

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

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authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

| Member | Constituency | Political Affiliation |
|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| ALLAN, Nancy, Hon. | St. Vital | N.D.P. |
| ALTEMEYER, Rob | Wolseley | N.D.P. |
| ASHTON, Steve | Thompson | N.D.P. |
| BJORNSON, Peter, Hon. | Gimli | N.D.P. |
| BLADY, Sharon | Kirkfield Park | N.D.P. |
| BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon. | Elmwood | 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 | St. Boniface | N.D.P. |
| STEFANSON, Heather | Tuxedo | P.C. |
| STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon. | Dauphin-Roblin | N.D.P. |
| SWAN, Andrew | Minto | N.D.P. |
| TAILLIEU, Mavis | Morris | P.C. |
| WHITEHEAD, Frank | The Pas | N.D.P. |
| WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon. | Swan River | N.D.P. |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, September 14, 2009

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Routine proceedings. Introduction of bills.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. Order. Introduction of bills. Petitions.

PETITIONS

Seven Oaks Hospital—Emergency Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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 our community-based emergency wards." End of quote.

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.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by P. Gorun, S. Kasperski and L. Mossop and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Parkland Regional Health Authority— Ambulance Station

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

These communities represent about 2,500 people. Other communities of a similar size within the region are equipped with at least one ambulance, but this area is not. As a result, residents must be transported in private vehicles to the nearest hospital if they cannot wait for emergency personnel to arrive.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Warren Mousseau, Wade Mousseau, Greg Eastman, and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Ophthalmology Services—Swan River

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-op and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has told the town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program. However, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

This is signed by Laurel Oxford, Adam Borland, Debbi Worth, and many, many others.

Mr. Speaker: Committee reports.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Justice First Report

Mr. Daryl Reid (Chairperson): I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee of Justice.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee of Justice presents the following as its First Report—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

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

Meeting

Your Committee met on Thursday, June 18, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building:

Matter under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 16) – The Police Services Act/Loi sur les services de police**

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the Thursday, June 18, 2009 meeting:

- Ms. BRICK (Vice-Chair)
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. DEWAR
- Mr. FAURSCHOU
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Mr. GRAYDON
- Ms. KORZENIOWSKI
- Mrs. MITCHELSON
- Hon. Ms. OSWALD
- Mr. REID (Chair)
- Mr. SARAN

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following nine presentations on **Bill (No. 16) – The Police Services Act/Loi sur les services de police:***

*Mel Klassen, Association of Manitoba Municipalities
Maurice Butler, Town of Morden
Keith Atkinson, Chief of Police, City of Brandon
Marc Robichaud, Ste. Anne Police Dept.
David M. Sanders, Private Citizen
Tom Simms, Community Education Development Association*

Allan Wise & Diane Roussin, Inner City Safety Coalition
David Chartrand, Manitoba Métis Federation
Cyril Keeper, Private Citizen

Bill Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 16) – The Police Services Act/Loi sur les services de police**
Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, with the following amendments:

THAT Clause 68 of the Bill be amended by renumbering it as clause 68(1) and adding the following as clause 68(2):

Independent prosecutor from outside Manitoba
68(2) The independent prosecutor appointed under subsection (1) must reside outside of Manitoba

(a) if the information laid against the police officer alleges that the officer caused the death of a person; or

(b) in other prescribed circumstances.

THAT Clause 87 of the Bill be replaced with the following:

Senior officers association

87(1) Despite the definition of "employee" in The Labour Relations Act, if at least 50% of the senior officers in a police service belong to an association composed only of senior officers, the senior officers in that police service may bargain separately with their employer through that association.

Definitions

87(2) The following definitions apply in this section.

"**association**" means an association that has as its objectives the improvement of conditions of service and remuneration of its members. (« association »)

"**senior officer**" means

(a) a police officer with the rank of inspector or higher, but does not include the police chief or a deputy police chief; and

(b) a civilian employed with the police service in a supervisory or confidential capacity. (« cadre supérieur »)

THAT Clause 106(1)(b) of the Bill be amended by striking out "this Act" and substituting "this section".

Mr. Reid: I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Crown Corporations
Fourth Report**

Ms. Marilyn Brick (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations wishes to present the following as its—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on CROWN CORPORATIONS presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- November 7, 2007 (1st Session – 39th Legislature)
- August 28, 2008 (2nd Session – 39th Legislature)
- June 25, 2009

Matters under Consideration

- Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the fiscal year ending February 28, 2006
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the fiscal year ending February 28, 2007
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the fiscal year ending February 29, 2008

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the November 7, 2007 meeting:

- HON. MR. CHOMIAK
- MR. CULLEN
- MR. DERKACH
- MR. GRAYDON
- MR. JHA (VICE-CHAIRPERSON)
- MS. KORZENIOWSKI
- MR. MAGUIRE
- MS. MARCELINO
- MR. MARTINDALE (CHAIRPERSON)
- MR. NEVAKSHONOFF
- MR. SWAN

Committee Membership for the August 28, 2008 meeting:

- *MS. BRICK (CHAIRPERSON)*
- *HON. MR. CHOMIAK*
- *MR. CULLEN*
- *MR. DEWAR*
- *MR. FAURSCHOU*
- *MR. GRAYDON*
- *MS. HOWARD (VICE-CHAIRPERSON)*
- *MS. KORZENIOWSKI*
- *MR. REID*
- *HON. MR. SWAN*
- *MRS. TAILLIEU*

Committee Membership for the June 25, 2009 meeting:

- *MR. ALTEMEYER*
- *MR. BOROTSIK*
- *MS. BRICK*
- *HON. MR. CHOMIAK*
- *MR. FAURSCHOU*
- *MR. GRAYDON*
- *MS. MARCELINO*
- *MR. PEDERSON*
- *MR. SARAN*
- *MS. SELBY*
- *HON. MR. SWAN*

Your Committee elected Ms. BRICK as the Chairperson at the June 25, 2009 meeting.

Your Committee elected Ms. MARCELINO as the Vice-Chairperson at the June 25, 2009 meeting.

Officials Speaking on Record

Officials speaking on the record at the November 7, 2007 meeting:

- *Ms. Marilyn McLaren, President and Chief Executive Officer*
- *Ms. Shari Decter Hirst, Board Chairperson*

Officials speaking on the record at the August 28, 2008 meeting:

- *Ms. Marilyn McLaren, President and Chief Executive Officer*

Officials speaking on the record at the June 25, 2009 meeting:

- *Ms. Marilyn McLaren, President and Chief Executive Officer*

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following report as presented:

- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the fiscal year ending February 28, 2006*

Reports Considered but not Passed

Your Committee considered the following reports but did not pass them:

- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the fiscal year ending February 28, 2007*
- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the fiscal year ending February 29, 2008*

Ms. Brick: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations Fifth Report

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

Madam Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on CROWN CORPORATIONS presents the following as its Fifth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- *December 12, 2007 (2nd Session – 39th Legislature)*
- *March 10, 2008 (2nd Session – 39th Legislature)*
- *July 8, 2009*

Matters under Consideration

- *Annual Report of The Workers Compensation Board for the year ending December 31, 2006*
- *Annual Report of The Workers Compensation Board for the year ending December 31, 2007*

- *Annual Report of The Workers Compensation Board for the year ending December 31, 2008*
- *Annual Report of the Appeal Commission and Medical Review Panel for the year ending December 31, 2006*
- *Annual Report of the Appeal Commission and Medical Review Panel for the year ending December 31, 2007*
- *Annual Report of the Appeal Commission and Medical Review Panel for the year ending December 31, 2008*
- *Five Year Plan of The Workers Compensation Board for 2006 to 2010*
- *Five Year Plan of The Workers Compensation Board for 2007 to 2011*
- *Five Year Plan of The Workers Compensation Board for 2008 to 2012*
- *Five Year Plan of The Workers Compensation Board for 2009 to 2013*

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the December 12, 2007 meeting:

- *Hon. Ms. ALLAN*
- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Mrs. DRIEDGER*
- *Ms. HOWARD*
- *Mr. MAGUIRE*
- *Ms. MARCELINO (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. MARTINDALE*
- *Mr. REID (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. SARAN*
- *Mrs. STEFANSON*
- *Mrs. TAILLIEU*

Committee Membership for the March 10, 2008 meeting:

- *Hon. Ms. ALLAN*
- *Ms. BLADY*
- *Ms. BRICK*
- *Mr. CULLEN*
- *Mr. EICHLER*
- *Mr. JHA*
- *Mr. MAGUIRE*
- *Ms. MARCELINO (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. REID (Chairperson)*
- *Ms. SELBY*
- *Mrs. TAILLIEU*

Committee Membership for the July 8, 2009 meeting:

- *Hon. Ms. ALLAN*
- *Ms. BRICK*
- *Mr. CULLEN*
- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Mr. FAURSCHOU*
- *Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS*
- *Mr. MARTINDALE*
- *Mrs. MITCHELSON*
- *Mr. REID*
- *Hon. Mr. RONDEAU*
- *Mrs. TAILLIEU*

Your Committee elected Mr. REID as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Ms. BRICK as the Vice-Chairperson.

Officials Speaking on Record at the December 12, 2007 meeting:

- *Tom Farrell, Chairperson*
- *Doug Sexsmith, President & CEO*

Officials Speaking on Record at the March 10, 2008 meeting:

- *Tom Farrell, Chairperson*
- *Doug Sexsmith, President & CEO*

Officials Speaking on Record at the July 8, 2009 meeting:

- *Doug Sexsmith, President & CEO*

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- *Annual Report of The Workers Compensation Board for the year ending December 31, 2006*
- *Annual Report of the Appeal Commission and Medical Review Panel for the year ending December 31, 2006*
- *Five Year Plan of The Workers Compensation Board for 2006 to 2010*

Reports Considered but not Passed

Your Committee considered the following reports but did not pass them:

- *Annual Report of The Workers Compensation Board for the year ending December 31, 2007*
- *Annual Report of The Workers Compensation Board for the year ending December 31, 2008*
- *Annual Report of the Appeal Commission and Medical Review Panel for the year ending December 31, 2007*
- *Annual Report of the Appeal Commission and Medical Review Panel for the year ending December 31, 2008*
- *Five Year Plan of The Workers Compensation Board for 2007 to 2011*
- *Five Year Plan of The Workers Compensation Board for 2008 to 2012*
- *Five Year Plan of The Workers Compensation Board for 2009 to 2013*

Mr. Reid: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Marcelino), that the report of this committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* (13:40)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the Public Accounts Committee met last week and passed certain reports. Under our normal practice that committee report would be presented in the House today. Due to exceptional circumstances, the committee has agreed that it would prefer to delay presentation of this report in the House until later this week.

Accordingly, I would like to ask the House for agreement to have the sixth report of the Public Accounts Committee presented in the House later this week.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, it's been announced that the Public Accounts Committee met last week and passed certain reports. Under our normal practice, that committee report would be presented in the House today. Due to exceptional circumstances, the committee has agreed that it would prefer to delay presentation of this report in the House until later this week.

Accordingly, the Government House Leader is asking for agreement to have the sixth report of the

Public Accounts Committee presented in the House later this week.

Is there agreement? [*Agreed*]

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: In compliance with section 4 of the Members' Salaries, Allowances and Retirement Plan regulation, I am pleased to table the reports of the amounts claimed and paid for members for the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

Ministerial statements.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I am pleased to introduce to the House the 10 students who have been selected to serve as pages at this session. They are, beginning at my extreme right: Ms. Jamie Chalmers, Ms. Angela Roesler, Mr. Joey Dearborn, Mr. Tyler Nikiel, Ms. Allison Fligg, Ms. Christine Durocher, Ms. Laura Bailey, Mr. Andrew McNaughton, Mr. Joseph Darcel, Ms. Jessica Morrison-Ciunyk.

So on behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here to the Chamber, and I'm sure that you will do a wonderful, wonderful job.

And I'd also like to draw attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today, we have the parents of the 2009-2009 and 2010 legislative pages.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Economy Status

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier, my question is this: How was your summer? Is there anything new?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank the Leader of the Opposition for his very, very important question. Today the Conference Board of Canada came out and indicated that Manitoba's economy would continue to be a leader in Canada, and we're really, really pleased about that.

We take no credit for the fact that the fall period or the late summer period is producing beautiful weather, but we know a lot of farmers that got their

crops into the ground very late in the year are getting a reprieve on a—on frost, and the ability to bring in their crops. And we're really pleased to the forces to ensure that that happens.

Of course, Manitobans continue to work hard. The unemployment rate has been challenge, but more people were working in the July month than a year ago. More people were working in August than a year ago. So I just want to thank the good people of Manitoba for—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Influenza A (H1N1) School Closure Plan

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I guess the curiosity will be which of the three competitiveness ministers they've had over the last two weeks that's gonna wanna take the credit, Mr. Speaker, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) or now St. Vital (Ms. Allan).

But, Mr. Speaker, on another question in relation to summer activities and planning, I want to ask the Premier, just with the start of the school year, there's a lot of concern from other parents in the schoolyard about the impact of a potential H1N1 outbreak on schools in Manitoba. Obviously there's an impact on schools; there's an impact on the broader population of Manitobans. There was a World Health Organization report on Friday that said that the timing of school closures is critical in containing the spread of any outbreak.

I want to ask the Premier if he can be specific about what his government's plans are with respect to schools in Manitoba and what trigger they would use on making decisions to close schools in order to protect kids and ensure that the flu doesn't spread beyond where it absolutely has to in the event we end up in that situation, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say, in terms of the preamble of the Leader of the Opposition, that the credit for the economic good works in Manitoba in relative terms goes to every Manitoban, not to—we don't ever consider it an issue of the government; we consider it an issue of the people and I wanna thank the people of Manitoba for that.

In terms of the specific question on H1N1, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) had an update to

the people of Manitoba last week on the preparations that are being in process here in Manitoba, including protocols in schools. The ministers, the deputy ministers of Health are meeting from across Canada in Winnipeg on Wednesday. The ministers of Health, I believe, are meeting on Thursday and Friday to go over the national protocols on many items on H1N1.

We will, of course, rely on the advice of the chief medical officers from across Canada on their recommendations on protocols. We—if there's any local issues, we will obviously, local in Manitoba, look at—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for River Heights, are you rising on a matter of privilege?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I'm rising on a matter of privilege.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise according to *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms, 6th Edition*, pages 28 and 29, citation No. 114.

The matter to which I speak deals directly with the comments from the Premier (Mr. Doer), the Ambassador-designate to—Canadian Ambassador-designate to the United States, and so it has risen at the first opportunity, and I will very briefly make the reason that there is a prima facie case of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, as Ambassador-designate, the Premier now reports directly to Prime Minister Stephen Harper. He has a very clear conflict of interest standing up for both Manitoba very forcefully while it deals with provincial issues and also being responsible to the Prime Minister of Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have checked. There is not an update to the Premier or Ambassador-designate's conflict-of-interest statement. He, the Premier, did not explain in the House before answering questions his current situation and the conflict of interest that results from this. This is a very serious matter and it impacts, for example, the ability of the Premier to stand forcefully up against the federal government when the interests of the hog industry are not being well supported or when the interests of people who have been flooded in the Interlake are not supported well or when Tembec workers are locked out and

there is a need for a very loud and vigorous provincial intervention.

