

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

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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

**Vol. LXI No. 19 - 10 a.m., Friday, March 27, 2009**

ISSN 0542-5492

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	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.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Elmwood	
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, March 27, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

### PRAYER

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PETITIONS

#### PTH 15

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Mr. Speaker, these are the reasons for this petition.

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

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

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

The current plan to replace the floodway bridge on PTH 15 does not include twinning and therefore does not fulfil the current nor future traffic demands cited by the Minister of Transportation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by Trustee Al Tymko, Lucille Dankewich, Steve Dankewich and many, many, many other Manitobans.

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

#### Seven Oaks Hospital—Emergency Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by A. Kym, L. Bergson, D. Johnson and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Mrs. Jen McFadyen and son James McFadyen, who are the wife and son of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

Also in the Speaker's Gallery we have with us today Corina and Stefan Schuler, who are the children of the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

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

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Budget Deficit

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** This is, as the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) said, exactly how he came to be known as Niki Ashton's dad.

Mr. Speaker, in having a couple of days to have the public start to absorb the budget brought down the other day by the Finance Minister, my office and many MLAs' offices have had comments and questions from regular Manitobans.

One question that I received from a Mrs. Delacruz [*phonetic*], who e-mailed the office and said, how is it that the government can be bringing in the amount of \$10.13 billion and spending \$10.22 billion and be claiming a surplus.

I just want to ask the Premier if he can explain: When you bring in less money than you spend, is that a surplus or a deficit?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the member will know, when he was chief of staff to former Premier Filmon, that in—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Yes, that the Auditor General reserved comments, full comments, on the audited financial statements. The Auditor General is required to comment on the status of whether it fulfils the requirements of the balanced budget legislation.

On the issue of summary financial budgets, which has been recommended by the Auditor General, issues like pension liability are in the summary financial budget—I know members opposite only talk about issues like Crown corporations—and you can't even use the rainy day fund from one year to another to move it forward, to smooth out these situations. It's all under GAAP financial accounting. It's all the revenues in the government and all the expenditures out of all entities including pension liabilities and pension obligations.

So, Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question is: Last year the third-quarter report projects over a \$300-million surplus in GAAP. This year the surplus is lower, quite a bit lower, at \$45 million, I believe, and that is all in and all out.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, I think, if the Premier goes back and looks at the Auditor General's comments in committee, he'll find that she says that the balanced budget calculation is a policy matter; it's not something that the Auditor General has ever commented on. In fact, they said move to GAAP which has nothing to do with the policy basis for determining whether or not the budget is balanced.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the Premier again on behalf of the restaurant owner in St. James who contacted our office, who said that if the reserves in his restaurant go down and their debt goes up, they would say that they were losing money, not making money, but the government seems to be saying they make money when the reserves go down and their debts go up.

Can the Premier just explain that apparent inconsistency to that restaurant owner in St. James?

\* (10:10)

**Mr. Doer:** I'm pleased and delighted with all the contradictions of the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) and the Member for Brandon, who said they wanted GAAP and they don't want GAAP, that the Leader of the Opposition has now acknowledged that the Auditor General of Manitoba has recommended GAAP, and, hallelujah, that's what we have in the budget in 2009. Let the angels sing in terms of this budget.

Mr. Speaker, four banks, CIBC, the Toronto Dominion Bank, the Scotiabank and the Royal Bank have all said this budget is balanced under GAAP financial accounting. So four banks have said it; we have proposed it. The Auditor General eventually will have to comment on whether we're in a balanced situation or not. So far that we've been in government, we've not had an Auditor General reserve comments because all the facts aren't on the table. Of course, members opposite would know that the pension liability used to be under the table.

I would also say to the restaurant owner in St. James that he should be really happy that Manitoba will be the first province in Canada to eliminate the small-business tax. That's a good day for that restaurant owner.

### User Fee for Print Copy

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, the restaurant owner in St. James can't expand because if the revenues go over the paltry \$400,000, they pay corporate taxes at

among the highest rates in the country and run into a payroll tax. So the NDP approach is to keep small businesses small and penalize them every time they hire someone. The only "GAAP" in this budget is the credibility gap of the Finance Minister and the Premier.

Manitobans understand, Mr. Speaker, that when the debt goes up and the savings account goes down and when the expenditures are higher than revenue, that's a loss; that's a deficit. It's not a surplus in their lives. It's only a surplus in the fantasy world of NDP politics.

I want to ask the Premier: Why is it that his government has introduced a new user fee that wasn't disclosed in the budget—a new user fee that wasn't disclosed in the budget? They now charge Manitobans a \$25 fee in order to get a copy of the budget when the budget used to be free and available to every Manitoban. What is it in the budget that they're trying to hide from Manitobans that they want to put a \$25 fee in front of them before they can see their own budget?

It's bad enough that they're charging Manitobans to vote. It's even worse that they're charging Manitobans to get a look at their own budget. Why, Mr. Speaker?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** I would point out that TD Economics says Manitoba did not take the easy way out. It's not running at a deficit, which has become the norm across Canada. It talks about the infrastructure spending and tax cuts. It goes on to say that CIBC—the members opposite would know the Manitoba representative, Mr. Stefanson—said it's a very positive budget. BMO Capital Markets says: one of the select few to balance the books in this coming fiscal year. Scotiabank, again: The Province will continue to tackle its pension liability, a consolidated surplus.

The member opposite and his surrogates talk about the small-business tax. It was 9 percent when we came into office. It's 1 percent today. It's going to zero in 2010. We're going to create thousands of jobs. The only person who's going to lose their job is the head of the CFIB because the tax rate will be zero, Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba.

#### **Budget Surplus Amount**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems the spin cycle is losing a little steam. Even the editorialists now recognize that this

is nothing but smoke and mirrors from the Premier (Mr. Doer) and from the Finance Minister. He talks about the TD; well, I'll tell you what. The TD Bank says that we're going to have a retraction of 1.2 percent in GDP. They don't accept that. They have their budget and they say that they're going to have more GDP this year than last year. That's not true.

As a matter of fact, this Finance Minister has put a surplus in his core budget of \$2 million—\$2 million. I wonder if the Finance Minister can tell me if that's enough cushion to take care of the flooding that's happening in Manitoba and any other extraordinary circumstances like a decrease in revenues or GDP this coming year.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** I didn't actually detect a question there, just a typical Friday morning rant for the Member for Brandon West.

The member, if he would have read the budget, would have noticed that we have \$28 million for disaster relief in the budget, and that goes on top of 10 years of investment in flood protection—\$850 million, Mr. Speaker. There are resources to help people when they really need it. There are additional capital expenditures that have provided ice-cutting equipment, Amphibex equipment and dikes protecting southern Manitoba, as well as the floodway which has seen a dramatic expansion. All of these resources are in place. The trick now is to make sure that the ice is properly dislocated and flowing so that these facilities can work properly.

Mr. Speaker, let's not forget the very, very, very obvious point that all of these investments, members opposite voted against every single one of them. They like the George Bush approach. They like the George Bush approach in North Dakota: do nothing and then have a major flood in Fargo.

**Mr. Borotsik:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that the minister has tried to deflect that to a flood. The problem is that he has a problem with this year's budget. He had a problem with last year's budget. He budgeted a \$2-million surplus, but he had to bring \$38 million out of his rainy day fund in order to balance it. Plus, he had to borrow \$1.5 billion of taxpayers' money to balance his budget.

He's got \$2 million this year regardless of floods. The GDP is going down 1.2 percent according to his bank, the TD Bank. How is he going to be able to relieve taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, of more debt going forward in the next year?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the flavour of the day seems to be the TD Bank. Here's what they said about the budget: "Over the short term, the infrastructure spending and tax cuts will provide some much-needed stimulus to the economy." Members will vote against it. "From a longer-term perspective, the province's sound fiscal management—not to mention its steadily improving tax competitiveness—will stand it in particularly good stead." That's what the TD said.

I know the member would like to read that because when he does, he'll know that it gives a solid endorsement to the way we've done the budget this year.

#### **Tax Reductions**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about tax competitiveness. The Finance Minister, in his '09 budget, proved once again he can spend, he can borrow and he can tax, and once again confirmed that he can't keep his promises.

In his 2008 budget, he was going to give overburdened taxpayers an ever so slight tax break. He had a five-year plan, Mr. Speaker. Tax brackets were going to go from \$31,000 to \$32,000. On the high bracket—which is a huge bracket—\$67,000 to \$68,000. This is well below inflation, but at least it was something.

What did we get in this budget, Mr. Speaker? Nada, zero, nothing. Why did the minister break that promise too?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, this budget has \$110 million of tax reductions. All the member has to do is read it to see that: \$110 million of tax reductions for families, for senior citizens, for small business, for larger businesses, refundability of research and development tax credits.

It's all there. All the member has to do is read it. When he does read it, he will note that that \$105 million of tax reductions over the last 10 years compounds to a total of a billion dollars of tax cuts that we've provided in Manitoba. That is why Manitoba is in the top three for affordability, and he doesn't have to believe it from our tables. If he looks at the Saskatchewan budget, the Saskatchewan budget ranked Manitoba No. 1 for affordability in the country with all family cuts.

#### **Disraeli Freeway Bridge Repair Options**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Speaker, I waited with great anticipation on budget day to hear some positive news for northeast Winnipeg residents and some support for the Disraeli Bridge reconstruction, and we heard absolutely nothing.

Can the government tell us today whether they've found an alternative plan to keep the Disraeli Bridge open during construction?

\* (10:20)

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I think the residents of northeast Winnipeg spoke volumes in terms of their confidence in this government just a matter of days ago, and I look forward to seeing the new Member for Elmwood take his seat in this House.

I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that we've always indicated—even though the City has never approached us in terms of requesting any kind of official funding or support for the Disraeli Bridge—that we certainly recognize the concerns that residents in northeast Winnipeg have, because when we build bridges, we work to make sure that they are not closed during the time in which the construction takes place. You just have to talk to our Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux).

I know our Premier (Mr. Doer)—I have, as minister, raised those concerns on behalf of northeast Winnipeg and we'll continue—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker, but we know when Jim Maloway jumped ship it was because the Premier and his government ignored him.

