then said, no, there would not be a loan program. Then there was discussion about a cash advance. I specifically asked the federal minister whether he would be putting into place a cash advance similar to what grain producers had. He said no. So I indicated there was no movement on cash advances, although there was the press release on August 12.

I am not sure why the member is so insistent on defending the federal government here. I am sharing information with this committee that when the federal minister made the announcement on the 12th he had a mechanism where he thought he could flow the money. That mechanism did not work, so they had to go back and redesign how they would flow the money. Had that mechanism worked, money would have flowed to Alberta and British Columbia and other provinces. Those applications would have been in place, but the system, the first attempt at flowing advance money through the APF did not work.

So the federal minister had to go back and find another system. We in fact were not able to sign that until last week when we were in Ottawa because they did not have a system in place. He announced one process. It did not work. They had to go back to the drawing board. When I answered the question on September 8, the system was not in place yet. As I said, we did not sign it until last week when we were in Ottawa. They have worked through it.

The issue of cash advance, this is not a cash advance. It is an interim payment on premiums paid by the provinces, by the federal government and producers. The cash advance that producers have been asking about is a similar program to

what is in place for grain producers and the federal minister has said no to that cash advance.

Mr. Gerrard: The press release of August 12 spoke very clearly of advances. It is my understanding under the bilateral agreement, which the minister calls a mirror agreement and has signed, there will indeed be advances flowing to producers and these advances will be in the form of cash. Is that not correct?

Ms. Wowchuk: The producer will be able to make application and get an interim payment on their CAIS program. Of course if they are getting a payment it is going to come in the form of a cheque, just as their payment would come, but no one around the table that I have had discussions with refers to this as a cash advance.

When people talk about cash advance they are talking about how they can get a similar program where they get an advance on their cattle, just as a grain producer gets an advance on their grain. This is not a cash advance in the same terms as a farmer would get a cash advance on their grain, or a Canola grower would get an advance on theirs. They are getting an advance on, payment from a program that they will have to participate in. Very different.

* (15:50)

Mr. Gerrard: The minister is trying to confuse the issue in this sense that what was clearly stated in the August 12 news release was that it was an advance. The phrase interim payment and advance have been used back and forth. On occasion the minister herself, in reference to the interim payment, has used the word advance because, in fact, that is what it is. It is an advance on what is expected to come through the bilateral program or APF if they fold into one another. Clearly, as the minister has admitted, it would come in the form of cash. The minister is trying to wriggle out of a situation which she has put herself in by making claims that clearly were misleading to a lot of people. I think it is unfortunate.

I want to move on at this point to ask a question or two related to the minister's responsibility to Intergovernmental Affairs and the new deal that has been put on the table by Mayor

Glen Murray and the members of the City Council which is being discussed at some length at the moment.

I would ask the minister what is her view of, what aspects of this new deal will require some sort of provincial enabling legislation if they were to proceed as they have been laid out at the moment?

Ms. Wowchuk: The mayor has just laid out his new deal and has begun his public consultation programs. Government is looking at the implications and what will be required. Certainly we will be able to address that as we move forward. I think the most important part of this is that we listen.

It is the mayor's and the City's consultation process that is taking place right now. We have to look at that and, certainly, there are implications but I think that we have to wait until the final consultation takes place over the next couple of weeks. There will be public consultation and then more information will be available at that time.

Mr. Gerrard: Is the minister saying that she does not at this point know which aspects might need provincial enabling legislation and which might not?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chair, this is a consultation process. There are many suggestions that are out there. It is a preliminary discussion. After the City comes back with the results of their consultation, there will be a discussion with the Government on which of the proposals the City is most interested in. That is the time that the Government will have to look more closely at the City's proposals and then make some decisions. The City requires provincial authority to move in some of these areas, and in some of the areas they have the ability to move on their own.

Mr. Gerrard: Clearly, consulting about something which the Province would never grant or would never enable is a pretty meaningless process. The issue here is: Which parts? It seems to me that it is very important in terms of the consultation which parts of these will require provincial enabling legislation or approval in order to proceed so that surely that is a part of

what people who are engaged in the consultations would know. Is the minister trying to hide and not let people know what in fact aspects of this would be required in terms of enabling provincial legislation?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, it is the City that is doing a consultation. It is consulting with the ratepayers. They have put forward a proposal on how they see the shift in taxes taking place. When the City completes their consultation, they will come back to the Government. We will certainly have a discussion on it.

I can tell you of course that there are people who are looking at the city proposals and running models on it just as the individuals are. Some people are looking at how it will increase their taxes. Some people are looking at how it will reduce their taxes. Some are looking at a much broader picture. Those consultations have just started. We will continue to have discussions with the City of Winnipeg on it.

There are places where the City has responsibilities, but the City also has to work under the act. Some of the suggestions that they are making will require legislative changes if they decide to proceed with them. They are in the consulting stage right now. They have not made any decisions. This is really a fact-finding mission on the part of the City, looking at what the public thinks about these kinds of changes, of shifting taxes away from properties and moving to a more consumptive tax and on paying for services. I think it is very important that all of us listen to what the public is saying right now.

Mr. Gerrard: If the minister will not provide information today as to what aspects might need provincial legislation, is the minister looking and asking people who work in her department to have a look at what aspects would require provincial legislation and what type of provincial legislation could be needed?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, of course. Anytime there is a proposal put forward by jurisdictions, such as the city, that falls under provincial legislation, the Province will look at it. When we receive the city document we have staff that are reviewing it, but ultimately we are also looking and listening to what the public is saying. When you have

a proposal put to you, of course it has to be reviewed to look at what the implications are for legislation.

Mr. Gerrard: When would the minister be prepared to tell the members of the Legislature what the implications are in terms of legislation?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chair, those discussions, those public consultations have just begun. This is a preliminary discussion that is out there. The City will come back to the Province. I am sure once they have done their consultations and made some decisions they will certainly come back to the Province.

The Province is looking at the first document, the preliminary discussion or the discussion paper that is there and looking at what would be required if the City would want to move forward. As I say, I think that this is very early. The discussions have only just begun. There will be a lot of work to be done in this area.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Chairperson, although the specific proposals of the new deal were only unveiled quite recently, the Mayor of Winnipeg, Glen Murray, has been talking about substantive changes for quite some time. The minister herself I am sure is well aware of that.

I think that it would be highly desirable for members of the Legislature to be aware and have information coming from the minister's department as to what aspects of this would require provincial legislation. From the minister's answer, it would appear that she does not know, herself, at this moment, and I think that that is unfortunate, that the minister does not know and will not tell the Legislature what aspects will require provincial legislation.

This is basic information, which should be available to all members of the public who are going into these consultations. It is basic information, which should be available to all members of the Legislature. It would appear that at this point the minister does not know, and I just would like to say that I think that is too bad, that the minister does not know.

* (16:00)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, as I said, we received the City's proposal just last week. Staff is looking through it, and I believe that the City's proposal will change. As they do their consultation, the City's proposal will change. We are looking at it and when the City's discussions are complete, then we will have further discussions with the City.

Certainly there are aspects of it that will require legislative change, but there is no decision as to which area the City will make a request on. It is a broad basket of ideas that has now been put out for discussion. The department is looking at it, and very shortly we will have information on which areas require change.

But, again, it is too preliminary because we do not know for sure what the City will come back with. When we have information, certainly we will be prepared to share it.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I have a question regarding the manure management regulations and the status of it.

Mr. Chair, the MIA, the Manitoba Institute of Agrologists, has been in contact with me and wanted to know, based on correspondence that they had sent to you in April, and it was responded to in August, indicating you were looking into the matter—they are being fairly proactive in their understanding that there is going to be a requirement for third-party applicators to be agrologists and to have, in a sense, done some homework and to have created the content for a training course for applicators to be offered out of ACC.

I guess they are ready and they are waiting for the minister or the department to make a decision on these regulations to ensure that they are up and ready and trained and able to work through the process in the spring when they will be very busy.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can I just ask for clarification? Are you asking about when the regulations will be ready?

Mrs. Rowat: I want to know the status of the regulations that are being reviewed.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, there has been a fair amount of work done on these regulations. There has been consultation with the industry, and they have gone back and forth a couple of times. I believe there is still one group that wants to meet. I am trying to remember which group it is that is wanting to have some additional input, but most of the groups have had input. They have gone back to draft, and they should be ready in the not-too-distant future.

Mrs. Rowat: The Manitoba Institute of Agrologists have indicated that they are really wanting to get some answers on this, and I guess the response that they received in August indicated you were looking into the matter.

I think they need an answer and they need it soon so that they can ensure that their association is trained and ready to go in the spring.

So can I have some assurances from the minister that this is being done and that they will hear in a time frame that she can maybe share with me, so that I can then share that with the association?

Ms. Wowchuk: Definitely, we are working on this. If the Manitoba Institute of Agrologists is looking for further information, I would just encourage them to call the office and we can arrange another meeting if they are looking for additional input.

But, Mr. Chairperson, the regulations are being drafted and there is consultation with the industry as we develop these.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chairperson, I do not think they are looking for input as much as needing to know the outcome. They are needing to know what regulations will be in place. They are needing that so they can move forward with the requirements to make sure that they are ready for spring.

So I guess the question would be: Can I get a contact name or an individual within her department that we can refer this individual to?

Ms. Wowchuk: I would encourage them just to call my office or call my deputy minister. That would be who you would call, but, certainly, as I

have said, these regulations are being worked on. They should be ready in the very near future.

Mrs. Rowat: My second question to the minister is regarding the feeder program. I believe the process is the ag rep works with the producer, and the application is then processed through Manitoba Crop Insurance.

I have had calls from producers in the area who are waiting for their dollars. Apparently, when they have gone into the Crop Insurance office, they have been told that their application has been approved, but they have been given no indication of why the dollars are not flowing. Actually, it is noted right on the application. It says approved, but the clients obviously are concerned that the dollars are not coming, and they were given no indication of why.

Is there an issue with cash flow occurring to the producers at this point?

Ms. Wowchuk: No, the issue is not cash flow. It is the number of applications. We had anticipated we were working within the range of 40 000 animals on feed in this province. The applications came in at a lot higher number; in fact, over 80 000 animals on feed.

When we put this program in place, there was about \$15 million, just under \$15 million that was for the slaughter program, and the balance was for the feed program. When the numbers went up, we had to ensure that there was enough money there for all of the people within the pool of money.

So the applications all have to be worked out so that you can then make the payments to everybody. You do not want to be making the payments to the first person in the program and then have someone else at the end of the program not be able to get paid within the pool of money. So an interim payment is made and then the balance is paid.

My understanding, Mr. Chair, is that there is an additional 246 claims that are expected to be processed on September 30 and mailed on October 1 or 2. Those are the applications that the member is probably referring to, because you

have to go through all of them and then be sure that all of them are processed in a timely fashion and within the dollars that are available for the program.

Mrs. Rowat: So you are indicating that the dollars will be there for everybody's application form. I think this person was led to believe and I think most of the producers in the area were led to believe that they would fill out the application, it would be processed, they would be approved and they would receive their dollars.

I guess that is what the issue is that we are facing out in rural Manitoba. I am sure that it is not only the producers. It is the people who are working within the industry and their families, that they are hearing about all of these announcements and all of these funding programs that are available, and the dollars are not flowing.

So, Mr. Chairperson, I think people are being misled. This individual is obviously very upset, needs the dollars. The cash flow is not happening, and, again, we are putting more families in a crisis situation over misinterpretation of the programs by the minister.

Ms. Wowchuk: I can assure the member I never misled anyone. This program, to have a feeder program, was worked out in discussion with the Manitoba Cattle Producers. It was the Manitoba Cattle Producers who said the slaughter program was not working in this province and asked us if we would change the program to a feed program within the dollars that were allocated to the slaughter program, the \$15 million.

*(16:10)

Those applications have been processed. Many were paid out before September 25 and there is an additional amount that is being paid out later, but I would encourage the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) to talk to producers in her area about the loan program. That is a program that helps with cash flow. I know they have been very critical of this program, but rather than being critical and talking about people who are in need of cash, I would ask her to talk to producers about a program that will make cash available for them, just as it did for hog producers under the previous administration,

although our program has a much lower interest rate. It is a program that allows for cash flow, and that, along with the slaughter program, the feed assistance program, the drought program, there is money available.

There is no doubt it is a very difficult situation for cattle producers at this time. Some people have to make some tough decisions about how they are going to winter their cattle this year, but there is money. Certainly the interim payment from the APF program, from CAIS, will also help producers, but we have to look at every opportunity we have to help producers. I would encourage people to talk about the programs that are there and help people make decisions on how they will get some cash flow to keep their operations and their families going this winter. Ultimately, the border opening is the most important issue we can see. To have live animals moving would be the best news producers could get.

Mrs. Rowat: There appears to be no good news coming from this provincial government, so I guess any news is better than what they are receiving at this point.

Talking to the producers, I encourage the minister to be talking to the producers. I believe I receive several calls daily from several producers regarding the loan program. A lot of them do not have the collateral to access the program. I guess it should be reflective to the minister in the number of people who have applied for the program that probably maybe the program is not working. Maybe the program is not working for the people who are in the industry. I guess the increase in the use of the stress line should indicate to the minister also that maybe her programs are not working.

My question to the minister is I would like to know the number of people who have been using the stress line from this last two months, if the statistical information is available over the last three months, and the breakdown of people using them gender-wise, and also to know what type of follow-up is being done with these individuals.

I have been talking to several ag reps in the area and they have indicated there has been an

increase in individuals being admitted to Brandon General for mental stress. I just want to ensure that we are doing everything we can to ensure these people are being taken care of. So I would like access to this information, if it is available.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chair, I am pleased the member is recognizing the Farm and Rural Stress Line as a more important service, one phone line where then people could be connected with mental health workers, financial advisors, other people who are trained in this area. It was not a service that was there under the previous administration. That service was cancelled.

An Honourable Member: That is not true. We set it up.

Ms. Wowchuk: The Farm and Rural Stress Line was cancelled by the Conservative administration. It was the NDP government that put that service back into place, and it has proven to be a very valuable service because, by phoning the stress line you do not only access the worker, that worker then has access to Clinic or mental workers or to ag reps, to anyone who might be able to provide the support that these individuals need.