And so I believe that this is a serious matter, that we should make sure that the Premier has adequately consulted the commissioner for ethics, that there should be a statement from the Premier in terms of this conflict of interest, and I also believe and I will move, as the MLA for River Heights, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that this matter be sent for review to be seen and looked at by a legislative committee.

* (13:50)

Mr. Speaker: The honourable—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Government House Leader on the same matter of privilege.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, it—I'm almost—I'm almost astonished, although I must admit I'm never astonished at what Liberals often do in this Chamber, but this—I'm almost astonished by the manner in which the member raised, or even—or even attempted to hijack the proceedings of this House.

We were talking about H1N1, Mr. Speaker. We were talking about the safety of the children of this country and the Leader of the Liberal Party stands up and has the tenacity to stop debate because he suggests that the Prime Minister of Canada, who has designated an honour upon the people of Manitoba through designating this man to be the Ambassador-designate to United States—the Ambassador-designate to the United States—is somehow in a conflict of interest.

I have seen the Liberals raise privileges based on where they sit in the Legislature. I have seen Liberals raise privilege when we were in the midst of the BSE crisis. I have seen Liberals raise questions about McDonalds, but this takes, this takes—this takes everything, Mr. Speaker. I cannot even find the adjectives to describe, to describe this.

Mr. Speaker, conflict of interest is very clear. There are guidelines we have to follow. I know we followed those guidelines when ex-Liberal MLAs were appointed to boards by the federal government, and I didn't, I didn't complain. I thought they could provide a useful function. Conflict of interest is clearly a matter that's defined in legislation and demand—and provided for, both in public office by

the Premier, et cetera. It's not even close to a conflict of interest because it's a position designate.

Even putting that aside, the fact that the Prime Minister of the day, the leader of the country in a federation where the powers are distributed between the federal government, the provincial government and the municipal government—and, Mr. Speaker, we deal with that every day in this Chamber and in conferences—in a federation it's not a conflict when one government position is in the same area or the same position as another government position. In a federation it would be different if we were a unitary state, Mr. Speaker, but the member is so off base. It is so poor taste. It is so poor quality.

We should be doing two things in this Chamber: honouring the fact that the Premier of this province, for the first time in history, has been appointed by a prime minister to be the Canadians' ambassador to the United States. I think we should be honoured by that. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, you know—you know, I have second and third points to make. Second point, we were in the middle of a debate and discussion about H1N1. It's not that we were talking about where the Liberals sit in the House, which was another point of one of their privileges, we were talking about a real significant issue.

And thirdly, Mr. Speaker, one thing I thought that we did in this parliamentary system is respect each other for what we do and what we stand for, and I am, I am quite disturbed that the member would take an honour of a member being designated by the Prime Minister to be ambassador and try to make a cheap political trick out of it.

It's below the dignity, in my opinion, of a member of this House to do that, Mr. Speaker. I think the member owes an apology to this House. It is clearly not a matter of privilege. It's clearly not in the public interest. It's clearly not timely and it's clearly in bad taste. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, I've heard from the House leaders, and the honourable member for Inkster, if you have anything new to add, I will hear you very briefly.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, thank you. Mr. Speaker, I do believe that it's important for us to take into perspective of the conflict of interest. If we were to ask a question of the Premier (Mr. Doer) in terms of the transfer payments we know the way in

which the economy and Manitoba's dependence on equalization payments and transfer payments.

The Prime Minister, or this particular Premier, the Ambassador-designate to the U.S., does in fact have a conflict of interest. If on the one hand we were to ask the Premier to stand up for Manitobans and fight for stronger, more transfer payments, more equalization payments, Mr. Speaker, this Premier is obligated, many would argue, to jump to the defence of the national government.

We have municipal city councillors that once they get elected to this Legislature, possibly even before then, that they are obligated to resign. This Premier did not state the designate position on his conflict of interest. I believe that there is some merit, Mr. Speaker, that at the very least the Premier should've made it very clear to this Legislature as to what his intentions are. And is there, I would argue, I believe that there is indeed a conflict for this Premier to be able to answer any type of question that could deal with Ottawa. And given that we're so dependent on Ottawa, I would suggest to you that the Premier would do Manitobans a favour by handing off those responsibilities to the Deputy Premier or designate it to someone else so the Premier, as now a diplomat, is in a better position to be able to carry out his responsibilities as Ambassador-designate as opposed to the Premier of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Order. A matter of privilege is a very serious concern. I'm gonna take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities, and I will return to the House with a ruling.

ORAL QUESTIONS (Continued)

Mr. Speaker: We will now continue on with question period and the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition had the floor.

Influenza A (H1N1) School Closure Plan

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Premier for the response on H1N1 around the protocols.

I think what's important is that Manitobans are looking for very clear and specific information aggressively communicated about something that could happen very imminently. The scientific information coming out suggests that the—any H1N1 pandemic could peak by the middle of October. We

could be into a situation within weeks if not days where decisions need to be made with respect to schools. With the World Health Organization saying it may be advisable to begin school closures, ideally before less than 1 percent of the population is infected, these are decisions that are imminent.

I wanna ask the Premier if he can be as specific today about his government's plans as the City of Winnipeg was this morning about that government's plans as it prepares to cope with the worst-case scenario that we hope will not arise.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I know that as anyone that has a child in school knows that there's considerable amount of briefing going on to children as they enter the school this year. And I wanna thank all the educators and all the people on the front lines for informing children of what they should do to prevent this disease from spreading, to informing children of what it may or may not mean.

The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) and the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) met on July 27th with all the stakeholders in education. We're following the advice of the Canadian public health agency on not having a blanket closure of schools if there's one case, but rather have an isolation or recommendations on isolating that individual from the rest of the school population.

I think the member would appreciate the advice given by the Winnipeg School Division. Obviously, we believe that it's best to have a policy nationwide in terms of protocols, and, obviously, it's best to take advice from people on the front lines, which we will do through public health experts, Mr. Speaker.

Health-Care Services Transfer of Out-of-Province Patients

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Thank you. Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) always seems to have an excuse when something goes wrong in her department.

* (14:00)

The latest excuse are breakdowns in communication. When 21-year-old Rodmond Huska got sick in the United States, the family was told that he couldn't be transferred back to Winnipeg because there were no beds here. He died in an American hospital alone except for his mom. The excuse? There was a breakdown in communication here.

Can the Minister of Health explain this excuse, this breakdown in communication, that left a young man to die in the United States with no family and friends at his bedside?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for the opportunity to clarify for the member opposite.

There are protocols and procedures in place concerning the transfer of patients from out of province into the province and into our facilities here in Manitoba. These policies and procedures are being reviewed with a specific view to the case that the member cites. I have met with the patient's mother. I've had, you know, good advice from her. We're working with the regional health authority, and indeed, the other piece of this discussion, with the insurance company with a view to improving those processes so that no family has to go through this kind of incident again.

Nursing Profession Lack of Personal Protective Equipment

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): During the first wave of H1N1, the Manitoba Nurses' Union said that nurses did not have protective masks to use and that's a basic piece of equipment. Last week in the minister's office, I told—I was told that this was due to a communication breakdown. Supposedly, the equipment was there but the nurses were never told how to access the equipment. Mr. Speaker, that's a very lame excuse and it's a very poor excuse and it makes us wonder if this government is indeed ready to deal with a pandemic.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to explain how could such a serious breakdown in communication occur, a breakdown in communication that actually put nurses at risk.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I can inform the House and put correct information on the record so they don't have any misinformation coming from opposite.

In addition to the announcement we made last week of \$47 million for investments in personal protective equipment, to vaccine, to antivirals, we also, of course, have been making continual investments in our regional health authorities.

Today the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority has over 1 million N95 masks with 3 million more coming this fall. Those masks were available in the

fall as well. There were some discussions on a national stage, Mr. Speaker, about the appropriate use of standard surgical masks versus N95s. Those discussions have become much more clear from the Public Health Agency of Canada as well as from Manitoba Health, but we're going to keep listening to nurses and take their advice as we all work together to fight pandemic H1N1.

Brian Sinclair Death Government Communication to Public

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): It is a fact that, according to the Manitoba Nurses' Union, the nurses in the spring part of the pandemic did not have safety masks to wear.

But, Mr. Speaker, the biggest communication breakdown and charade of excuses happened when Brian Sinclair died in an ER waiting room after waiting 34 hours for care. The worst offender was this Minister of Health, the head of our health-care system who misled the public with false information and covered up the truth.

I'd like to ask her if she could explain her poor behaviour to Manitobans who expect much better leadership from our Minister of Health.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, of one thing I can be absolutely sure, that a responsible Minister of Health does not do what the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and the member opposite did and blame front-line workers. A responsible Minister of Health in these situations takes action. That's why, within days, we had asked the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to change its protocols for identifying people in waiting rooms. That's why within a week we had made an investment to make capital expenditure changes in the waiting rooms. That's why last year we made a multimillion-dollar investment in augmenting personnel.

It's clear, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is much more interested in personal attacks than making the system better. Nothing new.

Economy First Quarter Financial Report

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): The government last week announced the first-quarter financial results and the report clearly shows the economic downturn is impacting the Province's finances. The document shows that revenue is down \$77 million from the Province's own projections.

Now, while revenues are down on the other side, spending is up \$111 million from their first quarter of 2008.

Mr. Speaker, the report itself shows that there's going to be more difficult times ahead. I ask the Acting Minister of Finance: What can Manitobans expect, fiscal year end, in terms of a provincial deficit?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Acting Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, and the member opposite should recognize what first quarter reports are, and they are a projection. But if the member will look at the results of what has been happening, the members opposite have been predicting doom and gloom. Members opposite, in fact the Leader of the Opposition said we were gonna be in deficit, that we were going to be spending all of the money in the rainy day fund. He said that last year, and, in fact, we have—we came out of last year in a positive way. In fact, we were able to transfer \$46 million into the Fiscal Stabilization account.

Mr. Speaker, we were able to make the required—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Deficit Forecast

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Well, Mr. Speaker, the acting deputy minister—Minister of Finance should recognize that they've been receiving unprecedented amounts of transfer payments from the federal government, and that's why things have looked not too bad recently.

Mr. Speaker, we—we've got uncertain times in our economy and unfortunately there's no plan in place. The other thing that the acting minister should understand is that this document that was released does not provide any forecast. It's just numbers up to the first quarter. We're asking for the forecast for the end of the year. Now, it also says here in a government news release in the last hour that the Minister of Agriculture is familiar with the issues in Finance, so we want to get to the bottom line here.

What is the forecast by the Acting Minister of Finance in terms of the deficit for the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Acting Minister of Finance): You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell—ask the honourable member to look at what the Conference Board of Canada has said and what they have forecast for Manitoba. And the Conference

Board of Canada has said—is forecasting that Manitoba will have the second-highest GDP growth in Canada. They—the Conference Board is saying that Manitoba is weathering the global economy downturn relatively well. The province has avoided recession with a 0.8 percent growth in GDP, and I'm very proud of the steps that our government has taken; the investments that we have made in infrastructure in this province to indeed keep people working and have the stimulus that we need. This province is feeling some consequences of the downturn—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans want to know what that really means to the bottom line of the provincial budget. Now, it's quite concerning that after the first quarter, we're three months into the year, the Province is already at a point where they've issued a special warrant to cover their cash flow. How could this government be so far off the mark only three months into the fiscal year?

Mr. Speaker, the federal government is being up front with their financial position. We're simply asking this Minister responsible for Finance to be up front with Manitobans and where are we going to be at the end of the—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: You know, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said that H1N1 was going to be his priority. This government has recognized H1N1 as a priority and that's why we have had to put in place special funds in a special warrant. When we were doing the budget we were not dealing with the flood situation, but we did not abandon people during that difficult time. So we recognize there are issues such as H1N1 emergency situations and we have put the money in place for people to know that we are dealing with it.

The member knows full well that in the first quarter it is not likely that you can project what your deficits or your needs will be, Mr. Speaker, but I can assure the member that we are on budget.

* (14:10)

Gang Violence Government Strategy

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, Winnipeggers and Manitobans again endured another horrific summer of gang violence. It resulted in the

deaths of innocent bystanders, and it's no surprise that it's the top priority of residents of Winnipeg and throughout the province.

In response to the public outcry, the Minister of Justice hastily made an off-the-cuff announcement on a gang strategy without talking to the City of Winnipeg, without talking to the Winnipeg Police. He promised to get in the face of gang members, and then he promptly dropped off the face of the earth.

Mr. Speaker, after 10 years in government, how could this NDP, how could this Minister of Justice be so unprepared for the gang violence which we suffered through this last summer?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): In the gang strategy that was first announced by this government in 2001, Mr. Speaker, we put in place safer communities—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chomiak: We put in a number of programs, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: —that are leading the country. And in fact, I have the honour of—I had the honour of attending a conference of all of the attorney generals across the country who use Manitoba's programs—mostly developed by the member for St. Johns—as best practices for gangs across the country.

And I'd indicate, when the member whipped in from Steinbach to do his couple press conferences over the summer, Mr. Speaker, special measures were put in place by the Winnipeg Police that have settled down the situation and prevented a lot more violence than could have happened.

Mr. Goertzen: I think the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) might want to avoid any photo ops with the Minister of Justice if that's the attitude he's going to continue to give because there's been 10 years of government. Gangs have become more brazen, the offenders have become younger and the violence has escalated. The NDP—and the minister admits it—has trumpeted six previous gang announcements in the past, and yet violent offences from gangs have gone up and the age of these offenders has gone down. Each announcement sounded tough, but it didn't get results. All of the past NDP gang announcement strategies have failed, and he acknowledges that they've been making them.

Can the minister tell us: Were they poor plans? Were they poorly executed, or were they nothing more than media and public relations designed to get off the front page?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, in order to deal with issues, you have to have the honesty to recognize them, Mr. Speaker. All through the 1990s, the members opposite did not recognize gangs as a problem as they grew. We acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker, and we put in place programs and services to mitigate it.

All we heard about for month after month, year after year from members opposite was: auto theft is going up, auto theft is going up. We introduced an auto theft strategy that reduced auto theft by 60 percent—60 percent, Mr. Speaker, and members opposite have not talked about auto theft once. They haven't said boo about auto theft. Yet, when we introduced the strategy, they made fun of it, they criticized it, they said it wouldn't work. It's now been recognized in North America as a leading, as a leading prevention program and has been given an award in North America for prevention of crime—auto theft—that they criticized.

Mr. Goertzen: Unfortunately, we were being recognized across North America as the leader in gang activity and violence and that is nothing, that is nothing that this minister should be proud of.

He made a mid-summer, on-the-fly gang announcement without talking to the City of Winnipeg, without talking to the police. And after a decade in office, after a decade in office, and after more than six announcements, failed announcements on gangs, he's now saying to Winnipeggers and Manitobans, oh, this time I really mean it. This time I'm going to come up with a strategy that works.

After a decade, after six failed previous gang announcements, can he tell us why any Manitoban should have confidence in this minister, in that Cabinet or anybody in that caucus, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: The member ought to go perhaps to the kitchen at Stony Mountain or Headingley and meet some of the Hells Angels that are now behind bars.

You know, the member for Steinbach likes to blow in in the summertime and do press conferences and blow back to Steinbach, Mr. Speaker. I wonder what he's done, I wonder what he's done. When I met with Rob Nicholson, the Minister of Justice, and he praised Manitoba for its efforts, and when Manitoba

got all the attorney generals to put a letter in to the Senate about the two-for-one remands, what has he done?

