

Second Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 9, 2004

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Minimum Sitting Days for Legislative Assembly

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 Manitoba Legislature sat for only 37 days in 2003.

Manitobans expect their Government to be accountable, and the number of sitting days has a direct impact on the issue of public accountability.

Manitobans expect their elected officials to be provided the opportunity to be able to hold the Government accountable.

The Legislative Assembly provides the best forum for all MLAs to debate and ask questions of the Government, and it is critical that all MLAs be provided the time needed in order for them to cover constituent and party duties.

Establishing a minimum number of sitting days could prevent the government of the day from limiting the rights of opposition members from being able to ask questions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider recognizing the need to sit for a minimum of 80 days in any given calendar year.

Signed by Monica Bell, Liz Sarin and Frank McKendry.

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table copies of two Orders-in-Council made under section 114 of The Insurance Act.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 24—The Travel Manitoba Act

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I would like to move, seconded by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Mihychuk), that Bill 24, The Travel Manitoba Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Robinson: The Travel Manitoba Act establishes a new public-private tourism agency that will oversee tourism, marketing, visitor information service, product development, research and public awareness of tourism.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 30—The Safe Schools Charter (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Training (Ms. McGifford), that Bill 30, The Safe Schools Charter (Various Acts Amended); Charte de la sécurité dans les écoles (modification de diverses dispositions législatives), be read a first time.

Motion presented.

* (13:35)

Mr. Bjornson: This bill requires that school boards provide safe and caring school environments and to establish electronic mail and Internet use policies. It

compels schools to establish codes of conduct and emergency response plans and review them regularly.

Motion agreed to.

**Bill 33—The Public Servants
Insurance Amendment Act**

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 33, The Public Servants Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance des employés du gouvernement, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: The bill enables the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to expand the classes of employees who may participate in the Group Life Insurance Plan under The Public Servants Insurance Act.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have from Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary School 20 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Cyndi Sawatsky. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray).

Also in the public gallery we have Dr. Mary Hall who is the director of Safe Schools Manitoba who is the guest of the honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson).

Also I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today members of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Tourism. These visitors are the guests of the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Robinson).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Red River Floodway Expansion
Master Labour Agreement**

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, imposing a master labour

agreement that requires all workers on the floodway expansion project to be unionized is nothing more than a blatant attempt to force an industry to unionize, because it is certainly not going to keep costs down or ensure labour peace. The chair of British Columbia's 2010 Construction Leaders Task-force has said, and I quote: Major industrial projects built under project labour agreements from the energy sector in Alberta to off-shore development on the East Coast have repeatedly incurred cost overruns, labour disruptions and delays.

Mr. Speaker, the Water Stewardship Minister says it is the Doer government's master labour agreement that is the magic bullet that will somehow ensure fair wages, labour peace, stability. Can the Water Stewardship Minister explain to this House what proof does he have and what is their guarantee?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): I wish the Leader of the Opposition had corrected the record because yesterday in Hansard and again on radio this morning he clearly indicated that he does not understand the master labour agreements which have been in place for many decades in Manitoba. Indeed, he indicated that somehow you will not be able to bid on this project if you are not a unionized company. That is not the case.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, rather than quote B.C., I would suggest he quote the last most significant project built under this kind of agreement, it is called Limestone. It was built for a billion dollars under budget.

Mr. Murray: Well, again, the minister is either afraid or cannot answer the question. I will ask him again, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day the Doer government is saying that the only way you will be able to work on the floodway expansion project is if you are a union member. That is offensive.

* (13:40)

As one Manitoba taxpayer said in an e-mail that was sent to the Premier (Mr. Doer), and I am going to quote: Mandating union-only workers on the expanded floodway project is wrong. I am very disappointed in the lack of integrity in this NDP government. It is time for Manitoba to join the 21st century. Selling out to the union bosses is unacceptable and I demand that this discussion be rescinded. There is no acceptable reason for

mandating union-only other than to protect your supporters. Simply put, it is wrong. It is unnecessary and it will add tens of millions of dollars to the cost. Sadly, my tax dollars at work again.

Will the Doer government listen to Manitobans like the one I just quoted and the heavy construction industry and their workers, Mr. Speaker, and put an end to Premier Doer's union-only policy? Will he put an end to that?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before recognizing the honourable member, I would just like to remind all honourable members, when making reference to each other, it is ministers by the portfolio they hold and other members by their constituency. I would ask the cooperation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Ashton: I think it is unfortunate that with one of the most significant projects of this decade, we do not get any questions about what this is going to do to floodproof Winnipeg, raising our flood protection. We do not hear any questions about the other aspects of the agreement which will assure training to make sure that we deal with the unemployment that many people in our Aboriginal and other communities face and also provide a skilled workforce for the future.

This agreement is about much more than just a collective agreement, Mr. Speaker, but I say to the member opposite again, it has worked for Hydro for the last 40 years. We are not doing anything different. It is this Opposition, though, that seems to have a different rather radical right-wing approach to this issue. Not acceptable.

Mr. Murray: It would be this minister that would somehow believe that an open tendering process that would provide the lowest cost to taxpayers in Manitoba would somehow be right-wing, Mr. Speaker. What is unfortunate is that they are forcing non-unionized companies to be unionized. That is what is unfortunate.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, this Premier took away an employee's right to a secret ballot to make it easier for his union-boss friends to unionize the workplace, step No. 1. Now he is using unnecessary master labour agreements to force

unionization on an industry that is almost entirely non-unionized.

Will the Doer government scrap plans to use the publicly funded floodway to force unionization in an effort to fill the coffers of their union-boss friends and commit to a policy, Mr. Speaker, that is open, fair, transparency tendering? Will they do the right thing?

Mr. Ashton: Let us be up front here. The Opposition for the last four years has been the Chicken Littles of labour relations. Any time there has been any initiative that comes anywhere close to touching labour legislation, whether it comes to workplace safety and health which they oppose, Mr. Speaker, or this which is going to apply the Hydro model which has worked for 40 years, they say the sky is falling.

Actually, Mr. Speaker, as of this day, under the NDP government, there is a one-third less rate of strike and lockout lost days than under the Conservative administration.

I want to put on the record again that this has worked well for Hydro, Mr. Speaker. We are doing what has worked in Manitoba for 40 years. He can look at B.C. He can look at any other examples he wants. It works and will work for the floodway. We will build it and we will protect Winnipeg.

Red River Floodway Expansion Master Labour Agreement

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): On Saturday, July 26, 2000, the *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial wrote, and I quote, he, the Premier (Mr. Doer), apparently thought everyone would agree it is a good idea to strip workers of their democratic right to reject unionization by secret ballot.

Now, almost four years later, he, the Premier, is simply stripping workers of all their rights. No vote, no rights, nothing. How does the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) defend her Government's decision to force the unionization of all workers at the floodway without consulting them and without their consent?

* (13:45)

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, let the Opposition not neglect one factor. They are so concerned about democracy,

in the last election they proposed what is called, I think, right-to-work legislation, which is a misnomer, which states that, you know, if you want to put it in a democratic analogy, if you do not like Paul Martin, you do not pay your taxes towards the federal government.

The fact is, and the member opposite knows, because he has been the leading—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, that might be unparliamentary, but he has been pushing a Chicken Little agenda. The fact is they have been making these kinds of statements for the last four years, but our agenda on the floodway works. It has worked for 40 years with Hydro. We do not need the kinds of scare tactics from members opposite or the distortions of the fact. What we are doing is not new. It works. It has worked for Manitoba Hydro and it will work on the floodway.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, we have serious questions and we have serious questions to this Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan), and she does not have the courtesy to get up and answer questions in this House. Is she going to be as incompetent as her predecessor, Ms. Barrett, who also would not stand up for the workers of this province, who also would not stand up for the men and women of this province?

Why will the Minister of Labour not get up and start answering some of the questions that we have put on the table? Why is she not standing up and defending the workers, the workers' right not just to a democratic vote, the workers' right to decide whether or not they wish to be unionized, whether they wish to work under union contract? Why does she simply sit there and say nothing and do nothing?

Why does she not just resign now and do like she did, the last minister, and quit because she will not stand up for the workers, the men and women of this province who need a Minister of Labour who will stand up for them, stand up for their rights? Tell her to get up and answer a question.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, the members, either they are interested in asking questions about the floodway, which is a legitimate policy matter, or we are going to see the same tired rants we have seen from the Member for Springfield for the last four years, the Chicken Little approach, and the sky is not falling on labour relations in this province.