The residents of northeast Winnipeg in River East constituency are speaking loudly and clearly. I've heard from the residents in Rossmere constituency, and I'm sure the Member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun) has heard the same concerns about the closure of the Disraeli Bridge for 16 months and how it is unacceptable. At the NDP convention, there was a resolution that was passed and the NDP membership directed the Premier to find an alternative to the closure of the Disraeli Freeway. Has he found that alternative solution?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** The member knows that the City of Winnipeg has a bid process. It includes traffic disruption in terms of northeast Winnipeg and its impact. I raised this issue long before the member raised it, long before she had a press conference with the local councillor, who seems to be incapable of getting some kind of recognition for northeast Winnipeg. She had that press conference in Elmwood, and her photo op.

We absolutely believe—and I've said it publicly and I've said it privately to the mayor—that the way in which we try to build construction, closing one span down and keeping the other span open, is the best way to go and we've said that to the City. When the mayor and council open the plans that they have allowed to be tendered we will try to find a solution to that.

We have taken the budget of \$6 million for roads and capital works. When the member opposite was in Cabinet, the amount of money that went to the City of Winnipeg was \$6 million. It's \$36 million now. When the member opposite was in Cabinet, the Perimeter Highway on the northeast side of Winnipeg was not rebuilt. It's being rebuilt now.

So we need no feigned indignation from the member opposite. She had a chance; she failed. We will succeed, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** But the delegates at the NDP convention unanimously—and I guess the Premier, because it was unanimous—voted in favour of finding an alternative. They have put themselves right in the middle of this situation.

When will he start to take some positive action? When will he stop paying lip-service and put his money where his mouth is and find the alternative solution that was directed at him by his membership and his own vote?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's lips uttered a comment with \$6 million in a budget year after year after year. Our budget has \$36 million in the budget for the last three years for the City of Winnipeg, an unprecedented amount of money for capital, including roads.

The Disraeli Bridge is a priority for this government. We're glad we have open and democratic conventions, vigorous debate, Mr. Speaker, but we don't try to talk out of both sides of our mouth. When the City of Winnipeg opens up the bid process, hopefully they will find a solution and we will certainly work in partnership with the

City of Winnipeg. It is absolutely crucial we work in partnership.

We're not going to grandstand on it. We're going to work with them to find a solution, Mr. Speaker.

### **Budget Livestock Industry**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** This week's budget failed to mention that Manitoba's cattle and livestock producers are in the middle of an economic storm. The livestock sector is an economic drive of Manitoba, responsible for a significant portion of our annual exports. I'm regularly contacted by cattle producers, pork producers who are having trouble making ends meet, yet the budget fails to realize the hurt in this industry.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture explain why the budget fails to mention the livestock sector and deal with the issues facing the cattle and pork industry?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Indeed, the livestock sector is a very important part of our economy, Mr. Speaker.

If the member opposite will look at the details of the budget that he has already seen, he will see that we have increased the amount of money that will be there for the programs, the safety net programs.

There have been changes that have been made into the wild hay insurances, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite fails to mention that we did just recently, with the federal minister, announce two programs for the livestock industry in the Interlake, the Livestock Feed Assistance Program as well as the Forage Restoration Assistance Program, which will put significant amounts of money into that area.

**Mr. Eichler:** This comes as an announcement five months after the disaster happened. She could have done it in September or October instead of dragging her feet, Mr. Speaker. This is not the type of answer that the cattle producers, hog producers have any confidence in.

In commenting on the budget, the Keystone Ag Producers said they wanted the provincial government to address the critical economic downturn that Manitoba's livestock producers are facing. They've yet to see anything in the budget, in the impression that gives the pork producers any hope is simply not the case.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: How could this financial crisis faced by the livestock sector be overlooked by this government?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** We have been working with the industry from the moment these challenges began. We addressed the issues with the pork industry when they were facing a downturn. In August when my colleague, the MLA for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) called, we went out into the Interlake and we announced the Forage Assistance Program to help people move hay into the region, Mr. Speaker.

We contacted the federal government and asked for a tax deferral for these people. We made various changes with the federal government on the AgriStability programs, the cash advance, the emergency cash advance to get money into the people's hands. Just last week, two weeks ago, we announced a \$22-million package which will put money into the producers' hands. These programs are—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, the minister should know very well that negative margins don't qualify. These people have faced BSE since 2003. The minister knows they're not going to trigger a payment.

Manitoba's beef herds fell 6.1 percent in 2008. Many hog producers had to close their operations. Our rural communities depend on a healthy livestock sector to help support their local businesses, and they are hurting as well. The budget contains promises of more regulations but fails to outline a long-term vision for our livestock sector.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister once again: Where is the plan to sustain and grow Manitoba's livestock sector? Does she not recognize the value this industry has for this province of Manitoba?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** This government absolutely values this industry, Mr. Speaker, and recognizes its contribution to the economy. That's why we have worked so hard with the industry on country-of-origin labelling. That's why we've hired additional staff in the U.S. to help us try to resolve that issue. We've worked very closely with the federal government to put in place programs. If the member opposite will look at the budget, he will see that there are additional funds in place to deal with AgriStability and the business risk management program.

Mr. Speaker, to develop programs, we work with the industry, and programs are developed on their recommendation. When the hog producers came to us and told us they needed loans, we put those loans in place.

\* (10:30)

### **Flooding Assistance to Rural Municipalities**

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I've been contacted by a constituent who has raised concerns with me about the maintenance of drainage systems along PR 427 in Headingley. He is very concerned about the blocked ditches and culverts and the problems that this creates such as overland flooding which does, indeed, threaten homes, businesses and roads.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to provide an update about what steps are being taken to ensure that blocked drains and ditches are being cleared to help reduce the risk of this flooding.

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** Mr. Speaker, there is, indeed, quite a new situation for us this year. Culverts that have been frozen over and that had been thawed are refreezing. This is an issue that is being dealt with by MIT. We are watching it closely. We are working with the municipalities. We are seeing a different weather pattern than we have seen in the past, and we are working with our partners around these issues.

If the member has a particular issue, if the member has a particular situation, I would encourage her to get in touch with me after question period, and certainly we will look at what the situation is on an individual basis as well.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the answer but really this is not a new issue. It's an ongoing issue and there are many miles of ditches and hundreds of culverts in the Red River Valley. We recognize that this year's weather conditions are creating extreme challenges as culverts become blocked with ice and water is slow to start moving in the ditches, but time is of the essence to keep trying to address the drainage concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to advise whether his



department is looking at using outside companies to help with drainage challenges and, if so, how many firms and how much equipment will be contracted?

**Ms. Melnick:** Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) is looking at many options. I know that his crews are working around the clock, working in partnership with municipalities. I know that they're doing all that they can.

Again, we're in an extremely wet period. The earth last fall was permeated with moisture. We know that we're seeing an abundance of water over the land. We are doing everything that we can with our partners to alleviate any problems that we are seeing throughout Manitoba.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear that the government is working with the municipal governments because they also play an invaluable role when it comes to flood preparation across the province. Local governments have first-hand knowledge and experience in managing drainage issues.

Many municipal governments have expressed a willingness to assist the provincial government in flood preparations; however, it is important that they know up front how they will be reimbursed if they become involved in helping to do maintenance on provincial roads and drains.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to make a commitment today to reimburse municipalities for any costs that they incur while maintaining provincial roads and drains to help prepare and alleviate flooding.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that we're working very closely with municipalities and, in fact, where required, we have been applying provincial resources directly to assist municipalities.

In fact, yesterday, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation had provincial highway crews clearing roads in the four affected communities in terms of the ice jams, because we recognize that all of their available staff were out dealing with the emergency. It was important to maintain those links within the four affected municipalities for flood

protection to continue but also for emergency purposes. Every municipality has an emergency plan. We have constant contact and I can assure the member opposite that our approach as a Province has been whatever it takes, we are applying the resources to get it done.

It's not an issue of jurisdiction. Federal, provincial, municipal, we're all working together on this.

### **Assiniboine River Diversion Ice-Flow Management**

**Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, as we're all aware, the Assiniboine River Diversion in Portage la Prairie is a critical component in Manitoba's flood protection infrastructure as it channels flood waters to Lake Manitoba.

I would like to ask the minister responsible for the operation of the Assiniboine River Diversion, in light of the ice jamming on the Red River, is the government now planning on sending ice flow down the Assiniboine River Diversion in addition to the flood waters to Lake Manitoba?

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** Mr. Speaker, we are watching the levels of the Assiniboine River. We do have an ice cutter out on Lake Manitoba right now that is cutting the ice around the exit of the Portage Diversion into Lake Manitoba. We're wanting to make sure that waters will flow smoothly, that ice will flow smoothly up the Portage Diversion to relieve any unnecessary stress on the Assiniboine River as it flows, as it makes its way through the eastern portion of Manitoba. We're watching this very closely. We have meters that are giving us real time, cfs, the flow of the water, as well as water levels.

So we're watching not only the Assiniboine but also the Portage Diversion and doing what we can to make sure that there's a smooth flow throughout the diversion.

### **Trans-Canada Highway and PR 227 Alternate Routes in Case of Closure**

**Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, that answer concerns me greatly. I'm sure the minister knows that the diversion channel was not, and I repeat, not designed to accommodate any ice. The bridge spans over the channel could sustain catastrophic damage.

I would like to ask the minister: What plans are in place for the closure of the Trans-Canada Highway and/or Provincial Road 227, which is Manitoba's designated flood evacuation route for the city of Winnipeg?

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** I know, Mr. Speaker, that my colleague, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), with his department, is looking at all possibilities for all channels in and out of Winnipeg. I know that the plan extends throughout eastern and western Manitoba, as well as down into the States. I know that there is a lot of co-operation going on again between municipalities, between all three levels of government. We're watching very closely and we're making plans for various scenarios that may or, hopefully, may not arise.

**Mr. Faursehou:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the minister is also aware that the last time the Assiniboine River Diversion was used, the boom broke and ice did travel down the channel and there was severe damage to Provincial Road 227 bridge. It had to be closed, and that is indeed this province's evacuation route in the event of a flood for the city of Winnipeg.

I want to ask the minister: What plans to alleviate the concerns that are in the city of Winnipeg and, indeed, for all Manitobans—what this government is planning if in event those bridges have to be shut down because of the ice in the channel.

**Ms. Melnick:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague is planning on safety first for all Manitobans, that there are a series of plans that are currently in place for roadways, the opening of roadways, the closing of roadways, making sure that if there is a problem on one section of a highway or a bridge, as the Member for Portage raises, that there will be alternate routes.