Have you talked to the Senate? Have you talked to the federal government about the two-for-one remands? You've done nothing. Done nothing, Mr. Speaker. And the Minister of Justice—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Chomiak: —and the Minister of Justice said—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: —complimented Manitoba for sending in a letter on behalf of all the ministers of Justice to convince the Senate to pass a two-for-one remand and the member for Steinbach comes in to do press conferences—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: —every couple of weeks.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. We need to be able to hear the questions and the answers that are coming from the individual that has the floor. Let's have a little co-operation here.

Tembec Employee Lock-Out

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): From January through August of this year, Tembec laid off its employees for a total of 12 weeks. On September the 1st, it imposed a lockout on its employees and now 300 people are out of work in Powerview-Pine Falls.

I ask the Minister of Labour: Is she going to get the parties together to negotiate a collective agreement or is she content to sit on the sidelines and watch families in Powerview-Pine Falls suffer?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Well, this is a very important issue, and I appreciate the opportunity to inform the member. I know that he's very concerned about this issue and is representing his constituency, and we on this side of the House are just as concerned, Mr. Speaker. And I want him to know that we have our conciliation services working with the employer

and with the union, and we will do everything we can to resolve the situation.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, families and businesses are suffering in Powerview-Pine Falls. The Minister of Competitiveness and now the member from Minto a couple of weeks ago visited the mill and employees were, at that point, optimistic because he said to the community that he would clear his calendar to deal with this issue. Then, just as suddenly, the minister promptly resigned as minister.

The member from Thompson visited the mill yesterday. Offered no solutions to end the lockout but was actively seen drumming up votes for his leadership campaign. Instead of looking to help families in distress, they were looking to help themselves, Mr. Speaker.

So I ask the Minister of Labour: When will she take an interest in this lockout? She hasn't visited Powerview-Pine Falls. When will she take an interest: now, or when it's too late?

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker—[*interjection*]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very serious issue, and I really would prefer that the member focus exactly on what this is about. This is about collective bargaining. This is not about the leadership race. This is a very serious issue, and we want to make sure—and that's why we have our conciliation services working with the parties. And the best thing that we can do right now is hope that this matter is resolved through the proper process.

Mr. Hawranik: For the minister's information, Tembec employees are ready and willing to negotiate a fair and equitable collective agreement, but Tembec, through its take-it-or-leave-it attitude, has locked out nearly 300 employees and has not returned to the bargaining table and refuses to return to the bargaining table.

So I ask the Minister of Labour: Will she stand up for the 300 employees of Tembec? When will she offer, at the very least, to appoint a mediator or an arbitrator to end this lockout?

Ms. Allan: Well, the member knows, the member knows full well that if there was going to be an arbitrator appointed that the parties would agree to that, Mr. Speaker. And I don't think he would want me to impose anything from my ministerial office that isn't agreed to by the parties that are right now in some very difficult collective bargaining. The best

thing that we can do right now, at this point, is hope that this is resolved quickly and that we can get the company back running and the workers back to work.

Hog Industry Economic Challenges

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Our pork industry is in a state of crisis. Over two years ago I warned this government about the impact of country-of-origin labelling, but when this government of ours has a closed-for-business climate thanks to Bill 17, then H1N1 appears and further hurts the industry, what do we see from this government? Nothing. When it comes to advocating for our pork producers, the Minister of Agriculture has been missing in action.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell this House why she continues to fail Manitoba pork producers?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I would want to say that this is a challenging time in the pork industry with country-of-origin labelling, a higher Canadian dollar. All of those issues are affecting the pork industry, and I can assure the member, although he says we haven't worked with them, we have worked with them on a regular basis. And when the pork industry came to us for assistance in the previous year for a loan program, we put that program in place.

* (14:20)

Mr. Speaker, we have put in place and are working with the pork industry in a variety of aspects. The member continues to ignore the fact that there is money in AgriStability, and there are advance payments that producers can get through that program.

Mr. Speaker, there is a recognition across the—

Mr. Speaker: Order

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture should be advocating for our pork producers.

On June the 22nd, more than 600 producers met in Morris to talk about the industry challenges and how to overcome them. They wanted to work with provincial ministers on an action plan for the industry. But not one NDP Cabinet minister or MLA bothered to show up for this meeting. Shameful, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture explain why she continues to turn her back on the pork industry? Why is she doing nothing while producers are forced from this valuable industry in the province of Manitoba?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, indeed, the member opposite has asked about why I haven't attended a meeting. One particular meeting I could not attend. But I can tell you that we continue to work with the pork industry, continue to raise the issue with the federal government. We continue to look for a national solution.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of country-of-origin labelling is one that is very serious, and because of those loss of sales, we have to look at how the industry can restructure. We have to look at how we can increase slaughter capacity in this country and in this province. And that is why we put money, we invested into Springhill, we invested into Maple Leaf so that producers would have a market for their product other than shipping into the United States. And those are important steps that we have taken.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, none of these plans she's talked about is working. Obviously, we would have an excess of our pork business as we see it today.

After the meeting in Morris, the Progressive Conservative caucus called the government to call the Standing Committee on Agriculture to address the challenges facing producers. The government refused, claiming that everything is fine. Producers struggling to pay their bills, feed bills or get a crop off due to the weather challenges will tell you everything is not fine.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture concede she has failed our producers in a time of need?

Ms. Wowchuk: You know, the member opposite would like to sit around a committee table and talk about issues. Mr. Speaker, I would rather work with the industry, and I have worked with the industry, and my department is really with the industry, and I am working together with the federal government to look for some solutions for this industry.

But there is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that we have overproduction in this country, and our industry is facing serious challenges because of the high dollar and because of country-of-origin labelling, and we have to continue to work to find solutions here, and

my department and I am working with the industry to try to find some solutions.

Provincial Debt Net Debt Increase

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, when hundreds of hog producers gathered in Morris because of the hog crisis, there wasn't one NDP MLA or Cabinet minister. When lots of people gathered because of huge problems of Killarney Lake, there was not one NDP minister or MLA present. We've had the crisis at the Tembec plant lockout. We've had the flooding in the Interlake, the Greyhound threat of a strike, and nobody is acting on the part of the NDP.

And let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, the recent financial report shows an increase of more than \$899 million in net provincial debt in this last fiscal year.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Why on Earth has their government been so absent this summer, and what's the reason for the huge increase in the net provincial debt last year?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Acting Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite might be running all over the province and offering solutions or selling memberships to join the Liberal Party, which we hear, which we hear he is doing.

The member opposite might be doing those kind of things, but I can assure the member opposite—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: —that this government is working. We are working to ensure that Manitobans continue to have jobs. That's why we've made the kind of investments we have made in the stimulus package, Mr. Speaker. And it's because we are working for the people of Manitoba that the Conference Board of Canada is forecasting that Manitoba will have the second-highest GDP growth in Canada. So he may say what he wants, but this government is working for the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, if this government is working, which a lot of us doubt and have missed the apparent work and the apparent action, but I ask the Minister of Finance to explain this \$899-million increase in the provincial net debt reported last week. Just like we've asked the Minister of Finance to

explain and give us the details on the cost and benefit of the HST, the Minister of Finance has been short when it comes to details.

Manitobans at some point are gonna have to pay this debt back. When is the NDP actually gonna come clean with some information here? Why has the Minister of Finance buried some \$781 million of the increased provincial net debt in a line, a line item, other comprehensive loss? Can the Minister of Finance explain this?

Ms. Wowchuk: According to the Auditor General this budget is—that we have brought forward or that was just passed, I should say, is a balanced budget. And, Mr. Speaker, the last budget was and it does meet the GAAP financial requirements, but there are challenges and some of these issues are related to the financial market.

Members opposite know full well that there are—have been declines in the financial market and there are reports that have to be made on a certain day of what the situation is in with the financials, the financials of different departments, and that is what has to be reflected in the annual report and that is what has been reflected in the annual report.

Greyhound Canada Passenger Service Cuts

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are concerned and I believe they have a good reason to be concerned, based in terms of this government's performance with Air Canada and how they dropped the ball in terms of the flight attendants and the job losses that Manitoba incurred because of the incompetence of this government.

Now, we have, Mr. Speaker, yeah, you got a lawsuit, but that's months after the opposition demanded for it. Now we have Greyhound Canada and issues surrounding Greyhound Canada, especially given the importance of the inland report—inland port. One has to question what is the government—can the minister, whomever that minister is responsible for the inland port, can that minister tell this House what exactly is this government doing to protect the interests of Manitobans with regards to Greyhound Canada and the potential threat of loss of routes and the loss of Greyhound, period?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): First of all, Mr. Speaker, we're very, very concerned that Greyhound has

indicated its plans to cancel all passenger service in Manitoba as of October the 2nd.

We've met with Greyhound Canada. We're continuing to meet with Greyhound Canada. We've met with the union, Mr. Speaker, and we want to make sure that we try to resolve this particular situation amicably and as soon as possible, but there's many different busing companies that are looking at the opportunities in Manitoba as well.

It's far too early right now, Mr. Speaker, to state what will happen in the next few days or, indeed, weeks, but the government is certainly meeting and has the best interests of not only northern Manitobans but rural Manitobans and, indeed, even people from Winnipeg with regard to bus travel in this province.

Innovation in Citizenship Education Grants Increase

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, citizenship education is important for students across the province who would like to take action in their communities and schools as they prepare for a lifetime of participation in our democratic society.

Can the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson) please inform the House of the commitment the government has made this year to innovation and citizenship program?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question, and each year we provide grants of \$1,000. Previously there were 10 grants. This year there's 20 grants of \$1,000 to support teachers who are choosing to bring some innovative plans to the classroom and they involve students in the planning of the process, they involve the community in the process. And it's designed to promote human rights, civic responsibility, social justice issues, good governance and environmental stewardship as part of our citizenship agenda.

* (14:30)

And I know as a teacher myself that a little bit of money goes a long way and that our teachers will raise the bar for our students. Our students will meet the challenge and the teachers will also take those lessons forward and support active learning among social studies teachers through the SAG program as well. So, good news for social studies and citizenship education in Manitoba.

Tabor Home Project Status

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Fifty-eight years ago, Tabor Home was built as a light-level seniors housing complex. Today, it is a personal care home; the majority of the people are bedridden. Several times this minister has said that the facility needs to be replaced and expanded. On August the 17th, the minister initiated another study. Tabor Home has a file of independent studies. Tabor Home has been studied to death.

When the minister—when is the minister going to stop studying and actually do something concrete?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, call me an optimist, Mr. Speaker. I was certain that the member opposite was going to stand up and say, thanks a lot, government, for announcing that you're going forward with the Tabor Home construction. My mistake. We know that in times of economic challenge, governments make decisions. The former—or the Conservative government during the last recession put a freeze on capital construction for health care, the effects of which we're still feeling across the province. That's not the decision that we're making on this side of the House. We're going forward with construction with Tabor Home, and we are indeed bringing in a third party to do an analysis of the best possible way to increase beds, a renovation or a brand new build. We're going forward with beds in Tabor Home. You're welcome.

Mr. Dyck: I like this spirit of optimism. I talked to Jack Wiebe, a constituent of mine, this morning. His parents have lived in Winkler all their lives. They have now been moved 100 kilometres away from where they built a business and spent their lives. Their friends are a hundred kilometres away, yet the minister, in her press release, says, and I quote, "to make Manitoba the most age-friendly province."

What is so friendly about moving parents a hundred kilometres away from their family, friends and the lifetime home?

Ms. Oswald: This is a serious issue. There is an interim plan in place to take pressure off of the beds in Boundary Trails Health Centre. This is a serious concern. In addition to making the commitment to the people at Tabor Home and in the community, we're also working with the community to ensure that we have a variety of kinds of housing, supportive housing, and indeed augmenting home care as well. We know that governments are judged

on the decisions that they make. We're going to invest in health care, not as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said, move on to other priorities.

Mr. Dyck: Two previous health ministers have both indicated that the only option is a new and expanded facility. The RHA has agreed with this assessment. The community has secured an option on a property adjacent to a proposed new assisted living complex. We are ready.

When will the minister see the pressing needs and build a new, expanded Tabor Home?

Ms. Oswald: Well, again, and when I was in Morden-Winkler making this announcement with a large number of people that are very pleased with the announcement that is going forward, the member opposite, on an extended vacation, wasn't there to hear the many people that were very delighted with the announcement being made, with the increase in the number of beds in the community, and with the other services like supportive housing and increased home care that are going to support the people in the community. I talked to those same people, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell them that they know that in difficult economic times, this is the government that will not freeze capital health spending.

Mr. Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. Norbert Farmers' Market

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to the House today about the St. Norbert Farmers' Market or La Marche St. Norbert which was recently named one of the top 10 farmers markets in Canada by *Canadian Geographic*.

The St. Norbert market was started in 1988. Twenty-one years later, it is known as Manitoba's largest and best-known outdoor market. Every Saturday morning from June to October, farmers bring their produce to the tables of the market where they are joined by vendors selling everything from preserves to crafts, furniture, jewellery and fresh flowers.

The market is now organized as a non-profit co-operative with 130 full-time vendors and as many as 50 casual vendors. The market's motto is "Where we make it, bake it and grow it for you," a reminder of the importance of eating and purchasing local

produce. Locally grown food is fresh, healthy and builds community by reconnecting the producers with the consumers while supporting farm families and contributing to a cleaner environment.

The market also promotes urban agriculture on the outskirts of Winnipeg and raises awareness of organic farming. What's more, each Saturday the market donates fresh fruits, vegetables, meats and baked goods to Winnipeg Harvest. Last summer, the farmers at La Marche St. Norbert Farmers' Market donated 10,083 pounds of food.

Mr. Speaker, La Marche St. Norbert Farmers' Market is not only a fun way to spend a Saturday morning, it's also about supporting local producers and crafts people with made-in-Manitoba products. I would encourage all members to take advantage of this year's extended schedule running until Halloween and also the new exciting Farmers' Feast event that will be taking place on Wednesday, September 23, in the evening.

The St. Norbert Farmers' Market has many treasures to offer and I encourage all members to take the trip to beautiful St. Norbert.

National Trucking Week

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, last week was National Trucking Week in Canada, and truckers across the country were encouraged to celebrate the occasion.

Here in Manitoba the members of the trucking association hosted a barbecue for truckers and their staff where they were encouraged to ask questions or raise any concerns that they may have regarding their industry. The trucking association also co-ordinated a convoy of 48 trucks around the Perimeter Highway whose drivers raised nearly \$15,000 as their part of the Canadian convoy to support Special Olympic athletes, nine of whom got to ride in the 18 wheelers.

The trucking industry continues to play a vital role in the development of Canada and particularly of Manitoba. There are approximately 425 trucking companies with headquarters in the province, five of which are in the top 50 carriers in Canada. Ninety-five percent of goods that are moved within Manitoba depend on trucking for transportation, and trucking accounts for 50 percent of all transportation-related jobs in Manitoba. The trucking industry has positively contributed to Manitoba's economic base as for-hire trucking directly and indirectly contributes 1.47 billion to Manitoba's gross domestic

product. In 2006 the Manitoba trucking industry produced 710 million in labour income, and it directly and indirectly employs approximately 4.6 percent of Manitoba's labour force.