An Honourable Member: They need the support. You are not providing the dollars so they need something—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Doug Martindale): Order. Excuse me, the minister is trying to reply. I will recognize members in order. Thank you. The Minister of Agriculture, to continue her answer.

Ms. Wowchuk: I just heard the member say that we are not providing the dollars. I would ask her to look at the programs. There is over \$180 million that is available in programming. Money is flowing to producers. The programs in this province are better than programs in other provinces. There are loan programs in other provinces that are at the prevailing rate of interest.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Chairperson, in the Chair

We have the slaughter program that is in place to help with culled cows right now. That is not available in other provinces. We have a Drought Assistance Program that is not available in other provinces. There is a loan program and there will be an interim payment coming out of the Agricultural Policy Framework that will also be of help to producers. There is no doubt.

I hear the member say I should get out and talk to producers. Well, I can tell her that I talk to producers on a regular basis. I visit them. I have visited in many parts of the province and I can tell her as well that there are people that are very happy with the programs, especially the program to assist with the transportation costs, the program that we were able to put in place to help with feed assistance because the slaughter program was not working for us, and the program now that we have put in place to help to move cattle to market and top up the slaughter price.

The loan program is a very important program because it does get cash into producers' hands. That is what they asked for. They asked for a way to get some money flowing so they could make decisions on purchasing their feed, they could make decisions on other issues related to their families. We have put a program in place and money is flowing to producers.

Mrs. Rowat: I get what she is saying here, but I am asking for the statistics on the stress line over the past three months, the breakdown and the follow-up to these people and also if she is aware that there has been an increase in the number of people being admitted to Brandon General for mental stress.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I do not have stats with me at this committee right now.

With respect to the increase in mental health issues, I think that that is a question that we would have to get information on from Health. I am not aware, that is not stats that we would have in this department. As I said, there are no matter when it is, whether it is during a flood or a fire or a drought or a situation that we are facing right now because of BSE, there is stress on families and we have to ensure that we have

the support services there for people. Our Government has made a commitment.

We have made a commitment by putting in place the Farm and Rural Stress Line to have that service available for people that they can access, and I would hope that people who need that service are accessing it. I can tell you that there is a lot of work that has been done to make people aware of the situation and put in place teams of people in various regions of the province to help out with this situation.

Mrs. Rowat: Regarding Intergovernmental Affairs and rural development, I just wanted to know what the status of the number of economic development advisors that she has in place throughout the province.

Ms. Wowchuk: The number of economic development officers has not changed, except for the fact that there are two vacancies. One is being filled now and I am not sure what the status of the second one, but there were two that were vacant and one I believe may have been filled now.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, if I can get the locations for the one that is filled, then the other one that is vacant.

* (16:20)

Ms. Wowchuk: I will get back to you with that. I do not want to put the wrong community on the record and then be accused of putting misinformation on the record, so I will get back to you on that.

Mrs. Rowat: As a former economic development officer, I served on a regional round table pilot project for the southwest region. It was funded federally and is into, I think, its fourth year. Last year we were up in Thompson, and we had a provincial-federal meeting. We reviewed sort of our successes and some of our challenges. At that point, the Province had indicated that they would be in the position to be taking over or at least providing some leadership in that area of the regional round table. I just wanted to know, to get on record what the minister's stand is on this and if she has some information to share on where the Province will take a

leadership role in taking over the regional round tables.

Ms. Wowchuk: Community round tables?

Can I take that question as notice and then get back to the member?

Mrs. Rowat: I think that is—

Mr. Penner: I do not know whether you went through this or not while I was gone. I asked the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) some questions in the other room, but I wonder if the minister could tell this committee how much she is spending on the advertising campaign. I understand from the Premier (Mr. Doer) that that budget is housed in the Department of Agriculture and whether she could also tell me under what line of expenditure that I might have missed that under during the Estimates? I did not see any increase of any amounts that would lead me to believe that there had been any provision made for this kind of an advertising campaign.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, there is always a certain amount of advertising and promotion of agriculture that goes on throughout the department. It would come under the marketing and business, farm development section of the Budget because there is always some room in that budget to do a variety of promotion of agriculture products. Certainly, I would believe that just as you, in other cases, advertise a program, for example, a crop insurance advertises programs in the spring, so there is a marketing budget in crop insurance, there is a marketing budget in the Agricultural Credit Corporation and certainly there is marketing and a certain amount of marketing under the marketing and farm business management.

So there are a few areas where there would be money available to do these kinds of things. As the member would know, there are many times we do advertising when there are new crop insurance programs. We did advertising when we brought in the program of Bridging Generations under the Agricultural Credit Corporation. There are various areas that we do promotion of agriculture and make information available to

farmers. This is no different than the other programs that we might have, whether they be, as I say, the crop insurance programs, when we make changes to crop insurance and add new crops or make people aware of what the deadline dates are.

We want producers to have the information, no different than what we have now. We have a crisis in the province, very serious challenges. We have made programs available. We want the public and the producers to know what is available for them. There are various sections in the Budget where we would be able to promote programs for farmers.

Mr. Penner: Well, I wonder whether the minister could tell us what the current advertising campaign would cost. Surely, she must have that answer.

Ms. Wowchuk: I will take that question as notice, Mr. Chairman. The program is in progress. I do not have the final amount of money. As the member knows, there are a variety of papers throughout rural Manitoba. We want people to have as much information as we have. The radio ads are ongoing. I cannot give you the final costs of the program.

Mr. Penner: I hear what the minister has said so far. I have been going through her Estimates book and so far have not been able to find a great deal of money that has been designated in the Budget for communications. There is some in the various areas, but it is not a great deal. I wonder if the minister would want to give us the information as to how much she and her Cabinet colleagues have decided this whole advertising campaign will cost. Surely she must have had that discussion. How much have you designated as an allowable expenditure through your Cabinet and or Treasury Board for this advertising campaign?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, when this Budget was written, we did not have the BSE crises before us. Just as we have had to make decisions on programming that is not in the Budget, the whole issue of BSE came after the Budget. Just as we have had to make decisions on what kinds of programs we would put in place, we also had to make decisions on how we would make the

public aware of the programs that we have developed.

It is important that the public know that there are a number of programs. Whether it be the loans program, the slaughter program, the Drought Assistance Program, we have made a decision that we will make the public aware to be sure that producers have access to every program possible. We made a decision on not only putting this money in place but also to be sure that there was money to make the public aware that these programs were available. The final cost of it is not finalized. I would be happy to share that with the member when it is finalized.

Mr. Penner: Could the minister tell us what the direction was from her Cabinet and from the Treasury Board to what the limits on advertising were under this Budget?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, just as with any program that is put in place, every program has to have reasonable amounts available for it. These are significant programs. The amount of money that is available for producers is significant. We want to be sure that producers really know the value of, for example, the recovery program. Given the negative comments that the Opposition continues to put out, that these programs are not valuable programs, we think that it is very important that we have information available for producers. Producers have been very busy through the summer months. Some of them might not even be aware of all of the programs. We thought it was important but, as well, it has to be done prudently.

* (16:30)

Mr. Penner: Just a short question. How much? How much have you designated towards the advertising campaign, you as a Cabinet? I think we have a right to know as members of the Legislature. We have a right to know what your Government is spending on the advertising campaign or, at the outside, what is the amount that you have been limited at for spending on this advertising campaign? What has your Cabinet given you direction on?

Ms. Wowchuk: Our Cabinet wants to be sure that producers no matter where they are, are

aware of the programs that we have put in place. We have put in place a significant amount of programming, more programming than is available in our province. We have made a decision, Cabinet made a decision that we would put in place the advertising to ensure that those producers who are having difficulty now with cash flows know what programs are available. That is what we are doing.

I have indicated to the member that I will share with him the final amount that is being spent on this, but I do not have the final amount yet because the program is not complete. We have not determined how much longer it will be necessary to continue with this advertising.

Mr. Penner: I wonder if the minister could tell us whether it is \$10,000 or more. Is it a \$100,000 or more? Or is it a half-a-million dollars that is being spent or could it even be a million dollars that is being spent on advertising in this campaign? Can the minister give us a range of where she sees this?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I have indicated to the member that I do not have that information with me. The final bill is not in, but I will be prepared to share that information. The member is asking for the specific amount that has been allocated and I will share that with you at our next sitting. I do not have the specific amount with me here.

Mr. Penner: Could I ask the minister then to ask her staff to go get it for her. I am sure that she has it at her disposal, at her fingertips. I will wait here for the answer if she is willing to share that information with me.

Ms. Wowchuk: The member knows that when we are in concurrence we do not have staff with us. I do not have that number here. I will get you the number, the estimated costs of the advertising, as soon as I have it available.

I say to the member it is a custom in concurrence to take a question as notice. I am saying that I will take that question as notice and bring back details for it. I can say that the final numbers for the advertising is not available because it is not completed. As soon as I have that number available and, certainly, when we

come back to concurrence, I can give the member an estimate of what the budget is. I do not have that number with me.

Mr. Penner: I wonder whether the minister could tell me whether the person who is sitting at the end of room is a staffperson or not.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, there is no staff from the Department of Agriculture and Food in the room.

I think we know it is a practice when we are in concurrence if a minister does not have an answer the minister can take the question as notice. I have indicated I would like to take that question as notice and I will return with the answer. I do not have that information.

I have also said the final numbers on the advertising are not available yet because we have not made the final decision as to whether we will have to continue with the advertising or whether we will be able to end it sooner.

I would be prepared, as I said, to take the question as notice and later in the day or tomorrow provide the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) with that information.

Mr. Penner: I wonder then whether you could indicate to this House whether you would be willing to bring it into the House tomorrow, that we could take a look at it.

Ms. Wowchuk: I will get the information as soon as I can and provide it to the member.

Mr. Penner: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wonder if the minister could indicate to me: How many producers have qualified for your programs? How many producers have qualified for your raft of programs that you have put out? Surely, you must have a count as to how many producers have been paid whatever from various programs.

Ms. Wowchuk: Under the low-interest loan program, 307 applications have been processed as of today. The number goes up every day as applications progress. You will remember we started out—

An Honourable Member: That is about 3 percent.

Ms. Wowchuk: So 307 have been processed now. With respect to the BSE Recovery Program, there were 716 producers or packers who participated in that. In the feed assistance program there were around 1100 producers who had participated in that program.

Those were the applications, I should say. The numbers I gave were the applications that were processed, received by September 25. By September 25 there were, of the slaughter deficiency program, 716; then on the inventory and price incentive program, there were 14 packers; and under the feed assistance there were 1103 applications received by September 25.

Mr. Penner: That means roughly about 15 percent of the producers in this province, in one way or another, have made application for support through any one of your programs.

Ms. Wowchuk: That is right because you will remember the slaughter deficiency program and the feed assistance program were designed to help those people in the feedlot industry. That is why that program was designed. In consultation with the industry, they asked federal and provincial governments to put in place the slaughter deficiency program. That is the amount of people we have there.

Then on the feed assistance one, it pegs at about a little over 1100, and on the recovery program there are over 300 who have had their applications processed now.

Mr. Chairperson, there will now be the Drought Assistance Program, in which the applications are just starting to flow on. We are working on applications right now. Then the second slaughter deficiency program that we announced as well, the number of applicants on that one should increase because it will not be those people in the feedlot industry. It will be anybody who can sell their cattle, so we should see more people accessing that program. That is what is important about that program. It is not just for the feedlot people. It is for whoever can move their cattle, so I think that you will see a larger number of producers take advantage of that because the first one that was designated to feedlots and people who are feeding cattle, and our numbers are a little bit low on that side.

*(16:40)

Mr. Penner: Mr. Chairperson, this just proves what I have been saying all along, that the minister's programs have been so complicated and so innocuous in many ways that the producers do not qualify. She knows full well this is a cow-calf operation in this province in large part. Mostly they are cow-calf operators. She knows that so far there has been virtually no support given to the cow-calf operators at all. Therefore, I say to her that she should give serious consideration to providing a cash advance program to the producers.

The other question I have for the minister is how much money has the Government committed to building a new beef processing plant in conjunction with a group of farmers that might be interested in forming a new generation co-op?

Ms. Wowchuk: I have to disagree with the member about whether our programs are working or not. *[interjection]* Mr. Chairman, if I may.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Excuse me. Allow the minister to speak when she has the floor. Thank you.

Ms. Wowchuk: Cash is flowing. People are making decisions on whether or not they want to take money now or whether or not they want to wait for a while. I have shared this with the member from Emerson before that the recovery program is working. It is flowing cash.

With respect to this being a cow-calf province, I would say that we worked very closely with the cattle industry. It was the Manitoba Cattle Producers who said—

An Honourable Member: Blame the Cattle Producers.

Ms. Wowchuk: No. The member says blame the Cattle Producers. I am putting information on the record, and I would expect that the member would listen. What I am saying is we had discussion with the cattle producers. We consulted

with them. They were part of the process. They said move the animals out of the feedlot. When those animals grow, it will open up markets. That was the advice of the industry. I would ask if the member is saying that the Manitoba Cattle Producers are not representative of the industry then. We worked through them with this program and worked with them in designing other programs as well. What was your question? If the member could just—that was the first question.

Mr. Chairperson: I will give the floor to the Member for Emerson.

Mr. Penner: I will help the minister along. The question was: How much money have you committed to a possible value-added co-operative being formed in this province, and how much have you committed to them that you would put into a slaughtering facility should they either be able to acquire one or build one?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, what we did announce is that we have \$2 million that is available for processors who want to expand or upgrade their facilities. We have made that announcement, and we have had discussion with producers who are looking at ways to expand their facilities.

Mr. Chairperson, these producers from the Interlake have been very concerned about the fact that older animals will not be leaving the province and that there is no slaughter facility and that our slaughter capacity has declined so badly under the previous administration. If you look at those facts, the slaughter capacity just went downhill, and nothing was done to improve it.

These producers are interested and we are willing to work with them, as we are with any other business that wants to come to Manitoba and create jobs and provide a service for our producers.

Mr. Penner: I just want to make one correction. The minister said under our administration the slaughter industry had gone—

Ms. Wowchuk: Died. You killed it.