I know that there are plans that are put in place for whether or not there is an expansion of ice conditions. We're doing everything that we can to make sure that ice conditions are alleviated as they develop. We're working very closely with our municipalities on that. Again, safety is No. 1. That is what we are focussing on. We are working all together with the various machinery that we have in the province and, certainly, with the manpower—I should say person power, Mr. Speaker, to try to make this as—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

### **Seven Oaks Hospital Emergency Room Service Reductions**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, in the last couple of days I've had discussions with medical officials and professionals that have made it very clear to me that there was an incident that occurred at the Seven Oaks Hospital that almost cost the life of a Manitoban. It's only by chance that this lady survived and is alive today. Suffering internal massive bleeding, if she was put into a hospital to be transferred or not able to have immediate service, she would have, in fact, bled to death and she would have died. There is no doubt in my mind that that is, in fact, the case. It's only because of chance that she's here today and the good will of a doctor that happened to become available not because he was on-call but happened to be available.

My question to the Minister of Health is: Will she recognize the decision to minimize the services offered at the Seven Oaks emergency is a bad decision for the safety of our patients in Manitoba?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** I would say that every member of this House, the member opposite included, would extend their heartfelt concerns for anyone, at any time, who has an adverse event, whether it's requiring surgery or as a result of illness. I'm very pleased to discuss with the member after question period some specifics about this case that he mentions today.

What I can confirm for the member is that it was medical leadership, medical doctors, that made the decision and the recommendation to consolidate general surgery with patient safety at the forefront, Mr. Speaker. I would not substitute the judgment of a politician for a medical doctor on such matters at any time.

\* (10:40)

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, that's where I differ. If I was the Minister of Health, the first thing I would be doing is I would be firing Brian Postl. Further to that, I'd be listening to what the medical officials on the bedside are actually saying about what you're doing, Madam Minister, in regard to health-care services.

The emergency services at the Seven Oaks hospital have been depleted and the patients' health is being put at risk. It's about patient safety. It's about delivering community services to our communities,

whether it's in The Maples, whether it's the Victoria Hospital, Concordia Hospital, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans need to be concerned that this minister does not understand the importance of community hospitals. She's putting a few elite doctors ahead of what the public expects and wants to see.

When is this minister going to have the courage to be able to make and reverse decisions that will end community hospitals in the city of Winnipeg?

**Ms. Oswald:** I can tell you, as minister, if I had to make the choice between following the advice of medical doctors who don't always agree, I concede that point. But if I had to choose between taking the advice of medical doctors when it comes to general surgery, the consolidation as a result of some specialization, the advice of medical doctors versus the Member for Inkster, it would be no contest, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, that's just it. I'll listen and I'll take the advice of medical doctors. I'll take the advice of those front-line registered nurses and so forth that are delivering the services, and those individuals are saying that this minister does not know what she's talking about. She's following a few elite that are changing the system to the detriment of Manitobans, and she has no idea that it's happening. She needs to get out of her ivory tower, get out of the Legislative Building, and start talking to the grass-roots doctors, the doctors that are performing the emergency operations, the nurses that are providing this service. If she was talking to them, she would find out the mistake is that she needs to demonstrate more leadership.

It's time to deal with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. They made a stupid decision and this minister, Mr. Speaker, has to reverse the decision.

**Ms. Oswald:** We have endeavoured to work with the member opposite in explaining the nature of subspecialization. We know that we have centres of excellence in Manitoba. We have a cardiac centre of excellence where it's safe and appropriate for surgery to occur there. We have an eye care centre of excellence. The member opposite wants to put his head in the sand, not understand about subspecialization. If he were to go to the doctor tomorrow and have an issue with his kidney, perhaps, he would want to have the doctor that does hundreds of these operations, not one that might do three of them in a year.

Mr. Speaker, I was at Seven Oaks Hospital yesterday announcing \$5.7 million for emergency care. I'm sure that the member opposite is going to vote in favour of that with the budget.

#### **Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Northern Manitoba Service Cuts**

**Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon):** Mr. Speaker, none of the provincial newspapers or television stations have reporters based in the north or have dedicated coverage of the north. My question to the Acting Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) concerns the CBC's decision to cut their last two northern reporters at Thompson and The Pas.

Is the Province speaking out in opposition to these senseless and mean-spirited cuts?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, as a northerner, I was shocked yesterday to learn that *North Country*, which has served Manitobans for more than three decades, has been cut by the CBC. The reporter based in The Pas has been cut and, for two staff positions, we risk losing our northern voices being heard. I want to stress, by the way, there are 23 transmitters to transmit North Country signals throughout northern Manitoba.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, and I know this is a sentiment shared by our minister of northern affairs who started with *North Country*, we would urge the CBC and the federal government to go back to the drawing board and save our CBC *North Country*. Get that reporter back in The Pas and make sure that northern Manitoba is on the map when it comes to broadcasting with our Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Save our CBC.

#### **Pinawa Hospital Ambulance Service Reductions**

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** A regional hospital is located in Pinawa which serves both the communities of Lac du Bonnet and Pinawa as well as other nearby communities. Both Lac du Bonnet and Pinawa currently have ambulance facilities protecting each community. Our local health authority is proposing to discontinue both ambulance facilities in favour of only one facility halfway between both communities.

So I ask the Minister of Health: What is her position? Is she in favour of this proposal by our local health authority?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** I thank the member for the question. We know that through the Medical Transportation Coordination Centre sited in Brandon that we have information and data concerning ambulance travel, personnel response time, as we have never had it before in Manitoba.

I also know that our regional health authorities work in close connection with their facilities concerning emergency response time because we know that all Manitobans want to know that when there is an emergency in their home or in their area, they're going to get the best possible, most rapid response time.

So the regional health authority continues to work on this plan to make sure that people are getting the service that they need when they need it.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### Bernadette McCann

**Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize the work of Bernadette McCann, someone who has dedicated her life and herself to the service of new Manitobans. Ms. McCann has been a neighbourhood immigrant settlement worker in my constituency of St. Norbert for the past five years.

In her role as a settlement worker, Ms. McCann is committed to aid immigrants and refugees as they transition into the communities of southwest Winnipeg. Her duties include helping to settle newcomers into their homes and providing access to necessary social and emotional support.

Ms. McCann helps new Manitobans and their families adjust by showing them how to navigate various services, including transportation, health care, child care and schools and putting them in touch with faith-based organizations, parent centres, family resource facilities, recreation centres and community centres.

Ms. McCann also co-developed and co-ordinated a community-based language training program for immigrant women which also helps them adjust to life in Canada by teaching them about schools, shopping and services in their communities. It allows mothers to participate by providing child care and transportation services.

On top of all this, Ms. McCann serves on the Healthy Child Coalition of Fort Garry-St. Norbert and has hosted an annual community barbeque for new families in the St. Norbert and Fort Garry areas. She also volunteers with several organizations to mentor immigrant women, to assist families to access furniture and clothes to meet their family needs.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a part of a government that values immigrants here in Manitoba. I am especially proud to have someone like Ms. McCann working in my constituency. She is truly an advocate for new Manitobans and her work reflects the kind of service I believe we should all strive for. It is with the hard work and dedication of people like Bernadette McCann that our province becomes a home for people from all over the world. Thank you.

#### Centennial Farm Award

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** The Manitoba Historical Society started the farm Centennial Award program in 1980. The program presents plaques to families whose ancestors started a family farm a hundred years ago or more. The Delichte family, as well as the Devos family, both from the R.M. of Lorne, became the newest families to be honoured with this award. Since the program's inception, more than 1,300 plaques have been presented.

Octave Delichte, an emigrant from East Flanders, Belgium, along with his wife, Augusta, originally started the Delichte family farm in 1908 when a hip roof barn was built, followed by a brick house in 1911. Once the family farm was established, it was used for many purposes. The present day farm served as a refuge for immigrants and was the site for many community picnics and horse-racing events.

Octave's oldest sons, Henri and Rene, began farming together in 1912 and purchased part of Octave's land in 1915. The brothers also worked their father's other land holdings and farmed together until 1960. In 1931, Henri purchased the remaining land from Octave and continued farming with his wife, Maria, and their two children. In 1948, Henri's son Maurice started farming on the family farm when he was 14 years old. Maurice and his wife, Lillian, the current owners of the farm, acquired the farm in 1962.

John Baptiste Devos, who was also an emigrant from Belgium, started the Devos family farm after immigrating to Canada with his two brothers in 1896. John Baptiste had a total of five children and eventually passed the family farm to his youngest son, Edouard. After years of farming, Edouard passed the farm onto his son Roland, who is the current owner of the farm.

The Devos family has become valued and devoted members of their community. This has led to the development of the Devos Family Scholarship, which will benefit local graduating students, and the Devos family has also contributed funding towards improvements to the Bruxelles Community Hall.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my congratulations to the entire Delichte family and the entire Devos family on behalf of this House. Many generations of hard work have gone into these farms and this has not gone unnoticed. We all look forward to the Delichte family and the Devos family continuing their family farms for many generations to come. Thank you.

\*(10:50)

#### **Donna George**

**Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to tell the House about a woman who is a shining example of the hardworking, caring and selfless souls that we have in our province.

Donna George has worked at the Deer Lodge Centre for 20 years and worked with chronic-care patients for a good portion of that time. Her particular work with veterans began in 2000 when she was assigned to T4, a personal care unit with beds assigned to veterans.

Donna's work with veterans at the Deer Lodge Centre has been immense. During her time, Donna established connections with the Transcona Legion and arranged outings for the vets through the legion. Later on she arranged Remembrance Day teas, Valentine's celebrations. She worked with Veterans Affairs to plan and implement the Year of the Veteran celebrations at the centre. As her work with veterans grew, Donna began a veterans club, which continues to meet and reminisce or speak about current affairs or issues of concern.

Donna has also planned the celebrations for the Year of the War Bride in 2006. Next, she discovered the veterans who had served in Holland were entitled to medals. It became her mission to ensure that all

these vets at the Deer Lodge Centre received their medal by the Dutch consul in person.

Donna George is very passionate and thorough about her work and does not miss any detail. Most recently, Donna helped with the Memory Project sponsored by Veterans Affairs. Realizing that her vets couldn't go to the event downtown, she arranged to have the project brought to Deer Lodge instead. The veterans were invited to share their memorabilia from the war, which was digitally archived for educational purposes.