It's important for drivers, including professional truck drivers and the general public to be aware of the safety issues involved in driving a large truck. This was stressed during National Trucking Week to drivers. But the public should also be reminded that trucks require a longer distance for stopping than a car and they also have larger blind spots. Through safe and experienced driving, Dennis Barkman won the 2009 Manitoba Driver of the Year Award. The award is presently annual—presented annually to the driver who is committed to safety, the trucking industry, outstanding acts and customer service. Congratulations, Dennis.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that members of this House will join me in applauding the many men and women of this province who are responsible for making Manitoba's trucking industry the success that it is today. As the shadow Cabinet member of the Manitoba government responsible for transportation, I wish to thank all persons involved in the trucking industry for their hard work and dedication. Thank you.

Southdale Community Centre Expansion

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to tell the House about an exciting new project to take place in my community.

During the 2007 election campaign the Premier (Mr. Doer) and I made a commitment to expand the Southdale Community Centre as part of a total commitment of \$60 million towards funding recreational projects across Canada.

On June 12, I was excited to announce, along with the Premier, a \$2-million commitment by the provincial government towards the first phase of Southdale Community Centre's expansion. This announcement is part of our government's commitment to foster economic growth in our province by investing in our infrastructure. This year alone, we are investing \$1.6 billion in infrastructure to stimulate the economy. This expansion will mean a new hockey rink, a recreational skating rink and new change rooms along with other upgrades to the community centre. In a growing community so dedicated to sports and fitness, these new upgrades are both needed and welcomed. The expansion

project is scheduled to be completed by the spring of 2011.

The Southdale Community Centre is an integral part of our neighbourhood, providing a home for hockey, ringette, basketball, volleyball, soccer, softball, baseball and many other community programs. Our community is also looking forward to hosting many more games and tournaments once the expansion is complete, benefiting young people from all over the city.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work and advocacy of the Southdale Community Centre's board and volunteers. Without them, none of this would have been possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:40)

Gladstone District Community Centre

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to announce that after 11 long years of planning and development, Gladstone has finally opened a brand-new community centre. Although the Gladstone Community Centre has already been open for the past few months, its official opening-day celebrations took place on August 28. Residents of the community were invited to come out in the evening and presentations and entertainment to celebrate the community centre.

The people of Gladstone recognize the importance that a community centre plays in a small community, as it is a place for people to come together to visit with their friends and neighbours. It was the people of Gladstone who made this community centre a reality. Local service clubs in the area recognized the importance of developing a new community centre in the region and took it upon themselves to donate significant funding to the project.

Residents of Gladstone have anticipated the opening of the centre for a long time and were pleased to accept cheques from local businesses and organizations to go toward the community centre. Following the cheque presentations, I was pleased to join other dignitaries from the community for the official ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The Gladstone Community Centre features many characteristics that meet the needs of the community. One of the many attractions in this new facility is a meeting room that can be divided into smaller events or can remain as one large room for larger functions.

The building is also environmentally friendly as it uses geothermal energy as a power source.

Even though the centre has recently opened, the town is making plans to improve the facility even more. The community centre was designed to accommodate people with mobility issues, and as a way to expand on this concept, the town would like to create a parking lot that would be accessible for people who require a walker or wheelchair.

To the end of the evening, Doc Walker was on hand to perform a number of their hit songs. The concert was intended to show youth from the community that they—there are activities in Gladstone for them to attend and encourage them to stay in the community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Town of Gladstone on the completion of their new community centre. I hope everyone in Gladstone and the guests to the area have the opportunity to visit the community centre, as I'm sure that it will be a place of gathering for many years to come. Thank you.

North End Stella Community Ministry

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, 2009 marks the 100th anniversary of the North End Stella Community Ministry. Actually, the history and activities of the ministry go back even further, before the influx of European immigration that swelled Winnipeg's population five-fold around the turn of the last century.

In 1889, Miss Dollie McGuire started Sunday school classes for immigrant children out of McDougall Methodist Church. A House of Prayer for All People was begun just north of the CPR station at Higgins and Main and became known as the All People's Mission. Ten years later, All People's moved into the former Maple Street Congregational Church, at which time the majority of immigrants arriving in Winnipeg were from eastern Europe, particularly from what is now Poland and Ukraine.

It was in 1909, under the direction and guidance of Reverend J.S. Woodsworth, that the mission which became known as Stella Mission began offering worship and humanitarian programs. During his tenure, Woodsworth campaigned for compulsory education, juvenile courts and the construction of playgrounds as well as other initiatives supporting social welfare. In 1925, All People's Mission

officially became a part of the United Church of Canada.

As the needs of the community have changed, so has the ministry's focus. For example, once immigration decreased, the ministry turned its attention to affordable recreation programs and became popular for its basketball teams and swimming pool activities. In the 1970s, it shifted from a charity model to one of community development as a way of supporting grassroots empowerment. The most notable example is the Urban Circle Training Program now located on Selkirk Avenue which began at North End Stella Community Ministry in the early 1990s.

Today this ministry is among several agencies within our city trying to address issues of poverty, racism, colonization and the legacy of residential schools. It promotes "Two Paths One Journey" a path of spirituality that equally upholds Aboriginal and Christian practices. Aboriginal traditions are honoured, respected and taught by the elders who are an integral part of this ministry.

I would like to congratulate the North End Stella Community Ministry on its 100 years of dedicated efforts to alleviate economic hardship and provide spiritual inspiration and social support.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of urgent public importance.

I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that under rule 36(1) the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the widely expected second wave of H1N1 flu this fall and the fact that we may see a dramatic increase in H1N1 cases before the vaccine is available in November.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable member for River Heights, I believe I should remind all members that under rule 36(2), the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other parties in the House is allowed not more than 10 minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

As stated in *Beauchesne's* citation 390, urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and

whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interests will not suffer.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I want to make the case that this is a matter which is of urgent public importance and should be debated now.

First of all, I think everyone in Manitoba, or virtually everyone, is aware of the concern of a second wave of H1N1 flu hitting this fall and, of course, when H1N1 flu came earlier this year in May and June, that there were stresses on our intensive care units because there were quite a number of people who got very sick as a result of the H1N1 flu, and the concern is that this wave of the H1N1 flu could be so severe as to have more cases, to have more people who require intensive care unit care and that we clearly need to be ready for this wave or second wave which we're expecting of H1N1 flu.

Now, the government preparations appear to be largely predicated on the estimate that the H1N1 flu second wave will occur later, November, December, January in the flu season and yet, right now there are some centres in the United States who are seeing quite a sharp increase in the number of H1N1 flu cases and, indeed, in some instances a number of the severe type, the adult respiratory distress syndrome type where people have to be on respirators or ventilators. So this, now, is looking as if it is possible that the wave of H1N1 flu may be primarily in September and October, early November before the vaccinations are ready and able to be distributed. And so it needs, clearly, a reassessment and some discussion from input from various members of the Legislature, some updating from the Minister of Health in terms of the situation that we're in should the H1N1 flu hit and peak in the next few weeks before the November expected date when vaccinations would be available.

There are a number of items that I think it's important to note. The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has announced some major investments in ICU capacity, and we certainly welcome that, but it raises a question because this has—it's been very recently announced, will this increased ICU capacity and the investments have been carried through so that the province will be ready should the severe—and the cases of H1N1 flu peak in September, October or early November before the vaccination is there? And have these investments, what is the status of these investments

at the moment, and are we, in fact, ready with the increased ICU capacity which the minister has announced recently and was getting ready for a November, December, January expected increase of H1N1 flu?

* (14:50)

There are some concerns related specifically to schools and, of course, schools appear to be very important in spreading this virus. The return to schools appears to be associated with increased virus activity in people in the United States. And, of course, it's been long known that schools are a place where there tends to be a lot of flu and that the spread among children can then spread out from the school to members of families and the community, and so that this is important to know what's happening in the schools.

Now, I learned this morning that one school division, which is in two different RHAs, has been given different instructions from each of the RHAs about what to do in terms of preparing for the H1N1 flu. So, clearly, there's not a very co-ordinated approach province-wide in terms of dealing with flu, with the H1N1 flu in schools, and we'd like some clarification from the minister in terms of whether she's got a patchwork quilt approach or whether, in fact, she really is on top of this issue.

The situation in terms of schools related, in fact, in part to the different approach to hand sanitizers, and it's my understanding that some schools and some RHAs are advising that each classroom have hand sanitizers, and that these be used in the classroom to make sure that all children have used the hand sanitizers on a frequent basis. Clearly, if this is to be the practice all over Manitoba, then the number of hand sanitizers that the minister indicated she had on hand, which I think was something like 29,000, is unlikely to be sufficient. We compare that with the number of masks, which, I think, was in the 1-to-2-million range or more, and the number of hand sanitizers is clearly much lower.

So the question is: What is the approach in terms of schools and hand sanitizers and other things? Do we have a uniform approach? Do we have enough hand sanitizers? If we're going to have them available in every classroom, what is the policy going to be?

Next, the concern is about the policy and the indications in terms of closing schools. Now, we know that the minister and the public chief medic—

public medical officer of health for Manitoba and, indeed, the Chief Public Health Officer for Canada have said that they really don't want to close schools. And yet closing schools requires preparation, not only from the school. It requires preparation from parents, from people in the community, all sorts of changes because you have children who were in school or who now are not in school, and what alternative plans—is there an approach to home schooling as apparently has been far advanced in some places in the United States, should schools have to close? What's going to be the approach and the policy?

So I believe that there are sufficient issues raised because of the indications that the H1N1 flu wave, second wave, may occur earlier rather than later that require this urgent debate and discussion and clarification now, Mr. Speaker, and that is why I have moved this motion. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The honourable—order.

The honourable Minister of Family Services and Housing, to speak to this, the urgency?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of this side of the House, I'm speaking to the MUPI.

Mr. Speaker: The urgency of—

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of this side of the House, in light of the circumstances and the need for both expressions and action in a co-operative spirit, we're prepared to see the MUPI proceed.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, in accordance with an agreement, I know that the member from St. Johns didn't mention it, but there's an agreement between the House leaders, among all House leaders, that the MUPI will proceed, based on having two speakers from the Progressive Conservative side, two speakers from the NDP and, of course, both speakers from the Liberal caucus. Three; two each.

An Honourable Member: Total it.

An Honourable Member: Six.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, for clarification for the House.

Mr. Hawranik: Yes, just for clarification. There will be two members of the Progressive Conservative caucus speaking to this MUPI, two members from

the New Democratic Party caucus speaking to this MUPI and the member from Inkster.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on whether the motion proposed by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) should be debated today. The notice required by rule 36(1) was provided.

Under our rules and practices, the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunity to raise the matter. I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward; however, I was not persuaded that the ordinary business of the House should be set aside to deal with this issue today.

Although this is an issue that some members may have a concern about, I do not believe that the public interest will be harmed if the business of the House is not set aside to debate the motion today. Additionally, I would like to note that other avenues exist for members to raise this issue, including question period, members' statements and grievances. Therefore, with the greatest of respect, I must rule that this matter does not meet the criteria set by our rules and precedents, and I rule the motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

However, despite the procedural shortcomings, there does appear to be a willingness to debate the issue. I shall then put the question to the House: Shall the debate proceed? *[Agreed]*

The debate lasts for two hours and, as a reminder to members, the speaking time limit is 10 minutes, and there is no vote on a matter of urgent public importance.

There has been a proposal for agreement that there would be two speakers from the official opposition, two speakers from the government side and one speaker—and one independent speaker.

Is that the will of the House? Is that the agreement? *[interjection]* There is agreement? Okay there is agreement. We'll let—could we now have a speaker? Nobody would like to speak? We have no speakers?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to stand in the House today to speak about our preparedness for pandemic H1N1 and to inform members of the House and,

indeed, members of the public about work that has been done over several years, the work that has been done since H1-pandemic H1N1 appeared in the spring and the work that will continue to occur going forward.

* (15:00)

I can inform the House, of course, that Manitoba has a comprehensive plan for the so-called second wave of pandemic H1N1 that allows for flexibility and for rapid response. Our announcement last week of almost \$50 million includes \$21.8 million to purchase and administer the H1N1 vaccine.

We know that we had to work with the federal government, indeed, intense negotiations with the federal government in cost-sharing the vaccine. The \$21.8 million will be the share that—of which we are certain, to date, for the purchase and administration of the H1N1 vaccine.

I can also inform the House that we're investing \$16.8 million to purchase additional masks, gloves, gowns and other protective equipment for our front-line providers. All Manitobans know that during a health-care emergency such as this, that protecting those people that come to work every day is one of the single most important things that we can do. There has been much discussion across the nation and with the Public Health Agency of Canada about appropriate protection for front-line workers, the most appropriate to wear a mask called an N95 and the most appropriate time to be wearing a standard surgical mask, and these guidelines have been developed through the Public Health Agency of Canada. Manitoba Health and Healthy Living has worked with them to do the best possible work that we can in communicating with our front-line workers to ensure that they are as protected as they can be in the fall as we approach a potential second wave.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Madam Deputy Speaker, \$5.1 million was announced for an increase in our intensive care and surgical capacity here in the province of Manitoba. As many Manitobans are aware, Manitoba experienced a very significant number of severely ill patients in our intensive care units during the first wave in the spring. In fact, a very important conference was held in Winnipeg in the last couple of weeks where experts on ICU and on pandemic came together to discuss real life cases and real world situations dealing specifically with pandemic

H1N1. It was out of that conference that many important teachings came and certainly a uniform message to all jurisdictions was that work had to be done to expand for ICU capacity, and that's exactly what we're doing here in Manitoba; not only in terms of equipment that is required, but in terms of an even more precious resource, and that is health human resources. There is a lot of work being done to co-ordinate our front-line staff to ensure that we have contingency plans; to ensure that we're working with our health-care unions to prepare for such things as invoking article 10 as we did in the spring; to create ease in moving these health-care professionals from area to area.

It should also be said, Madam Deputy Speaker, that during the spring segment of our dealing with pandemic H1N1 that our front-line providers and their unions were extraordinary in their co-operation, in their vision and in their willingness to work and to offer advice to regional health authorities and to Manitoba Health and Healthy Living, and we really respect that and are grateful for that, and we're going to continue to take advice from them.

We also announced \$3.7 million for the purchase of additional antivirals. That's on top of the stockpile that we already have, Madam Deputy Speaker, to augment laboratory testing equipment and to provide for additional public health staff.

We're working in partnership with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to provide a medicine kit for all First Nations community households. This is an initiative that is being led by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. We are but a partner in this initiative. There has been admittedly some discussion and controversy about whether or not these kits are, are needed in homes in remote communities. Our Chief Provincial Public Health Officer is supportive of this initiative and believes the kits themselves, accompanied by accessible information and education for people, will be a very good step in helping people prepare for what is to come in the fall.

We will continue, of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, to take the advice from medical doctors, from our public health experts on all matters concerning pandemic H1N1, whether it is the prioritization of groups for the vaccination program or whether it is on the subject of school closure. We know that the Public Health Agency of Canada, in addition to Dr. Joel Kettner, our Chief Provincial

Public Health Officer, are not recommending school closures at this time.