Mr. Penner: Died, killed. I want to say to the minister that under her administration, when the NDP first formed government, there was 500 000 cattle slaughtered in this province annually. When you left office, ma'am, you were down to less than 100 000. Sorry about that. I wonder who killed the industry.

Ms. Wowchuk: And when you left office, sir, it was under 16 000 or under 20 000. You look at the charts and we know—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Allow the person who has the floor to speak.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, when the Conservative government was in place, they did nothing to improve the slaughter capacity in this province. We have producers now who are interested. The member asked how much money we were willing to put in for that. We will work with them as with anybody else who comes forward with a business plan and has ideas for Manitoba.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. When you make your comments, make them through the Chair, please. Thank you.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I am going to take just a very few minutes because we are running out of time, but I would like to ask the minister very directly about her intergovernmental portfolio, because that is important.

The community of Decker, the Decker colony, a Hutterite colony, have had water issues for a long time, but they are now at a point where the water is not drinkable at all. Their families are getting sick. Elderly people are getting sick. They have been in touch with me to see what it is we could do to get water.

Now, the only way that they can get water to that Hutterite colony is by piping it from a well in Miniota. That is about 20 miles across country. Now, that is a significant cost, but, on the other hand, this community is the size of any village in that area, so, therefore, an investment is required because not only are their families getting sick, their livestock are getting ill as well. They are currently getting their water out

of a dugout and hauling it, but that is not sustainable for any length of time.

They have appealed to me to see what it is that we could do as a government to help them in this time of crisis, because I do not want to see another Walkerton issue develop as a result of us not paying attention to this particular issue. I know that Water Services have been informed about it and are aware of it, but because of the significant costs, nothing has been happening.

I am asking the minister whether or not she would commit today to look at this problem very seriously on behalf of the people of the Decker colony, because we cannot go into a winter without knowing that there is a sustainable and a clean water supply for that community.

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, I will talk to the Water Services Board. Of course, I cannot be familiar with every project where there is an issue, but I will take the question as notice, contact the Water Services Board and then get back to the member with some information, because I do not have that information in front of me.

Certainly, there are issues and there have been studies done in a couple of the areas of the province to look at how the water supply can be addressed, and, certainly, with a drought situation, there could be some serious situations. Can the member indicate which municipality that is in?

Mr. Derkach: It is in the Shoal Lake municipality. I can share with the minister that this is an issue that goes back to the time when I was minister of rural development. So it is not a new issue but one that has escalated in terms of its severity because of the quality of the water that they have at the colony.

I thank the minister for that and I would certainly be prepared to sit down with her on a one-to-one basis to give her more information on this if she requires.

The other question I have has to do with the slaughter industry. I have presently a constituent who is interested in constructing a multispecies processing plant. The minister may know about it. I know there has been some correspondence

from her department in this respect. This individual is, right now, I guess, a part owner in a processing facility outside the province, wants to bring it back into the province and wants to develop it as a multispecies processing plant, which, I think, this province needs, because we have the bison, we have the elk, we have horses, we have cattle, we have sheep. We have all of these species, but we do not have a multispecies processing plant which this individual is interested in constructing.

I would like to know from the minister whether her program of support to the development of a slaughter industry would include support to a multispecies processing plant.

Ms. Wowchuk: A multispecies slaughter facility is a very important facility for this province. We have had discussions with several people over the past couple of years who have come forward with an idea and then just have not been able to make it fly.

But I think that given the situation we have right now with border closures and people looking at how they are going to continue with these industries, it is very important. If someone was interested in a multispecies facility, it would be given the same consideration as anyone else who is looking at the slaughter capacity.

Mr. Derkach: I have taken more than my time. I thank the minister for her comments. Thank you.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Chair, just a couple of quick questions. Madam Minister, in regard to the federal-provincial program that you announced, the new \$1.14 billion that you announced with the federal minister a week ago last Friday morning, can the minister indicate to me whether or not the 1.14 billion that she and the honourable minister, Lyle Vanclief, the federal Minister of Agriculture, announced. Can she tell me whether or not the \$1.14-billion program includes the farmers' share of the premium, or is it over and above the 1.14?

* (16:50)

Ms. Wowchuk: That is the Government share.

Mr. Maguire: The farmers' premium will be over and above the 1.14 billion?

Ms. Wowchuk: The 1.1 is a 60-40 share of the federal-provincial government.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chair, when will the forms will be out for the interim payments on the CAIS program?

Ms. Wowchuk: The federal government administers the program. The federal minister indicated that the forms would be out in early October. He anticipates payments by the end of October.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I guess my question to the minister is: Are these dollars then—obviously, it is an interim on the CAIS program—that are going to come out, are they the same dollars that she has announced for her extended slaughter program?

Ms. Wowchuk: No.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, is the transportation program that she has announced a part of the CAIS program?

Ms. Wowchuk: No.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chair, the minister has indicated to us in the House and others that the dollars that she signed a federal-provincial program on is on long-term agriculture disasters and drought. What part of the federal program that she signed then has any relationship to drought?

Ms. Wowchuk: The feed program, the Drought Assistance Program and the second BSE, the slaughter program that we announced, are all provincial dollars. We have asked the federal government to share in those programs with us. We have not got any commitment. These are dollars outside of what is in our Budget. There are dollars in the Budget for the programs, for crop insurance, for CAIS program, but these are additional dollars that we put in place because of the disaster after the Budget was printed.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chair, I will turn it back over to my honourable member from Ste. Rose.

Mr. Cummings: Just quickly for the record, does the Minister responsible for Water Services Board—there are a number of communities out there that are having their problems compounded by the drought the same as the member from Russell was indicating. There are communities that expect to be short of water. Are there any additional expenditures within the Water Services Board that the minister expects to put into drought-proofing?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chair, is the member asking about additional money for this year? If you are talking about additional money for this year at this point, we are working within the existing Budget.

We are having discussions with PFRA on looking for some additional resources for water. There are programs in place as well that can be used for piping water but that depends on distance. We are having some discussions with federal government through PFRA as to how there might be some additional resources available to help with the water situation as well.

Mr. Cummings: Well, I think the Premier has put the minister in a very difficult situation. She certainly has lots on her plate with Agriculture. I would suggest that probably the responsibility, particularly under the water services side, probably has been on automatic pilot. I would only encourage her to look at the areas that are short, are going to be drought-stricken. There are some areas in the Westbourne municipality that certainly will be very short of, if not potable water for the community, certainly what would be ranked as not industrial but farm water.

I say this to make my case, much as I am aware of one farmer who has seven dugouts on his farm, and they are all dry. There is no well that can be developed in that area. It is an area, following on that example, that should receive some attention.

I would encourage the minister to refer to the Water Services Board these issues.

Ms. Wowchuk: I have had discussion with the Water Services Board about these particular issues and areas where, although there is piping service available, some of this piping is just too

far to be handled through the piping systems. Piping the surface water is just a little bit too far. But there are studies being done in a few areas of the province and certainly the one that the member refers to. I believe in the area of Westbourne and also in areas of the southwest of the province feasibility studies are being done on how water issues can be addressed.

But the issue that we have facing us immediately with cattle is certainly going to be challenging. Some of those wells, community wells that are in place, are going to be taxed pretty heavily to supply the water. As I said, there are discussions taking place with the federal government through PFRA on this important issue.

Mr. Penner: I believe this brings us to a conclusion. I think we were asked to wrap up at around five o'clock. I just want to ask the minister one further question before wrap-up. That is, you indicated that the farmer's portion was not part of the federal-provincial announcement that was made. You also made a commitment, I believe, of somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$43 million that you committed when the announcement was written. Is that correct?

Mr. Chair, that is the amount, the exact same amount that is now in your sub-appropriations for this year, which amounts to the same amount of money as we had in the Budget last year for CFIP, \$21,150,000; and NISA, which was \$21,960,000. The combined total gives you \$43,110,000.

So there are no new commitments being made in your budget for the new CAIS program other than what was already there. You are rolling that into the \$43 million, as I see it here, and you have announced that \$43 million as being your commitment to the CAIS program.

Ms. Wowchuk: That is right. When we were printing the Budget we were not sure exactly what the number would be. It is a demand-driven program. At the time we were printing the Budget, BSE was not an issue, so we were making assumptions that the amount of money would be similar to what we needed for NISA and CFIP.

That is the amount that we were able to print at the time when the Budget was being printed.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to clarify that because when the Premier (Mr. Doer) has on a number of occasions made reference to the \$43 million that you have committed, that is no new money being committed to the cattle producers. That is the old amount that you budgeted for at the beginning of the year to supplement the requirement by the Province if and when the Province would sign on to the CAIS or APF agreement. Is that correct?

Ms. Wowchuk: That is the money we have put into the APF. However, we have put a lot of additional money on the table for the cattle industry—

An Honourable Member: Not \$43 million.

Ms. Wowchuk: No, besides the \$43 million we have put in place money, the \$15 million that was for the slaughter program. We have put in place the drought assistance. We have put in place the \$100-million loan program, but within the APF we had to make an assumption of how much money we were going to put in. That is the assumption we made, when we were printing our Budget, on how much money would be needed.

Mr. Penner: Well, thank you very much. As long as we are clear on that. The \$43 million that the Premier has so highly touted as being additional monies put in place so that farmers can have access to that, which is part of the \$180 million that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has talked about, was in fact a proviso that was contained in the Budget and is no new money, is only a rollover of the old money that was there through NISA and CFIP. As long as that is clear to the people of Manitoba, because I do not want another perception being created that it is a whole bunch of other money that has been rolled into a new cattle or livestock initiative. That simply is not the case. This is old money that is being revisited.

Ms. Wowchuk: It is new money, because it is in a new Budget. It is the same amount of money we had under the past Budget because we could not—*[interjection]* That is what we had to base the decision on. However, I would not want the

member to give the impression that this Government has not stood behind the cattle industry, because we have put in lots of money for the cattle industry.

My only hope is that the border opens and we can get business back to usual because that is the most important thing we need for the industry now.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions?

An Honourable Member: We pray, Mr. Chairman, that your minister is right.

Mr. Chairperson: What is the will of the committee?

An Honourable Member: Adjourn.

An Honourable Member: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise.

Concurrence Motion

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): The Committee of Supply has before it for our consideration the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question for the Minister of Health deals with the performance deliverables that he is demanding from each of the regional health authorities. I have in front of me a copy of one of the performance deliverables and measurement of performance schedules. I would ask the minister whether he has such a performance deliverables agreement with the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairperson, we have signed performance deliverables with all of the regions and CancerCare Manitoba. They vary depending upon region. This is the first year of a process, a very innovative process I suggest, undertaken by Health that deals with specific issues and some specific highlights. This is the first year of a process. It is

in process and there are agreements with all of the regions.

Mr. Gerrard: In this one I note there is a written regional primary health care operational plan to be submitted to Manitoba Health by December 31, 2003. I would ask the minister whether this is the first time he has asked the health authorities to deliver to him an operational plan, and also for how many years is this plan going to be operative? Is it a one-year plan, a three-year plan, a five-year plan, a ten-year plan?

Mr. Chomiak: For the first question, with respect to the first question, in this format, no.

Mr. Chair, regarding the second question, this is part of a long-standing, ongoing process of primary care development. The member may not or may be aware of the fact that we are involved with primary care reform across the province in a variety of activities and functions with the regions and are involved in a multitude of primary care projects.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister.

I am aware that the minister himself has referred to a plan that was put forward, I believe, by the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority which he has referenced as a Tory plan, which was for I think eliminating or getting rid of some four or five of the hospitals in the Assiniboine, or maybe it was the South-Westman or Marquette regional health authorities at that point.

I would ask the minister, this plan which he referred to in his answers to questions in the Legislature in the last couple of weeks: When was that plan written and delivered to Manitoba Health?

Mr. Chomiak: The plan was put together by the former South-Westman Region. It commenced at a time when we were not the government. The framework and the outlines of the plan were finalized within the fall of '99 and early 2000. We had discussion in the Legislature that I think the member was privy to at that time concerning that particular plan.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister has indicated he rejected that plan recently in the Legislature. Can

he review with us what he did and whether there was a subsequent plan which replaced it?

Mr. Chomiak: The plan called for the conversion of a number of facilities, if memory serves me correctly, to go down from something like 12 to 6 facilities in the South-Westman Region and it was our position that we were not going to close facilities.

Mr. Gerrard: Did the minister ask the regional health authority for a replacement plan or an updated plan?

Mr. Chomiak: There is all kinds of planning that goes on with respect to the health care sector. With respect to this particular effort that was put in place by the South-Westman Region, it was done in conjunction with a number of agencies. Nothing of that kind has been done subsequent.

Mr. Gerrard: Just to get clarification then, from that time until the regional health authority presents their operational plan, which may be December 31 of 2003, at the end of this year, there has not been a clear plan in the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority? Is that correct?

Mr. Chomiak: No, that is not what I said.

Mr. Gerrard: I would like to ask the minister then to clarify, the minister rejected the one plan which was looked at in the fall of '99 and 2000, but has said there was not, or maybe just that he did not ask for a replacement plan. Did the regional health authority deliver a replacement altered plan?

Mr. Chomiak: There are all kinds of plans, recommendations and efforts that go on, on a yearly basis. With respect to the specific, which I will call Tory plan, that came about in the summer of 1999 with all of those agencies and all of those entities, we have not asked for that plan to be resurrected.

Mr. Gerrard: I presume there would be some alternate plan for the facilities. It may not have been to close, but to change. What was the future? Was it just a status quo approach?

I would ask the minister whether there was a clear overall framework for where the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority was going?

Mr. Chomiak: As I have indicated to the member and to the House, it has been government policy and strategy to work within the framework of not closing facilities. That is the framework we have worked on since before I came to office.

Mr. Gerrard: In the context then of the plan for the future of the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority, which may or may not exist at the moment, one of the things I know the minister has committed to is he has very clearly indicated in this Legislature in the last few weeks that he has directed the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority to do some physician recruitment. I gather the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority has been successful, from his announcement of Friday, in recruiting three physicians.

Can the minister tell us at which facilities these physicians will be working?