The bottom line is with the floodway what we are dealing with, Mr. Speaker, right now is what has been in place with major projects, Manitoba Hydro, since the 1960s, and that goes back to the Roblin PC government, the Kettle Rapids dam. There is nothing new in this. It has worked, and the last time it was used in this province, the Limestone dam was built for \$1 billion under budget.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, this is an absolute disgrace in this House that the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) sits and lets every other minister defend her and get up and answer the questions that have been put forward by the Opposition, and she answers none of the questions.

We have serious questions and we have asked who is going to stand up for the working men and women of this province, and clearly not the Minister of Labour. We have stood up and fought for the democratic rights of working men and women.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Once again, I would like to remind all honourable members that I need to be able to hear the questions, and I need to be able to hear the answers in case there is a breach of a rule. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, the real Minister of Labour should get up and answer these questions. We have asked who is going to stand up for the men and women of this province. Who is going to stand up for their rights? It now has come down to that only the Opposition will stand up for the rights of working men and women of this province and not the Government. We need a minister who will stand up for the rights of working men and women. Instead she sits and does nothing. Will this minister get up and start defending the rights of working men and women in this province?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I think we saw the real agenda of the members opposite in the first and then the second question, because of what they tried to do with the previous Minister of Labour time and time again, berate the minister, call for resignation over asking a question in the House when that member should know that the Government decides who answers. I assume since they asked about the floodway they were actually concerned about the floodway.

* (13:50)

Mr. Speaker, we do not need any lectures from members opposite about protecting the rights of working people. They voted against The Workplace Safety and Health Act which was unanimously supported by labour and management in this province. Do not give us lectures on working people.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. First of all, I would like to remind all honourable members when a Speaker is standing that all members should be seated and the Speaker should be heard in silence.

I would like to remind the House that we have guests in the gallery, we have the viewing public and I am sure they are tuned in to hear the questions and the answers. It is very difficult when decorum is the way it is at this moment. So I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

The honourable minister, have you concluded your answer?

Workplace Safety and Health Regulations Residential Home Construction Industry

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Home Builders Association and the Manitoba Construction Safety Association have been reviewing proposed workplace safety and health regulations that could be in effect by the end of the year. While they support creating safer workplaces, they feel that changes to regulations should accurately reflect the nature of the business and to the degree of potential safety issues that exist in their industry.

Will the Minister of Labour ensure that the regulations for this industry take into consideration the position of the industry, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, well, it is nice to see the members of the Opposition finally asking some questions about rights for workers in this province. It is really nice to see.

I would just like to remind the Labour critic that in December when we passed Bill 4 in this House, a bill around compassionate care legislation and job retention for women who take maternity leave, he spoke in this House against it. So we need no lectures from members opposite about standing up for workers' rights in this House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the Minister of Labour is standing on a question finally. I do hope that she will answer my question.

Mr. Speaker, after analyzing the cost implications of the regulations that are being considered, the Manitoba Home Builders Association's initial assessment is that they would add about \$30,000 to the cost of a new home. As the association has said, these changes if not amended to account for the specialized nature of residential construction would seriously affect the first-time new home purchasers.

Rather than impose a new \$30,000 tax on new home buyers, will the Minister of Labour address the industry's concern and ensure that they have separate and distinct regulations from the other sectors, Mr. Speaker?

* (13:55)

Ms. Allan: The Workplace Safety and Health Review Committee in this province presented the Government with 62 unanimous recommendations about creating a workplace safety and health culture in this province. This province had one of the worst records in Canada in regard to injury, and it was your government that absolutely, completely ignored any workplace health and safety laws in this province.

We are going to be moving forward with regulations that will be fair and reasonable, Mr. Speaker, and it will put us in the mainstream of Canadian regulations in this country, and it will be the right thing to do.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the Minister of Labour, who stands up and says that they are going to make something that is fair and reasonable, will listen to the industry and make sure it is fair and reasonable for them, not for the Doer government.

Workplace safety and health issues in the residential construction industry are not in the same league as other sectors, Mr. Speaker. In fact, in a letter from Qualico Homes, they raised concerns that these regulations could force many of their sub-trades out of business. As the letter states, and I will read from it, it says: Many sub-trades operate as small independent businesses with two to ten employees and simply do not have the capital required to implement the proposed changes.

I remind the Minister of Labour that the Home Builders Association is predicting that these regulations could add up to \$30,000 to the cost of a new home. I ask the Minister of Labour again: Will she take the distinct nature of the residential construction industry into consideration and ensure they have separate regulations? That, Mr. Speaker, would be being fair and reasonable.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, these regulations have been in the public domain for a very long time. Our department is spending a lot of time meeting with people, having conversations with people, dialoguing with people, asking them for their recommendations. We will proceed with fair and practical recommendations around these regulations, and we will be in the Canadian mainstream when we are done. We will not have a mothball act like we had under their watch.

Economic Development Government Initiatives

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, what we will have is an act that will increase the cost of our—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will have an act that increases the cost of housing by \$30,000.

Mr. Speaker, the Chartered Accountants of Manitoba have referred to Manitoba's economy as lacklustre. The Business Council of Manitoba indicates that Manitoba taxes are uncompetitive. The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce in a survey received responses from 64 percent of the businesses indicating that their business would either perform worse or at the same level as they did the year before.

The fact of the matter is under this Government the economy is in a tailspin. I would ask the Minister of Finance what specific action he will take to make Manitoba competitive and to improve the provincial economy.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): The member from Fort Whyte in his analysis ignored the fact that we have among the lowest unemployment rates in the country right now. The member ignores the fact that even though the economy has dramatically slowed down in this last year, the growth in the Manitoba economy is actually above the Canadian average.

Of course, the member ignores the fact that we are the first government since the Second World War to reduce corporate income taxes, and I will further clarify what we have done in the next question.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, the minister knows the unemployment statistics are low because he ignores a large part of the workforce when those statistics are compiled. The truth of the matter is that jobs are not being created in Manitoba. In a December-to-December comparison, there were 286 000 jobs created in Canada. There were 400 less jobs in the province of Manitoba. It is about jobs. It is about hope. It is about the future, none of which is being created in this province because we are uncompetitive as a result of his policies of high taxation and unfair labour laws.

* (14:00)

I would ask the minister to describe to Manitobans what specific action plans he will set in place to make Manitoba competitive once again.

Mr. Selinger: The member asked me to describe what we have done to make Manitoba competitive. I am happy to do so. First of all, we have 27 percent more young people going to school than when these guys were around, post-secondary education. They are getting qualifications that will allow them to enter the labour market and get good-paying jobs.

I mentioned earlier we reduced the corporate income taxes, the first time since the Second World War. The member maybe forgets that we have reduced small business taxation rates by 43 percent. The member maybe forgets that we have increased the band of income for small business taxation from 200 to \$360,000, and we are going to take it up to \$400,000.

The member maybe forgets that we have among the highest participation rates in the labour force of any province in the country and, with the projects that we have on the books, more—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Loewen: The minister is dreaming in technicolour. He is living in La-La Land. The truth of the matter is, and he needs to listen to this and everybody on that side of the House needs to listen to this, Manitoba is the only province in Canada—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The truth of the matter is Manitoba is the only province in Canada where an average, you need to listen to this Mr. Minister, family spent more on gambling than they did on Christmas presents. That tells about our economy, more on gambling than they did on Christmas presents.

I would ask the minister if he could identify when the Doer government plans to get down to the real business of making Manitoba competitive and quit relying on the expansion of gambling as their major economic initiative.

Mr. Selinger: I tell you, Mr. Speaker, ever since we have entered into government, we work every day to make Manitoba a more affordable place to live with higher quality services. We have the fourth-highest personal disposable income in the country. The cost

of living in Manitoba is in the top first or second ranks all across the country for most family types.

We have improved the minimum wage by 16 percent. These gentlemen across the way let the people at the bottom languish for four years at a time. We have improved the minimum wage up to \$7 an hour and we now, for the first time since 1988, have the same purchasing power for those people that have to work at minimum wage.

As a matter of fact, disposable income for families in this province is among the best in the country. Our Autopac premiums are among the lowest. Our housing costs are among the lowest. Our hydro costs are among the lowest and our quality of life is among the highest.

CAIS Program Provincial Share

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): We have seen over the last year the devastation that has occurred in the livestock industry in this province and, not only are we seeing the devastation in the livestock industry, the Farm Product Price Index shows that farmers are in a huge crisis. The price changes over 2002 compared to 2003 show that devastation.