But, in both cases, it has been said that should the dynamic change, should the situation and information concerning pandemic H1N1 change, then so, too, will our plan. This is the very essence of this pandemic plan, is that it must be rapid in its response, but it must be flexible to deal with the particular issues that surround this particular illness.

And what I mean by that, of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, is if we were to write one plan, a one-size-fits-all plan, that stated, for example, here is who is going to be typically vaccinated when it comes to influenza, and we followed what the doctors inform us are the basic patterns for influenza, we may, in fact, be offering the vaccine to groups for whom H1N1 has not appeared to be of the greatest concern. And that is why it's important to have a plan that's based on real information about a real illness.

Again, on the subject of school closures, I can tell the member opposite know that Dr. David Butler-Jones and Dr. Joel Kettner are united in their stance that schools are not being recommended to close at this time for a number of reasons, not the least of which, of course, is the challenge that is presented when schoolchildren are not present in school. Where are they? Would they be held in quarantine in their bedrooms at home? Or would they be congregating with one another to play, or to go to the mall together, or to have sleepovers because there's no school, which is, according to health experts, and, I would argue, common sense, not exactly helpful if we're trying to contain an illness.

So we're going to take advice from our doctors on this subject, on the subject of vaccine, on the subject of personal protective equipment, on the subject of the timely administration of antivirals, on the subject of providing materials for remote northern communities and, indeed, on all subjects related to the medical issues of pandemic H1N1.

It has been said by doctors that they believe that Manitoba to be among the best prepared going into the fall session. This is good news, but it is not a reason to stop with our planning. We have to continue to listen to our partners, whether they are front-line workers, parents that may be alarmed, or patients themselves. We have to work together and make sure everyone not only knows the plan, but has comfort with the plan. And I'm confident that, as we unite and work together, we are going to be able to

face the challenges of pandemic H1N1 this fall in ways that Manitoba can feel very proud. Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I do stand today in support of this debate as an urgent public matter. And I do think it's important that some of this be put into context, and we have some historical perspective around what's happened over the last few years.

In December 2007, the WRHA accreditation report said that the WRHA was not prepared for a pandemic. It also said, at that time, that the Manitoba government did not have a completed plan, which could have a very negative effect on people in Manitoba should a pandemic occur. That raised an extreme amount of concern for us when we read that in the accreditation report, and we, at the time, started to press this government to table a plan. We looked at what other provinces were doing, and we were actually startled to see the lack of information that was in the public realm here in Manitoba. When we looked particularly at what Ontario had made public, it became obvious that they were so far ahead of what was happening around this than Manitoba was. When we looked at B.C., Alberta, it was the same thing.

* (15:10)

And we should take note that Ontario certainly learned its lessons the hard way with SARS. The province was brought to its knees at the time when SARS hit, and they learned a lot of lessons and they are much more public about what they put out there, and they're not as secretive as this government has shown a tendency to be. So we became very, very concerned that this government was not putting forward, you know, a plan that Manitobans could see what they were doing, to see how well prepared they were and that still has not really come forward in Manitoba.

There have been parts of plans certainly shared with the public by this government, but compared to what we see in other provinces, ours looks quite sparse, at least that which is shared publicly. You know, they're using the excuse, well, it changes all the time. Well, I mean, the other provinces can use that same argument. That didn't keep them from putting forward a template and, you know, an idea for what, you know, the public could expect, but I think because this government is so short of any sense of accountability and transparency in terms of how they want to do business, it think they felt it was

in their own best interests, so that they couldn't be judged on when they made mistakes or stumbled, and so I think they chose to keep a lot more things secret.

So this minister, despite being asked on numerous occasions to share a plan, has been very secretive about it. She's also been very secretive about the age, gender and region when somebody has died and, again, that's very different from other provinces. Other provinces have been very forthcoming with that. It does tend to, you know, make regions in the province aware of where there has been a death. I think it makes people—I think, because, you know, ignorance can lead to fear. I think what information will do is prepare people to better understand this and better prepare for it. Instead, what we've seen from this government is certainly a lot of secretive behaviour around pandemic and there really is no basis for saying that it's held back because of FIPPA rules or privacy rules because nobody was asking for the name of anybody. It was just age, gender and region, and it would allow people then to understand more about the disease itself. So, again, there's a lot of secretiveness about here and, you know, again, I go back to Ontario. They're not nearly as secretive as Manitoba.

In the most recent Manitoba Nurses' Union report in their newsletter that came out, they were actually very critical of this government's handling of the first wave of a pandemic. Certainly around the area of not having nurses fitted for masks and having those special masks available to nurses raised huge concerns for them, and I think it should raise huge concerns for a lot of people, especially since the minister, in a January letter to me and on numerous occasions since then, has unequivocally said this government is more than ready to deal with pandemic. Well, when the rubber hit the road in the spring, we found that nurses who were the front lines, that were the—probably some of the first people to have to face patients with H1N1, these nurses did not have protective masks.

Also, the Manitoba Nurses' Union pointed out that there was poor communication that was occurring around this same time, and that certainly reinforces what we have been saying all along, too, that this government certainly needs to do more work in that area. And if the minister, as she said, was so prepared for a pandemic, why weren't nurses already pre-fit for masks? Why didn't they have the masks accessible to them? For us to be told, well, the masks were there, but the nurses didn't know how to access

them is quite a lame excuse because you have to be fitted for these masks. This doesn't just happen where a nurse goes into a room and grabs a mask. You have to be pre-fitted for them and that had not happened.

So, through all of these things, what has become more and more apparent is our concern that we've got some problems. There is an extreme shortage of ICU nurses in Manitoba. There is also a worse shortage of ER nurses in Manitoba, and, if this system is going to collapse with a pandemic, this is where it's going to happen. And on numerous occasions, we have warned this government: Train more ER nurses. Train more ICU nurses. You are not going to be able to manage patients safely in the future with the nursing shortage that we have seen in the last number of years. And this shortage in our ERs has grown. It's worse than it's been in years. With the ICU nursing shortage, we are still seeing, you know, it's almost 70 nurses short, I believe, or somewhere around 64 nurses short in our ICUs in Winnipeg. You cannot provide safe care. You cannot expect nurses to be able to give of themselves, as much as they're going to be expected to, because they're going to be exhausted, because they're going to be tapped into.

The MNU, in their newsletter, pointed it out. They said, at the time, that there weren't enough ICU nurses in the spring. And we wonder where are they going to get them now? These nurses gave above and beyond the call in the spring and there are no—there's no magical place for the government now to find ICU nurses. For years we've said, train more. The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) actually promised to train more, and she's failed in that because this shortage is not correcting itself, in fact, in some instances, it's getting worse. And what we're going to see is patient safety being compromised because this minister didn't heed the warnings when they were first raised years ago. Even the ICU doctors are also saying that.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are going to have some problems in our ICUs, and what we have concern about is the kind of information that this Minister of Health is going to put forward. We have lost faith in, in her ability to bring forward information because she has, as we saw in the case of Brian Sinclair, misled the public with false information and then went further to cover up the truth. That has raised some very, very serious concerns for us in terms of how far is she willing to go to bury more information in a pandemic? And I think she really has lost her ability to lead Manitoba

Health and to be the person that can stand up in front of the public and, and properly bring forward ideas and information, because her track record also has shown how far she'll go to avoid the truth. She went AWOL at the time Brian Sinclair died, and she was not even prepared to face the media and went in hiding for a period of time. And then, when she came out, she came out of hiding, she misled the public about his death, she hid the truth and she covered up information.

How, Madam Deputy Speaker, can we have any faith in a Minister of Health when she does that? And we are going to be looking at probably one of the most serious things to happen in health care, would be a pandemic, if it gets as bad as some are saying it might. So there's no faith in this minister, and I think Manitoba's going to be in for a rough ride. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to be able to express a number of thoughts in regards to this emergency debate, an emergency debate that, right off hand, I acknowledge and express appreciation in terms of the government recognizing the value of having this debate today. And I say that because, you know, I do believe that a great number of Manitobans are really concerned in terms of the way in which this whole file has been handled to date. I believe that there's a lot of concern on Manitobans' part.

And, you know, the member from Charleswood raises a valid point, because all of us here, and many Manitobans will recall, the bungling affair of what happened with Mr. Sinclair, and what was, in fact, the worst emergency situation or incident that our province has ever experienced. And what made the matter worse, as it has been pointed out, is the way in which the minister responded, even though she had all that information at her hands, in her hands, Madam Deputy Speaker.

* (15:20)

So I think that we, we should be concerned. And that's why by having the emergency debate, hopefully, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) will recognize the concerns that Manitobans have and, in particular, through what members of the opposition are saying and trying to bring to the attention of the government, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I know, I've had the opportunity to be able to discuss, discuss the issue. I've also been able to, to follow some of the newscasts in regards to H1N1 and

I believe, like most Manitobans, that their, their knowledge of this particular epidemic or the potential is, is fairly significant and what they're looking for is leadership from the government. They want to feel confident that the government of the day is, in fact, aware of the potential and more importantly that they actually have a plan, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And this is where I would really challenge the Minister of Health. You know the Leader of the Liberal Party brought up a point in which I didn't hear the Minister of Health respond to but I believe the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) will be speaking today, Madam Deputy Chair, and I really hope that she will address the issue that the Leader of the Liberal Party brought up. I thought it was an excellent example.

In Winnipeg or in Manitoba we actually have a school division that bridges a couple of the different regional health authorities in the province of Manitoba. That school division is being given one direction from one regional health-care authority and another direction from another regional health-care authority. So it's the same school division that's being consulted and given instructions from two separate health-care authorities and those two health-care authorities are not giving the same message.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's one thing that we're aware of and I suspect that if you start to really investigate it and you start looking into it that you're gonna find that there is a great deal of inconsistency in the province of Manitoba and I'm gonna suggest to you that the person responsible to ensure that there is constituency throughout the province is, indeed, the Minister of Health.

You know, I understand that's the reason why she said that she wasn't gonna run for the leadership of the New Democratic Party because she didn't want to take any of her focus off the H1N1, and if that is, in fact, the case, then why do we hear about examples such that the Leader of the Liberal Party has brought to our attention today, Madam Deputy Speaker?

We all know that the Minister of Health has no shortage of health-care workers, professionals, in particular bureaucracy, Madam Deputy Speaker, this government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars into. They have the resources to be able to put into place a plan that will alleviate the concerns that Manitobans have in regards to the threat of H1N1

and in the future as we go into the months, the months ahead.

We hope and trust that ultimately it will not be as severe as many think that it, that it could be or that it has the potential to be. No one wants this virus to cause the potential harm that it could harm but we need to do a lot more than just hope and trust and pray. We have a responsibility ourselves to play the roles that we've been assigned inside this Legislature and I want to take this opportunity to try to emphasize to the two ministers responsible for Health and well-being inside this Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that is that they have the leading role to play in protecting and coming up with the plan to deal with an H1N1 virus that could have severe impact, potential, in our province.

And to that end I think that they have to be able to share that plan with Manitobans, provide the detailed information that's necessary. To what degree has this government met with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and the different school boards that are out there? To what degree have they ensured that there's communication links between our health-care regional authorities, Madam Deputy Speaker? You know, the hundreds of millions of dollars that we spend in terms of the creation and the ongoing operational costs of those regional health-care authorities.

To what degree are we ensuring that there's a communication in there so that they're sending a consistent message so, whether you live in Virden, Manitoba, Thompson or in the city of Winnipeg, that we're hearing the same message as to terms of what it is that Manitobans should be doing, so that the school divisions are, in fact, being informed on a consistent basis as to what would be the best practices, Madam Deputy Speaker?

I am not convinced. I really enjoy—I'm not convinced today that the government has met the expectations, not only that we, in opposition, have of the government, but also the public. Yes, you're putting millions of dollars into it and I acknowledge that you're putting millions of dollars into it, but I've got news for you. Every government is putting millions of dollars into it across Canada. It doesn't take a genius to throw money at issues. You know, the money is there. We expect you to spend that money in such a way in which you're going to be able to demonstrate that you have a plan that is going to be effective at addressing the concerns that Manitobans have.

It wasn't that long ago in which we were having problems in the ICU centres in our hospitals, and the fear factor that was there in terms of Manitobans having that this government wasn't doing enough to protect the interests of our ICU centres throughout the province of Manitoba, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Yes, I'm glad we're spending millions of dollars on the masks and it looks like we, we might have been able to, to overcome that particular issue. Yes, I'm pleased that we're spending the money on the, on the vaccine, which I understand is going to be coming out in, in November, but what about—what about for those individuals that contract the virus, and the Tamiflu vaccine or vaccine prescription that would be necessary in order to fight the virus, Madam Deputy Speaker? To what degree is the government taking the necessary action in regards to that? To what degree is the government talking with our municipalities?

You know, today I heard on CJOB, they were talking about our police force. Well, there is very important individuals that are going to be handling this, this infection more than the average person that are—and I'm talking about emergency services health-care professionals, and I appreciate the fact that the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) did make some reference to that. But it goes beyond our health-care professions, whether it's our firefighters to our police force to the paramedics, there's a great deal of effort that needs to be put into this, and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm not convinced to date that the government is, indeed, on top of it all, and it's, it's a little bit surprising. It's surprising because I have a good idea in terms of the hundreds of millions of dollars of bureaucracy that the government has in those pools or resources that they could be pulling around and developing a plan.

Most important, Madam Deputy Speaker, is we gotta ensure communication.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The member's time is up.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Last spring our world was hit with H1N1. It took many people by surprise. There was shock that we heard across, across the world, but, in Manitoba, we were fortunate that we had a pandemic plan. We also were fortunate that we had a strong Health Minister who stood up and addressed the issues head on. She worked with the Department of Health, with other leaders across the province of Manitoba, as well as nationally led a fight to have the federal

government come to the table and work with us as we prepared for this.

I've sat and listened to the rhetoric across the way, and I have to reflect on what I heard as I was travelling this summer. Often people talked about the, the presence of our Health Minister on the national media and how she spoke to all of us across Canada with a calm, confident approach which was assuring, but also talked about the need to be prepared and work together, and that's a message that she has continued to leave the department with as we've come together to prepare for this.

* (15:30)

The members across allege that there is no plan. Well, there is a plan, and a strong plan at that, a plan that talks about investments of human health resources, ensuring that the front-line staff have the equipment that they need, ensuring that Manitobans when they need the service that it is available.

I think that people around the world looked at Manitoba as this H1N1 hit us in ways that it hit no other jurisdiction, and our health-care professionals stepped to the plate and provided the necessary services and supports to the individuals afflicted with H1N1, but also for their families while assuring that Manitobans got the message, got the message that, yes, this is an issue, but we are prepared. We will act as we see necessary and provide the services required to support people.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

There was an announcement last week of almost \$50 million where we talked about purchasing and administering the H1N1 vaccine. We talked about \$16.8-million investment for masks and gloves and gowns and other protective equipment for health-care providers, and also because of the Manitoba experience, we know that there needs to be further investment as far as increased intensive care and surgical capacity. That's within the human health resource as well as for the equipment and ensuring that we have spent—and we're planning to make an investment of 3.7 million for antivirals, testing equipment, ensuring that we have what is necessary.

We have found throughout the province, and I have heard physicians themselves speak about how H1N1 is an issue for us in this province, but how it has brought health-care professionals together. In no other way there are individuals that are planning and strategizing, reviewing the protocols and ensuring

that they have the information that they need as professionals to pass it on to their patients.