Mr. Chomiak: The region has successfully recruited three physicians and there are five more they are very hopeful of finalizing arrangements with. The region has a series of priorities and openings with respect to a number of facilities around the region. We have asked the region to prioritize according to what the region has to but that the Government wishes to sustain a practice and an ER in the specific community of Erickson.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Chair, I am uncertain, in fact, as to where things are going, particularly when I talked to a physician the other day who looked up on the Web site of Manitoba Health for career opportunities and opportunities for physicians and after this was brought to my attention some 10 days ago, which was a number of days after the minister had given his directive for there to be a physician recruited for Erickson, that at this point there are listed opportunities in Rosburn, in Russell and in Wawanesa, but there is no opportunity listed in Erickson.

* (14:50)

Will the minister explain why the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority is apparently not advertising on the government Web site for a physician?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, when I last checked, there was an ad for Erickson.

Mr. Gerrard: I will provide for the minister a copy of the Web site, as downloaded just half an hour ago. This is quite similar to what it has been for the last 10 days. Certainly, in checking innumerable times, there has not been any advertised for Erickson. I am not sure which Web site the minister was looking at, but it does not appear to be that there was any advertised for a physician in Erickson.

I would ask the minister: In terms of his view of the communities of Rosburn, Russell, Wawanesa, Erickson, which are all looking for physicians—the latter one we take on the minister's word—what in terms of the primary care model for the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority is the minister's view of the arrangement which was working apparently quite well in Wawanesa and Baldur and a third community, Glenboro, where there were three hospitals and where there were physicians who shared weekend call among the three hospitals and managed to work out an arrangement so that they had one of the ERs open on a weekend and it was clear to people that they could find out very quickly which one was open and how things were working, whether that model of three communities working together with three hospitals is one which he would support in terms of a primary care model.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am not sure what the member's definition of primary care is, but primary care encompasses far more than just referenced in what the member is saying.

We are certainly open. Our policy has been to try to keep all the facilities open and the ERs open which we have done quite effectively for the past four years and will continue to try to do. Any variations on that that could assist in keeping ERs open, we are interested in looking at.

Mr. Gerrard: My reference was to the fact that the communities of Wawanesa, Baldur and Glenboro seem to have worked together and that the physicians and the nurses in the area seem to have worked out arrangements which have been quite satisfactory and that there is the potential to build upon those relationships the preventive care and the various other things that are critical in terms of providing primary care.

What I would just ask the minister is: Is that the sort of co-operative arrangement among communities which the minister would support?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we are supportive of any model that will continue to provide care to communities and are interested in looking at any kind of models. The member referenced the fact of rotations in covering ERs, and there are various devices that have been utilized in the past in other jurisdictions to cover that off.

We are interested in utilizing or recognizing any and all of those variations.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Chair, it has been somewhat surprising that in Wawanesa there is some considerable disgruntlement among the nursing profession about the way that things have been handled. I understand they have a complaint before the Labour Board because of what appears to be poor relations between the regional health authority and the nurses.

In this case, Mr. Chair, in Wawanesa, I would ask whether the review that the minister has commissioned and announced on Friday would encompass looking at these sorts of problems, as well as the physician situation?

Mr. Chomiak: Insofar as that matter is before the Labour Board, I would rather not discuss that particular matter in public.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, let me rephrase that then. Would matters which deal with nurses and with the nursing environment and the ability of nurses to contribute to health care in the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority region be included in the review which he has asked for?

Mr. Chomiak: We are very concerned about matters relating to nurses concerning their relations, et cetera. We have ongoing dialogue and discussions with respect to nurse-related matters.

I have just been provided with a listing from the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority about physicians in Erickson that has been up since July. I have three copies to table to the member.

Mr. Gerrard: Perhaps, then, it is just a problem with it getting on to the departmental Web site, and maybe the minister could ask his Web masters to have a look at that.

Now, I want to move on to an area in which I know that the minister has a great interest, which in the period leading up to the election of 1999, the minister was very, very actively engaged. I have a letter, actually it is an e-mail, from somebody in my constituency. I will read at least parts of the e-mail.

Dear Doctor Gerrard: I am a recent escapee from incarceration at the Victoria General Hospital and from the meals that are served to the patients (prisoners). After the food has been through the micro, much is left to be desired. What really appals me is that this form of food has been suffered by those incarcerated for the past several years. The food on the tray and listed on the menu is a cookbook picture and a pleasure to look at. There the pleasure ends. Vegetables: Green beans like rubber and barely warm. Mixed vegg, the same, fresh only once in three weeks. Potatoes: Lovely mounds of mashed looked just perfect, but taste closely resembles sawdust. Roast potatoes: Once looked delicious but were barely warm and were hard. Rice: Dry and dingy and clingy except once when mixed with wild rice. Meat: Pork and veal both very solid. Minced meat dishes were a small improvement but what was keeping it from being dried out was congealed on top. Toast: Thick and either hard or mushy from steam, supposedly marged but not sure. Eggs: Scrambled looked great but that was it; closely resembled pieces of sponge. They were served regularly and I never once found them edible. Desserts: Usually canned fruit and sometimes fresh. Puddings: prepackaged and okay.

Because I am a diabetic, nothing was seasoned which left everything tasting as it was and that was flat. Tea: I am a tea drinker and only fresh boiling water can cut it, so my family made tea at home and brought it up. Fortunately, my husband usually brought a homemade muffin, so I only lost about 10 pounds, which did not do me any harm. Other members of the family suggested it may have been closer to 20 pounds.

She continues: So what is my beef? Obviously, there is top quality food costing top

quality prices but served in a way that makes it an absolute waste of public funds. This has been going on for years. Please do something.

I bring this to your attention. This is from somebody who was in hospital for a period of time who is a reasonably good observer with reasonably good taste buds and sense of good food. I would ask the minister why it is that this sort of unfortunate circumstance seems to be happening at one of our renowned hospitals.

* (15:00)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I would appreciate if the member would pass that letter on to me and he could expunge the name, et cetera, so we could get dates and take a look at the particular complaint.

Mr. Gerrard: I will certainly do so. I would ask the minister whether he is doing any look at the extent to which food is returned to the kitchens in the various hospitals to know to what extent there might be waste, as it were, going on and food that is not being eaten and used.

Mr. Chomiak: I believe that the quality control officials do take a look at that. I will ask for an update on that.

Mr. Gerrard: Would the minister be prepared to provide the response of the updates to the members of the Legislature?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I will endeavour to see what is available.

Mr. Gerrard: I want to thank the minister for paying attention to that. It is clearly an important matter to a lot of people.

I would like to move on for a moment to the recommendations of the Koshal committee and ask the minister to provide us a brief update on where things stand.

Mr. Chomiak: A number of positions that have been advertised for and have been put out, there have been several meetings of the implementation committee. The beginning of the process of the movement of surgeries to St. Boniface Hospital has commenced.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the concerns, let me put it on the table, is that in the changes, there are

areas which will be decreased at St. Boniface at the same time as there is the increased focus on cardiac surgery. I would ask what, for example, the minister's and St. Boniface Hospital's plans are with respect to, for example, the program in liver surgery, which is a very important program there.

Mr. Chomiak: I am not going to go into the specific detail of that. I will check with the implementation team and have the implementation team provide a specific response on that specific issue to the specific member.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, Mr. Chair, to the minister for providing a commitment to give me the information with respect to that. I would ask the minister in terms of the recommendations of the Koshal report, one of those was related to the assessment of physicians. This was clearly something which Sinclair reports and others have focussed on that there be a consistent framework for assessment of physicians. I would ask the minister what progress has been made in this area.

Mr. Chomiak: I think the Koshal report referred to the fact that there were assessments done as the result of measures that were put in place previously by this Government with respect to assessments but that they ask for specific criteria within the cardiac program per se to be put in place. That has been moved on to the implementation committee in order to be put in place.

Mr. Gerrard: Can the minister tell us when that might be put in place?

Mr. Chomiak: In this often studied program, there have been specific recommendations that have been given to us with respect to the Koshal report amongst other things. We are working on those processes. The implementation team has put in place processes and Doctor Koshal has recommended that a review be done in a year in order to determine the progress on each and all of the recommendations in his report.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the other areas which was quite important in the Sinclair report, as you will well remember, was quality assurance. Once again, there were issues in the Koshal report and recommendations related to quality of standards

of care, outcomes of surgical procedures and so on. I would ask the minister when he would expect these to be implemented by.

Mr. Chomiak: Again, that is in front of the implementation committee for implementation. I do want to point out to the member that, in point of fact, when the Sinclair-Thomas commission reported, they also recommended that certain guidelines be put in place and certain standards be followed. Those have been put in place as a result of the Sinclair inquiry. We have seen developments of reviews of programs and developments of dealing with some particular people and some particular programs and how those programs are applied. That process has been put in place since Sinclair and continues in place.

Mr. Gerrard: I think that one of the things that Koshal mentioned was a need for risk standardized mortality. It is my understanding that in fact that approach had been used under the Society of Thoracic Surgeons' North America database for which cardiac surgery in Manitoba was in 1999 a participant and that, along the line, under the watch of the minister, that process changed. The risk stratified assessments of mortality rates were longer done.

The Koshal report talks pretty clearly about the need to return to risk stratified assessments of cardiac mortality for things like isolated coronary bypass surgery. I would ask the minister when he would expect to have the return to the risk stratified cardiac mortality reporting.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chair, the Koshal report makes a number of recommendations with respect to quality care and operations with respect to the cardiac program. It is interesting that in terms of a number of factors, the Manitoba program is as good or better than other programs in various jurisdictions. For the first time in history, as a result of the reporting structure put in place at the federal-provincial conference, we reported on a number of factors nationally and provincially that could be utilized in a comparison basis. That report came out in September of 2002 dealing specifically with some heart procedures. There will be further national reporting that will be done arising out of the further developments at the federal-provincial level, and the

implementation of the Koshal report is being undertaken by the implementation committee.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister for his comments, and I look forward to hearing, I presume through the report of the implementation committee, how they are doing in making sure that we have the risk-adjusted mortality rates presented. Thank you.

* (15:10)

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): On September 20, I was in Rivers at a craft sale and function within the community, and they were hosting a food fair and information booth on the Riverdale Health Centre, with the proceeds going towards their infrastructure project.

After that event, I met with the mayor of Rivers and the health action committee, and we talked a little bit about the process to date on the health issues in their community. There are two things I would like to address to the minister. The first is the community of Rivers has asked for a meeting with the minister instead of the deputy minister which was initially offered. I wanted to know what the status is on that meeting request.

Mr. Chomiak: I will have to check my schedule with respect to that particular issue.

I note that the Premier (Mr. Doer) was recently in the community of Rivers and committed to the health centre.

Mrs. Rowat: So if I do make a trip up to the minister's office, would I be able to confirm a meeting date for the community? This was requested last week and they have been asking for my assistance.

Mr. Chomiak: I will have to check my schedule and get back to the member and to the community.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, the community is also in a situation where there is a physician who is leaving the community, and I would just like to know if the minister can update me on the status

of the replacement for the physician in that community.

Mr. Chomiak: The member may be aware that the region is in a situation where they have recruited three physicians and are in the process of recruiting an additional five, subject to some licensing provision. I am hopeful and I believe that amongst that group, there is some movement towards Rivers. I think we will have to confirm that with the region.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister, Mr. Chair, confirm that placement of one of those five would be to the community of Rivers?

Mr. Chomiak: I cannot confirm that. We will have to check with the region in terms of their prioritization, but they certainly have indicated that they want to and that Rivers is one of the communities that they are recruiting for.

Mrs. Rowat: I would also request the same question for the community of Wawanesa. I know that it is also in a situation that is requiring a physician. The status of Wawanesa's request for a physician is at what level?

Mr. Chomiak: The member is probably aware that there has been a physician recruited for Wawanesa, and the region is recruiting for another physician.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, the community of Wawanesa has asked for a second meeting date or was led to believe that there would be another meeting date set for them to discuss the status of their physician recruitment needs and also the retaining of the level of service that that facility is having. Has another meeting date been set with the community and the minister?

Mr. Chomiak: I cannot confirm that at this point.

Mrs. Rowat: In a meeting with one of the communities, there was discussion on a strategic plan that was prepared by the ARHA board for the year, I believe, in around 2000.

Is this a common strategic planning session that is held every year, and is this document available for the public?

Mr. Chomiak: I am not certain what the member is referring to.

Mrs. Rowat: That is fine. I will get further information on that and come back to the minister's office on that. Thank you.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I would like to ask the Minister of Health a couple of questions as they relate to urban—or, pardon me—rural facilities. I know the minister has made some significant progress in terms of his commitment to the rural hospitals that have been identified for closure, specifically in my area, namely, the offices of Birtle, Rossburn and Erickson, and, in addition to those, of course, neighbouring hospitals within that same RHA, like Rivers, Wawanesa, and Baldur, I guess. Today I want to ask the Minister of Health whether or not he has communicated with the RHA regarding his Government's position on closure of rural facilities and whether or not he has clearly indicated to the RHA, specifically the Assiniboine RHA, that they are to actively recruit for doctors for those facilities.

Mr. Chomiak: That has already been communicated.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, the hospital signs at Erickson are still down and will remain thus until such time, I guess, a doctor or doctors are hired for the Erickson facility. However, I am still concerned about the comments that were made by the CEO of the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority, who said, after the minister made his commitment to the communities, that the RHA would be hiring, but that in fact Erickson was not one of the major priority areas for hiring of physicians.

Mr. Chomiak: As I indicated previously, Mr. Chairperson, in this House, priorities are determined by the region. We have indicated that the region should be recruiting in those areas. We have also put in place a review of what options we can look at in terms of those smaller facilities. Nothing has changed in that context. As I said to the member before, the region has to prioritize based on a whole series of factors. They are aware of their responsibility to all those communities and will continue to work in that regard. I think the fact that they have actively

recruited as many doctors as they have is indicative of their efforts to recruit physicians for that region, which has been an ongoing issue for a number of years.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I guess I asked the question with regard to the direction that the minister had given the RHA because of the comments that were made by the CEO. The community has contacted me and has indicated that indeed there are doctors who are interested in locating in, for example, Erickson, but the community has not been allowed any input or participation in the recruitment for a physician for the community. I want to ask the minister whether he has given any instructions to the RHAs to allow for community participation in the hiring of doctors for their communities.