Grain prices have dropped almost 40 percent. Potato prices have dropped 27 percent. Special crops prices have dropped 25 percent, and on it goes, while costs have steadily increased. The nets of farmers in this province are zero minus for the first time in the history of this province.

When will the Government of Manitoba commit to sign on to the revised APF CAIS program, and when will we see that announcement?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Acting Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): It is certainly no secret that agriculture across Canada has been affected by factors such as BSE, the drought and others. But you know, Mr. Speaker, what can be taken from preliminary numbers anyway is that Manitoba is faring fairly well compared to other provinces. I know the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) works every day on behalf of our producers and is one of the most respected Agriculture ministers in all of the country.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, the farmers of this province do not trust this Government. The federal

government announced a \$1.2-billion transition program which supposedly the provinces were to sign on to and deliver 40 percent of. Yet the Province of Manitoba has refused to make its commitment of 40 percent to that program, which cost Manitoba farmers over \$120 billion.

In other words, they are \$120 billion behind in revenues compared to other provinces. When will this Government, when will this Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), commit to meeting their commitments to the farmers of this province to bring them on an even footing with the rest of the farmers in this country, to that 40% level?

Mr. Lemieux: The member opposite often refers to a lot of numbers, comparatively speaking, across the provinces how Manitoba fares. Let me just take a moment just to go through a couple of numbers that I have before me today.

Dealing with the Canada-Manitoba BSE Recovery Program, for example, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's portion in that, being 40 percent, is \$7.8 million. Manitoba's feeder assistance program is \$6.2 million; Manitoba's slaughter deficiency program, \$8.8 million; Manitoba's Drought Assistance Program, \$3.9 million; Manitoba's BSE Recovery Loans, over \$54 million; Manitoba Cull Animal Program, \$3.7 million; for a total of about \$82.8 million.

We have been putting more and more finances toward agriculture, comparatively speaking, than many, many other jurisdictions. This Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), we should be celebrating the fact that she fights so hard on behalf of our producers and is putting her money where her mouth is, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the minister finally admitted how wrong his Minister of Agriculture and his Premier (Mr. Doer) have been when they have constantly advertised \$180 million has been paid to livestock producers under their livestock support program.

Now he is saying it is down to \$82 million, and I think if you look at the real numbers will be down to less than half of that that has actually been paid out. These are programs announced but never paid. The last \$6-million program has yet to deliver a million, and that has been the program.

When will this Government meet its commitment and pay out and commit to the 40% participation in the CAIS program that is currently before this House and this Government for signature? When will he commit to that so our farmers can have some comfort that they can compete with the rest of the country of Canada and the U.S.?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the question the member was asking prior, only Alberta signed on to the extended coverage to date, but let me just take a moment to quote the Opposition. We hear this from the Opposition on a regular basis. One day, it is spend more. The next day, it is spend less.

Just a quick quote: deep spending cuts and if necessary budgetary deficit should also be applied to ensure the provincial beef industry survives, Mr. Penner, sorry, the MLA for Emerson, added. The Government should, if necessary, be willing to run a deficit, he said, insisting the collapse of the cattle industry would devastate the entire province.

This is an article, Mr. Speaker, that was in *The Carillon* newspaper. The member opposite wants us to run a deficit one day, the next day cut spending. They cannot make up their mind where they want to go. Our Minister of Agriculture knows where she wants to go. She supports the producers of this province, and they cannot stand it.

Health Care Facilities Bed Availability

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): ER overcrowding is a serious public health problem which has serious consequences, including patients dying. Lack of acute-care beds has been cited in the literature as the No. 1 reason for overcrowding in ERs. Yet, several months ago, 80 beds in Winnipeg hospitals were closed.

I would like to ask this Minister of Health: Can he tell us how many beds are currently closed in Winnipeg hospitals right now and the reason that they are closed?

* (14:10)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the largest number of beds in the history of the province of Manitoba that were ever closed was 1400. They were closed when the member was a

member of the government opposite; 1400 beds were taken out of service.

Mr. Speaker, we have put in place not only additional staff but additional resources to deal with the situation. The member cited something from a minister of Health of Ontario last week. She forgot to tell us that the minister of Health she was referring to was three ministers ago, and since that time, the government of Ontario adopted our hallway medicine plan to deal with a hallway medicine situation in Ontario.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health conveniently forgets that he has promised to open a hundred new beds to fix his problem of ER hallway patients, yet a few months ago there were 80 beds closed in Winnipeg hospitals.

Lack of hospital beds has been cited by the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians as the No. 1 reason for overcrowding in Winnipeg ERs. I would like to ask this Minister of Health if there is any move right now in Winnipeg hospitals to close any more beds.

Mr. Chomiak: When we announced our hallway reduction plan on November 22, 2000, pardon me, November 22, '99, we also announced and did open additional beds. But I find this astounding, Mr. Speaker, absolutely astounding that the member in Estimates advised me to close beds to save money in the health care system during the Estimates process, and said get on with it, the rest of the country is. You should utilize less beds.

That member was quoted in Hansard. I will find the Hansard. I have it in my files, Mr. Speaker, where the member urged me, she urged me to close more beds in our system. I might add that on yesterday's date, there were about four people in the hallways. In 1999, when that member was the assistant to the Minister of Health, there were over 20.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, well, the minister should mention that he has changed how hallway numbers are counted, and you can no longer compare

apples to oranges anymore, because those numbers are fudged.

Mr. Speaker, overcrowded ERs make patients suffer unnecessarily. Patients are not simply inconvenienced. They suffer in pain. They leave without their concerns being addressed. They are humiliated by toileting in the hallways, and sometimes, like Dorothy Madden, they fall through the cracks and die.

None of this has to happen, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to ask this Minister of Health today: Will he direct his ER task force to look into how a shortage of hospital beds or how the utilization of hospital beds is leading to the warehousing of patients in our ERs?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, members opposite closed 1400 beds. They closed Misericordia Hospital. They took out of circulation 1400 beds. That resulted in one of the most awful situations in the history of the province of Manitoba with the hallway situation, which is why we put in place our five-point hallway plan. I find it very interesting now that the member who advocated that we should close additional beds should be talking about beds.

Yes, we have an ER task force. Yes, it is looking at a variety including 25 additional nurses that are being staffed. Yes, it is looking at flow-through. Yes, it is looking at the fact that we are graduating 300 percent more nurses now in training than when members opposite were government. It is also making ongoing recommendations to improve the situation. Last week she wanted a computer system. This week she wants beds.

Education System Physical Education Curriculum

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, last fall at the annual meeting of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Bruce Brinkworth advocated strongly for more exercise for children and for mandatory daily quality physical education for K to Senior 4.

The Minister for Healthy Living, who was present, offered his strong support. I was pleased then to hear the minister providing his view of government policy. I presume the comments in the Premier's (Mr. Doer) speech over the weekend are a

reflection of the Premier's interest in looking at mandatory, daily, quality physical education for primary and secondary schools in Manitoba.

Will the Minister of Healthy Living indicate whether his Government supports the introduction of mandatory, daily, quality physical education for K to Senior 4 in Manitoba?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living): I think that it is very important not only to have active living in just schools, but it is important to have it across the spectrum. We need active living in early childhood centres and at home with young children. We need active living in schools. We also need active living throughout our entire system. I implore the business community. I implore all employers, all parents, everyone in the community to make sure that they keep becoming more and more active. I do not think it is one size fits all.

I think the Physical Activity Coalition of Manitoba is working on this issue. I am willing to meet with them and continue meeting with them to discuss this issue further.

Task Force on Tobacco Smoke Meeting Schedule

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the all-party task force on smoking held meetings in 12 communities around Manitoba. Not one of those meetings was in a First Nations community. This happened in spite of the fact that I requested and urged the chair of the task force to hold at least one of the meetings in a First Nations community.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) is now talking about an all-party task force to look at exercise and healthy living for Manitoba children. Will the Government provide assurance that any such all-party task force will hold meetings in communities throughout Manitoba including First Nations communities?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living): A very good question, and the answer: When you agreed as a member of the task force, we had given a list of where we were going to meet, and you agreed that as an all-party process you agreed to where we were going to meet, but, more importantly, we also took submissions from all Manitobans, through e-mail, through mail, et cetera. We received a number of submissions from across the province.

I think we have been on record of being an inclusive Government. We are on record going out into the community, not just staying in one community, but going out and listening to Manitobans. I think that the report that your party signed is a reflection of what we heard in the province, and I think we are moving forward on it.