These actions are important, and it has led to other people looking at us and referring to say that we are in a good place that we have a strong plan, but you do not see this government nor this minister sitting back. We continue to do the due diligence as far as getting the information out to individuals and ensuring that our system is ready for this, for the H1N1.

Right now we're not certain of what the fall will bring, but I am confident that with the investments that we've made that we are prepared.

But we have to talk about that balance of ensuring that Manitobans know that we're prepared, but that we also do not elicit a panic factor for Manitobans, and I've been told that the best vaccine for panic is education and information, so sending that information out to the schools, the day cares, to the workplaces, to the municipalities, to the First Nations communities, to the Métis communities and ensuring the facts are there.

Some of the solutions include hand washing, coughing into your elbow, but one of the most important defences against H1N1 is having a healthy body, and this is a government who has made millions of dollars investment into healthy living. We know that individuals that have a healthy lifestyle, good nutrition, are physically active, that they are able to fend off H1N1, in some cases very successfully.

So it is important that, as we prepare for the onset, that we continue to express the interests and the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and we will continue to do that as we send out the messages about the plan and about the strategy. We will continue to rely on the experts to lead this process as we develop our own strategy, and as we heard the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) speak so eloquently about, it's important that we have a rapid but flexible response, that we're able to adapt our responses to the demands and the needs while balancing that important message of prevention and confidence to Manitobans that we are prepared.

We have to be extremely grateful for the staff within the Department of Health and Healthy Living, who have worked together so well to ensure that this plan is developed and is disseminated across the province, and all of the front-line workers to

continue to provide quality health care to Manitobans.

So, as we move forward, I am confident that with the leadership of the Minister of Health as well as the experts that will guide us and inform us in making decisions, that we will be prepared, that we will be able to provide the necessary services for Manitobans, that we've made the necessary investments and that we will continue to work with all of our partners in a co-operative and collaborative way, to ensure that the information is disseminated and gets into the hands of the individuals that are needing of it, and that we will be as prepared as we can be for H1N1, and we will work together as we face this. Thank you.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to put a few brief comments on the record with respect to this matter of urgent public importance introduced today by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). We recognize on this side of the House that it's an important issue to debate, an important issue to bring to the attention, I think, of all Manitobans and, in fact, the minister, in terms of possible ideas for plans that may—that should come forward by the Province to ensure that our residents in Manitoba are protected from this H1N1 virus.

The government also recognized the value of having a debate because they know that they are not ready, Mr. Speaker. I think that it's important to note that sometimes in a MUPI, opposition members and independent members and government members debate a particular issue and sometimes the minister is listening and sometimes you do get a reaction from government favourable, hopefully, toward being prepared for a particular issue, in this case the H1N1 virus.

The issue totally is—with respect to this MUPI is with respect to the trust and confidence that we have in this House and Manitobans have in the minister and in the government to deal with an outbreak that may happen within Manitoba, and the real issue is trust and confidence in the government and the minister and I, there are many examples of where the trust and confidence of the ministers, of various ministers, and this government, has been breached. The most obvious in the case of the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), of course, is the case of Brian Sinclair where this government misled the public, Mr. Speaker, gave false information on the record, false information to the media and then proceeded to

cover up what really happened in that particular case. So it's a question of trust and confidence in this government and trust and confidence in the minister, and that's why we support debate on this matter of urgent public importance.

Our critic has been asking about preparedness ever since the H1N1 outbreak, Mr. Speaker, ever since—right from the beginning. We were told time and time again in this House, by this government, and by this minister, that we're ready for an outbreak. Yet, at the WRHA accreditation report, which was released shortly afterwards, indicated otherwise. It indicated that there was no adequate plan for this province, and other provinces were ready, but we were not. And that's what motivated our critic asking questions, of course, to the Minister of Health in this Chamber to ensure that Manitobans are protected from an H1N1 outbreak.

* (15:40)

There's a, also a question about the completeness and accurateness of the information that was provided us, Mr. Speaker, and the member from Charleswood indicated that we've been asking, at various times within this Chamber, and outside this Chamber, about information about those who are infected within the province. We wanted information such as the age of the individual, the gender and the region in Manitoba in which they resided. And we requested that information, but it was refused. There is no adequate reason to refuse information, general information like that, because that kind of information can be used to, to, for example, contain a particular outbreak. It could be used to determine whether or not vaccines should be given to a particular age group or, or a particular, or a gender, particular gender. It's important information, I think, for opposition to know, so that we can properly treat victims of H1N1 and, possibly, even preventing it from happening. So that kind of information, we didn't ask for names of individuals, we just asked for very general information and it was refused. No reason why. No valid reason why, but it was refused.

There's been a shortage of doctors and nurses, as the member from Charleswood indicated, in the province, particularly in intensive care units across the province. And that's a real concern for us in this Chamber, as well as all Manitobans, because the first place that a victim who's infected with the H1N1 virus will go to is, of course, the intensive care unit. So we need to ensure that intensive care units are adequately staffed to provide for treatment of H1N1.

There's no real plan, Mr. Speaker. We haven't seen a plan. We, we don't know what's going to happen if hospital beds are filled with H1N1 patients. Where will other patients go to who need further health care? How will we protect hospital staff? Really no plan that we've seen to date from the Minister of Health or from this government. There's no real plan when we deal with outbreaks in schools or possible outbreaks in schools to contain the spread of H1N1. The schools, most if not all schools, are not equipped with HVAC systems, that's heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, which renew the air in schools.

And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when my two daughters were in elementary school, they were, of course, in a confined environment in the classroom, and every time one child got sick with the flu, it seemed like everybody followed thereafter. There was, every time someone had a cold in that classroom, within the next five or six days, everyone got a cold in that classroom. So it's important, I think, that we address the issue with respect to schools and how we deal with the spread of H1N1 within schools, in particular. Schools are doing the best they can, of course, with the resources that they have, but they need support and encouragement from this minister and this government, and there needs to be a real plan to stop the spread of H1N1 within the schools.

Manitobans, I believe, have lost the confidence in this government to deal with the crisis. Manitobans, I think, are looking for government leadership, ministerial leadership, and they're not getting it. We need to do more than just hope for the best. We need a plan.

And I just reflect back in terms of today in question period where I asked the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan), in particular, with respect to the Tembec lockout, and she was nowhere to be seen, Mr. Speaker. I'm just hopeful that the Minister of Health is seen by Manitobans and is coming up with a real and effective plan for all Manitobans. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, as previously agreed, that is speaker No. 5.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: So now we will move on and we will now deal with grievances. Is there any grievances? Okay, the honourable member for Pembina, on a grievance?

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the honourable member for Pembina.

Mr. Dyck: And before I get into some of the issues that are pertinent and pertain to the area that I represent, I want to welcome the new pages here. I know that for you this will certainly be a good learning experience in whether you are interested in some day becoming an MLA or an MP or whatever. We trust that the information that you pick up here, that you will find that pertinent, that you will find that exciting, and we certainly welcome you here and do want to thank you for the way you look after our needs day-to-day. So thank you very much, and we appreciate having you here.

The other comment I wanted to make at the outset was we also have some new interns who've just started today as well, and so it's going to be good to have them in our offices, and we appreciate the work that they do for us and for the research that they do in assisting us, so it's good to have them on board as well.

Now, just following question period today, I know, during question period it's interesting to see how the activities of the Chamber are taking place, and, of course, we're watching to see the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the way he is responding to some of the issues that are out there, and it's got to be a little difficult. I just wanted to give you an example and, of when I ran for the nomination, this was back in '95, for the Pembina constituency. I was still the chair of the Garden Valley School Division board and I was at a public meeting, and so I was asked for a comment on a certain issue. I gave the response and the response that came back from a gentleman in the audience was, so who are you representing? Is this a political answer or is this a personal or is this a school board, and so I understand where there can be conflicts that arise when, on the one hand, you're still in the position but, you know, ultimately within time that you will be somewhere else.

So I trust that this will not just be a government and a Cabinet that's got to be in a caretaker mode for the next while, but that truly, we're going to get some work done and that's the approach that I have taken as we came back to the opening of the session here. And I do look forward to that because in the comments that I will be making, I do have a number of issues that I need to address and that are as a result of the meetings that I've had this summer and as meetings that I've had at the end of last week.

And I'm going to start off with education. Now, I know that the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) has announced that there's going to be two new schools coming in addition to another one, and certainly that is welcome news. But, in having met with the superintendent on Friday of this past week, I do need to indicate that as a result of the growth which certainly was projected, that's taken place, we today have, as we speak, in fact, while they're just dismissed from school, but in our high school, we have four classes that are meeting in the hallway. Now, that's at the collegiate. That is a disgrace and the reason, or the reason that they are meeting in the hallway is because of the red tape that needed to—they needed to go through in order to be able to convert the existing division office into classroom space.

The school board, the superintendent, the maintenance department, they were all ready to have this completed by September 1, and it should have been, but, and I'm not going to put blame anywhere specifically, but the bottom line is that there are four classrooms in the hallway. If you would have anything like that happening within industry anywhere, that kind of crowding, you would probably shut them down, but somehow, somehow, this is tolerated and this is acceptable within our school system. I can't understand it, but that is what's taking place.

The other thing that was, is very concerning is the fact that as, the same thing happening probably two weeks ago that the department said that where the minister had come up with a very clear directive that there be a school completed in 2011 and another one in 2012. Now it appears as though they're coming and saying, well, that is sort of a projection. Okay, what does that mean? And at the outset, and I know, I talked to the minister, to the department and they said that, well, you know, there are some things that we can now forward, we can now fast forward because we don't have to re-invent the wheel. We know that there's an Emerado school, the school at Southwood would be somewhat similar to that, so we don't have to re-invent the wheel. We can move ahead, and, in fact, we can get this done by the time the school is—or, rather, by the time 2011 arrives.

* (15:50)

Well, I am told now that, in fact, we are re-inventing the wheel again. Now, if that doesn't extend the occupancy date, that's fine, but I must say, in defence of the school division, that in their

planning they have been working ahead. In fact, they have been projecting all the time lines right back to the opening of the school—or forward to the opening of the school—and they just said that at the rate that they are going, there is no way possible that we can have those schools open. Now, I mean, we've got in the excess of 40—I bet it's probably 50 huts by now, of students, where we're spending just piles of money on these portable, relocatable units and yet, though, there seems to be no end to this.

So I would just encourage the minister, the department, that if truly we are going to fast-forward something, let's do that. Let's not put all kinds of hiccups and hang-ups in the way, but let's fast-forward. Let's make sure that the dates that are given are the ones that are realistic and not put all kinds of stone or walls in place that are going to slow the project down.

So, again, we don't need more red tape. Should the schools be saved? Absolutely, they should. Should we do a good job in designing? Absolutely, we should. But I would submit to you that we do have designs in place. We just opened up a new school a little while ago and the community, the staff, would be pleased to have that kind of a school replicated in a different area. So—whereas I know that architects like to have their stamp on everything, that's great, but—I think I've made my point. We need to move ahead. We need to get the time lines in place and not—so that we don't come back and we just say, well, this was another press release. We'd like to have some reality put to it.

The other one that I want to talk about—and I did ask a question today on Tabor Home. Again, a concern that we have within the area—and I mentioned the gentleman by the name of Jack Wiebe who's now needing to go and visit his parents who live 100 kilometres away. They're not seen by their friends because, by and large, their friends are not the ones who are going to make the trip of a hundred kilometres. I could go on and name you number of other cases and same thing that's happening where, in an area where we've got growth taking place, our infrastructure needs are just not keeping up. And to me, in this province, this is nothing that is—it shouldn't be news to anyone that we are having growth. We have growth in three areas in this province, and that's the Morden-Winkler area, the Hanover area and Winnipeg. So, I mean, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that there are infrastructure needs that we might have.

So I've been told that—and I just got started, I just took a breath and I'm already told that my two minutes—I have two minutes left.

An Honourable Member: Lots to grieve.

Mr. Dyck: So I've got a lot to grieve, but not enough time.

And, again, and I know that the minister is well aware of it, but Highway 32 comes to mind. It's the same thing. It's an infrastructure need that we have. Infrastructure needs, to accommodate the growing area, with the school being located just north of Highway 32—we have some real exceptional needs. And of course, the highway going through the city of Winkler, heading south towards the U.S. border. It's a high-traffic area. We have—you know, there are fender-benders taking place constantly. It's not—and because it's not a fast-speeded area that you don't have the really serious accidents taking place—although there have been a few—and yet though, it's a need that we have.

So, again, I just wanted to indicate that, with the schools, with Tabor Home, with Highway 32, we have issues. They're not being addressed quickly enough and, in fact, it appears to us at times that there is more talk than action, and press releases going out. We need to have something concrete that's going to be taking place in order to be able to meet the needs within our community. And again, coming back to the elderly in our community, it is not right that the people who have lived there all their lives are being shipped out to areas that are further away, where, in fact, their own families find it difficult to come and meet with them, and we should not be doing this to the people in our community. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances.

Seeing none, we will now move on and we will now deal with orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, would you please call debate on second readings: Bill No. 26, Bill No. 31, Bill No. 4, and the rest in order as they appear.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 26—The Apprenticeship and Certification Act

Mr. Speaker: Okay, and we now call and resume the debate on second reading of Bill No. 26, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Carman.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, as we resume bill debate in this fall sitting of the session, there's certainly been a lot of changes since this bill was introduced this spring. We've—we're working on our third Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade since then. The member from Minto, the former Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, was the one who introduced this bill, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act. We met with him a number of times, had some concerns, didn't really get many answers back to our concerns. We proposed an amendment, at least one amendment. There was never any answer back.

So I'm not sure where we're going to go because the member, the Minister for Science, Technology, Energy and Mines (Mr. Rondeau) was supposed to be the interim minister and, for whatever reason now, we're on to the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) as Acting Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade.

Meanwhile, we know that the de facto minister is actually Scott Smith in this, and we're still wanting to know whether his contract has been renewed as of August. But we'll—hopefully, we'll find that out.

So, and as I was doing research on this particular bill, the message that came back very clearly was that the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, the—I'll call him No. 1, actually had no communications with the Minister of Labour. That was the message that we continually heard back, was that there was a lack of communication between the two ministries, when, in fact, they should be working very closely because apprentices, apprenticeship and Labour work very—should be working very closely.

So it will be interesting to see how the current Minister of Labour now, hopefully, she will bring herself up to speed on this bill, and so we can have some answers. I would even hope that perhaps she'd put a few comments on the record, but I won't hold my breath on that one.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And there is—there's a lot in this bill and there's a lot of nothing in this bill because the reason for the bill was supposedly to enhance apprenticeships and trades in Manitoba. We knew that this was a campaign promise of the NDP in the last—in the 2007 election, that they would create 4,000 apprenticeship training opportunities. We've asked for that number. In fact, what we've had to do is we've had to send in a Freedom of Information request just to find out where—how many apprentices have actually begun training.

So we are very unclear. We have no clarity at all as to how the current apprenticeship act was working, and therefore it really makes us wonder, on the surface, why they would bring in another bill. But, as you read through the bill, it becomes clear why this—the purpose of this bill and that's the centralized power in here. They—they're taking away power from the provincial trade advisory councils, moving power up to the board, moving power up to the minister and ultimately up to the Cabinet because it's—even under this act, now, the Cabinet is given responsibilities for designating trades as compulsory certification trades. Like, where would this come from, other than to centralize power?