Mr. Chomiak: The RHA has been in regular contact with the community and some of the community leaders and will continue to do so. We will also try to have increased input as a result of the review we are participating in. We have had discussions on this. There have been some issues with respect to whether or not doctors that were brought into the area by the region were interested or not interested, for example, in a particular community, and there has been some disagreement about that particular issue. Unfortunately, it has resulted in some communication problems, I think. Certainly, the community will be involved in the processes as we go along, as has been the pattern in the past.

Mr. Derkach: Can the minister tell me what the pattern is for involvement of community in the recruitment of doctors for that community?

* (15:20)

Mr. Chomiak: As I understand it, the last time there were doctors that were in the area, the community was advised of that. I am also of the impression, I am advised that the region does keep in contact with the community concerning developments. I also appreciate the fact that there have been some strained relationships as a result of some of the developments. Hopefully, the communication can improve between the region and the community, notwithstanding it is a very, very serious issue, how it impacts on the

community and at the same time the impact it has on the region in general.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, it appears that some of the communities are not aware of how they can participate in the process of hiring a doctor for their area.

I met with the Erickson community and I met with the Russell community, who are facing an extreme doctor shortage as well right now. Both communities have indicated that there is no formal process or protocol set up for a community to participate in the recruitment of physicians for that community. I understand that the lead for recruitment of physicians must rest with the RHA. I also understand how important it is for the community to become involved to assure the physician that indeed those amenities that are required are not going to be in place, because the RHAs do not know specifically what kinds of services and amenities are available for people in the various communities. They just have no idea of that.

Mr. Chair, I am wondering whether there is a formal protocol or a formal process that has been adopted by the department to allow for the participation of communities in the recruitment of doctors.

Mr. Chomiak: I will take the member's suggestion under review and discuss it with him further.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the minister for that. In the past, the minister and I have had, I would have to say, some positive working relationships when it comes to issues within the constituency that I represent. I certainly do respect the efforts that he has made to try to alleviate those.

One of the other issues that keeps plaguing our area is the cost of transportation from our area because it is on the extreme west side of the province to the major facility here in Winnipeg for patients who need the services of the Winnipeg hospitals. I know that transportation is not an insured service. I think that is a given. However, the problem comes in patients who do not need the services of an ambulance to get back to their hospital to recuperate but could

probably use the services of something like what we have in the city right here, a stretcher service.

Stretcher service costs about half the money that an ambulance cost. Because those costs are borne by the individual, many of whom who are on fixed incomes, many who are elderly, this becomes a very onerous burden. I am wondering whether the minister has in his plans looked at the possibility of allowing stretcher services to operate in rural parts of the province, especially in the rural remote areas which I represent, for that matter.

Mr. Chairperson, I only say this because the Government did move on eliminating that \$50-charge for northern people who were using the air ambulance. In our case, we are often not allowed to use the air ambulance, but instead we use the ground ambulance. In many cases, we could be using a stretcher service that could get us back safely to our communities. However, none have been allowed to be licensed in the rural part of our province. I would just like to see what the minister's point of view is on that issue.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, there have been several solutions. It is not just confined to the member's area. There are pockets all around the province that suffer from this difficulty.

One of the solutions, of course, is to try to bring more services to residents closer to their home. Part of the developments in Brandon, the developments in Neepawa, the developments in Russell and other facilities will bring more care to patients in their facilities, so the need to have to go to larger centres like Winnipeg will be diminished.

The overall issue of providing transportation at reduced transportation costs is something that we are grappling with and continuing to look at.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Chair, with the greatest of respect to the minister, this was an issue I have raised now repeatedly for the last three years and we have had no resolution to it. So I ask the minister to look at it very quickly and very soon because of the urgency of this.

These are costs that are being borne by the individual client, and they are costs that are

becoming more restricting in terms of people being able to afford them. I know that regional health authorities have been lenient in how payment of these fees is made, and that is respected, but, Mr. Chair, to the minister, I have to say that there are cheaper ways of addressing some of these transportation costs, especially when a physician indicates that the individual does not have to be transported by ambulance.

So I am wondering whether the minister could commit today to look at this expediently, so that whether it is a private service or a public service—I am not really hung up on one or the other—I do know that there are individuals in rural Manitoba who could probably provide that service at a reasonable cost, and it does not have to be provided by government. But, on the other hand, if government chooses to do that, that is fine, too, as long as we get the service.

I guess my bottom-line question is whether the minister would commit to looking at this issue in the near future.

Mr. Chomiak: I will commit to look at this in the near future.

Mr. Derkach: Can I ask the minister whether he would then advise me as an interested MLA in this particular issue as to how the issue is progressing within the next two months?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I am going to take the minister back to rural health facilities and the urgency of that matter. Is there any way that the RHA and the minister could communicate to these communities of Wawanessa, Rivers, Rossburn, Birtle and Erickson the intentions that government has with respect to these facilities?

I spoke to the mayor of Rossburn a few days ago—pardon me, just yesterday, for that matter, and there is still significant concern in the community about the status of the hospital. That concern still remains in Erickson, and tonight, Mr. Chair, the community of Birtle has a meeting scheduled to deal with this issue.

I am wondering whether or not the minister can communicate with these communities to

give them some assurance that indeed their facilities are going to remain open as long as physicians can be recruited.

Mr. Chomiak: In a lot of respects, the situation is not dissimilar to what it has been for the past four, five and six years. We are endeavouring to recruit and maintain all of the facilities. We have asked the Office of Rural and Northern Health to do a relatively quick review, a more expanded review of the situation.

I assured the communities that were here when they were here a week or a week and a half ago, that we would do everything that we could to ensure that doctors are recruited.

At the same time, the situation, even though we have more doctors in rural Manitoba than we have had in the past, even though we are offering fairly lucrative packages, the situation is difficult, but we are trying our best. I cannot give a 100% certainty except to say that we have worked closely with a lot of communities in the past and have managed to provide the services. We will still try to do that.

* (15:30)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairperson, I apologize to the minister for being so parochial in this section of the Estimates debate, but it is a concern that dominates my region and is fairly important to those communities, so I hope the minister will bear with me.

The community of Erickson is still under some apprehension because of the mixed messages that have been coming to them from the minister's office and from the RHA. Right now they are still living under the directive that was given to them by the CEO of the region where they have been told they will be operating as a northern nursing station or a clinic and that there will be no on-call and no emergency services in that community.

Can I ask the minister whether he has given direction to the RHA to communicate directly with the Erickson community and to alleviate the concerns that community has at this time? Because it impacts on people who are making decisions about where they will live, who are

moving to and from the community, and also people who are using the whole area of that south park area for recreation.

Mr. Chomiak: I do not know how much more I can communicate other than what I said to the community when they were here, what I have said to the region, and what the region has said as well with respect to they are attempting to recruit more physicians, and if they are able to recruit physicians for their facilities, that the on-call, the ER would be restored. That is what we are trying to do. That is the best assurance I can give.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Chair, I respect that, but I know that at some point in time, for example, if you have been working at recruitment for six months or more and you have not recruited a physician, then alternative plans have to be put in place for that community and for the facility.

Has anyone thought about what the future of that facility might be should a doctor not be recruited in the near future or within the next six months?

Mr. Chomiak: The member knows the region has to plan on the basis of future, both future positive and negative scenarios. Any operation has to function like that.

Secondly, Mr. Chair, there have been all kinds of various options and permutations that have been put forth with respect to alternatives and various approaches. We have said we will try to recruit. If we can recruit then the ERs will be open.

In the worst case scenario, which is where we are right now, the good news is beds are open and the staff is fully employed. The bad news is that ER service is not provided and we have to provide some way of offering, if not that kind of service, some alternative to that service in the worst case scenario.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I am going to try to convince the minister to see my dilemma. In the case of Erickson, the CEO of the region has said that Erickson is not a priority for recruitment of physicians. She has also said to them that their

hospital will be run on a clinic basis and will be run as a northern nursing station. That is quite a different message than what the minister is saying, and so it is a contradiction between the minister and the CEO of the region. I am asking the minister whether he has in writing given any assurance to that community that indeed what the CEO said was incorrect and that indeed their facility will continue to function as a hospital as long as a doctor can be recruited. When the CEO says that it is not a priority, that it will be run as a northern nursing station and only as a clinic, that sends a fairly direct message.

Mr. Chairperson, the other part of the message is that the signs were taken down. Usually, they were hooded when there were insufficient staff; this time they were removed completely, including the pole that the sign had been attached to. So that sends a fairly direct message to the community, and I am wondering whether the minister has, as of this date, in writing, communicated with the community to tell them that indeed what the regional health authority said to them was incorrect and that their facility is indeed a priority and there will be active recruitment of a doctor for that facility so that those services that they had before can be restored as soon as possible.

Mr. Chomiak: The member has to appreciate priorities, that different communities have different priorities, and that within a region there are higher priorities and different priorities that have to be planned for. I have talked with colleagues of the member that have different priorities than the member. Within the region, there is active recruitment going on, as I pointed out earlier to the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). The active recruitment will continue with the fact that there are three physicians hired and five that have subject to licensure coming on. I think that things look relatively well for the region, but there are a number of priorities in the region. I cannot say any more, I think, than I have already said both to the community and to the member.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairperson, just one final comment and question to the minister: I ask the minister to commit today in this concurrence session to write to the Erickson community, with a copy to the Assiniboine Regional Health

Authority, indicating his intentions and his commitment to that community.

Mr. Chomiak: I have conveyed that in the meeting I had face to face with the community.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): To the Minister of Health, I wonder if you could give me a bit of an overview as to what your views are and your plans are for the Emerson facility. As the minister is well aware, the Emerson facility needed some upgrading, and under directions of the fire commissioner, and I believe some of that work has been done, although the consolidation of the hospital side and the personal care side under one nursing station, I do not know whether that has been totally finalized yet. I know that there was some work done there too.

I wonder whether the minister could give us his views as to what he thinks the future of that facility is, knowing that it is an old building, an old customs building that was converted many years ago to a hospital, and has seen an addition of a personal care unit to it. The foundations, to say the least, are not as good as they could be, and the shifting of the building is quite evident in water leakages throughout the building. Many other works still need to be done, such as straightening out the floors because of heaved foundations and the dike sliding right behind the hospital. Nobody knows how long the dike that has currently been constructed there will hold and whether that river bank will not again slide and might, in fact, cause some of the facility to slide into the river. I am wondering whether the minister could give some indication to the town of Emerson that their facility will be maintained over a long term knowing full well that he has closed the hospital and that it now only serves clinic purposes and as a transfer house for patients when they have severe conditions.

I wonder whether the minister can give the assurance to the town of Emerson that there will be some longevity to that facility, maintaining a health-care facility in that town.

* (15:40)

Mr. Chomiak: We put in some specific repairs and upgrades to the Emerson facility. I will endeavour to find out the current. The member

had mentioned to me in private earlier, and I do not have the specifics with me in the concurrence debate, but I will get those details and get back to the member on the specifics regarding that.

Mr. Penner: As the minister knows full well, the previous government had in its capital budget the budgets for a new facility. I think the minister is also aware that the Town of Emerson had in fact incurred some significant expenditures acquiring properties to put a new facility in which had been negotiated and agreed to.

Would the minister still be committed to putting a new facility in the town of Emerson at a future date?

Mr. Chomiak: We have had these discussions both in Estimates and concurrence before with respect to Emerson. There was hundreds of millions of dollars of commitments made in the '99 Budget that were not funded. They were made to a lot of communities.

We did a review of capital projects across the province and prioritized them over the past several years and determined prioritization projects. Most of the projects went ahead. Some of them, very few, did not proceed. Emerson was one that did not proceed at this time for construction of a new facility. In lieu of that we put in some significant funding for repairs.

Mr. Penner: I wonder if the minister could indicate whether the roof has also been fixed.

Mr. Chomiak: That is part of the information I will have to get back to the member, because that is what I was referencing in our earlier discussion we had had.

Mr. Penner: As far as physicians are concerned in the town of Emerson, has the minister had any discussions with the regional health authority there, the Central Regional Health Authority, as to what the plans are for physicians in the town of Emerson and some permanency to those physician positions. Is it the minister's view that it could be designated as a hospital again in the future?

Mr. Chomiak: As I understand it in terms of the initial utilization of Emerson, it was serviced out

of Morris with respect to itinerant physician. That was the process that was put in place I believe under the previous administration. We continued with respect to the itinerant nature of it. I will have to check with the region in terms of the plan as to whether or not they feel that they are in a position to recruit permanent, full-time physicians to the Emerson site.

Mr. Penner: It is, I think, quite reasonable to reflect on the nature of the Emerson facility. On the one side, to the south of them, there is the U.S. border. There is, however, a significant community that depends somewhat for hospital services in Emerson, even from south of the border. I think there could be a significant opportunity there for the Province of Manitoba to be servicing the needs of those people south of the border if we, in fact, had the physicians in place to serve that need.

Secondly, because it is right on the border between Southeast and Central, Emerson is somewhat at a disadvantage, but the needs for a hospital facility and physician services requirement in Emerson are significant as well from the southwest quadrant of the southeast region.

Those people have always used Emerson hospital, as has the Roseau First Nation community at Roseau in Roseau River Anishinabe Indian Band. Those services now must be acquired somewhere else by those people. It causes some of the people, for instance, from Ridgville to have to travel very long distances to be able to get to the first service provider either in Altona or Morris or indeed Steinbach and/or Vita, Vita being also a smaller facility with less than all of the facilities that are sometimes required. It then becomes imperative that good ambulance services be available at all times in these areas to transfer these people if and when they do arrive at the Emerson clinic and/or the Vita facility.

I wonder whether the minister could give us a bit of an indication as to whether he has had discussions with Southeast Region as well as Central Region to see whether that centre could be brought to greater use by adding some personal care beds to that Emerson facility as well as upgrading it again to full hospital status.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the member for those suggestions. We will pass them on to the regional authorities.