Donna has been an important member to the recreation team at the Deer Lodge Centre. She is compassionate and has a special gift in working with the frail elderly, especially with dementia and non-communicative patients.

I worked with Donna until I was elected in 1999. She has used me as a resource with her vets so I know her extra mile work first-hand. She's a very humble and selfless lady who takes inspiration from those around her but, really, she is an inspiration to us all. She will be greatly missed when she retires from the Deer Lodge Centre on March 31.

On behalf of everyone at the centre, and the House, I wish her all the best in all that she will continue to do. Thank you.

#### **Talitha Calder**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to rise today and congratulate a very special member of my constituency.

Ms. Talitha Calder, of Altona, has become one of only 30 young Canadians this year to earn the prestigious Loran Award, the largest scholarship available in Canada.

The Loran Award is comparable to the Rhodes Scholarship for undergraduates and comprises a tuition waiver, annual stipend and summer programs for four years with a total worth of up to \$75,000.

Talitha was chosen from an initial pool of 3,200 applicants and survived the most rigorous selection process in the country, which involved multiple rounds of personal interviews. The Loran Award is issued based on a mix of academic achievement, extracurricular activities and of leadership potential, all of which Talitha has in spades. She has been involved in a multitude of activities and events that range from being a youth representative on the town council to the

membership in a range of choral groups and jazz bands to being a young director in a youth and a philanthropy club. During her involvement, Talitha has maintained an upstanding academic record and has kept her enthusiasm and gregarious character throughout it all.

The Canadian Merit Scholarship Foundation has been selecting Loran scholars for 20 years and is funded entirely by donations from companies, foundations and individuals who support its mission of promoting gifted students who show promise of leadership and dedication to their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that, like the Altona community and everyone at W.C. Miller, I'm very proud of Talitha and wish her all the best as she moves forward in her academic life. She's an excellent role model in her community and an inspiration to all young people across the province. Please join me in congratulating this young lady and a future leader for her remarkable achievements in earning this prestigious award. Thank you.

#### **Greek Independence Day**

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Mr. Speaker, as Hellenophiles, or lovers of all things Greek, my wife and I were pleased to join the Winnipeg Greek community in celebrating Greek Independence Day on March 21 at the St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church hall.

The Greek War of Independence was waged by Greek revolutionaries between 1821 and 1829. After a long and bloody struggle, the Greeks became the first people of the Ottoman Empire to secure recognition as an independent nation by the Treaty of Constantinople in July 1832. Celebrated as a national holiday in Greece, this year marks the 188th anniversary of Greece's independence.

The guest speaker of the event was Takis Iacoudis, whose excellent address tied the Day of Independence and the Feast of Annunciation together. In Greece, the two days are celebrated as one and serves as an annual occasion for celebration as a day of freedom for all people of all backgrounds, nations and cultures.

Greetings were also brought by Grant Nordman from the City of Winnipeg and by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton) from the Province of Manitoba. The minister, who also serves as the chairperson of the Canadian Committee for the Restoration of the Parthenon Marbles, drew the connection between Britain hosting the Olympic

Games and the opportunity to return the Parthenon marbles to Greece, home of the original Olympic Games.

As we all know, the society that we live in today began with the philosophical foundations of a democracy back in ancient Greece. These are values that we hold dearly and appreciate more every day as Manitobans.

Manitoba has a vibrant and lively Greek community which adds immensely to the multicultural fabric of our province. I would like to congratulate the Greek community of Winnipeg for a great event. Good times were had by all as we got to enjoy delicious Greek food and danced traditional Greek dances to a live band from the Island of Rhodes. It was indeed a fantastic night.

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, we would like to interrupt the budget debate to move into Interim Supply.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, we will move into Interim Supply. The House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole to continue to consider and report on Bill 10, The Interim Appropriation Act, for concurrence and third reading.

Madam Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

\* (11:00)

### **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

#### **Bill 10—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2009**

**Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski):** The Committee of the Whole, please come to order. We will be considering Bill 10, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2009.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Chair, I do have a series of questions I'd like to ask the Minister of Health. The first are kind of a carry-over from yesterday when my leader was asking questions in regard to diabetes, the first one being the latest. Can the minister indicate what the latest figures for the number of new cases of diabetes are in Manitoba for 2007 and 2008?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** As I indicated to the member yesterday, or to the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), certainly, in health we share responsibility, and the Minister of Healthy

Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) has taken diabetes and its prevention—

**Madam Chairperson:** Order, please. The acoustics in this room are particularly difficult down here on the floor. I'd appreciate if you could keep the chatter down, go into the loge. Some voices do carry more than others. I'm sorry, but if everyone would just please co-operate. Thank you.

**Ms. Oswald:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As I indicated to the member's co-member yesterday, this is a file that is held by the Minister of Healthy Living, who continues to work on very important prevention initiatives.

The question was asked yesterday about specific numbers concerning the diabetes file. I don't hold those numbers in front of me today, but I do note that the Minister of Healthy Living is here and in her chair, and as questions go forward, certainly, we will share in our responses to that question as, of course, we share this file.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** The final question that I'll ask and either minister can choose whichever one feels more appropriate to answer the question.

The second question was the lifetime cost for health care for a person diagnosed with diabetes, and in particular with the public-sector cost versus, let's say, the private-sector cost on an individual basis—can either minister provide something or make a commitment to provide us that information?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, we discussed this somewhat yesterday and touched on the fact that there are, of course, a range of costs that one could endeavour to calculate, whether it was an investment that government was making upstream on prevention initiatives in helping families and individuals and health-care providers, in promoting healthy eating, physical activity, smoking cessation and all of the interventions that the Ministry of Healthy Living works to provide, whether it's working on early detection, early diagnosis, the appropriate provision of pharmaceuticals as captured under our Pharmacare program.

There are issues, of course, to endeavour to capture for fee-for-service doctors, as well as salary doctors. There are costs to capture, as the illness would progress, that may or may not involve the cost of dialysis and, indeed, the investment in placing dialysis into areas of the province that would bring it closer to home for individuals. Depending, again, on the very individual and specific development of

illness in an individual, there may be interventions or investments concerning appropriate foot care and education and prevention. Indeed, in some of the most extreme cases where amputation must occur as a result of side effects of diabetes, that cost, indeed, could also be captured. So I would suggest to the member that it is not a one-size-fits-all kind of number as no individual in Manitoba is precisely like another. While we can capture some broad costs concerning what we invest in dialysis, what we invest in prevention, what we invest in some of those other elements like foot care, and, regrettably, amputation in cases, it's broad across the spectrum. What I will say to the member is that we know that when diabetes is on the rise, as it is across our nation and in many respects North America, we need to continue to invest and that's what we're doing.

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** Madam Chairperson, now that question period is over, I'll try to pose almost the same question as I had in question period for the Minister of Health, and, perhaps, she can then give me some indication as to whether or not she's in favour of our local health authority's decision to centralize an ambulance facility in between both Lac du Bonnet and Pinawa or whether the health authority has even consulted her with regard to that decision. If she could clarify that for me, I'd appreciate that.

**Ms. Oswald:** As I said in my answer during question period, I'm in favour of people getting the quickest care when they're in an emergency. I think everybody in this Chamber would be in favour of that. I would also like to make a correction. I know that the member sent some correspondence—or I believe he did make an inquiry, I should at least say—earlier this year concerning information from North Eastman and their regional health authority. I do believe that there has been a correction. There were some communications that came from the region to say that this decision was a done deal. It is my understanding that, indeed, that is not true and that there will be public consultation, the member will be pleased to know. I do know that the regional health authority is tasked with ensuring that people get the quickest possible response in an emergency situation and we will not be supporting changes that don't achieve that goal.

I understand fully how it may be counterintuitive to suggest that how could you close one EMS station and get faster service? That makes sense on its face, but we know that part of the exploration of a new EMS facility in between communities concerns an

ability to staff that EMS station 24 hours a day. In the current complement, when an emergency call comes in, it may require, with the part-time staffing that exists, a call to be made for someone to come from home and to get to the facility and to begin the journey of the emergency response. In a 24/7 staffed environment, that shoot time, if you will, is decreased substantially.

Now I'm not saying the decision has been made, but the analysis is ongoing about whether or not a new 24/7 facility instead of two part-time facilities would, indeed, improve that shoot time, which I think is what all Manitobans want. They want the quickest possible care in a time of an emergency. That work is ongoing. No final decision has been made. But, in answer to the question, whichever decision is made, the one that I support will be the one that gets emergency care to people the fastest.

**Mr. Hawranik:** Well, I would agree with the minister that a 24/7 staffing complement in any facility, any ambulance facility, certainly, is what is required and desirable, and that's going to make a difference. However, the difficulty in our region—I just want the minister to understand this—the difficulty in our region is that, when you're locating an ambulance facility halfway between communities that are 30 kilometres apart, neither community benefits, in my view. When you're locating a facility where they are proposing to locate this facility, there are very few residents living nearby and you're at least 15 kilometres away from the hospital in Pinawa and you're at least 15 kilometres away from the community of Lac du Bonnet.

\* (11:10)

The ambulance facility in Lac du Bonnet is a regional one in the sense that it protects not only the town of Lac du Bonnet, but also the rural municipality. It protects about 4,000 residents and thousands of cottagers who need to get to Pinawa emergency facility quickly. Some of those cottagers, from where they're intending to locate or proposing to locate it, are a half-hour or 45 minutes away from that facility. They'd have to travel 45 minutes one direction for an ambulance to go to a patient, and then another 45 minutes to come back to Pinawa.

So getting rid of both of those facilities, both in Lac du Bonnet and Pinawa, makes absolutely no sense. I don't see that helping response times, but I agree with the minister in terms of the fact that you

need ambulance facilities with 24/7 staffing. It is possible to get it in both communities, in my view.

Pinawa as well, the ambulance facility there protects about 2,000 residents so there are enough residents and there are enough cottagers as well who are in the area, particularly in the summer, that you could actually have two full-time ambulance facilities. I would be supportive of that.

So I'd ask the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) whether she would support a facility, an ambulance facility, a full-time complement staff located in each community as opposed to one in between both communities. It's not like Pembina Trails where the hospital being in between Winkler and Morden, where they are only kilometres apart. We have two major communities that are 30 kilometres apart and that makes a substantial difference in terms of where it's located and so on. So, just so the minister knows, I would support, of course, a full-time ambulance facility in both communities; each one, each community should have its own. I'd like to just hear briefly from the minister as to her position on that.