If you're taking the opportunity away from the PTACs, as we call them, the Provincial Trade Advisory Committees, and centralizing it in the Cabinet, you're taking away the credibility of the apprenticeship program in Manitoba.

* (16:00)

Under this bill, we also know that there are standing communities—committees of the board that are being established. They're putting these committees right into the act. I suggested to the minister, No. 1, that these committees should not be in the act but in regulation instead, and he said he would take it under advisement. I can only hope that he's off the campaign trail long enough to meet with the current Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) to advise her on this. And, again, we would certainly look forward to hearing her position on this.

We know that these PTACs have been working very well until the minister, No. 1, tampered with the plumbing of PTAC and changed it from five years to four years, which perhaps could have been argued that it was putting it in line with other provinces. But what the minister forgot to do is to tell the industry about this and consequently, there was a huge

uproar, rightly, from both the company side and the labour side on this because there was issues of back pay, there was issues of contracting based on old rates and then having to pay new rates. So there was a great deal of confusion in there, and again, if that's symptomatic of what this government is trying to do with this new act, it's going to be very unfortunate because it's taking away—it's fixing something that wasn't broken. And what they're—by centralizing power in here, it is not going to be a way to encourage apprentices to, first of all, to start training in Manitoba and to stay here in Manitoba through their apprenticeship, and again, once they've become fully trained within their field.

We know that all too often this government, this NDP government, drafts and implements policies and legislation without wider industry consultation. I know that for a fact again because I've talked to industry people. It—as my job as critic is to go out and talk to these industry people. And they're wondering where did this come from, why were they doing this and, obviously, they were not consulted on this. And despite the assurances from former ministers and current ministers that they do wide consultations, we know that, in fact, is not the case.

There is a great need for new apprentices in Manitoba. There's absolutely no doubt about that. And what we need to be doing, we need to be encouraging them to take up an apprenticeship in Manitoba. And the only way you can do that is to work with industry and labour to make sure that the programs that are out there are working as well as can be expected.

There's a number of changes in this bill that we do have a lot of concern about. They are taking the executive—they're allowing the executive director to have—to issue occupational certificates based on his opinion that the individual has met the prescribed standards and requirements for a certification in the designated occupation. Why would you do that on the basis of one person's opinion? Why would you not go back—first of all, go back to your board to see what the feeling is there, and then, also back to the specific apprentice, the PTAC that's in charge of that apprentice—apprenticeship—in order to make sure that this changes, or this opinion, is indeed valid?

This is the troubling part of this whole bill, is that you're centralizing power here, you're not doing a wide-scale consultation because, ultimately, they may not like some of the advice they're given back on some of the consultations. This bill gives the

Cabinet the power to add to the list of trades that require apprenticeship training. Why would the Cabinet have the power of this? Why wouldn't this come back through the PTACs, through the board, through to the minister and then the minister recommending this to Cabinet? If they feel that Cabinet must approve this, then bring it up from the bottom through, and not from the top down.

When we asked why this is being done, I guess the obvious reasons come through that perhaps the NDP are—because they won't release to us the number of new apprentices in the last two years. Perhaps we're not getting the number of new apprentices that they were hoping for, that they were shooting for and that they did set the goal at. And, instead of raising the bar again, they just lower the bar. And they'll be able to allow more people into apprentices—apprenticeship—that really aren't qualified for that in order to meet a political goal. So that's, these, this bill just brings out that type of, of concerns.

We know that the, in the past the board has worked well. We know that it's been very successful in having apprentice, apprenticeship training in Manitoba. So why—again we're questioning why, why you're changing a system that has worked well and particularly when you change it and without consulting the industry.

The, there is a number of other issues that we have with this. The, as I stated, the executive director seems to be given wide-ranging powers here to, to make, make appointments, make approval of apprentices. The, we know that we need new apprentices. We know that there's shortages coming in the labour market. There's no doubt about that, that there will be shortages within the labour market both in terms of business growth and to replace retiring workers. So what this—what they should be doing instead of tinkering with the management of this is getting out there and offering better opportunities, trying to encourage more people into the apprenticeship trade and, and again we're, we're concerned that those numbers aren't happening.

We know that it's, it's well known that there will be a labour shortage. There's not only a labour shortage today, but there's a labour shortage coming in, in the future here as, as the so-called baby boom starts to retire. There are projects such as CentrePort and there's private-sector development that requires apprenticeships, apprentices and skilled trades people and it's critical that, that the proper analysis

be done in each trade to ensure there isn't a shortage or an oversupply because we know that, that labour is quite mobile to move from province to province so, but we have to have—there is no, no plan in place from this government as to how they're going to address labour shortages in the future other than grandiose press releases and, and somewhat hollow promises about hiring a lot of or starting a lot of new apprentices.

We also need to ensure that these apprentices are receiving proper technical and safety training. It's, it's one thing to have apprentices in training. We need to always make sure that, that the courses are up to standards both within Manitoba and with, with other provinces and safety is always an issue.

This, this bill just doesn't meet those types of, of goals and objectives that we feel that they should of, should have been doing. In fact the bill, the present bill, The Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act really does, has been working well and has covered these, these type of issues.

What they needed to do instead of bringing in a new bill is to bring in some, if I can use the word, concrete goals and, and meetable goals that, that this province could actually see more apprentices, more apprentices within the, within the trades, in school and on the ground once they've been properly trained and to meet the, the growing workload that we have here in Manitoba and across the country because we know that, that we have the ability to, to trade with other provinces and move with other provinces.

Interesting side on that one is minister, No. 1, brought in the agreement on tariffs, agreement on internal trade, pardon me. It was Bill 21 in the last, in the spring session, and it was passed. It still has to be proclaimed. In other words, it's not in effect yet. So, so there, there, the, the semantics are they're passing these bills in the press releases, but the real work is not happening because we don't actually have an agreement on internal trade within Manitoba with, with the rest of Canada because the bill has never been proclaimed.

So, if they're going to make changes on here, why would they bring changes in on this when they can't even implement legislation that's already been passed?

* (16:10)

So the bill—I have a number of amendments that I would like to be bringing forth, both in committee and in report stage. They're a—they deal with a lot of

the language within this bill that we feel is either—the language within the bill is either unclear; it needs to be much more precise when you're doing an—a bill. The—we just, again, we think it's somewhat sloppy of the ministry to bring out a bill like this when they don't tighten up the language of it—leaves a lot to be open for interpretation. There are a couple of amendments in here that we think they're making changes within this bill that will really tie in—tie up this bill. I'll give you one example, and that one is the committee structure.

There is—they are proposing to put, I believe it's four committees: a governance and planning committee; a community liaison committee; a program standards standing committee; and a nominating standing committee into the act. And I think that that's a huge mistake. I told the minister, No. 1, that that was a mistake to do that. You should not be putting it in the act. You should be putting it in regulation because, as committees come and go, we all know from—or at least most of us know from being in organizations—that they're—the structure of the organization changes. You're tying this into the act. The only way you can change this, if any of these committees are actually as redundant as a couple of them sound to be, that you would have to open up the act in order to make any real changes to this—to these committees.

So I hope that the interim Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade will take this to heart and seriously consider this as at least one of the amendments.

As I said, I have a number more, quite a few more amendments that I would like to see to this bill, but will—we will work on these in both committee and in report stage to see if they will at least consider any of these. And just to pass the bill as is, I think, is a mistake. It's, as I stated when I started, that it was centralizing power. The last thing you need to do and last thing we should be doing is centralizing more power in this province. I realize this is a fundamental difference of opinion here but, believe me, government really doesn't know what's best here. They've set up a system where the—both labour and industry and the apprentices themselves had real input into their respective trades, and in what is a trade and what should be considered a trade. This bill is going to take that away from them and it's going to put it into the halls of government here which I believe is totally counter-productive in a time when we need to be creating more apprentices and to work

on training and putting these apprentices out into their respective trades.

We have so much opportunity in this province and it's a real shame when this government just keeps—continues to squander it away. They have no vision. There is no real goal in this other than press releases and lofty goals that have no hope of being attained.

So, with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would certainly invite the new interim Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade to get up and make some comments on this so that we at least know that she is engaged in this process of bringing this bill through, and we would certainly like to see where they would be open to some suggestions to changing this.

So, with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll leave it at that and look forward to both her comments and committee and report stage. Thank you.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I thank the member from Carman for his speech on Bill 26, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act, and before I go on I would like to just welcome the pages to the legislative Chamber and hope that this will be a pleasant experience for you and something that you will remember as you go forward.

Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just would like to perhaps start with the notion of why we even are having this debate today. I mean the idea of bringing in legislation for or a bill that is proposed legislation for the province basically why that would be done would be probably two reasons. One would be that there was a number of people in the public that really came to the government minister and really asked to have a look at this. This should be something that, that's driven by the industry and the industry wants this to happen. And another reason why there might be some legislation or a bill put forward in the Legislature is because the government themselves want this to happen for some specific purposes only known to themselves and for their own self-interest.

So, when you look at this piece of legislation as we have and as the member from Carman, as the critic has, has done some consultation in the broader public and when we, when we hear what people have to say back to us, we get the feeling that this has not been a bill that has been brought to, to this government from the public who want to see some changes here. We get the impression that there has been no consultation with, with the public and the,

and the organizations that this affects. And when that happens, that's never a good thing because the organizations that aren't consulted then don't feel part of, of the process and will find a lot of things wrong. And they have told us, some of them have told us many things that they don't feel the government has listened to them on this.

Now the, the Minister for Competitiveness, Training and Trade who brought in this piece of legislation, this bill, has recently resigned from his, his, his minister, ministership and I think that he was, you know, a new minister who didn't have a lot of experience in the, in the area and perhaps he just wasn't really quite aware of what his role was to be—that he should be really consulting with the public. Anyway, he has resigned from, from his ministry of Competitiveness, Training and Trade. So, and subsequent to that, another minister, the, the minister from Science, Technology, Energy and Mines was asked to fill in to that portfolio at least for a short term. We don't know what happened there but then the Premier (Mr. Doer) today decided that that wasn't the right person for the job so he's asked the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) to, to take over the, the Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade.

And I would just like to also say the the member from Carman did put some words on the record today for healthy debate in the Chamber. I mean that's why we bring legislation to this Chamber so that we can have an exchange of ideas and we can have a debate. The member from Carman brought up some issues that he was concerned with. He said that he's had some amendments that he's, he would like to bring forward. He said that he's consulted with the broader public and the, the stakeholders here and invited the new interim Acting Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, who is the Minister of Labour, to put some comments on the record.

Now that would be a healthy debate because then we can just talk about the back and forth of what is good or what is maybe not so good about the bill. That is what the Chamber seeks to accomplish with government in opposition. We both have an opportunity to debate the legislation and it goes to committee and then the general public has their opportunity. But, when you don't have debate, there's, there's two things in my mind that are happening. Either the minister doesn't feel comfortable enough about this bill to speak on it, she perhaps agrees with the member from Carman, and so has no debate on, on what he has brought forward

or, or perhaps the government just—the minister feels a certain sense of smugness that they don't have to debate the legislation. And I think that is not a healthy situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because Manitobans expect there to be, when the legislation is brought into this Chamber, that there be a healthy debate on the pieces of legislation so that we don't get bad legislation and bad laws in the province.

* (16:20)

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that this particular bill, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act—you know, it's important, it's an important piece of legislation when you're talking about apprenticeship and jobs in the province, so I think it's really incumbent on all of us in this Chamber to make sure that we take a good strong look at this, and I know the member from Carman, as the critic, has—had—an opportunity to take a hard look at what's going on here. I know that the NDP had made a commitment to create 4,000 apprenticeship training opportunities during the last election campaign. So there's a commitment to create 4,000 training opportunities here, but what there is no real clarity on is how this is being measured and whether or not this goal is being achieved. How do we actually know if this is actually happening? Perhaps it's not, and perhaps there's a way to mask what is going on so that the election commitment will not show to be not having been completed.

Now, I'll just relate this a little bit to something I know a bit about. In the Workers Compensation Board area, for example, when the time-loss injuries are quite high in Manitoba—highest, one of the highest in Canada, actually—and the government has made a commitment to reduce the time-loss injury rates. Now, that didn't happen. Over five years, they failed to make that reduction, so, instead of working towards a safer—safety in the workplace and enforcing the legislation that they had, they decided that they would expand coverage to industry and organizations and people that were working in areas that would be less subject to injury. So you have a lot more people in the mix that are working in low-risk situations and therefore, when you add that in to the numbers, you get a diluted number so, obviously, if you get a lot more people included in the averages that are in low-risk situations, your workplace injury rate is going to come down, but that does not mean that the injuries in the workplace ceased to happen or actually came down. In fact, what we do know is workplace injuries—the length, duration, of the

industries and the severity of the injuries are increasing.

So I'm not sure. The minister did not stand up and want to debate this when the member from Carman spoke about it, so we don't really know whether this is just another way to mask another failed campaign promise. So, it—that's why I think that the debate in this Chamber is important. I know that I look at the members opposite. We very rarely get good debate from them. We are the ones that look at the legislation and bring it to the Chamber for debate. We're the ones that, when we go to committee, we're asking the people that are presenting at committee the questions, and very rarely does the government do that. Now, as I said before, it's either because they believe so strongly that they're absolutely right about everything, or it's simply a smugness about not thinking that they feel that need to engage in a healthy debate.

But what we look at in this bill, when you look at the record of consultation, I know that we often hear when we get to committee that we ask the people that are coming and presenting at the committee if they've had the opportunity to be consulted and have input into the legislation or the bills that are proposed by this government. And quite often, quite often—in fact, almost always—we get the feedback that no, no, the stakeholders and the public haven't, haven't been consulted.

Now, I know that the member—or the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan)—prides herself in consultation. She says that she believes in consultation, so I'm encouraged by that, because now if she perhaps will go and consult with the stakeholders on this bill, in the absence of the former minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, perhaps, perhaps she will do a better job than he did in this portfolio.

I had the opportunity to speak with a constituent of mine, actually, who heard, of course, all the need for training and apprenticeship in the province, and after quite a long discussion with his wife and his family, decided that he would opt to take some time and go back to school and apprentice and train for the jobs that he felt were there. And after the time that he spent going to school, he then found he was unable to actually secure a job in the area of the trade that he had trained in and he was quite distraught by that, after all of the time that he had taken to actually put aside his, his or forgo his earnings for a period of time and actually go back to school, which of course

put his family in a situation that they needed to cut back. You know, it's tough times, these times, and when two people in a household are working and then there's only one, it creates a tough situation. But this was a commitment and a trade-off to actually get the—further the education so that in the end of that, he would have a better and higher paying job. But he was unable to actually find that position and was quite distraught about that.

So I'm, I guess—just to reiterate, the commitment to create 4,000 apprenticeship training opportunities, again, we're not quite sure how we can measure if that has been a success or, or a failure. And if you work their numbers around a little bit and obscure it in legislation, maybe that's the way that this government decides to hide the fact that perhaps this campaign promise has not been lived up to.