Mr. Penner: I want to raise one other issue that I wrote the minister a letter about. That is a matter of a patient or a victim, I should say, in the southeast corner of the Southeast Regional Health Authority. That person lives in Wampum, Manitoba. His name is Ray Culleton. His wife works in Roseau, Minnesota, at a doctor's office. Ray was experiencing a heart attack which his wife was quite familiar with and phoned for services. She was told that the Vita ambulance was not properly staffed. Therefore she made the decision that she would take her husband to Roseau, Minnesota, to the doctor that she was working for.

He diagnosed immediately a heart attack and phoned the Vita ambulance to be able to transfer Mr. Culleton to Winnipeg under an emergency kind of a situation. Mr. Culleton tells me that it took four hours before the Vita ambulance responded and said, sorry, we do not have proper staffing, in other words, they needed a nurse that was able to provide drip morphine to the person, and that nurse was not available and therefore could not provide the services to Mr. Culleton. The Roseau doctor then chose to use the Roseau, Minnesota, ambulance to transport Mr. Culleton to Winnipeg. The cost of that was \$3,068 U.S.

The request that I had made to the minister in writing was whether the minister would be agreeable that because services could not be provided in Manitoba by an ambulance or the staffing at the Vita Hospital that in this case we should view this as an emergency case that was where a service provider had to be brought in from another country. The U.S. health care system had to be brought into being and the U.S. ambulance had to be used. Now Mr. Culleton has been told that he must pay the total bill out of his own pocket. That would amount to better than \$4,000 Canadian for an ambulance trip from what should have been Vita to Winnipeg.

Mr. Chair, I believe that this is a special case that needs some special consideration because of the services not being provided. I am wondering whether the minister has had an opportunity to

look at the letter that I sent you with a bill attached and whether he would agree that Manitoba Health should adjust the bill to reflect what the Canadian cost would have been had a Canadian ambulance been available.

I think that would only be fair to Mr. Culleton. I have had that discussion with them, with the Culletons, and I am wondering whether the minister might want to give consideration to that and pay restitution to the Culletons for the difference that they had to pay simply because our services were not adequate.

* (15:50)

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I received the letter from the member and I have asked the department to look at the options, if there are any possible options in regard to this.

The member is probably aware that we have a fairly generous out-of-province transportation policy. It is understood to be the best of any province in the country. I have asked the department to look at this situation, and I will get back to the member on the specifics.

Mr. Penner: I appreciate that. I know that this was a bit of a special kind of a situation, and it needed a special kind of a person to be able to administer the drip morphine on the trip. However, I think we need to make note that this person is a Canadian living in a Canadian community having had to access the American health care system.

That doctor, I believe, Mr. Chair, made the right decision because when Mr. Culleton was admitted at St. Boniface, he was immediately treated in an emergency manner, and four days later had major heart surgery. He is now well. We thank the doctor in Minnesota for his services. We also thank the ambulance service providers for the services that they provided. I think that his action, the doctor's action, certainly in my view saved Mr. Culleton's life, and Mr. Culleton agrees with that.

But, clearly, we could not provide the services in Manitoba, and therefore I think it is only reasonable that we would expect that the adjustment would at least be made to not have Mr. Culleton pay more than what the Canadian

ambulance service would have charged to him. That is really the only request that Mr. Culleton is making.

So I thank the minister for giving some consideration to that. We will wait for his response.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): The other day in Estimates, I asked the minister a few questions about the organizational structure of his department and a Mr. Rick Dedi, who is the ADM of Special Projects. I just wanted to pursue a couple of more questions for clarification because as I read Hansard I was not completely satisfied with the answers that the minister provided.

The minister indicated the other day that Rick Dedi, as an ADM of Special Projects, had no individuals reporting to him. Is that normal throughout government, that someone would have a salary of \$100,000, have assistant deputy minister responsibilities and yet have no one reporting to him?

Mr. Chomiak: First off, I think I gave the salary range to the member during the course of Estimates.

Secondly, as I indicated to the member, it is a unique situation with respect to some special projects that Mr. Dedi is undertaking.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if the minister could indicate or give us some examples of some special projects that might be undertaken or might be in process right now in the Department of Health that Mr. Dedi might be involved in.

Mr. Chomiak: There are numerous projects that are engaged on by the Department of Health. In many instances we go to consultants or we do internal. The member knows that because the member was a member of Executive Council for a number of years. There is a variety of projects that sometimes can be done best outside, best inside or best in a combination. In this regard, Mr. Dedi has undertaken projects with respect to some issues that require some expertise for which we do not have to go outside of the department to obtain the services for.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, I was a member of Executive Council, but very often I was asked for some specific examples. Especially when you look at an expenditure of \$100,000 of taxpayers' money, there has to be some accountability. The minister should be able to share with the taxpayers of Manitoba at least a couple of examples of what Mr. Dedi is involved with in Special Projects. Obviously, they are projects that should be to the benefit of the taxpayers of Manitoba when it comes to delivery of their health care. I do not understand why it is such a big secret. Surely to goodness the minister can be accountable to the taxpayers and give us a couple of examples on what kinds of initiatives have been undertaken, what kinds of projects, what kinds of studies are being done or have been done under Mr. Dedi's watch.

Mr. Chomiak: When those items come to fruition, I will share those items with the member.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So is the minister indicating to me today that there is no project that has been completed under Mr. Dedi's watch, that everything that he is doing is ongoing?

Mr. Chomiak: I have indicated that when we are in a position to provide that information to the member then we will make that information available to the member.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But this is absolutely unacceptable from a Minister of Health who has the largest budget in the Government of the province of Manitoba. We have seen and there have been questions around skyrocketing administrative costs, not only in the regional health authority, but increasing administrative costs in the Department of Health.

When we have someone being paid a salary of \$100,000 and the minister cannot stand up and publicly defend or justify or indicate to Manitobans what this person is involved with, I find it shameful. Is the minister trying to hide something? I cannot understand, because I do know that from time to time we had people doing special projects in my departments that I had responsibility for, and that information was shared. It was shared with members of the Legislature. I am just asking for maybe one

example of one area that Mr. Dedi might be involved in providing information or support or analysis to indicate that there might be a new direction in Health. I am asking maybe for one example. I cannot understand why the minister is being so secretive. If he could just give me one example of one area within his department that he has undertaken a special project. That might be helpful.

Mr. Chomiak: First off, the member is wrong in terms of skyrocketing administration costs. The CIHI report that came out most recently indicated that when the member was a member of Executive Council the total administrative costs were \$195 million for the province. It has now dropped to \$179 million. So the member is wrong. The CIHI report also indicates that Manitoba has the third lowest hospital administrative costs in the country. That is apples to apples, Mr. Chairperson, and that is comparison.

So the member is wrong in terms of her assertions. With respect to the Department of Health, the majority of new positions, hirings in Health, are in the public health area to carry on the very active public health activity that we are involved in.

With respect to the specific projects, they are of a nature that there are policy implications, of a policy nature. As I have said, when we are in a position to make that information public, the member will have that information.

* (16:00)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, the minister did not answer my question. Could he just give us one example, one small example of something that is not that confidential that it cannot be shared with the taxpayers of Manitoba? Can he give us one example of what Mr. Dedi is working on? Just one area. I am not asking for the myriad because someone that is paid \$100,000 a year, I am sure, must be involved in several different projects, not just one.

Maybe he could just share with us one, one small project that Mr. Dedi might be involved in working on.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, as I indicated to the member, these are policy-related matters.

They are matters that have direct reporting relationships with respect to those policy matters. I am not in a position to outline the specifics to the member, but I will do that when we are in a position to announce that, which is totally legitimate in terms of a government planning and policy process.

While members now have access to all kinds of information that were not formally accessible under the previous government, that is, through the regions, et cetera, Mr. Chairperson, there are still developments and policy analysis that we have the ability to review and to discuss. When it is appropriate to make it public, if in fact the matter is of such a nature that we actually move on the particular aspects, then I will provide that information to the member.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, does Mr. Dedi take direction from the minister?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, Mr. Dedi takes direction from reports through the deputy minister to me.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, how many times since Mr. Dedi has been appointed to this Special Projects ADM position would the minister have had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Dedi?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I cannot off-hand recall the specific number of meetings.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, could the minister indicate: Does he meet with Mr. Dedi on a monthly basis, once every two months, once a week on an average? I am sure that, when it comes to senior officials in his department, he would know sort of in a round number. I am not asking for absolute specifics, but would it be once a week, once a month, once every two months, once every six months? Maybe the minister could just indicate how often he might meet with him.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the interaction is generally between Mr. Dedi and the deputy minister of Health.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I know the minister indicated that Mr. Dedi had no support

staff. Could he indicate for me whether there is a staffperson that answers the phone, takes messages for Mr. Dedi?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I believe that I answered that previously in Estimates. I believe that information is provided through the department on an as-needed basis. I do not know the specifics of that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chair, I understand that there was a fair amount of damage control going on in the department after questions were asked last time in Estimates. I am just kind of wondering because there has been rumour around that Mr. Dedi was moved, sort of shelved or benched, I do not know what the language is, buried in the department. You know, I guess when I look at the other questions that I asked in Estimates when we have the person that who has assumed Mr. Dedi's position being paid as an executive director taking on those responsibilities. Then we have an ADM who has no staff reporting to them, no administrative assistants, and is paid \$100,000 a year, and the minister cannot account publicly for absolutely one project that that person is involved with. I question, Mr. Chairperson, what the Minister of Health is doing.

Now, can he explain to us the rationale for creating the new position of ADM of Special Projects? It is a new position that was not there in the past. The minister cannot account or cannot give us any example of what the person in this position is doing at a cost to the taxpayers of \$100,000 a year.

Now, can the minister try to explain to me the rationale behind the creation of that new position?

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Chomiak: I have already indicated that that person is responsible for special projects and that when and if we are in a position to illustrate what those special projects are, I will provide it to the member.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am going to leave it at that except for one question. I am wondering whether

the minister has had any second thoughts about the classification of the position that Rick Dedi vacated that was taken over by Bev Ann Murray.

Has there been any discussion around classification, what the proper classification for that position and those responsibilities should be?

Mr. Chomiak: The deputy minister will advise me as to those issues and those matters.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess I am little disappointed with that answer. I would think that the minister would have an interest in ensuring that staff were fairly compensated for the jobs that they undertake.

Certainly, Madam Chairperson, he defends very vigorously the job that Mr. Dedi does for Special Projects, and my sense is that the position that Mr. Dedi vacated, the position that was filled by Bev Ann Murray is the position that certainly warrants consideration, a very onerous position.

I know that none of the jobs at the senior levels within the Department of Health are easy jobs, lots of issues surrounding them. I would hope that he would encourage his deputy minister to take a look at those positions and ensure that people are being fairly treated when they are asked to take on significant responsibility.

I also do want to indicate that I think it is unconscionable, before I leave this area, to have a minister defend a position that he created at a salary of \$100,000 of taxpayers' money, when he cannot publicly account for one ounce of work or information that has been provided to make our health care system a better system.

So, if that is the approach that this Minister of Health takes, I would question his ability and his leadership to manage the biggest budget for the biggest government department. I think it is absolutely unconscionable that he could pass these questions off as frivolous attempts, when all we are trying to do is hold this minister accountable for the tax dollars that he spends in his department.

Mr. Chomiak: The member is inaccurate in her assessment and can conclude anything the

member likes to conclude and tends to do that anyway. Simply, that is her opinion, and I think it is wrong.

* (16:10)

Mrs. Mitchelson: The minister has given me no answers that would give me any comfort at all that this position he created on behalf of the taxpayers of Manitoba is a position that warrants \$100,000. If the minister can give me one indication of anything that has been accomplished through that office or that position, then it might give me some comfort, but how can he expect me to accept his word based on no information that it is good value for taxpayers' money? That is shameful.

Mr. Chomiak: As I indicated to the member, when I am in a position to outline that information I think the member will be pleasantly surprised.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The minister should be in a position today to indicate what the \$100,000 that has been allocated in this year's Budget for Mr. Dedi's salary is accomplishing. We are halfway through the fiscal year and he cannot give me one example of anything that has been undertaken that can be made public.

I think it is shameful on his behalf to sit there and not answer questions. This is the budgetary process for this fiscal year. It is the Estimates process and that is when ministers are to be held accountable and answer in a straightforward fashion on how the money in their departments is being spent. He cannot give me one example today of anything that has been accomplished. I say to him, shame. That is not the way to run a government department and to spend taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I had a question that also follows out of the Estimates. I wanted just to kind of follow this thing through over the next year.

Madam Chair, I posed a question in regard to doctors. I was listening to the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) as he articulated, and articulated well in terms of the need to have doctors in rural Manitoba and the possibilities of

the local communities being more involved. So I did a quick Hansard search.

I had a workshop on the Provincial Nominee Program, probably about two weeks ago at my constituency office. One of the individuals who had shown up had a brother. Her particular brother, Rufino Pascual, Jr., who is a medical doctor, actually is practising in King Abdul Aziz's Military City in Saudi Arabia. When I had brought up the issue in the Estimates, the minister had responded, and I was quite pleased with the response.

He had indicated, and I quote: We have achieved a fairly sophisticated first of its kind program in Canada with medical doctors, where medical doctors who are foreign trained can take an evaluation course over a weekend. It is a three-day course. If they pass, they qualify for a conditional licence. If they do not, they get to take, for lack of a better word, a year's assistance in order to qualify for a conditional licence.

Madam Chair, I was actually pleased to hear the comments from the Minister of Health. What I thought I would do is maybe get the page to provide a copy of this particular individual, Rufino Pascual, Jr., who is, as I indicated, a medical doctor in Saudi Arabia. I understand he got his doctorate in medicine in April of 1988.

There are a couple of things that came to my mind when the Member for Russell was bringing up the issue. It is two concerns. One is if in fact a community that is in need of a doctor can find a doctor who they are prepared to accept, if in fact the Minister of Health would be open to that particular community in sponsoring, whether it is through giving a Provincial Nominee certificate or assisting in somehow accommodating that particular community. That would be one.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

The second one is in regard just to follow through on the Minister of Health's comments. I am not going to ask a more specific question on this particular individual, but my intentions would be the next time we go through the Health Estimates to have a discussion on this particular case: It is someone who appears to want to be able to come to Canada, we have a huge

shortage of doctors, and how it is that we might be able to accommodate the match of someone who wants to be here in a community, possibly, or here in the city, of how we are able to make things happen in terms of getting an additional doctor for our province.