**Ms. Oswald:** I appreciate the member's comments about reviewing the uniqueness of regional situations and community situations.

He's quite right in saying that the community of Morden-Winkler is not the same as Lac du Bonnet and Pinawa. That's why we charge the regional health authorities with the task of using the data that comes from the Medical Transportation Coordination Centre that's providing us with response times and shoot times as never has been provided before, to enable them to make appropriate decisions for care.

I want to reassure the member, once again, that the regional health authority may have, in the past, posted some information that could have suggested that the decision was a done deal. I know that the CEO has apologized to community members for that miscommunication and that, indeed, the proposal is only going to go forward if it is going to improve response times as very closely measured by the data and closely analyzed by members in the region and through the MTCC data.

Certainly, I meet with communities and municipalities all the time, and I don't recall many, I might even say any, of those meetings ever resulting in community members saying we don't want 24/7 staffing for every element of health care in their community. We know we live in a time of very aggressive recruitment and retention across the



nation and into the United States for all health-care professionals. While we are educating more paramedics and doing advance training more than we ever have before, we need to ensure that the health human resources that we have are being used in the best possible way.

Whether or not it would be an ideal situation to have a 24/7 EMS station in every community in Manitoba, an emergency room in every community in Manitoba, an acute-care facility in every community in Manitoba, a personal care home in every community in Manitoba, it is very likely not a realistic approach given the resources that we have, financial and, arguably, more importantly, on the human professional side. So I want to assure the member that we want to use those resources in the best way we can for the resources that we have now.

We intend to educate even more going into the future and that this decision is not a fait accompli. It's going to require community consultation and analysis to ensure that the very best, most rapid response occurs for the people of that region.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Chairperson, I want to pursue a few questions that have come out of question period and a very serious issue, I believe, to all Manitobans, but, in particular, my focus is on the North End. The minister indicates that the decision was made because of some general surgeons or because of her medical advice that she received.

If there was a secret ballot amongst the 40-plus general surgeons, does she feel that they would support emergency services that have been shifted, all going over to the Grace, Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface?

**Ms. Oswald:** I don't think we should be making decisions about people's health and well-being on a secret ballot. I would say that, first of all, respectfully. I acknowledge to the member opposite that there are some dissenting opinions on this. I've never suggested otherwise.

We have been advised by what I perceive to be a majority of general surgeons that because of subspecialization that has occurred over time, a reality not just in Manitoba, Madam Chairperson, but across the nation and the world, indeed, because of this subspecialization that this move to centres of excellence, this consolidation is an appropriate and safe move for patients.

I know the member in a measurably animated way suggested that I don't take advice from the

breadth of experts. I want to assure him that's not true. Of course, I take this issue very seriously. It concerns our families and our loved ones who have emergencies in the middle of the night, and there's nothing more important than the health of our families, Madam Chairperson. So, on this advice, on which I accept that not all surgeons agree, but, on the majority of advice on this issue, this consolidation of general surgery has happened.

We continue to evaluate the efficacy, indeed, patient safety, the flow of patients. As we go forward, we watch this very closely, Madam Chairperson. We know the way that doctors are practising is changing, and we cannot put our heads in the sand about that fact. Surgery is becoming more specialized, and with so many subspecialties, safe, high-quality patient care requires that subspecialties are consolidated at hospitals.

Now, as the member has indicated, over the last decade we have increased the number of general surgeons by close to 40 percent. That's a very good thing, but, if the WRHA or, indeed, any region ignores the new reality of subspecialties, we are not going to be able to continue to recruit top surgeons to Manitoba, which is what I know that Manitobans want us to do. I say this respectfully to the member that what he is proposing could possibly take us back to a time when we were losing doctors, net losses year over year over year, like we did in the '90s, Madam Chairperson.

\* (11:20)

We know that the WRHA has been able to, in a preliminary way, say that this model of care has given us a competitive advantage as we go out to recruit. We know that, as a result of this consolidation, scheduled elective surgeries are not being bumped as they were before as a result of general surgeons being spread thinly across the system. So those patients that come in for those surgeries in the daytime are not discovering that their surgery cannot occur in one hospital because their general surgeon had to spend the night doing a different surgery. This is a positive thing for the many, many thousands of people that have elective surgeries.

I also want to point out a very important point that has been missing from the member's discourse on this matter, and that is that, in the event a dangerous situation presents itself where a patient cannot be moved for that general surgery, the WRHA has committed that, in those rare

circumstances, that patient will not be moved, and that arrangements will be made and the surgery will be done at the presenting hospital. Again, I say to the member that there are some dissenting opinions on this; I don't disagree with that. I'm interested in hearing them and hearing them in a fulsome way, as I would hope the member opposite would be open to hearing the sides of the story that he does not support in a fulsome way.

Again, I did write a letter to the member, inviting him to meet with me. My records indicate—I could be mistaken about this, but my records indicate that I have had no response or interest from the member to meet to discuss with me or others the details of this arrangement, but I welcome him to come to meet and to discuss this issue further. I believe, notwithstanding theatrical name-calling, that he cares about the members of Manitoba as I do, and I believe that we can work together to find the very best solution for Manitobans. My door is open, and I'm happy to discuss this with him at any time, as I've invited him to do.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Chairperson, I would just ask the minister to recognize the shortage of time, so, if we can try to keep both questions and answers, we'd probably be able to be a little bit more productive.

I can tell the minister that, yes, I did receive the letter from her. I did have an open public forum in which Winnipeg Regional Health had a representative, and they were able to answer not only my questions, but the questions of those people that were in attendance. The conclusion of that particular meeting seemed to be that no opinions were changed.

It seems to me that the decision that has been made, because it was made fairly clearly to us, was not a cost-saving measure. It was done for other reasons. It wasn't about the dollar. Is that correct?

**Ms. Oswald:** Madam Chair, I respect what the member is saying about keeping my answers brief. I'll endeavour to do that. The member has been very vitriolic about whether I care about people. I think he came on the verge of accusing me of killing people, and so, if I need to take an extra moment or two to clarify and explain my answer, I would think that that would be explicitly fair to do.

Having said that, the decision concerning general surgery consolidation has to do with what I've said, and that is the subspecialization and the ability of providing that specialized care in

consolidated places where the surgeons can be there and be the experts that they need to be. I alluded in question period to the fact that we have a cardiac centre of excellence, and people know that when they go to that centre of excellence they are going to have the utmost expert care in that particular field. We have that for eye care in Manitoba. I said today that I don't think kidneys are less important. I think that if you arrive at a facility and have an issue concerning trouble with your kidney, you want to have the surgeon that sees hundreds of these cases, and he or she will open you up, I suppose, have a look and know immediately, because they've seen so many situations before, what it is that needs to be done, as opposed to a general surgeon that may have, in the past, in a community setting, maybe seen three a year. So it is not an issue of cost. It is an issue of subspecialization, and we'll continue to monitor as we go forward because I, like the member, believe it to be a serious issue.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** The Premier (Mr. Doer) himself stated in the '90s to Premier Gary Filmon at the time: "I would like to ask the Premier, in light of the subcommittee's report which indicates that bypassing an emergency department at a hospital and adding an extra five minutes to a call could affect quality of care that a patient receives, is it his decision to put in jeopardy or potentially put in jeopardy the safety of Manitoba patients or people in our community areas who rely on these hospitals, to add that extra five minutes, and is it worth risking life or limb?"

Madam Chairperson, I have had several medical officials, professionals, tell me that that's, in fact, what is happening. Exactly what the Member for Concordia talked about back in the '90s is actually happening today at the Seven Oaks hospital. That is the reality. It's about patient care—

**An Honourable Member:** It's incorrect. Wrong.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** It's not incorrect.

**An Honourable Member:** Wrong.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** That is the reality, and if you don't believe that's the reality, you need to go and talk to the workers not wearing your government hat where you get all the lap dogs telling you what you want to hear.

You need to be going there and talking to individuals that are going to share with you the reality of what's taking place.

Madam Chairperson, for any government minister to say that the safety of patient and care of patients has not gone down since this decision has been made is a false statement. There is no simpler way of putting it to you. It is a false statement to say that the safety of our patients in Manitoba is just as good today as it was prior to this decision.

The Premier also said in the '90s: Madam Speaker, we are pleased to see the government will utilize public consultation for decisions affecting health care. The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) and the WRHA did nothing for a public consultation. The closest thing to public consultation occurred when there was a public meeting in The Maples in which members were invited to attend and the only one that decided to show up was representatives from Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. For whatever reasons, that's the reality.

Madam Chairperson, I do believe that, if a bureaucracy makes a decision and it's to the detriment of Manitobans as a whole, that the minister has a responsibility to review it and to make necessary changes if it is, in fact, deemed of the best interests of Manitobans.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) needs to be aware that this had nothing to do with dollars; it was not a cost-savings measure. If it's not a cost-savings measure, what we're talking about is two totally different community hospital models, one that has a reduced emergency service and the one in which the Premier (Mr. Doer), when he was the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and the Member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) fought for, side by side with me, in the '90s. You know, Madam Chairperson, that the government of the day supported community hospitals, and they ensured that Seven Oaks would continue with emergency services, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Now we have a government that is not seeing the value of community-based hospitals. It's about patient safety and community hospitals. Madam Chairperson, the government has failed on both accounts.

That's going to be my final question. I realize I went longer only because I realize the minister was going a little longer in her answers. So this way, I was able to express myself. I look forward to the Estimates in the upcoming days where I know, and I'll say now, there is going to be another public

meeting on—I believe it's April 22. The location hasn't been confirmed yet. It's a group of individuals that are going to be at least putting it together, in most part. There's also going to be some promotional material that will be going out.

\* (11:30)

As I said yesterday in the emergency debate, if any material the minister is aware of, or any member in the North End is aware of, that is not factual, I'll be more than happy to address it and I would ask that they would bring it forward and table the document. I challenged the Member for Kildonan to do that yesterday and I look forward to seeing any information that is authored in any fashion by myself that is not factual, related to this issue.

One of the things that I think is very important is that we do be transparent. I have seen misinformation and the misinformation that is coming out is not coming out from myself, it's coming out through different venues that try to give people living in the North End the opinion that the changes are of a minor nature, when that is just not the case and the minister knows full well that that's not the case. An excellent example is the one that I brought up today. Even though that's a fairly dramatic one during question period, there are other incidences that have occurred.