Provincial Nominee Program Family Unification

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Immigration. The Provincial Nominee Program has proven to be a huge success since its inception back in 1998. That is in spite of the Government's inattention to properly resourcing that particular department.

If the Government were to stand back and look, they will know full well that the most successful immigration policy that a government could have would be based on some form of family reunification, encouraging family members from abroad to be able to come to Manitoba. Through time that has proven to be the most successful.

The Premier has said he wants 10 000. What we need is a more proactive government in recognizing what the Manitoba Liberal Party has recognized, the value of the family member.

I would ask the minister specifically: Will the minister recognize the importance of giving more points to the family members that want to be able to use the Provincial Nominee Program as a way to immigrate to our fine province?

* (14:20)

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I am absolutely delighted to tell the MLA from Inkster that this is something actually that we have considered. I would like to pay recognition to the previous Minister of Immigration, the MLA from Thompson, who is passionate about our immigration program. There is absolutely no question that when newcomers come to our province, if they have a family connection it provides the settlement and the support that they need to integrate into Manitoba. We will be making an announcement about our assessment criteria very shortly. I am sure the poster boy for immigration will be delighted.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

Following the Prayer on March 2, 2004, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) rose on a matter of privilege regarding comments spoken by the honourable Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale) concerning the Official Opposition and its position regarding ethanol legislation passed by the Government.

At the conclusion of his remarks, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader moved

"THAT this matter be investigated by the Speaker of the House and that the Speaker report back to this House on the specific passage and support by all parties of the ethanol legislation."

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) also offered advice to the Chair on this issue. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity; and second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House have been breached, in order to warrant putting the matter to the House.

Regarding the first condition of timeliness, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader asserted that he did raise the matter at the earliest opportunity, and I will accept the word of the honourable member.

Regarding the second condition, it appears to me what exists is a situation where remarks have been uttered that have caused offence to some members in the House. However, these remarks are based on a different interpretation of the same set of facts.

Beauchesne Citation 31(1) advises that a dispute arising between two members as to allegations of facts does not fulfil the conditions of parliamentary

privilege. Joseph Maingot, on page 223 of the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, states: A dispute between two members about questions of facts said in debate does not constitute a valid question of privilege because it is a matter of debate.

Regarding Manitoba practice, in 1980, Speaker Graham ruled that a dispute between two members as to allegations of facts did not constitute a breach of privilege.

I therefore rule, with the greatest respect, that the matter does not satisfy the conditions of a prima facie case of privilege. I would, however, like to remind members that, from time to time, our comments may unfortunately have the effect of causing offence in others. Even if the offence caused is unintended, it is important to remember that words can be very powerful, and can be understood by people in different ways. Yes, debate and discussion in the House can get heated, but it is important to keep our comments and contributions temperate and worthy of the important parliamentary institution that we all belong to.

* * *

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the ruling, and, with the greatest of respect, I know that words can be very powerful in this House when they are used. But when a minister of the Crown stands up and makes a statement that is untrue, that is not uttering or muttering. That is a statement. It is on that basis that I challenge your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in support of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the ruling of the Chair, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Derkach: Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Aglugub, Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Brick, Chomiak, Dewar, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, McGifford, Melnick, Mihychuk, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Rondeau, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Selinger, Smith, Struthers.

Nays

Cummings, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurshou, Hawranik, Loewen, Mitchelson, Murray, Penner, Reimer, Rocan, Rowat, Schuler, Taillieu.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 27, Nays 16.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege. I understand that there are two elements that qualify for a matter of privilege: One, that it was brought to this House at the earliest opportunity; second, that it inhibits the member's ability to function in the duties as an MLA and as a critic. I will make the case that both of those have been met.

This stems from earlier on today during Question Period. I got up and asked the minister a question. The minister refused to stand, which is the Government's prerogative. They may have anybody stand who they wish to have stand.

In my comments, I said if the minister was not prepared to answer questions, perhaps she should resign. Later on in the hallway the Minister of

Labour (Ms. Allan) went on at great length indicating that somehow this was a bullying tactic and was sexism on behalf of this member and this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first opportunity I have had to raise the matter in the House, so I believe I have met that condition. Second of all, I have absolutely no say in whom the Premier (Mr. Doer) appoints as minister. The Premier does not consult with the Opposition, and if members opposite do not feel that this is a serious issue, I can sit down. We can wait until they quiet down, Mr. Speaker, because I actually do take this very seriously. So perhaps you want to call the House to order?

This side of the House does not have the right to choose ministers. That is the Government's right. So far the Premier of this province has appointed two ministers: one former member of this House, Becky Barrett, who was minister until the election called in 2003; then an interim minister, Acting Minister of Labour. The Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was appointed Minister of Labour until a Cabinet shuffle came about after the provincial election, at which time the second minister, the Member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), was appointed.

As a member of the Opposition, over the years we have done and I have done what we are supposed to do, try to keep the Government accountable. Strong opposition supposedly makes good government. On numerous occasions this member has taken the opportunity to call for ministers to step down because they were not fulfilling their duties. To mention a few: Minister of Lotteries; two ministers of Education; Minister of Health; Minister of Conservation and others. That is something that has happened throughout the history of Parliament.

If we would go back hundreds of years, we would find that that is what takes place. Members in the Opposition get up; they ask sometimes very difficult questions. That is our role. That is our right. That is our responsibility as the Opposition. If we feel the answers are not appropriate, we challenge the Government. We do get into heated debates.

At all times, we as the Opposition are supposed to be vigilant and are supposed to challenge. If we find that the answers are not there or ministers are not answering or we do not find that the answers are

appropriate or correct, we ask for those ministers to resign. That is one of the roles and responsibilities of the Opposition.

I was doing what the people of Manitoba elected me to do, to be effective Opposition. If there are ministers who are not comfortable with that, and there are individuals who get elected to this House, and I know in 1999, I know actually two individuals who got elected and were not that comfortable with the way Question Period works, but that is the way it is.

We have hundreds of years of tradition in this House. For a member of this House then to go out into the hallway and, after the first time being challenged as a minister, for the first time being challenged by the Opposition, to go out into the hallway and somehow suggest that it was anything but the duty of the Opposition to try to keep a government accountable, that somehow this was a sexist approach to governance is inappropriate. It hampers and it harms the way we run the business of this Chamber.

Basically what the minister is saying is that the Opposition has no right, no right to ask her tough questions, or to ask her to resign. That completely flies in the face of parliamentary tradition, a tradition that far, far exceeds any time that we have spent in this House. It goes on for hundreds of years, and it is basically the crux of the way we run things here.

* (15:30)

This is how opposition keeps government accountable. Yes, we ask for ministers to resign. We have not just asked for one gender or the other gender to resign. I think we have been asking for those individuals' resignations who, we felt, were not living up to the standard that we feel they should be living up to.

Then to go out into the hallway and to somehow claim that this is something other than politics, I think, is wrong. I think it is hurtful to this House. I think the minister has hurt what the Opposition was elected to do. Basically the minister has said you can ask anybody any questions, but just not this minister, because if you ask this minister questions, if you ask this minister to resign, you are being sexist. I do not think that is appropriate, Mr. Speaker.

I think the minister should reconsider, should reflect on our parliamentary tradition. Think about what it is that we do here. Think about how this functions, how Question Period functions. I point out to you, Mr. Speaker, it is called Question Period, not question and answer period. It is the opportunity for the Opposition to ask questions. Yes, in time, to ask for resignations. That is what that is all set out for.

To go out in the hallway and to somehow say that there was another motive, I think, is really, really unfortunate. It is unfortunate because those tags and labels are hurtful. As the father of two young daughters who, by the way, I back and I support, I stand day in, day out behind my daughters and I tell them you can be anything and everything you want to be. Then to have somebody, a minister of the Crown, a representative of Her Majesty's government go outside in the hallway and say how dare you ask a question, you are obviously a sexist if you ask me a question, if you ask me to resign.

You know what? That is so hurtful to this Opposition. It is so hurtful to the critics and what we are trying to do here and trying to keep the Government accountable. The minister should reflect, and she should apologize for that and clear up the matter.

I move, seconded by the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), that this matter be now referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections and be reported in this House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before handing the paper back, we no longer have a committee of—Legislative Affairs is the committee.