I would stop now if the minister was wanting to comment on that. Otherwise, I will just have one other question to follow up with.

Mr. Chomiak: Just two responses, Mr. Chair. We are in the process of centralizing our recruitment around RHAM, which is around all of the regional health authorities and seeing what kind of community input can be involved in terms of the specific communities offering support, but still the hiring is done through each regional health authority and that is the only appropriate way it can be done.

The second point is it is a little bit more complicated. As I outlined to the member, in order to qualify for the CAPE assessment that I indicated was the weekend followed by the possible year, the individual must meet certain criteria. That is they must be eligible for licensure, be eligible to write parts one and two of the qualifying exam and/or if they have not written part two, I think they would have had to have practised three of five years in actual practice.

I have specific criteria that I will forward to the member that outline the specific criteria. When I gave the member the answer it was just general, but it is complicated by virtue of the Human Rights ruling and our need to have to meet the requirements of the Human Rights ruling, as well as some of the other specifics. I will get that to the member.

Mr. Lamoureux: The minister now has a copy, actually has probably more information than I have now because I gave him my original, I just kept a photocopy of the top page. I guess the question I would have is, with this particular sister, because it is the sister that I have actually communicated with, I had indicated what I would like to do is to try to help in getting this particular doctor to be able to have at least the opportunity to come to the province. What would the minister suggest I would have the

sister do today in order to try to expedite things for her brother?

Mr. Chomiak: Well, there is of course immigration matters and normal channels that one can follow with respect to immigrating and then taking part in the CaRMS match and the residency positions, et cetera, but there is a process. We do have individuals in the department. I will pass this on and have the department and the specific individuals get back to the member with respect to the steps the member has to follow, or that the member can convey to that individual in order to do a follow-up.

Mr. Lamoureux: I would truly appreciate that. The other area, again, we had commented on it somewhat briefly, was the nurses and how we might be able to get more nurses to be able to come to the province.

Mr. Chairperson, I had opportunity during the Immigration Estimates. His colleague, the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Mr. Ashton) had indicated to the committee they are currently looking at a number of changes which would include the semi-skilled worker. The nurse actually would apply under the skilled worker.

I am wondering if the minister can give any sort of indication whether or not the Department of Health, in any way, has had opportunity, that he is aware of, to communicate with the Ministry of Immigration.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we did at one point designate nurses as one of the nominees under our particular program, and I will update myself and get back to the member on that.

* (16:20)

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I did not quite catch the tail end of the comment. I am sorry.

Mr. Chomiak: I will get back an up-to-date answer to the member.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I would truly appreciate it in the sense that I know that the Minister of Immigration today is, in fact,

looking at changes in the criteria in process, and if there is going to be an opportunity for us to be able to make some of the changes necessary, I think now is, in essence, the time to be acting. So I appreciate the minister's comments.

The other issue, of course, is one in which the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and I have been involved in when we were both in opposition, and it was something that we truly, no doubt, believe passionately in. That is the future of Seven Oaks Hospital. Both of us were at the Legislature, in schoolyards, and explained how important it was that we keep these two facilities operational in the true sense.

I am wondering if the minister can give some sort of indication in terms of how he sees in particular the ICU and the general operations over at Seven Oaks taking place over the next few years.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we have enhanced the capacity at Seven Oaks through dialysis and oncology. There is also a plan for an expansion that we are looking at as well. So the future of Seven Oaks is quite strong in the community and will continue.

Mr. Lamoureux: I had brought it up very briefly in committee, in the Health committee, and then we kind of skipped over it, and that was in regard to obstetrics. Is the Government giving any consideration at all to the possibility of obstetrics returning to Seven Oaks Hospital?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I do not know the specific operational plans of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. I do not think that there is a plan to move its obstetrics back to Seven Oaks Hospital.

As I indicated briefly in the committee concerning obstetrics, Mr. Chairperson, there has been a lot of debate concerning the presence of obstetrics in tertiary facilities versus community facilities, and we have chosen to have obstetrics in two tertiary facilities as well as one community hospital. There is still ongoing debate by people within the system as to whether or not obstetrics should be even offered at the one community hospital.

So I do not think, particularly in light of the fact that we now have a fairly expansive mid-wifery program, that it is in the cards at this point for obstetrics to return to Seven Oaks Hospital.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I can recall an individual, and it would have been a while back, in which this particular person brought up the issue of Victoria as a community hospital that does have obstetrics services, and I think that there are really two issues, the first being that of a sense of fairness in that if in one area of the city we can provide obstetrics services, why would we not be able to do it in the other area?

Of course, I think there is just a tremendous amount of merit for that, as opposed to the Government maybe taking the position that we have one today and it would appear that we are content at leaving it at one.

I am wondering if the minister sees the inequity that is there, that many residents that both of us, the minister and I, represent would like to see obstetrics brought to the Seven Oaks Hospital.

Mr. Chomiak: What the member says is largely correct. It is a little bit more complicated than that. It is not for lack of desire, necessarily, that it would not happen. There are a number of dynamics in terms of the system in Winnipeg, in general, and reconfiguration as a result of the cardiac and movement around the system.

Mr. Chair, I do not think it would be honest of me at this point to say that we are looking at Seven Oaks as an obstetrics, even if I, personally, desired it, or the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) desired it. There are a number of factors.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chair, the last question to the minister is: Does the minister see merit in terms of having some sort of an analysis done in which, if it is not only favourable to see community facilities having obstetrics, but if the economics of it can be justified, would the minister then be open to it, and maybe have an analysis done on that issue?

Mr. Chomiak: Now that analysis has been ongoing, and will continue to be ongoing.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Chair, just while we are waiting, a question to the Minister of Health on the smoking committee. On the smoking task force, there may be questions or materials that the minister and his staff have available which would be helpful to the task force.

We have got presentations from a whole variety of people, but I just wondered whether the minister would be willing to make information available if it was requested on fairly short notice for that.

An Honourable Member: I do not have anything that you on the task force do not have because we are a very democratic bunch. Everything has been shared.

Mr. Gerrard: I take the minister's reply to mean that he would be willing to see if he could help with questions which a task force may provide so that we can bring the report to a conclusion as soon as possible.

Mr. Chomiak: I am just as anxious, as all members of the committee and public, to deal with this matter as expeditiously as possible.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I just spoke with the community of Birtle. They are having their community meeting tonight. One of the issues that was raised with me was the issue of community participation on the hiring of physicians for communities.

I asked this question to the minister earlier today, but I think it is becoming much more urgent and much more of an issue out there in terms of the relationship between the RHA and communities. Apparently, the RHA is resistant to having any community participation in the recruitment of physicians for the communities. Yet it is the welfare of the community that is at stake.

We talk about community health, and yet we do not want to include them when it comes time to recruit physicians. I am wondering whether the minister would undertake to pay some attention to this matter sooner than later.

Mr. Chomiak: This communication is important, but this is a larger—in terms of this context we want to not be in a position that sometimes we found ourselves in before. The member will appreciate that that is where we will have communities bidding against other communities. That is the other side of this coin.

So communication is important. I think the RHA is aware of that. I appreciate the member's concern, but we want to be very careful in terms of this path so that we do not end up in a situation where we are pitting one community against another community with all of the result, because, in the end, that will hurt tiny communities or smaller communities, because it does become a question of size and the availability of resources. There is a balance to be struck in regard to that.

* (16:30)

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Chair, my question is to the First Minister, just a couple of quick house-cleaning things that were left over from Estimates that he had indicated he would give me a letter regarding the quasi-judicial authority of both the PUB and the CEC. I have not received that. I wonder if the First Minister could give me some sense that I will get that before the end of this week.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The quasi-judicial nature of the PUB and the CEC are in legislation. I think they are two pieces of legislation. I am pretty sure that they are. They are both acts of the Legislature. I can provide a copy of the acts for the member. I think that you were asking questions about the timing of the Wuskwatim hearing, et cetera. Since it is in court and in process, which is not unusual, by the way, in terms of regulatory bodies lately in Canada, I said, you know, we certainly do not direct it once an application is before it, but I can provide copies of the legislation.

There was another matter of the salaries. You may probably be aware that Mr. Dewar has left, so the letter that I was going to sign on the salary side was inaccurate. So I have redrafted it and you will have it by the end of the week. It will reflect that the new chief of staff is being

hired at the bottom step of the same classification.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chair, I do not want to sort of go back on a whole lot of stuff, but for the First Minister, I had asked about the letter he said he would provide me regarding a quasi-judicial authority. The other question he was going to provide me with was when Mark Stobbe left. I think he indicated he did not know at that time and he would indicate back to me. The list of the staff members, he has just touched off on that. The new name of the Information Resources Division, all suppliers contracted by IRD and the dollar amount was the other thing I had asked for and the status of the Capital Commission report and the terms of reference.

Again, I am not asking for the Premier to respond to each and every one of these, but I do not think it is unreasonable to see if we can get those by the end of this week in lieu of the fact that we did have the discussion a couple of weeks ago.

Mr. Doer: In terms of the quasi-judicial bodies, there was some material drafted for me that was inaccurate, so I have redrafted it in the sense of the new salary that is lower. On the name of the formerly known Information Resources Division, I believe the new name is Communications Service Manitoba. Mr. Stobbe did not work for us, as I said before, in the Executive Council line. There was another issue, the mid-can Texas corridor, the Laredo Project—you got that, okay, so that should be there. The salaries, as I say, I have updated it. I did not want give you Bob Dewar's, salary since he left. So that will be to you by the end of the week.

Mr. Murray: Okay, just to move through it, I understand that the First Minister saying that Mr. Mark Stobbe did not work for Executive Council, but, again, did ask the question when he said he would look into it understanding he did not work for Executive Council but did say that you would look into it and provide when he left.

Mr. Doer: I will have the minister, I believe he is in the Industry Ministry. I will have the minister respond to you directly.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman, I wondered if the First Minister could tell how many of our

struggling producers have applied for low-interest loans on their program that they advertise.

Mr. Doer: I believe the take-up for approved applications is \$11 million as of today.

Mr. Murray: I think the question and I think the First Minister answered that it was \$11 million was the take-up, and he would also give the number of applications that had been approved that would make up that \$11 million. I take him at his word on that.

I wonder if the First Minister could respond to a comment that he made in Hansard on Thursday, September 18 when he, to a question that I asked about providing a cash advance to families in need, went on to say, and I quote from Hansard: "We have a low-interest cash advance program." Could the Premier just indicate whether he is aware of the difference between a low-interest cash advance program? If he is not certain, I wonder if he could be my banker.

Mr. Doer: I would love to be your banker and I will charge you a low-interest rate of 11 percent on all your loans you would like to undertake. I understand your credit is very, very positive and certainly for farmers though that are struggling, the low interest is 3.25 percent and 2.25 percent for people under 40. I do not think you will like our rates, but I am certainly willing to try to get incorporated and provide those loans. Point well taken. I know the difference between a loan. It is like Progressive Conservative or industrial park; it was a little bit of an oxymoron. The right term is a low-interest loan program. I think the producers know what it is, the member knows what it is, and it is a low-interest loan program.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Chair, I am delighted that the Premier's peanut gallery finds it amusing in the answer that will allow them to have some chuckles. I think when he makes reference to oxymoron, Today's NDP, of course, also very much in everybody's mind, is a bit of an oxymoron, but having said that, Mr. Chairperson, I would very much like to come back, and I know that the First Minister maybe misspoke. I am not sure if he misspoke, but the fact of life is, and we

have had a discussion on the issue, that we should be looking at a cash advance program.

I think the First Minister has indicated that the best that they can do is to provide a low-interest loan, and of course that means that those people that are on those programs are going to go further into debt, and I think that anybody that has been in a position where they have got a level of debt and are being asked to go further into debt, I think it is one of those areas that always is unfortunate because, in some respects, Mr. Chairperson, I think what it shows is that there is a lack of understanding of what is actually required.

I think that we on this side of the House have said numerous times that we find it fascinating that the Premier and his Government would be out advertising in newspapers and radio and television, and we understand that they had allocated \$100,000. We disagree with it. We will go on record as disagreeing with \$100,000 of advertising programs that do not work, but the fact of life is that we see that these programs are being advertised with a focus more on Winnipeg than on being in rural Manitoba, and I cite that on the basis that they are on the two major, at least the copy that I am looking at today and other copies, the two major daily newspapers in Winnipeg.

Arguably, the First Minister will say, well, they are distributed around the province. There is some accuracy in that, but it seems to be so concentrated on the city of Winnipeg that on the basis that it is not getting the message to those families that are suffering. If it is to be viewed as, look at us, we have got programs, yes, you hit the mark in the sense that they are not working, but you are advertising the fact that you have put a lot of money into programs but they are not getting into the families' hands that need them. We have had this debate in this House. We believe that the position that the AMM has taken, the position that the cattle producers have taken, that a cash advance is desperately needed and it is desperately needed because we are well past anybody's sense of when you might see a glimmer of hope that this thing was being resolved, which, obviously, is to open the borders.

* (16:40)

We know that all political parties, all citizens, want that to happen, but in the absence of that happening, we find that the Premier is prepared to stand up and talk about programs, but if the programs are not producing the results, in other words, giving the monies to those families, there is a better way. This is well beyond, in my mind and I believe in the First Minister's mind, well beyond politics. This is now beyond helping families in need.

We have said all along that this Government is doing the wrong thing by advertising programs that do not work, that we need to be able to get to the point where we can be providing cash advances for those most in need, and I am continually listening to Manitoba producers. I have met with a number of them. I have met with families at their kitchen tables in rural Manitoba, and it is tough because they are a very proud entrepreneurial group of people. They do not like to be in a position where they have to feel that they have to rely on government programs.