Maybe the question I would put to the minister is: Was she aware of the incident that I made reference to in question period?

**Ms. Oswald:** Madam Chair, there was a long journey through that answer and we've got, you know, a number of issues to correct in that answer. It began with, I think, another slam and smear of front-line workers and people that work in the health-care system. And you know, I don't expect the member opposite to embrace and love every doctor, every nurse, every health-care aide, every triage nurse, every clerk in the system. I don't expect that, nor do I expect them to embrace him. But I really do expect in the discourse a little dignity and a little bit of respect for those people that get up in the morning and go to work every day and try to make a difference for the well-being of Manitobans.

So I would begin my remarks by suggesting that the member can, yesterday, today and very likely and regrettably tomorrow, engage in juvenile name-calling and the spreading of falsehoods and treating the people that work every day with absolutely no dignity, no class and—he can continue

to do that. That says a lot more about him than it does about me, and it says nothing about the people that work hard at Seven Oaks Hospital and across our province every day for health care. So I would begin on that point.

I would go on to say that the member says that he isn't saying anything incorrect. But the very comparison that he makes about the very devastating idea in the '90s when the Tories were going to close Seven Oaks Hospital altogether, close the ER altogether, is not the same as consolidating general surgery in the name of patient safety as a result of subspecialization. He doesn't get it. This is not the first time he doesn't get it. I can absolutely guarantee in an iron-clad way to this House today, it won't be the last.

But I can tell him that the other falsehood that he spreads, though his efforts to say the contrary fall on disbelieving ears in this Chamber, is that we don't care about community hospital investments. What we do know is in the very letter that the member cites when he, in under a week, invited me to appear at a meeting. I wasn't able to attend; I had another commitment. But I sent him a letter in which I said I would be happy to meet with you at a mutually agreeable time to discuss these issues. I asked him to convey information at a meeting, which I believe he did.

I know that he read it out, or at least so I heard, but maybe he didn't get it. It said: in the 1990s there was some uncertainty about the fate of the Seven Oaks Hospital and whether the hospital's emergency room would remain open. The entire emergency room, since we formed government in '99, we've worked to ensure that Seven Oaks remains open and, in fact, have upgraded and expanded the hospital—not closed it down, but expanded it. *[interjection]* I'm glad, but did you understand? I'm going to assist you in that way.

Most recently, this has included an investment of \$10 million to modernize and expand the Seven Oaks ER, which opened this past August with double the space, more patient spaces and a design to improve infection control. The new ER is supporting improved patient care and is a better work environment for the ER health professionals. The ER is fully staffed with ER doctors and the staff has worked to improve patient care by incorporating leading international practices to ensure patients have little or no wait when they visit the hospital.

Further, on the subject of community hospitals, at Seven Oaks, we've invested in bringing more orthopedics to the hospital. We know that this is something they didn't have before, and now they have that happening at Seven Oaks hospital and expansion.

The member opposite also concurs with the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) in suggesting that there are no emergency surgeries going on overnight at the hospital. Incorrect. False. That's not true. There are surgeries that go on at the community hospital. The general surgeries that we've talked about indeed do not happen, but at Seven Oaks, of course, we've got surgery in orthopedics, urology, gynecology, so there's still surgery going on at the hospital.

Furthermore, our investments across community hospitals—and I'll try and do this quickly because I know the member has questions, but I'm just pointing out the incorrect information that he's put on the record. Since '99, in the community hospitals, we've invested at Concordia. To start, \$3.3 million for the expansion and upgrade of the hospital, which was officially opened in November of '08. We've invested in making Concordia a national leader in hip and knee replacement and revision surgeries, making unbelievable strides in bringing down wait times.

At Victoria, we've invested more than \$13 million to construct a new state-of-the-art oncology department. We'll start construction soon on a new emergency department there; \$14 million at Seven Oaks to expand and upgrade the emergency department. We made an announcement of \$5.7 million yesterday to upgrade the staffing in that hospital, as was committed to in the election. We've added five new clinical assistants to the Grace Hospital.

So I need to suggest to the member that to put on the record, first of all, saying that it's entirely similar to consolidate general surgery and to close a hospital, is not the same thing. Not at all. Second of all, I would suggest that our commitment to community hospitals remains very robust and we continue to roll up our sleeves in that regard.

So I would say to the member, as I said at the beginning: dignity, respect for workers in our health-care system should be paramount. I would suggest that the ongoing dialogue on the issue of the general surgery consolidation will continue. I know that not everyone agrees, and I accept that. I am open

to listening to the variety of sides on this story. I believe that patient safety must be at the forefront.

Certainly, when it comes to taking medical advice on medical matters, as is the case in this situation, the decisions will be made by medical professionals and not politicians. Thank you.

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Madam Chair, I just want to reference a letter that I—well I didn't quote from it but, certainly, I did table it on Wednesday when I asked the question regarding the personal care home in Morden, the Tabor Home, and of course, with that, the fact that the minister has now determined that long-term care patients who are awaiting placement at Boundary Trails will be moved out.

I can understand the rationale for that; however, it's just really very difficult for the families, where they are moved away from their friends and, of course, their own family members. So this all has to do with the replacement of Tabor Home, and I know that the minister is well aware of it. We've been working at this for many, many years, and I was really looking forward to the budget and hoping that there was going to be an announcement of some sort. Somehow, in the total budget, southern Manitoba was totally ignored.

\* (11:40)

So I'm just wondering if the minister could update the information regarding Tabor Home and, of course, with that in mind, of having to move the long-term care patients from Boundary Trails and two other personal care homes. Thank you.

**Ms. Oswald:** Madam Chair, I too have a copy of the letter he speaks of. He gave me one the other day, and I had received it prior. The members that are working on the development of Tabor Home have been doing so very hard and I concur with the member that that's been going on for some time. We want to continue to work with the community and with the region as we go forward with capital construction. We are in economic times that are challenging, but we don't want to stand still. We want to go forward. I know that the member knows that literally every member of his caucus and mine have projects that they want to go forward from community groups in their constituencies and I respect that.

Further, I respect the fact that the population is growing in his region and that, as a result, the region has made some decisions in trying to find the best

possible use of acute care beds. I'm not going to spend one second disagreeing with the member that it is challenging for families when their loved ones are not in immediate proximity. It is not an ideal situation. Certainly, the construction of Tabor Home, would we be able to say yes to it today, would not be completed tomorrow, and so contingencies need to be put into place as we work through these pressures. I know that the members of his community have worked very hard, and we will continue to work hard to try to move forward with these capital investments, as swiftly as we can, knowing that there are communities across Manitoba asking for similar types of health-care investments.

It had certainly been a hope of mine that in some of the stimulus money that is going forward, that health care would be considered because of how important it is for our communities. It has not yet been considered from the federal government as part of that stimulus package. Indeed, we're going to work very hard, but I think having a partnership on health capital would be extremely useful and we're going to continue to speak with our partners because stimulus as we know in this economy is very important, as is the care of our loved ones.

So I'm going to continue to work on it. I cannot commit to the member today that we will put a shovel in the ground tomorrow because we need to continue to go forward measuring our ability to put these capital dollars forward at this time.

**Mr. Dyck:** I'd like to indicate to the minister that we are in a somewhat unique situation where, No. 1, as she indicated, we are in a growth area, and it's the area that's growing basically the fastest in rural Manitoba. So I would say that part of it is unique. But the other part, which I want to add to it, is the fact that the use that we're making of the beds at Boundary Trails now with persons seeking long-term care is not the best use of those facilities. I know the minister is aware of that, but it's costing probably double to almost triple the amount in money per day to keep the clients there. So I think we need to keep that in mind when we do look.

I do agree that there are pressures that the minister has with many people needing replacement or needing personal care homes or added beds or whatever, but I would submit that we are probably in a little bit of a unique situation where we need to do this.

The other thing I would indicate is that I think the community, and they realize that if the shovel

were put in the ground tomorrow, it probably is anywhere from three to five years—I mean, I would hope it would be quicker—but, if we look historically at the way things progress, it would be several years before anyone would move into there. So we need to be proactive looking ahead. As I say, I think the community would at least feel that there's some action that's taking place. Right now they're sitting and waiting and not knowing what to do. They know that the minister has been out. They know that the minister is supportive of it. But, you know, we can support and say those are good ideas for many years and, ultimately, if nothing happens, I think people get discouraged. So we're desperately looking for places to leave people.

I'll just give you one example. It just happened last week. It's a younger couple, and the gentleman's wife is needing help. In fact, he's presently going to Boundary Trails three times a day to feed her. She just can't feed herself, and she's not that old a person, but they are looking for bringing her to either Salem or to Tabor, which would be within the region so that he could continue to do this. But the way the rules are right now, they will probably be taking her 40 or 50 miles away and it's going to make it extremely, extremely difficult for him to be able to go and visit his wife and, in fact, help her. So these are the situations that we are involved with there, and I could cite more. I know the minister has heard these comments before.

But I'm just saying that I believe that, with the growth that's taking place there and, you know, we've had that growth and the minister has seen this for the last 10, 12 years. It's not something that's new that just happened overnight. So I think that there is a good reason to believe that we need to fast-track this, the Tabor Home.

**Ms. Oswald:** Madam Chair, I thank the member. I would state that he's quite correct in the uniqueness of population growth and a need for additional personal care home beds. We know that, in analysis that's been done across the province, what we have discovered—and most importantly, taking advice from seniors—that as we increase the options for seniors, they need to go across the continuum of care. We need to provide more home care. We do have the best home care in the nation, for which I think we can all be proud, but we do need to be augmenting on that front. We need to be providing more supports for seniors in group living, which I think is a critical component. Affordable supportive

housing options will be important in some regions, but not in others.

But I respect the member's statements about the growth in his region and the arguable uniqueness of that. There are some of his colleagues that might challenge that and say that, actually, their needs are greater. I respect them, too, because each situation is unique, but it's undeniable the growth in the area. It's undeniable the amount of work that the community has done to prepare for this, and I say to the member that I'm going to work as hard as I can, in a time of fewer economic resources for capital construction, to continue to move forward.