Mr. Schuler: I move, seconded by the Member for Minnedosa, that this matter be now referred to the Committee on Legislative Affairs and be reported in this House.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing any of the members to speak, I would remind the House that contributions at this time by honourable members are to be limited to strictly relevant comments as to whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity, and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the timeliness of the matter is

not in question, but whether it is a prima facie matter of privilege is one that we certainly have serious concerns as to how members opposite or the individual member can suggest that this is a matter of privilege.

I just quote from *Beauchesne* Citation 24: "The privileges of Parliament are rights which are 'absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers.'" Then on 27: "A question of privilege ought rarely to come up in Parliament." Then, going on to the time-honoured and tested attributes of a matter of privilege, Citation 31: "A dispute arising between two Members, as to allegation of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege."

Then, Mr. Speaker, I conclude just by the most obvious obstacle for this being advanced as a matter of privilege, and that is 31(3): "Statements made outside the House by a Member may not be used as the basis for a question of privilege."

This is no question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. In conclusion, I will just say that the member opposite has been dishing it out for years, heckling members of this House. What is good for the goose is good for the gander.

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

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I know there are other members who want to give you advice on this matter, but let me just briefly say that I am somewhat disappointed by the House Leader who does cite citations in *Beauchesne*.

The fact that a matter of privilege should be rarely used and only used in matters of a very serious nature is something I think all members of this House and all members on this side of the House would agree, Mr. Speaker. If we have stooped to such a low level as members of this Legislature that we can, without thought and very carelessly because we are being attacked on principle and on issues that are important to Manitoba, step out, and in front of the media, accuse a member of this House as being sexist, as being a bully because that member asked a difficult question and asked for a resignation of a minister really tells a great deal about the quality of the people who are making those accusations.

I regret to reflect on a minister in that way, Mr. Speaker, but we have an honourable member in this House who is a critic for a portfolio who has a family, who has a spouse, who has daughters, and the last thing in the world that this member would want to do is have himself labelled as someone who is sexist and a bully only because he is doing his job as a critic and as a member of the Legislature of this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that is the context in which this matter needs to be considered. Yes, we can go by the letter of the law as it is prescribed in *Beauchesne* or any other book, but this goes beyond that. This goes to the integrity of the individual who is making that accusation who has the responsibility of being a minister of the Crown of this province. It talks about the quality, it talks about the integrity, and really talks about the truth.

Mr. Speaker: Before I recognize the honourable Member for River East, I think I have heard sufficient argument. If the honourable member is rising because she feels there is some point that has not been touched upon, I will hear her briefly.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I regret to have to rise on this issue, but as a woman in this Legislature and as someone who has served 11 years as a minister of the Crown, I have experienced several ordeals, have had some pretty tough questioning from members of the opposition, as did all of my colleagues who, on many, many occasions when we were in government, were asked to resign by the opposition.

I recall specifically the Minister of Justice, Rosemary Vodrey, who the now-Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh) was pretty vicious with from time to time in his questioning, and he felt very strongly in his arguments. I do not ever recall that minister of the Crown, under the pressure that she was under, going out into the hall and calling the then-critic for Justice a bully or a sexist because he felt that he was doing his job in representing his point of view here in this Legislature.

I also remember when the member from Flin Flon orchestrated a rally on the front steps, that, again, Rosemary Vodrey was involved in. I do not remember her coming back, and security had to be called in to protect the minister. I do not recall Rosemary Vodrey coming to this House or stepping

out in the hall and calling the Member for Flin Flon a bully or a sexist. He felt that he was doing his job.

* (15:40)

I am extremely concerned as a woman that this kind of an issue sets us back, as women in the Legislature, when all of us are looking to try to encourage more women to get involved. It is not an easy thing to do, to stand up and have to defend yourself and be criticized. It is not. It is very tough for all of us, but we were elected and we are appointed by premiers to serve in certain positions. We have to live up to that and be honourable members in this Legislature, and we have to take the lumps sometimes.

We also heard the Minister of Energy stand up and call policies that I implemented policies that hit women over the heads with sticks. Those kinds of things do happen, and we have to take that in our stride recognizing that is part of the process in Parliament, in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat disconcerted to hear the arrogance of the minister today when she stood up in an answer to the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), when he legitimately has brought issues around immigration to this House on a regular basis. She stood up in her answer and called him the poster boy of immigration. I think the Member for Inkster should have taken some offence to that. I think that all members in this House are honourable members. I think the Member for Inkster could have gone out in the hall and said that was a sexist remark, that he was being bullied by the Minister of Immigration (Ms. Allan). It works both ways. We all have to stand up with dignity in this Legislature and represent our points of view.

Sometimes it gets ugly, quite frankly, and I have experienced that in my 18 years in this Legislature. It is part of the process and I would hope that this matter would be considered very seriously. I respect my colleague, the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), and I would not want the message to be out there that he is a sexist or that he is a bully as a result of what happened here in the Legislature today. That does a great disservice to any of us who want to hold this profession as a profession that we should be proud of and that we have honoured for many years in this province. I just wanted to add those comments.

Mr. Speaker: I just want to remind all honourable members at this point, when members rise on privilege, it is to give the Speaker advice on eventually the ruling that I will have to make. It is supposed to give me advice. When you rise on privileges, it is not the time to be debating the substance of the issue. It is to convince the Speaker on the privilege. The substance of the issue is if the ruling comes back or the ruling is to debate it, but right now it is to convince the Speaker, to give the Speaker advice and not to debate the substance of the issue. I just wanted to remind all honourable members of that.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): First of all, this matter is clearly not a matter of privilege. The comments that were referenced by the mover of the motion were made outside of the House. I think very clearly, technically, that is not the case.

I do want to put on the record, however, Mr. Speaker, that I think it is important to recognize in this House that we have an atmosphere at times that develops which I think is unfortunate. We all have to be open to considering what that atmosphere is, comments that are made and behaviour that occurs in this House.

I will put on the record that I watched for four years as Becky Barrett was minister. I, quite frankly, at times felt very strongly that she received the kind of treatment that I have never received in this House. I will put that on the record because I think it is very important that we acknowledge that fact.

By the way, I was also Minister of Labour, not acting, full Minister of Labour from June until the Cabinet shuffle, so I know it is a very difficult portfolio. But I also want to put on the record that I think if we are going to improve the atmosphere, make people feel at home in this Chamber, that it is very important we also respect the right of members to express their views in terms of how they feel in terms of the treatment that is in this place.

I realize that those may be difficult discussions at times, but I can tell you, as I have watched the advancement of women, the increased diversity in this province, much of that does not happen without some very open discussion about the way people are treated and, in fact, whether people are treated in a different way because of gender and because of

background. I remember matters being raised in this House. There are precedents in terms of that regarding racist policies.

There was a ruling that was very controversial in the 1990s with former Speaker Dacquay. I want to put on the record, and I think this is really important, that I think we have some way to go, and I speak from some experience in this House, in establishing an environment in which we see certain members not subjected to that kind of treatment. I am not just talking about comments on the record as well, because I have seen comments made to members repeatedly off the record as well.

So we have some work to do. I say that because I also think that one of the key elements that we have to recognize here is until we can identify the degree to which people feel that comments made in this House are applied equally and in fact perhaps in a more civil way. I am one that debates as strongly as anyone else, but I have sat here and seen people, and I even heard comments again today, Becky Barrett's name mentioned again. I will put on the record that Becky Barrett was an excellent minister of the Crown, and, quite frankly, I felt very sad that I saw the kind of treatment she received.

There may have been other members as well over the years. In the end, what we have to do as members of the Legislature, I think, is go a long way to treat each other with greater dignity.

I appreciate you will now have to take the ruling on this matter. I realize it is going to be ruled out of order based on our precedents in this House, but maybe we should all consider our comments at various times and aim to improve the way we treat each other in this House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Privilege is a very, very serious matter. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members. When members rise on privilege, it is a very, very serious matter. It is one of the times that can stop any business of the House, except when the vote is taking place. That is how serious it is. I need to be able to hear every word that is spoken today in order to make my judgment.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I would like to provide some advice to the Speaker on the issue at hand. As a new member of the Legislature as well as the critic for the Status of Women, I was quite

surprised by the statements that were made outside of the House by the member of St. Vital. I guess I question the reasons for it.

Working outside in the private sector, your work ethic, your ability to do the job is always based on that. If you were not able and not capable of handling questions or dealing with the issues at hand, I do not feel that it has anything to do with gender. I think that, as being part of a team and being a part of the process, it should have nothing to do with gender, it should have everything to do with your capabilities and abilities to do the job.