Again, I think that the First Minister, the Government under his direction are misleading and not doing a service. They are doing a disservice to Manitoba families by not providing what is something that this Government could do very immediately to provide a cash advance that does not put producers further in debt. I certainly will ask, on behalf of all of Manitoba families that I have spoken with, all the producers out there who are fiercely proud of what they do and what they do for Manitoba, I will ask the Premier one last time to reconsider his programs and do the right thing and provide not a low-interest cash advance as he made reference to but a cash advance against the inventory that the cattle producers are trying to carry during this very difficult time, knowing, in a simplified way, much the way that the Wheat Board's programs work, that on the sale of inventory, that money would come back immediately to the Government of Manitoba.

Both sides of this House, the former government talked about making ag producers, knowing that there was all sorts of tax on wheat farmers, and we have had all-party committees on that, that there should be a commitment and look at opportunities to diversify. I think that a

lot of producers did do that. What they are looking for is where is the commitment from the Government to say, okay, you have diversified. We respect that. Now what we are going to do is we are going to come behind you and support you, but support you with the right program, a program that works.

Mr. Doer: We agree to disagree. We had a multiple set of programs to deal with multiple issues related to the closure of the border, including trying to work to enhance our slaughter capacity and processing capacity.

The situation with transportation of materials with feed challenges in drought areas, we have also put money in. We have extended the slaughter subsidy program. All three of those programs do not have a nickel of federal money in them. It is regrettable.

The low-interest loan program also is on our Budget. Agriculture used to be a 60-40 proposition with the federal government. All of these programs are being supported by the provincial Treasury in recognition of how tough it is out there, but the bottom line is we will just agree to disagree on the part of the "or" in the letter of July the leader sent out. We took one part of the "or" and he is now arguing for the other "or." I think I recall the letter was low-interest loan or cash advance.

We recognize there is nothing in any jurisdiction that has made up for the income gap and the uncertainty in the cattle industry. I quite frankly am a bit disappointed that we do not have a more federal-provincial response to this crisis, which I think is a national crisis. As the member said, we cannot wait. We had to make our announcements and will continue to work on our side in Manitoba on the border.

Mr. Murray: I think we hear analogies from time to time from the First Minister about wings, right wings, left wings. He is suggesting, making reference to a letter that I wrote very early on in this issue about choosing one "or." I would strongly recommend that he put the other "or" in there and do the right thing. That puts you right down the center, making it happen and making it work forward. Instead of using one "or" going in

circles, put both "or's" in and make it happen. That is really what this debate is about.

I know the Premier will say we will agree to disagree. I just say that I believe when he was leader of the opposition with the previous government, during the flood of the century, he went on at length I think about flowing the money and making the right moves and forcing the government's hand of the day, because, yes, there are issues and that particular one affected Manitoba, the flood of the century, of course neighbours to the south, but a Manitoba issue. I think this is what this debate is about, when you get into BSE, there is no question.

Mr. Chair, the history shows that clearly it is a Canadian issue. It is a bigger issue than just Manitoba, but the bottom line is when you are the elected premier for the province of Manitoba, Manitobans look to you for leadership on it and look to you to provide the kinds of support they need, and they are not getting it. The fact that they are not getting it, we saw the issue where one dairy producer had to put 12 cows down. How terrible that must be for a producer to have to be put in that position.

What is happening, Mr. Chairman, is that producers, because the Government is not responding to the crisis, they are now forced to take matters into their own hands which is most regrettable. I do not think anybody would want to see that take place. Now we find there are producers out there who are forming a co-op, looking at potential slaughter capacity. Again, they are doing it on the basis that the Government has in essence hung them out to dry, so they are out there trying to do something for themselves because the Government has failed them.

I would like to ask the First Minister, when he directed the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) to sign the APF, was he aware the assistance under that was for all farmers, not just directed toward the BSE and drought crises?

Mr. Doer: I was aware that KAP, the municipal leadership through the AMM, the cattle producers and lamb producers, auction house leaders at a meeting said we basically had to sign the agreement because it would deal with some of

the gaps in income. That is why we signed on to the framework agreement. Of course, we are aware that it covers all producers.

* (16:50)

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chair, to quote the First Minister who said, I think on numerous times, that this is a crisis, he recognized it is a crisis, and he instructed his Minister of Agriculture to sign on to a program that rather than focus on the crisis was a much more broad program that in essence would not deliver the kind of results that cattle producers and those that are suffering from drought would have in this province.

Mr. Doer: The advice we received, I repeat again, from the major farm organizations, is different than the advice I am receiving from the Leader of the Opposition. I was at the meeting with all of them. I was there present with the Minister of Agriculture and a number of people from our caucus. That is the consistent advice we received from everyone. We also received acknowledgement that, as I recall it and we have notes I would imagine, there had been some improvements made by holding out.

Let us just put it this way. If I was to follow the advice of your ag critic who has flopped around on this issue like a whitefish on a table, I would be all over the place. It is a serious decision we had to make. You will recall that the federal Minister of Agriculture stated that any support would be subject to this agreement. We took the advice of the farm organizations. That is the advice we took. We had already placed \$43 million in our Budget. That money is in the Budget. It is costing the taxpayers' money. If we had a split opinion, that would have been a much more difficult decision. The only organization that is offside on this decision now, not before, is the members opposite.

Mr. Murray: I am disappointed that the Premier would stoop to take a bit of a shot at the Agriculture critic, the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

I say that because it was the member I think—and if the Premier will not acknowledge this, Mr. Chairman, then I am afraid all bets are off in this discussion because he would know

that it was the member from Emerson, our Agriculture critic, that met with the Manitoba Cattle Producers after 72 days of this Government ignoring them. Because that member from Emerson understood the seriousness of it and that member from Emerson cares deeply about our ag producers. That is why he has been out all over the summer at various barbecues throughout the entire province of Manitoba. I would suggest he has attended more barbecues as an elected representative than anybody else in this House because he cares deeply about this issue. For the First Minister to sort of stoop to that, I find takes this debate unfortunately from a serious level to one of just how can we just throw in a cheap shot here and a cheap shot there.

I would like to ask the First Minister, if he could, give us a sense, and I want to just ask him about Sunrise School Division. We know and through questioning, that Mr. Lloyd Schreyer, a member of Treasury Board, was directed to get in touch with MAST to settle a strike. I just wonder, and it is a very simple question, if the First Minister could tell us who directed Lloyd Schreyer to get in touch with MAST to put money on the table to settle the strike.

Mr. Doer: Just bottom line is, the statement about the Ag critic, when you have two different positions on the same framework agreement, it is worthy of accountability, and we do not have the opportunity to have two different positions.

So, Mr. Chair, the issue is not his attendance. *[interjection]* Well, you cannot have two different positions on one framework agreement. This is the problem. This is the dilemma for government. It comes right to the very issue we are facing. We do not have the right to be both critical of the program and be opposed to it, and then have some changes made and then have every organization say we should sign it because you have no other choice—those are the words that people use—and then have a different position.

So the real issue here is: Are members opposite going to support the fact that the Government entered into this framework agreement (a) with some changes, and (b) with the advice of all the major farm organizations? The bottom line is, we, of course, have taken the

advice of major farm organizations, and that is when the member has a critic that has two different positions on that issue. I think it is regrettable because one of those organizations was his past organization, and I do not disagree with the sincerity on the crisis that the member opposite has, the critic for Agriculture. That is not the issue. The issue is, you cannot have two different positions on the same agreement.

On the Sunrise School Division, I believe the employee in question answers to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Chairperson, again the question, I think, is very, very simple. We have been asking straight ahead who directed Lloyd Schreyer. We hear from the Minister of Education (Mr. Lemieux) that this is all about the children, and then we hear from the Minister of Finance that he had no knowledge that there was going to be an election coming.

So, again, Mr. Chair, these are all very fascinating answers, but not to the questions being posed. The question, very simply, being posed is, and I believe that the First Minister would clearly have some involvement knowing that it is Treasury Board, that past practices would know that the Premier would have his involvement with any Treasury Board decision, and so somebody directed Lloyd Schreyer to go in and put \$428,000 of taxpayers' money on the table on the basis that it was supposed to be built into a base budget, which, then, apparently was changed to say that it was only for three years and after that the taxpayers of the Lac du Bonnet constituency would be on the hook.

Again, it is a very simple question. Knowing that there was involvement from Treasury Board, could the Premier simply indicate who directed Lloyd Schreyer to go in and put the money on the table to solve the labour dispute?

Mr. Doer: The bottom line is, if one was to take a political prism and look at this issue, then one would have done what the members opposite did and just sit in the status quo and not change the school divisions literally within 12 months of when the election was eventually called.

So to make a retroactive assessment is, quite frankly, absurd, and I say that, but members opposite will continue to say what they will say. The logic of their position that dealing with school divisions would be that we would not have amalgamated any school divisions if we were acting in a political way.

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. Murray: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson. I just heard that the First Minister used the expression "the bottom line" on this. Well, the bottom line on this is that this First Minister and his Government put \$428,000 of taxpayers' money on the table, and they did so on the basis that they were looking at settling a strike.

That is the bottom line, Mr. Chairperson. It is about \$428,000 of taxpayers' money that was unaccounted for at Treasury Board. He wants to talk about the bottom line as something other than status quo. That is where this thing has gone wrong because he knows that the bottom line is \$428,000 of taxpayers' money, put on the table; that has all the appearance of buying an election. The reason is because he simply will not answer the question as to who directed Mr. Lloyd Schreyer to go out and basically put the money on the table to ensure that in this election this constituency could be bought off during an election campaign.

* (17:00)

When the First Minister uses the word "bottom line," I think you should understand the bottom line is about protecting the taxpayers of Manitoba. When \$428,000 goes unaccounted for in the sense that there was no Treasury Board approval, and it comes up at the last moment with no criteria, that, I believe, is what the bottom line is about.

Mr. Doer: On the same point of order, the member does not have a point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: Differences of opinion as to the bottom line is not a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Murray: The bottom line, Mr. Chairperson, is that we have \$428,000 of taxpayers' money that was put into a position that Lloyd Schreyer, a political employee of the Government under Treasury Board, went out and basically indicated to the people in Sunrise School Division that—again, I want to come back to this bottom line.

This First Minister talks about status quo. Well, the fact of life is it was he and his Government that has said—and I asked this question in Estimates about this \$10-million saving that we were going to see through forced amalgamations. I believe that what the First Minister said—and I can go back and check Hansard—but I am sure what he said at the time was that \$10-million savings will be realized over the course of our mandate.

So I said, what would the course of the mandate be. Will there be a quick surprise, a quick election, or were you going to go longer in terms of your mandate? He said, well, it is going to be closer to five years.

So the First Minister is on record as saying that the \$10 million is going to be realized over a five-year term and yet we see where \$428,000 on one issue, Mr. Chairperson, and Sunrise gets put in. Why is there discrepancy? There is discrepancy that had to be covered off by this Government because they forced these school divisions to amalgamate, and they are the ones that talk about the fact that there is disparity between the two levels of the school divisions that they forced the amalgamation on.

Well, if they did not force the school divisions to be amalgamated, then perhaps this issue would not have been there. But all along we are waiting for \$10-million worth of savings. So I hope that the First Minister can possibly explain why Lloyd Schreyer would be directed from Treasury Board by either the First Minister, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), the Minister of Education (Mr. Lemieux)—why he would be directed to put \$428,000 of taxpayers' money on the table to solve a labour dispute and yet the same issue the First Minister would have us believe that there is \$10-million worth of savings in forced school division amalgamations. Mr. Chairperson, which is it?

Mr. Doer: Well, first of all, I think that for the member I will bring the Deloitte & Touche audit that showed about \$70 million of unbudgeted collective agreement settlements all achieved during and after the '99 Budget and none of it in the Budget, and that is documented. Mr. Chairperson, the school divisions issue has already been gone over by the Minister of Finance.

I would point out to members opposite to take gratuitous shots at the individual involved and label him in such a way. He is an individual that did work for the former government, as I recall it, as an employer representative. So one should be very careful about—

An Honourable Member: He is a political hack.

Mr. Doer: Well, you just heard the political shot. I am not going to participate in mud-raking over a civil servant's reputation.

Mr. Murray: This is not about Mr. Lloyd Schreyer. This is all about who directed Mr. Lloyd Schreyer to put taxpayers' money on the table—to interfere with a labour dispute that was going on. The Premier may want to make reference and talk about Mr. Lloyd Schreyer. We, on this side of the House, Mr. Chairperson, on behalf of taxpayers of Manitoba, are simply asking who directed Mr. Lloyd Schreyer to interfere in a labour dispute, to go out with \$428,000 of taxpayers' money before Treasury Board was able to authorize it, knowing full well there was an election coming. How is it that Mr. Lloyd Schreyer would be directed to do that? And the question becomes: who directed him? Who directed Mr. Lloyd Schreyer to do that?

Mr. Doer: I have already answered the question that the member, the individual, in reports to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairperson, I will stop my questions now and defer them to a later date.

Mr. Chairperson: Is the committee ready for a question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Committee of Supply concur in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates and Expenditure for the Fiscal Year ending 31 March, 2004, which have been adopted at this session by a section of the Committee of Supply or by the full committee.

Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

* (17:10)

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): I would ask that we go into a recorded vote at this time on this motion.

Mr. Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

All sections in Chamber for formal vote.

Mr. Chairperson: The question before the committee is the concurrence motion, which states that the Committee of Supply concurrence on all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditures, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004, which has been adopted at this session by a section of the Committee of Supply or by the full committee.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 28, Nays 20.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is carried. Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Conrad Santos (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted a motion regarding Concurrence and Supply. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), that this House concur on the report of the Committee of Supply respecting concurrence on all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Deputy Government House Leader, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture and Food, that this House concur on the report of the Committee of Supply respecting concurrence on all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those not in favour, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

The question before the House is the motion moved by the honourable Deputy Government House Leader, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food, that this House concur in the report of the Committee of Supply respecting concurrence in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004.

Division

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

Yeas

Aglugub, Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Maloway, Martindale, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Santos, Schellenberg, Selinger, Smith, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Nays

Cummings, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Fauschou, Goertzen, Gerrard, Lamoureux, Loewen, Maguire, Mitchelson, Murray, Penner, Reimer, Rocan, Rowat, Stefanson, Taillieu, Tweed.

Madam Clerk Assistant (Beverley Bosiak): Yeas 29, Nays 20.

Mr. Speaker: The motion has been carried.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5:30? *[Agreed]*

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, September 29, 2003

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