Again, as I said before, elderly individuals that need to travel great distances to be with their loved ones—loved ones for whom they've likely spent 40, 50, 60 years together—is a significant hardship, and I'm going to work with the region to mitigate that wherever humanly possible.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I do want to just compliment the minister in regard to looking after all seniors in Manitoba. I know I've talked to her a number of times in regard to personal care homes in my area of Lakeside as well.

I don't have a question for the minister, but I do just want to pass that on that we are still looking and working hard to bring those issues forward to the minister so that, in fact, our seniors don't have to leave our areas as well, because I know it's a serious problem for all of Manitoba, not just Pembina or Lakeside or the city of Winnipeg.

But my focus is more along the agricultural side of things in regard to, first of all, the recent program that was brought out by the Province and the federal government through AgriRecovery for the Interlake and Westlake regions.

I was wondering if the minister could outline how her department determined the affected areas and how the program was to be rolled out for the House.

\* (11:50)

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Madam Chairperson, I thank my friend for the question.

Indeed, this is a very important program and one that we have worked very closely with the federal government, going back to early August when the dramatic rainfalls took place. At that time, we recognized that there was a serious issue, so we

contacted the federal government for the need to have the feed assistance program put in place, which was put in place very quickly and was supported by the industry, by the farm organizations recognizing that it was needed.

The member asked how the area was determined. It is federal. Provincial officials who surveyed the area, surveyed the data that was available on the amounts of rainfall and then made a determination on which areas—

**Madam Chairperson:** Order, please. Can I remind you the level of chatter is beginning to affect my ability to hear. Could you please take any conversations to the loge.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Thank you, Madam Chairperson. So the federal and provincial officials worked together based on the information that had been collected, and then determined what the boundary should be for the AgriRecovery, for the programs that were announced the other day. But I would remind the member that for the feed assistance, the feed assistance was available right across the province.

The member asked how the program is being delivered. The program is being delivered through the MASC, the Manitoba Agriculture Services Corporation. Applications are available. I believe the applications are on the Web site right now or people can go to GO offices to get their applications.

**Mr. Eichler:** Thank you, Madam Minister, for that. I do still have some concerns in regard—and you said the federal and provincial officials determined the affected area. I know that the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) and, of course, myself, we had two municipalities in Lakeside that were missed. The Member for Gimli had a municipality. They both sent their requests in. All three sent their requests in; St. Andrews, Rockland, and Woodlands back in August. Again, in July, I believe, St. Andrews has sent theirs in, and Rockwood sent in two actually, one in September, I believe, another one in October, to the minister and to the EMO services asking that area be declared a disaster area.

Rain doesn't have a boundary when it comes to R.M.s, and, of course, both the R.M. of Woodlands and the R.M. of Rockwood recognize that not their whole municipality was affected, so they had asked to be included in that, the northern part of Rockwood, the northern part of Woodlands. Also, talking to the reeve from St. Andrews, the middle part of St. Andrews was fine, but the southern part

was bad and the northern part was bad as far as flood waters were concerned.

How do we go about getting those three municipalities included? Do we need to go back to the ministers? I know the minister and I have had discussions on this. We need to have some type of assurances that these people will get the same funding level that was offered to the others. We, at first, thought it was just an oversight. I know the federal minister has indicated to me that he has no problem with it, both of agriculture and the Treasury Board. The member for Selkirk-Interlake has also asked the minister to include these municipalities. Could she outline for us the procedure we're going to have to follow in order to get those done, or is her staff going to make recommendations to her so that we can deal with those municipalities?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** There is always a challenge when you have to determine an area that should have benefits of a particular program, and we've run into this in previous programs that have been run for assistance. When you draw a boundary, there's always going to be somebody that's outside the boundary, but I have asked my officials and the statistics have been reviewed. It has been determined that this is the right boundary.

However, the member talks about the federal minister and the Member for the Interlake being supportive of changing. I would remind the member that this is a federal and provincial program. My officials have reviewed the data. If the federal minister wants to reopen and renegotiate that, what he has to do is say that he is interested. Then, once again, his staff would review the data and make a determination as to whether there should be a change or not. I have asked my officials, and my officials are recommending that we stay with the boundaries that were determined earlier on. But the federal minister has that same ability to review those boundaries and come to us with a request. If he said I see these numbers different, then our officials would jointly review this one more time.

But, because it's a joint federal-provincial program, for the federal MP for the Interlake to say yes, it's the Province holding this up, I have heard this. My colleagues have heard both that the Member for Interlake and the MP for the area—not for the Interlake, I'm sorry, for Lakeside—have said, oh, the federal government is all willing to come back and change this. There is an official process that has to take place. I have not had communication with the

federal minister. I am operating on the advice of my officials. If the federal minister wants that discussion, the member knows full well that I have a very open-door policy and my staff is in constant communication with the federal Department of Agriculture and we would work with them.

**Mr. Eichler:** In regard to the provincial officials that have looked at this, I know that the R.M. of Armstrong, which is a heavy-flooded area as well, and the northern part of Rockwood, in particular, that water comes right through Armstrong and out through Rockwood. You know, I've talked to a number of the staff as a result of that and I find it quite surprising that they would say that this part of Rockwood should not be included, or Woodlands or St. Andrews for that matter.

I know that the minister has gotten calls in regard to this. I will be not letting this issue die. I will be contacting the federal minister and also the local member of Parliament, Mr. Bezan, as well and ask that this be re-evaluated.

So I would advise the minister that she should talk to her staff again because of the number of producers that are affected in that area certainly doesn't seem fair to have them outside that privy where they're not eligible for those funds. But, having said that, I will move on. The minister's made it clear where her department's at.

I do want to talk about the riparian tax credit that was mentioned in the budget, where the Province has agreed to double the benefits to farmers and ranchers to protect riverbanks and lakeshore areas, if she could outline how that would be set out so that farm organizations and that could get that information out to the public.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Just back to the member's previous comments, I know that it is very difficult when boundaries have to be drawn, but this is how insurance programs work. You look at the data from a particular municipality and you average out the whole area. That's how it has worked with all of the programs and I am not—the member is implying that part of a municipality should qualify, not another part. But, if you start to look at that, you're looking at individual insurance that affects crop insurance, so we have to look at the way data is collected for all of our programs, not just for this one.

But I encourage the member; I would be standing up for my constituents as well. I will certainly have a discussion with my staff again on

this particular issue, and check with them about any communication that may have taken place with the federal minister because it's my understanding that there hasn't—that we will do that.

Madam Chair, with respect to the riparian tax credit, that information has been out for several years now and it's been provided—it's available for—the information is provided. I can get back to the member on what information is provided and how it's provided to individuals and how they access it.

**Mr. Eichler:** I look forward to that, and I will check the Web site as well. I know that was one of the concerns that was brought forward by the Keystone Ag Producers in regard to one of their comments that they made.

\*(12:00)

The other was a green equipment tax credit, solar thermal systems, in addition to geothermal systems. I was wondering if the minister could outline where that would be taking place and how it's going to be administered in regard to her particular department.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Those tax credits, I believe, are in the Department of Finance. I would have to, again, get back to the member on specifics as they relate to agriculture, and I can do that, but both those tax credits are administered by the Department of Finance.

**Mr. Eichler:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and also, Madam Minister. In regard to question period, I asked the minister in regard to the livestock industry the lack of funding that should be spent in regard to the cattle and hog industry. We know it's in a state of emergency and a number of hog producers, in particular, having to prepay their feed before they're able to actually receive it because of the credit crunch that's out there. A lot of these producers just don't have the cash. A lot of the barns are being forced closed. Unfortunately, a lot of these producers just aren't eligible for some of the ad hoc payments, not ad-hoc payments, but the AgriStability payments. I know she talked about the cash advances through AgriStability. Most of those have been maxed out.

I'm wondering, with the country-of-origin labelling and she's talked about in the budget that they were going to flow money through to Brandon and to Neepawa, but what are the initiatives that her department is looking at in order to help sustain this industry in order to ensure that, in fact, it will be here when the markets do come back.



**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Chairperson, there's no doubt the livestock industries are very important industries to this province, and they are under significant pressures. I want to assure the member that we've worked very closely with those organizations and their representatives. Last year they came to us and asked us for support in the form of loans so that the pork industry could continue on.

The country-of-origin labelling is significant, and that's why we have worked with the industry and we have spent significant resources to get this issue on the table. Manitoba has been the lead and I've been the lead on getting this issue on the federal-provincial agenda because Manitoba is most significantly impacted. I want to recognize that the federal minister has done a lot of work on country-of-origin labelling, but I want to assure the member that that has been at our urging.

We talked about where this is going, and it's not quite clear. We were quite comfortable with the recommendations on the rule that was going to see the number of labels narrowed down. But that now has been put on hold by the new administration, and we have to wait until the comment period is over to see what is going to happen.

We very much believe that our solutions are to increase slaughter capacity at home so that we do not have to ship live animals into the U.S. I'm quite confident that a Canadian brand would stand very well in the market and we could export to the U.S. and to other parts of the world. That's why we've made investments into Brandon, that's why we've made investments into Neepawa, to ensure that we have more slaughter capacity for the pork industry here at home. That's why we are working very hard on trying to get some additional beef capacity in this province so that, again, we can avoid some of the transportation costs and put more dollars into the producers' pockets. If they can save transportation costs and have their animals slaughtered here at home, that's also helpful.

We have to work very hard at branding, and those things are happening. We do have to continue to work to ensure that Canada's reputation and Manitoba's reputation is known around the world.

**Mr. Eichler:** Thank you, Madam Minister. Yes, we certainly agree with the minister in regard to increasing slaughter capacity within the province of Manitoba, and the more we can send out in finished product, certainly, we will do whatever we can to encourage that as well.

Would the minister be able to elaborate on the amount of money that's being flowed into the two processing plants, in particular Brandon and Neepawa, and how that money would be flowing into those two particular processing plants? Will it be through the food safety net programs, or is it going to be an individual program that will be established by her department?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Of course, the member knows that when you have slaughter capacity, you use a significant amount of water. Waste-water treatment is very important, and that is why we've made investments to help to upgrade the waste-water treatment in order that these plants can operate, as well. The major investment is in the waste-water treatment of both facilities, and I can get the member the details of the amounts that have been put into each facility. But the member mentioned tracking and tracing and the food safety. There's no doubt that consumers are looking to be able to identify where their products have come from.