Unfortunately, the comments made against the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), I think, were unwarranted. He is a team player. He is one of the great mentors that I have as a new MLA, and I truly appreciate his insight into the women's issues. Being a parent of two children, I think he has a great deal of respect and understanding of the issues facing women.

* (15:50)

I think the comments made by the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) also share great insight into being a minister and how to handle that in an appropriate and professional manner. I think that has a lot to do with the issue at hand as the professionalism that was presented. This type of tactic, in my opinion, puts the women's movement back. I think we have to be open and be able to share and take the comments and suggestions made within the room and move forward with them.

As a new MLA, I asked a question in the House at the beginning of my term in here, and I was challenged by the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) on my ability to ask the question. I could easily have gone out of the House and made comment about it being a sexist remark, or a mark against a woman who is trying to do her job.

We need women in the process here, and I think by making a comment like that, it will definitely scare women away from wanting to become involved in the public process, public office, and I am very discouraged by what I have seen here today.

Mr. Speaker: Before I continue on, before I recognize the honourable member, I would just like to once again remind members, at this point of the

member rising on privilege, to give the Speaker advice on *prima facie*, at its earliest opportunity. There have been times when we are getting right into the actual debating part. If that is the ruling that comes down, that will come later, the opportunity to debate it. But right now it is to give advice to the Speaker on the first opportunity on whether this is a *prima facie* case.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I would just like to add my advice to the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat). I feel this minister should realize that the Opposition here today is not addressing the person, he is addressing the office of the minister. I fear that she has taken it personally, and I feel that is unfortunate for all women in Manitoba.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, in just thinking about the matter of privilege, I can appreciate that it was brought up at the earliest time possible. But I want to keep my comments very short, and say that I know that, as MLAs, we all carry a certain amount of prestige to our positions, and quite often, if an MLA or a city councillor makes a statement in a hallway, or in a public forum, we might be quoted.

Nothing is, in my opinion, more damaging to the integrity of an individual than if you are called a racist or you are called a sexist, or anything of that nature, because it is very damaging.

I know I would be very hurt if a headline of that nature appeared against me, whether it is in a newspaper or on a radio station, and that is the reason why we have to approach this. Whether it happens inside the Chamber or outside the Chamber, it does have an impact, an impact that, quite frankly, is very difficult to overcome, because what might appear to be a big headline at the time of the occurrence, it might be small print, if it is printed, if there is an apology that comes at a later time.

I rise more on a cautionary note that we have to be very careful in terms of what it is that we say, both inside the Chamber and outside the Chamber, because of the ramifications. I, for one, would not want to be labelled anything of that nature. I would rather hear the arguments and have the accusation be made inside this Chamber, and then debated so that at least there is a fair opportunity for me to clear my name.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I appreciate your allowing me to put a couple of phrases in advice on this debate.

Very often, and it is starting to happen again in this session, the good will of all members of this House is needed for the House to function properly. The debate that we have in here, we all, including myself, from time to time, say some hateful and rather disparaging things. But very often, the same person we might have said those things to, we can go out afterwards and have a meaningful discussion, knowing that it was part of the thrust and the to-and-fro of this House.

When something crosses the line, and I, sitting right where the current Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) is, crossed the line one day on one of the colleagues on this side. He rightfully leapt to his feet and berated me right on the spot, and was about to ask for the same sanctions as are being asked for today. I was able to rise and say it was unintentional. It was not meant to be personal, and I withdrew the remarks.

If the government of the day—this goes beyond advice on this matter—expects the ongoing cooperation of the Opposition to do the business that needs to be done of this House, we need to restore ourselves to some semblance of what the difference is between heat of the moment comments that are made in this House, and what are meant to be hateful, divisive and punishing remarks made in a forum where we are not able to defend ourselves, sometimes.

My colleague has now left, but the only area where he can defend himself, other than in this Chamber, is in the media events or interviews that might follow. We all know, in this House, what kind of a circus that can be, or how difficult that might be and how unreasonable it is to expect someone to have to defend himself in those circumstances, when there is a venue in here where this can be dealt with. That is partly why this side takes this matter so vehemently seriously. It needs to be dealt with, and I know you will, Mr. Speaker, by all of us as quickly as possible if we are to do the business of this province.

Mr. Speaker, you have only known me part of the time that I have been in this Legislature. I have never, in 18 years, risen to speak on a matter such as

this. I feel moved to speak today because of the reasons that I just gave.

Mr. Speaker: A matter of privilege is a serious concern, so I am going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities. I will return to the House with a ruling.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Canadian Power Toboggan Championships

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): It is with great pleasure that I report to this Legislature on behalf of all residents of the constituency of Lac du Bonnet as to the success of the 42nd annual Canadian Power Toboggan Championships races in Beausejour this past weekend. One hundred and seven snowmobile racers converged on Beausejour from points all across North America to participate in the races and to try to become the Canadian champion.

Approximately 4000 racing fans came to Beausejour to witness some of the finest snowmobile racing this country has to offer. Beausejour has hosted the Canadian championship races for 42 consecutive and successful years. There is no other community in North America the size of Beausejour which has hosted a major, national sporting event for 42 years in a row. This speaks to the commitment and the resolve of the volunteers in Beausejour, the Rural Municipality of Brokenhead, Tyndall, Garson and other surrounding communities, who have ensured the continuation and the outstanding success of the races.

Hundreds of committed volunteers are required each year to hold the races. Volunteers provide an identity to every community. The identity provided to Beausejour, Brokenhead, Tyndall and Garson by the volunteers at the CPTC races over the years is one of caring, compassion and community spirit. For that, I thank them.

Congratulations to Tom Garbolinski, the president of the CPTC and the other executive members, namely, Steve Sobering, Dale Neduzak, Robert Small, Lynn Chalus, Linda Kaatz and 24 other directors for organizing "The Greatest Show on Snow" for 2004.

The race began 42 years ago when the Beausejour Lions Club hosted and organized the first race,

and since then it has evolved into an event with massive community involvement. The Beausejour Lions Club still participates by providing food and concessions to the racers and the pit crews. Clarence Baker, a former MLA for the Lac du Bonnet constituency and a former snowmobile racer at the event, still volunteers and offers advice when needed. His son, Andy Baker, also a former racer at the event, is one of the directors of the CPTC. Without the involvement of families like the Bakers, and there are many such families in our area, the races could not be the success that it has been.

Margaret de Kock

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to inform the House about one of Flin Flon's and indeed Manitoba's most dedicated literacy professionals, Margaret de Kock.

Margaret was recently honoured with the Lieutenant-Governor's medal for literacy. She was presented with this award in recognition of her exceptional contribution to literacy in Manitoba. Margaret has served as co-ordinator and instructor of the Community Adult Learning Centre in Flin Flon since its inception in 1992. She retired from the position in December 2003. Aside from her involvement with the Community Adult Learning Centre, Margaret has helped develop the local family literacy program called Read to Me, a program which is still going strong.

She has also spent many hours working as a volunteer researcher on an Aboriginal grammar game called Kistikewin Itiniwok. In addition, Margaret was a leader in the formation of the Northern Literacy Coalition, which enhanced the networking of practitioners and learners in northern Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, in the information society in which we now live, high literacy levels are essential. Illiteracy is often connected to ill health and poverty. Illiteracy affects all of us negatively. Studies have shown that people with low literacy levels receive lower salaries and experience greater unemployment than the average worker. Low literacy can even impact on health because it can lead to misreading prescriptions. Illiteracy tends to perpetuate over generations. We need to stop this negative cycle. Margaret de Kock is one of those unsung heroes and heroines who have worked selflessly on the front line of literacy education.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to Margaret de Kock's dedication and commitment to literacy programs, the quality of life for many northern Manitobans has greatly improved. I wish Margaret and her husband Dennis well, and once again, on behalf of our community, thank and recognize her for the sterling job she has done over many years.

Manipogo Festival

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege today to speak about the fourth annual Manipogo Festival held in St. Laurent on March 6.

Manitoba is a great place to live. It is full of history and diverse culture. Travelling from one end of the Interlake to the other, from the north to the south and east to the west, one will never get bored experiencing the heritage of the various communities and the small-town hospitality.

* (16:00)

It was a privilege to be invited to the Métis winter festival to experience their warm hospitality and proud culture. The reality of the inventiveness of the ordinary Canadians was driven home. The awesome display of 15 bombardiers was an impressive parade.

The Métis people have made a significant contribution to the culture and heritage of the Interlake region. Moreover, it is through the efforts of many hardworking individuals from St. Laurent and area that the history of the Métis people has been preserved for future generations.