I think the member from Carman mentioned some of the things that we're concerned about. Enshrining subcommittees in, in of the apprenticeship and certification board in legislation. When you do that, when you enshrine boards in legislation, that just means you're always going back to the legislation, having to open it up if there's changes, so I'm not sure why that would be something that the minister, the former minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade felt he needed to do. Now, was this something that somebody from the public came and said, Mr. Minister, we really want you to do this? If that is the case, he certainly has not reiterated that to, to the critic and so we feel that it must be something that he himself wants to do for his own specific purposes.

The member from Carman also said that there's a feeling of perhaps this central control, making sure that everything is brought up to the ministerial level, that the minister has full control, full control over all the boards and all the organizations and stakeholders that govern this—are governed by this piece of legislation. I think that's a dangerous situation to put anybody in because there are a number of stakeholders affected by every piece of legislation, particularly this piece of legislation. They don't feel that they've been consulted with. And when you, when you bring everything into the—right into the bailiwick, if you will, of one person's decision-making process, you actually—you deny a lot of people the opportunity to, to do the jobs that they need to do.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

If you have a number of stakeholders—these are the people who run their organizations, who are heads of their organizations, who know their organizations, and yet they are being told, you know, I don't believe that you really have any knowledge of this or ability, ability to have knowledge of this, so, therefore, I, as the minister, am the only person that knows what needs to be done here, and I'm going to make all the decisions.

* (16:30)

I don't think that is a very healthy place to be where one person makes all of the decisions for all of the stakeholders. In fact, I think that this government will find that the stakeholders will be very, very unhappy with that. In fact, at a recent meeting with some stakeholders we found that going through this legislation, we—he held up the bill and he had a little sticky notes all the way along to show all of the places in the bill where he had issue with. And it took almost two hours to go through all of the little pieces in that bill that he thought were not, not necessary and not—and he had a lot of questions and most of those questions related to why the bill gave so much power to the minister and really negated the ability of many of the stakeholders and didn't recognize their, their experience and their knowledge in each of their areas of expertise and representation.

One of the things that was specifically mentioned was it gives, the bill gives a lot of power to the executive director, and that individual has the authority to issue an occupational certificate in a designated occupation if they are of the opinion that the individual has met the prescribed standards and requirements for certification in the designated occupation.

Granting certificates should require more than an opinion of one individual. That to me is very problematic. If in my opinion you qualify in a designated occupation, then I will allow you to work in that occupation 'cause it's my opinion. I don't think that anybody in this Chamber would agree if I said, you know, the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) in my opinion is a excellent heart surgeon so go ahead and use him for your heart surgery. I don't know that you would go and say to me, okay, I value your opinion and, yeah, I agree with you. I don't think that anybody would want to take my opinion on that. So I'm just, I'm saying when somebody is going to grant somebody a certificate in a designated occupation on their opinion I have a lot

of problem with that as do many of the stakeholder groups.

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've seen this government do all kinds of crazy and wacky things, so—we've seen the dilution of many of the professions under this government and many of the professions are quite, quite upset about that. And I think Manitobans are upset about that as well because Manitobans do want the best service whether it's in health care, whether it's plumbing, electricians, roofers, whether it's people in the retail business, whatever. I mean, we do want to have the best-trained people that we can have in this province and we want to keep them in this province.

When we train them here, we want them to keep jobs here. We don't want to train them so they can move along to Saskatchewan or move along to Alberta, move along to B.C. or go to Ontario. We do want to keep our trained tradespeople and professionals here in the province. And increasingly we're hearing more and more from the organized professions and from the leaders in these organizations that it's being increasingly difficult to keep people here and to employ people here. Tax regimes are harder here in this province to deal with. Labour laws are quite restrictive in this province.

So we hear all of this thing, and it's healthy to go out to the public and listen to what the public and the stakeholders have to say because you get a different perspective when you're listening to what the people say rather than just sitting in your ministerial office and just deciding that you're going to change a bill. You're going to tinker here, a little bit there, just to give yourself a little bit more power, and maybe it makes you feel better as a minister. I don't know that you've presented a bill to the Legislature and passed a bill, and maybe you can put that on your future résumé or something, but, you know, that's not really what it's about, Mr. Speaker. It's about doing the right thing for the people and the province. It's doing the right thing for the tradespeople, the right thing for Manitobans. And so I question the priorities, I guess, of this government and why they tend to do some of the things they tend to do.

And, as I said in the beginning, when you are proposing legislation, you're doing it for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it's because people in the public have come to you and said, you know, this isn't working for us and we'd like to have this changed, but, you know, you can't just take it from one group of people. You've got to consult with a lot of people,

'cause one piece of legislation can actually affect a whole lot of people. So you can't just react to what one group wants to say and you can't just rely on your own opinion or your own department to bring forward a law just because as a young, new minister that you've got to make your mark and you've got to perhaps put out a piece of legislation with your name on it. That's not what this should be about. And I find that the consultation process here has been lacking, Mr. Speaker.

The debate process in the Chamber is also lacking and it's very unfortunate. It's very unfortunate because I think there is an opportunity here. There's an opportunity for the members on the government side of the House to bring forward their argument. When the member from Carman spoke, he had an argument and we were waiting for the government minister to stand up and present her argument and then we don't get that, so—*[interjection]* Well, you know, the minister from Carman is also saying to me, you know, if they don't—they didn't do any consultation, so how do they—how can they stand up and debate the legislation? Well, you know, I agree with him. It's problematic. It's problematic when that happens.

But it's not the first time we've seen a lack of consultation, not only with the former deputy—or the former minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade. I, interestingly, had a bill briefing with him on another bill, and we were discussing some issues around privacy issues and protection of personal information in the private sector, and he just said, oh well, you know, if you have a problem, you just go to the ombudsman. Well, you know, I would expect a minister of the government to have a little bit more knowledge of that, because the ombudsman doesn't have any jurisdiction in the private sector because there's no legislation in the private sector for protection of personal information. So I was quite alarmed to think that one of the ministers in this government was so ill-informed, even when he was coming to us to give us a bill briefing. I really did not have a lot of confidence in that minister, so I'm really—you know, he has stepped aside, he has resigned, and certainly we'll look forward to see what the new acting minister can do. But, certainly, you know, we look forward to some kind of indication of what she wanted to say about the bill and we didn't get that, so perhaps in the future—well, maybe we'll just have to wait to committee and see what transpires there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to sum up just by saying that we are disappointed in this government's lack of consultation around this bill. We're disappointed in the lack of healthy debate. We're disappointed that it appears that this is a piece of legislation driven by self-interest rather than the public interest. And I'm quite sure that the member from Carman has some good amendments to bring forward, and so I look forward to some support from the government and look at these amendments because they're good amendments, because, as I've said before in this Chamber, no party corners the market on good ideas. And that's why we all need to have this discussion and listen. And I look forward to the amendments that the member from Carman will bring forward and look for some healthy debate on that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:40)

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and participate in second reading debate of Bill No. 26, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act, and I've been listening very intently throughout the afternoon and have once again not heard any of the government members participate in this afternoon's debate. They have been quite silent over the course of the passage of this bill through the House, and I, I'm left wondering as to why the government on a particular piece of their own legislation would not want to herald its virtues and yet, conversely they may perhaps be embarrassed through their silence, regarding debate on this particular bill.

We do know that this bill comes to the floor of the Legislative Assembly emanating from a 2007 election promise where effectively the New Democratic Party committed to create 4,000 additional apprenticeship training opportunities. And as, try as we will on this side of the House to find out how many additional apprenticeship positions have been created here in the province of Manitoba, we have been stymied at every effort to get an answer, and I wonder why the government would not be providing information as to the progress towards an election promise which was a fundamental plank in their campaign. And this again leaves Manitobans wondering and especially we on this side of the House, who our responsibility to critique the government's performance and in this particular area, the government's performance is woefully lacking

and is making every effort to cover up their once again, their mismanagement.

Now we are led to believe because of the evidence that we've uncovered that there has been very little, if any, co-operation and communication between the Department of Labour and the Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, and the two departments which are engaged in this particular area should most certainly be communicating. But now, as of this afternoon, there has been once again a shuffling of responsibilities of the various ministries and we now see that there will be communication between the minister responsible for Labour and the minister responsible for Competitiveness, Training and Trade because they are now one and the same. And the minister can communicate, I'm sure, within her own thought patterns, the merits and perhaps the demerits of this particular legislation and hopefully, hopefully, this government will now at least talk between the two departmental personnel as to the areas that are deficient within this particular bill.

And we do believe that there are many, many areas deficient within this bill because of the considerable, in my own personal opinion, opportunity to dumb down the qualifications for the respective professional trades within the province of Manitoba. And this particular legislation does indeed allow for any of the designated compulsory certified trades that individuals—not just board members meeting as a whole—but there is the ability to communicate—commute, if I will say—the responsibilities and abilities to provide authority through certification in the respective designated trades by the executive director of the Apprenticeship and Certification Board. And so you are now taking the responsibility that was once left with the respective trades and certifications—for certifications—and now putting it in the hands of an individual who only has to satisfy his or her own opinion as it respects to the granting of the certificates in the respective trades and thereby allowing an individual to carry on work as a recognized apprenticeship—apprentice, in this province. And it is very, very wide open and deep, when a person was looking to work in a respective trade, he or she may be granted the designation if—there are a number of qualifications—holds a valid certificate of a qualification for the trade, is in apprenticeship already in the trade—it's obvious—holds a valid certificate issued by another jurisdiction in Canada, is registered in another jurisdiction

training program, is permitted under regulation, which we have yet to see, is a holder of a temporary permit, or is engaged in factory mass production in plant assembly operations or in plant processing.

So there is a lot of opportunity to grant the apprenticeship designation and I believe that this is another effort by this government to save face because they have not been able to do it in their respective ministries and fulfil a 2007 election promise. So what we have before us is Bill 26, which strips the responsibilities from the respective trades for the qualifications and granting of apprenticeship status and replaces it—and places that responsibility with an apprenticeship and certification board, which, in turn, puts that—delegates that responsibility to a chief executive officer. So we are now—multiple trades are effectively now beholding to one particular individual as to whether or not someone enters into their respective profession as an apprentice based upon the executive director's opinion.

So I'm afraid, Mr. Speaker, I have grave reservations as to whether or not Bill 26 is in the best interests of this province, but I will be the first, absolute first, to say that we are in desperate need of more trained individuals. Our particular training programs that are operating around the province have significant wait times for individuals that have been accepted into the program. I understand that there are programs now, through a media release, that are in existence in the province of Manitoba that have upwards to four years' waiting time, and that is in areas of desperate need for newly trained individuals to replace those that are retiring or moving on to other provinces. But I will say that there should be, as there is in this act, an appeal process, which I appreciate.

* (16:50)

I will just leave you with one example of an individual that had immigrated to Canada in search of gainful employment. He was recognized in the U.K. as a journeyman carpenter and had all the work experience to that end. Came to Canada, but was required to provide for time spent in an apprenticeship designation. While this was fair, and he believed that he had, would have no problems entering into the workforce and garnering the required amount of experience. I hope the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) is listening at this point in time because it is an example of the frustration that new immigrants coming to Canada to get recognized for already-existing experience and expertise. And

this particular individual got employed, had his, was working towards the required time as an apprentice in the field of carpentry. Throughout, though, that period of time, the firm to which he was working for engaged in construction of concrete grain elevators here in the province of Manitoba.

This individual went to work, working with wood, but working on the construction of a concrete elevator. After he completed the months of construction employment, building the concrete elevators, he found afterwards that all of that time spent constructing the concrete elevators, even though he was working with the wood framing and forms, was not eligible to be considered towards his apprenticeship time. To me, I'm left wondering, really, how the Minister of Labour and how this government has, indeed, allowed roadblocks such as this particular example to exist in this province when we are, indeed, in need of qualified and certified carpenters here in the province of Manitoba.

And this is just one example and, of the frustrations that new immigrants to Manitoba face, and I hope that through the appeal process here that will, in this particular example, have that opportunity to do so and be recognized for the experience that was garnered obviously in this particular individual's example towards the apprenticeship time.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to participate in second reading debate of Bill No. 26, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act, and I very much look forward to the public's opportunity, finally, to participate in the legislative process and the, and the legislation that is before us. Thank you.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It's my pleasure, as well, to put a few words on the record in regards to Bill No. 26, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act. And, of course, when I was, had the opportunity and privilege of being the Competitiveness, Training and Trade critic myself before the fine job that's being done by our member from Carman, now, I had the opportunity of dealing with the minister in charge of this area of apprenticeship and certification and, of course, it was being called another act at that time, The Apprenticeship and Trades Qualification Act was the old act that this bill is replacing. But, Mr. Speaker, there isn't a lot, there isn't a lot of changes in this particular bill other than there are some additions as well, and one of those is, of course, that the apprentices will have a person on the board, the

composition of the board themselves, but, of course, that person is non-voting. So it's a, it's an information-only position and one that I think that the apprentices across Manitoba should be somewhat concerned about.

There is a good deal of, of course, the board that would be established under this particular bill has provided for a board to be established and the certification board that would be put in this place, and as I read through the mandate of that particular board with the persons that would be placed on it, and, of course, we've heard that there'll be deputy ministers from many different departments placed on this particular board as well, which to me, to my way of thinking, when I look at the—at the wording of the bill leaves a disproportionate amount of ministerial discretion still within this bill.

And while the minister, we understand, has a right to have a say in most bills it's unusual to put in the mandate of the board some of the items that have been placed in this particular venue. And one of them, Mr. Speaker, there's a couple of things that the strategic plan must point out that the minister—that the board would submit to the minister an annual strategic plan to review and for a review and approval. But part of that strategic plan has in it that the plan must set out the board's goals and objectives while taking into account the government's strategic direction.

So No. 1, Mr. Speaker, the government's strategic direction is already in the plan and that may be a given, that's not so bad. You want to, of course, be in concurrence with the particular government of the day that may feel that they have a significant direction that they want to move in. They also have an indent—must be able to identify performance measures related to the objectives in that goal and that's fair ball as well.

But there's another third strategic part that's the part of the strategic plan and, Mr. Speaker, that is, and at least I just think this is completely too open-ended. It says—it states that any other information required by the minister. Well, when you've got a situation where the government is basically running it, I think that this is not ambiguous, it's all-powerful for the minister in regards to the requirements of this particular act.

But, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say that there are other things in regards to designation of trades and occupations. There's a lot of apprenticeship and certification board standing committees that would

be involved in this kind of a bill. There's a great deal of discernment that could be there, but I'll have to save those for another day. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? *[interjection]* Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill No. 26, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No?

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division? Okay, on division.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce that

the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Thursday, September 17, at 6 p.m., to consider Bill 26, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act.

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Thursday, September 17, at 6 p.m., to consider Bill No. 26, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act.

That's for the information of the House.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Monsieur le Président, je pense que aujourd'hui nous avons fait beaucoup des affaires de l'état ici dans la chambre législatif du Manitoba et je pense que maintenant je vois qu'il est presque cinq heures, je pense que dans 25 secondes sera cinq heures et je dois vous regarder le clock et je pense que tout de suite on va finir cette siége de la législatif du Manitoba que je pense que sera—

Translation

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think that we did a lot of government business today here in the Manitoba Legislature and I think that now I see it is almost five o'clock, I think that in 25 seconds will be 5 o'clock and I have to look at you the clock and I think that right away we will end this sitting of the legislative of Manitoba that I think that will be—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The clock is already at 5, so there's no requirement to ask leave.

So, at the hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, September 14, 2009

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