Manitoba Cattle Producers have recognized the importance of tracking and tracing, and some are moving forward on it because they recognize the extra dollars that it means for them. That's why we've got the pilot project on tracking and tracing. That's why we're putting additional money into—we're introducing a food safety act and we'll be putting additional people in place on food safety inspection.

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** My question is for the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh).

In review of the budget documents tabled regarding the Manitoba Development Centre—*[interjection]* Thank you, Madam Chairperson. In regard to the Manitoba Development Centre, in review of the document that had been tabled pertaining to the budget earlier this week, there is acknowledged a reduced allocation for salary and employee benefits for the Manitoba Development Centre.

I can appreciate that with the reduced number of residents at Manitoba Development Centre, this is indeed appropriate. However—

**Madam Chairperson:** Order, please. Please take your conversations to the loge.

**Mr. Faurshou:**—within the budget document, there is concern for the capital expenditure that had been promised a number of years ago to enhance the living and quality of life issues that have been

brought forward in years past. I would like to ask the minister where in the budget we can refer to the capital expenditure that had been previously promised and the time frame into which that expenditure will take place?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** I know that, since 1999, there's been a reduction of about one-third in the population of MDC. So one would then, of course, expect some decrease in the need for the support services at MDC, although we recognize that it certainly isn't proportionate then to the reduction in the number of residents. That's because there's an infrastructure that's necessary. So I understand there has been some marginal adjustment of some of the services, but it remains as just that, marginal, I understand to this point.

The capital commitments have been focussed on safety enhancements, and I understand there have been several millions that have been invested. I'm just going by recollection here. I think there were—well, maybe I shouldn't go by recollection. I know I have access just a few feet away to some of the more recent numbers in terms of the capital investments, but I know there have been enhancements to the cottages and some other work at the facility.

\* (12:10)

In terms of the plans for this year, perhaps, we can have a more detailed discussion in the next few weeks in the Estimates, but I'll certainly prepare for that line of questioning from the member, and we can get the details to him about the plans with regard to MDC.

**Mr. Faurchow:** I look forward to a more in-depth discussion when we have the opportunity.

My second question is for the Minister of Conservation as it pertains to the recycling of beverage containers here in the province of Manitoba. It was promised by this government last year, when a resolution came to the House—in the minister's own words—committed that to stay tuned in for next year's budget for a beverage container deposit program and to effectively get in sync with every other jurisdiction in the nation in the recovery of beverage containers rather than seeing them going to the landfills.

I scanned the budget documents and cannot locate the government's commitment. Could, perhaps, the minister isolate for the House today that particular program that was promised last year?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation):** Madam Chairperson, I would ask the Member for Portage la Prairie to take a much closer look at the budget then, and he will see an incentive plan that we've put together that received good remarks from a number of municipalities, including the City of Winnipeg, that will greatly assist in improving the amount of recycling that we do, whether it's pop bottles or any other kind of waste stream.

He will also notice that we have put forward—Cabinet has passed a regulation making it imperative that industry step forward with a business plan, and I want to say that industry has been supportive in doing that, so that will be a long-term net improvement to our recycling ability in Manitoba.

Finally, he will also notice that we've made commitments in the budget to improvements in terms of funding for household hazardous waste and e-waste as well. So I thank the Member for Portage la Prairie for that question.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** I have a couple of quick questions, if we can get this in before our time expires, to the Minister of Water Stewardship.

First of all, the sandbags being used by municipalities for the high water event—as we like to call it instead of a flood—who pays for the sandbags?

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** We have been very clear on saying to municipalities that we are very concerned about safety and are wanting to take every precaution around safety. We have provided, I believe it's 100,000 sandbags plus two sandbagging machines to the various communities along the northern Red River right now. That is part of the government's stock hold of some three million sandbags. We're also providing water tubing that is proving to be very effective in various communities. It's also been deployed and is being used by communities.

I also had a very positive discussion yesterday with the federal minister of INAC, Minister Chuck Strahl, and we've all agreed that the important thing to do now is to make sure that people in communities are getting the supplies that they need to prevent flooding, to be aware of what may be coming up their way. We're all working together. It's important to recognize that we are all Manitobans here, and we are all working together as Manitobans. Right now, it's on northern portions of the Red. Of course, we're watching Winnipeg; we're watching south of Winnipeg. We're all working together here. We are

making sure that information is being passed back and forth to individual communities. PFRA very generously called earlier this week, and offered any services that they may be able to provide during this time. So we're all working together here.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I appreciate the—and I understand that the Province is supplying these. My question was, who is paying, who gets billed, or who is paying for the sandbags? Is it the Province, the municipality, the federal government, or all of the above?

**Ms. Melnick:** Yes, as I had mentioned in my previous answer, this is part of the stockpile that the Province has and has paid for, some three million bags that we have had stored up waiting, you know, ready and waiting for when they're needed.

Also, we are using the tubing which has been paid for by the Province and is being deployed throughout the province as need be. I just want to clarify with the members that—the question that you had. *[interjection]* Yes. Okay.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Madam Chairperson, through you to the minister, the dikes within the city of Winnipeg, were they raised as part of the floodway strategy, or what is the current situation with the dikes that are within the city of Winnipeg?

**Ms. Melnick:** The dikes within the city of Winnipeg are part of the City of Winnipeg's preparedness response. They are going to traditionally low lands which have been sensitive to flooding in the past, and have worked either with individual homeowners or business owners or whatever buildings may be on those properties, whatever properties they are, and have taken precautionary measures with them. This is within the city's plan,

Again, we're communicating with the city on a regular basis. They are making the determinations as to where preventative diking should go up, how high that diking should be and they are working with the individual landowners, the homeowners, the business owners, et cetera.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So, from what I understand, then, from that answer is that the dikes within the city of Winnipeg are the City of Winnipeg. They are not part of the floodway strategy because the Province has run the floodway strategy. What you're telling me is the city of Winnipeg dikes are the City of Winnipeg, and they're not part of the overall floodway strategy.

**Ms. Melnick:** Well, as I said previously, we are all Manitobans here and we are all working together. So the city is working in the areas that they have responsibility for. There is constant communication between EMO, provincial EMO including Water Stewardship and the City of Winnipeg, as there is constant communication between EMO including Water Stewardship up along the north Red River right now.

We are communicating with the federal government on the Roseau River situation. There's communication with south of the border. We all are pulling together here. We all are playing our part and we're all going to do the very best that we can no matter what level of government we are. No matter what areas we're working in specifically, we're all working together to try to help each other as neighbours, to help each other as Manitobans to prevent as much concern and as much damage as we can here.

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** Madam Chair, one very quick question and, I know, one very quick answer from the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald).

In this Interim Supply, there's approximately \$565 million being approved for capital. We've heard of a couple of projects in the city of Brandon that have been announced ad nauseam. One is the Westman lab redevelopment and the other one is the CancerCare. Can the minister tell me if she has any of the \$565-million capital that, in fact, we can see some action on these two projects that have been announced many times, but we do not have any shovels in the ground?

Can the minister tell me if we're going to get a shovel in the ground in the next six to eight months?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chairperson. I appreciate the opportunity to speak of the numerous capital investments and other health investments we've made in Brandon. I can say that, of course, we were very pleased to announce yesterday further supports for the Brandon Regional Health Centre, which we were able to construct under our watch.

\* (12:20)

I can say to the member, while attempting to go on at some length in this answer, that work in concert with Westman labs is going forward. We have been working with them to ensure that we're able to keep the lab open. It's during construction, which is not a simple task, in doing—in issues of contamination and

safety, of course, but we're going to go forward as quickly as possible. The member is also aware that we are working very closely with the Brandon centre and CancerCare Manitoba to take what was an original very good dream to have radiation available for patients in Westman, and we expanded that project significantly to have a much expanded community CancerCare program outside of Brandon. So we are moving forward very swiftly with those projects.

The member opposite throws up his hands and says it's not built. We signalled in the budget that it will be built. I can assure you that during these tough economic times we're not going to make the mistakes of the '90s and freeze our capital infrastructure and let our health-care facilities crumble. We're going to go forward, not back.

**Madam Chairperson:** We shall now proceed to consider the bill clause-by-clause. The title and enacting clause are postponed until all other clauses have been considered.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; clause 6—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes the business currently before us.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

### IN SESSION

#### Committee Report

**Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (Chairperson):** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 10, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2009, and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that the report of the committee be received.

*Motion agreed to.*

### CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

#### Bill 10—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2009

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), that Bill 10, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2009; Loi de 2009 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, as reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I understand His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor is on his way to the Chamber.

**Mr. Speaker:** His Honour is on his way, so we will be ready for His Honour.

### ROYAL ASSENT

**Acting Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Ray Gislason):** His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

*His Honour John Harvard, Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the Throne, Mr. Speaker addressed His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor in the following words:*

**Mr. Speaker:** Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba asks Your Honour to accept the following bill:

**Madam Clerk Assistant (Monique Grenier):**

Bill 10—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2009; Loi de 2009 portant affectation anticipée de crédits

**Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk):** In Her Majesty's name, the Lieutenant-Governor thanks the Legislative Assembly and assents to this bill.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please be seated.

The time being 12:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on April 6, year '09.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, March 27, 2009

CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>			
<b>Petitions</b>		Pinawa Hospital	
PTH 15		Hawranik; Oswald	471
Schuler	463	<b>Members' Statements</b>	
Seven Oaks Hospital—Emergency Services		Bernadette McCann	
Lamoureux	463	Brick	472
<b>Oral Questions</b>		Centennial Farm Award	
Budget		Pedersen	472
McFadyen; Doer	464	Donna George	
Borotsik; Selinger	465	Korzeniowski	473
Eichler; Wowchuk	467	Talitha Calder	
Disraeli Freeway		Graydon	473
Mitchelson; Ashton	466	Greek Independence Day	
Mitchelson; Doer	466	Martindale	474
Flooding			
Taillieu; Melnick	468		
Taillieu; Ashton	469		
Assiniboine River Diversion			
Faurschou; Melnick	469		
Trans-Canada Highway and PR 227			
Faurschou; Melnick	469		
Seven Oaks Hospital			
Lamoureux; Oswald	470		
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation			
Jennissen; Ashton	471		

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**Committee of the Whole**

Bill 10—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2009 474

**Concurrence and Third Readings**

Bill 10—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2009 488

**Royal Assent**

Bill 10—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2009 488

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings  
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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