Community members have donated not only personal possessions but also stories that otherwise would have been lost in the community without taking steps to preserve them. That these treasures will be enshrined in the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., is a credit to their vision and validates their historic significance to Manitoba.

Remembering our history shapes our view of the future and the probable creation of a Métis Interpretive Centre in St. Laurent and will be an important step to preserving the Métis history as a learning tool for their children and grandchildren.

For an educational and inspirational experience, I would encourage any Manitoban, for that matter,

any Canadian, to experience the Manipogo winter festival in St. Laurent.

La Francophonie

Ms. Theresa Oswald (Seine River): Le 20 mars est une journée de fête internationale pour la Francophonie. L'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) a été fondée pour promouvoir la langue française et les valeurs qu'elle représente dans chaque pays particulier. L'OIF, qui au début comptait 22 pays membres, comprend maintenant 56 pays et états.

Tous les ans, à l'occasion de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie, 170 millions de locuteurs à travers le monde célèbrent la langue française. C'est un moment de fierté pour la communauté internationale de francophones et de francophiles qui reconnaît le rôle de la Francophonie dans le développement de la démocratie et le combat pour la diversité culturelle et linguistique. Étant donné que le Canada est membre de la Francophonie et que beaucoup de Manitobains et de membres de ma circonscription s'expriment dans cette langue, il me fait plaisir de reconnaître l'importance de cette journée internationale.

De plus, chaque jour dans la circonscription de la Rivière-Seine, on encourage l'usage du français et on le célèbre à l'École Saint-Germain, à l'École Julie-Riel, à l'École Christine-Lespérance ainsi qu'au Collège Jeanne-Sauvé.

Comme nous vivons dans une province qui met en valeur la langue française, il me fait plaisir de célébrer et de souligner cette journée spéciale, la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Translation

The 20th of March is the international day of celebration of la Francophonie. The international organization of la Francophonie was founded to promote the French language and the values with which it is associated in each particular country. The organization, initially consisting of 22 member countries, now includes 56 countries and states.

Each year on the international day of la Francophonie, 170 million people around the world who speak French celebrate their common language. It is a moment of pride for the international community of

Francophones and Francophiles. It affirms and celebrates the role of la Francophonie in the development of democracy the struggle for cultural and linguistic diversity. Since Canada is a member of la Francophonie and many of my constituents and many Manitobans share this language, I am pleased to recognize the importance of this international day.

Further, in the constituency of Seine River, the use of French is encouraged and celebrated every day at École Saint-Germain, École Julie-Riel, École Christine-Lespérance and at Collège Jeanne-Sauvé.

As we live in a province that promotes the French language, I am pleased to mark and to celebrate this special international day of la Francophonie.

Inkster Constituent Concerns

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the most valuable resource we have as MLAs is our constituents. As in the past, once again last year I requested my constituents to express to me their opinions. Over 350 did just that by returning a questionnaire that I in good part personally dropped off. I will often refer to the results when I comment on issues here in the Chamber.

But for now I want to share with the Premier and others interested, MLAs, some of the highlights: 75 percent support a province-wide ban on smoking in all public indoor buildings. That speaks well for the all-party task force report. Only 22 percent felt that the best health care possible is available to them. Worse yet, only 19 percent believe our health care system is better today than it was in 1999. Wow, think about that one.

Sixty-two percent oppose any form of user fee or deductible on essential health care services. We are trying to get tougher on drinking and driving. Well, 72 percent support a minimum 10-year licence suspension for a driver caught drinking and driving for a second time.

A clear message was given on Mr. Doer's policy on using Hydro as a cash grab: 88 percent said no.

It is my intention to debate these and many other issues inside the Chamber in the coming months.

Mr. Speaker: Before moving on, once again I would like to remind honourable members, when making reference to other members to address ministers by

the portfolio they hold and members by their constituency, a reminder to all members.

MATTERS OF GRIEVANCE

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I am rising on a grievance today, regrettably, Mr. Speaker, because I feel very strongly about how this House functions. From time to time, as has been alluded to in the Matter of Privilege that was just raised, members in this House tend to make comments that might be hurtful, that might be off the mark, that might in fact be distasteful to the decorum of this House and that might be offensive to members in this Chamber.

But the good nature and the honourable character of every member in this House are such that when we do make that error, when we do make a mistake, we have the sense of good judgment to rise in our place and apologize or withdraw the remarks that we have made. If this House is going to function and if we are going to move the agenda of the people of this province ahead, it requires the co-operation of both sides of the House.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I have been here for 18 years-plus. During that period of time I have watched how members in this House have conducted themselves. I have been a part of every bit of banter and every bit of criticism that I can sometimes muster to throw across the House, but if I do it in a way where it is going to hurt the integrity and the personality and reflect on an individual and it has been brought to my attention, from time to time I have stood in my spot and apologized to the member for those remarks.

A couple of examples come to mind. One of those examples, I will have to refer to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), because the Minister of Health, as an individual, as a member of this Chamber, as a person is probably as concerned about the health and welfare of Manitobans as any other individual is in this Chamber.

Sometimes I have gone overboard, and I am guilty of that. I have stood in my place and apologized for it, where instead of attacking the office of the Minister of Health and about his job that he is doing, I have attacked him as a person. That is wrong. So, when I do that, I am not afraid to stand in my place and apologize to the member and to this House for having done that.

* (16:10)

Today I rise on a grievance because of what I am witnessing this Government and members of this Government doing. On March 1, the minister who is responsible for Technology—and the reason this offends me so much is because not only is he a minister of the Crown, he is also a minister of the cloth.

Besides that, Manitobans would view him as being someone who has integrity and someone who by virtue of his position commands some honour, some respect and indeed commands that as a member of this House.

Mr. Speaker, on March 1, the minister stood in this House. After having gone through a fairly easy debate on the ethanol legislation and having that legislation passed in a period of two weeks in this House—from the introduction of the legislation to the passage of the legislation was a period of eight sitting days. That is probably a record in this House in terms of when a bill is introduced and when it is passed.

Even if that were a period of fourteen days, and perhaps it was longer than just the eight days, maybe it was fourteen days, but regardless of the time frame in terms of one or two days here or there, the issue is that this piece of legislation was passed in record time.

The minister has to acknowledge some things. One is that he came to the Opposition almost cap in hand, asking for the co-operation of the Opposition to pass this legislation because the Government of the province was in difficulty because they had indeed made a commitment to pass this legislation to people who were looking at projects of ethanol across this province, but they were caught short because of an election campaign, because of not calling the House back in, whereby the federal government was prepared to announce sums of money for projects across Canada. Before Manitoba could qualify for any of that, we had to have legislation passed in this province regarding ethanol and its use by consumers.

It was that argument that convinced us that we owed it to the people of Manitoba to go along with the hasty passage of this legislation. We even allowed for, if you like, the circulation of the

contents of the bill before that bill was introduced in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, that is very abnormal, because that in itself was a matter that was raised as a matter of privilege against me when I inadvertently, when members of my staff inadvertently, when I was minister, happened to share some contents of a bill with a member before that bill was tabled in this House. Yet, on this circumstance, when this Government found itself in difficulty, we agreed to waive some of those rules of the House to allow, on behalf of Manitobans, this legislation to come forward.

During the committee stage we had several presentations made to the members of the committee. The minister was present in the chair when those presentations were made. During that period of time we on this side of the House indicated our agreement in principle with the bill. The minister, immediately following the presentations to the committee and even in his closing remarks, if you will review Hansard, indicated his appreciation of the Opposition supporting the hasty passage of this legislation. After the committee was adjourned the member came over to all of the members of the committee who were on the opposite side of the bench and thanked us for our support of him and of this legislation.

Now, the reason I say this is a serious issue is because the minister, who has responsibility to all Manitobans, came back to this House on March 1, and what did he say in this House? He was responding to a question from the member from Brandon East, a member of the Government, standing up and asking a question on ethanol production. The minister responsible for ethanol, the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale), stood in his place in this House and he said, among other things: "I am also pleased that we are continuing to work with Commercial Alcohols and another company, Outlook Resources, in regard to further plants that may develop in Manitoba. I simply would regret that the Opposition did not support this legislation and work with us to develop this industry in a more effective manner."

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is an untruth. When I talk to my family, when my children were growing up, I tried to teach them the importance of being good citizens. Like any other parent in this Chamber, we tried to instil in our children the importance of being truthful, of being honest, having integrity and respect and dignity for all other people.

I regret that the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale), who, I must reiterate again, is also a minister of the cloth, a member who stands in the church pulpit, at the church pulpit on Sundays and preaches to Manitobans, preaches to people, preaches to a congregation about such things as the Ten Commandments, about such things as the Bible, about such things as truth, would stand in this House and knowingly make a statement that does not in any way reflect, resemble, parallel the truth. That is what I find so offensive.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at Hansard, at the vote on the bill, it says that a member called for the vote on this bill to be on division. We have lived through this before, and I want to remind the House and all Manitobans that we did not make an issue of this bill on the vote on MTS when it was sold. But, if you look at Hansard, the vote on MTS was passed unanimously.

What does that mean, Mr. Speaker, in the true sense of the word? That means there was no opposition to the bill. But have we accused the then-opposition the charge led by the member from Thompson that they were in support of the legislation, because the bill passed unanimously? No.

We were much more honest with Manitobans than that. We knew that the Opposition was completely and vehemently opposed to that legislation. But, if you look at Hansard, and I could quote that back to the member from Thompson and now Minister of Water, to the now House Leader, to the Premier, to say that we were the ones who passed the sale of MTS, but it was passed unanimously in this House.

But what does that say about us? What does that say about members in this House?

Mr. Speaker, you came down with a ruling on this issue today, and you ruled from past practice. You ruled because you take members at their word, because you find all members in this House honourable. And so I may disagree with your ruling. But one thing I have to give credit for is that you have looked at this from a perspective of integrity, past practice and considering that all members in this Chamber are honourable.

* (16:20)

So, Mr. Speaker, I cannot disagree with you on the basis of that principle. What I had thought for one moment was that the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology would have had enough integrity that he would have said, all right, I am going to stand in my place after this ruling. I am going to be honest with the members in this Chamber, and I will simply withdraw those remarks, because I know, in fact, that that was not the case.

Mr. Speaker, just to show that, in fact, there is some proof of that, the NDP on their Web site for a while had the fact that the Conservative Party did not support the ethanol legislation. After I raised the matter in this House, and after we had the debate in this House, the NDP party did withdraw that piece on their Web site that says we did not support the legislation. At least I give their party credit that they have the integrity to be honest.

Mr. Speaker, this caucus of the NDP is leading me to wonder how this House can function in the future in a way in which there could be some co-operation, in which we can move the agenda of the people of Manitoba in a positive and forward fashion.

Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that I have been very adamant about the fact that we have to change the way in which we do business in this House, that we have to move the agenda of the people of Manitoba ahead, but when you have no co-operation it makes it extremely difficult.

I thank you for allowing me the time to put those remarks on the record, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, the discussion that is occurring this afternoon is certainly distressing to yourself and to most members, I would suggest, of this Chamber. But, in rising on a matter of grievance, I am more interested in some of the matters that my colleague just touched on, in terms of the fact that we continually receive from the now-Premier the overture that we should have an all-party committee. We have just come through that on the smoking bill. It is an all-party committee, it is a new way of doing business, it is a new way of doing politics, it is co-operative politics. From time to time those of us who are a little sceptical, we say, yes, and we will all hold hands and go dancing off into sunset. If you can see me and the now-Premier (Mr. Doer) holding hands with the Member for Thompson (Mr.

Ashton) dancing off into the sunset, then you have got a more imaginative mind than I do, because I just cannot even imagine that happening.

In some respects that is what the Premier (Mr. Doer) is talking about when he suggests that we need to be doing business differently. Then he talks about all-party committees, and when we reference all-party committees, there are a couple examples that have happened in the last decade.

A couple of notable examples: One is the smoking bill discussion that flowed from the initiative from my colleague from Carman; the other was Meech Lake. In both cases the public had every right to have input in that manner. Then, as the crunch came, were we able to hold hands and cross that threshold together? Well, Meech Lake, it did not happen. There are other examples of where in this House when we are talking about doing business differently—I think the public does want us to do business differently. In many respects what we saw today and what we have seen from time to time recently is we are all talking the talk, but are we able to walk the walk?

I am going to speak later, as is my right, on the non-smokers rights as encompassed in the proposed bill of the Government, 21. But in the sense that the public has had an all-party group that has been a travelling road show, go out and solicit input and receive some good input, both pro and con, then we have got a report that presumably reflects what the committee found.

Maybe I am overly suspicious, having been a politician for as long as I have when you include the years that I was a school trustee. But the fact is when the Premier stands up at the municipal convention in Brandon, and he has got 1100, maybe 1200 people out in front of him and he says: I do not mind a cigarette and a beer, I think that is a good thing. I have really got to give credit to my colleague the Conservative member from Carman. He is trying to milk both sides of the issue.

When you are talking about trying to do politics a different way, then I suggest that that is not the way you get all-party support, because we all know that this is a controversial issue and needs to be decided on principle and needs to be decided in a way that does the most good for the least amount of harm that it causes to people that might consider

themselves to be negatively impacted. Some of the ones who are negatively impacted, it is not directly related to health, it is related to the health of their business that they have built up based on certain known rules. When those rules are suddenly and arbitrarily changed by society, then they have a right to be offended and be concerned.

I have a neighbour, and I want to put this in the context of new politics. He and I have been philosophically divergent since we were 18 years old, both attending a farm forum. He made a presentation just ahead of me as a beginning farmer and he said: The banks are lending too much money to the farmers today and they are putting us in precarious financial situations, and that is not good.

I was in the opposite position to him, as I was trying to leverage some money for my business. So I leapt to the microphone and put in my two bits worth saying I wanted to talk to his banker because I had the opposite problem, that agriculture was not being appropriately funded. So I think that demonstrates we were philosophically at either ends of the teeter-totter.

We are at either ends of the teeter-totter on this smoking bill. But you want to talk about new politics. He wrote a letter to the editor asking if I had now joined with the socialists, whom I thought he was fairly sympathetic toward; if I had now joined them and which gulag, in my thinking, was I going to march him off to when he refused to pay his first fine?

Well, I think both of us took a breather for a couple of weeks, and then the next time we met at a public function, he came over and said, I hope you are not overly offended by what I wrote. I said, no. I did not like what you wrote, but I did not take it as a personal attack on me, because I know you do not write with a poisoned pen. We, more or less, made a public statement in front of a large group of people when we were having that meeting. What he did not do, he did not go behind my back and try and undermine my position. He was up front with his concerns and he made it clear what his concerns were and he stuck by his principles.

If we are going to do politics differently in this province, and frankly, over the years, people have been concerned about statements that are made: I hate the other side of the House, or I hate it every

time one of them gets up to speak—that sort of thing. The politics of that are pretty near dead, in terms of the general mainstream of public feeling. They want us to do business on their behalf.

My colleague from Russell and myself came into this House at the same time, so, collectively, we have between 30 and 40 years in this House. I honestly thought that there was a willingness to do politics differently this last while in this House, and I do not mean since the last election.

I mean over the last few years, but then—I guess I am going to tie it back to the matter of privilege that was raised earlier—to find that we are now back into the mode of where we spent long periods of time debating about—and I hate to use this phrase, but it is a common vernacular in terms of how debates that are unsolvable will go on and it becomes that argument—he said or she said. The difference here is that it is all on the record, and there is proof of what is said that may not be necessarily proof of intent.

* (16:30)

I have heard several speeches by the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) over the years in this House talking about his view of political science and how the public is better served and so on, and sometimes I paid attention, sometimes I did not. It is probably the same as I would be if I was in one of his classes, a poli-sci class, I suppose. But the fact is the public expects us to spend less time with vitriolic debate and more time with substantive discussion about where we are going with legislation, where we are going with rules and regulations in this House.

We have a fair stack of legislation that is coming at us right now, and a government, since they are privileged to the right and I would expect nothing less, is putting their legislation forward as being of a certain calibre and you want the Opposition to be, I think, in a position as saying, well, we cannot accept that. They are saying but that is wonderful legislation; the Opposition does not know what they are talking about.

The difference is that if you have enabling, and I would say, sometimes, dangerous, legislation, that its teeth will come in the regulations. Then that puts distrust in the minds of the public. It puts distrust in the minds of the Opposition, and it does a disservice to the public and their perception of governance and

politics. We have all in this room and the fourth estate and everybody who follows politics at all will have followed polls that show that politicians are at the low end of the scale in terms of trustworthiness. Depending on the crowd I am in, I either say I am a farmer, which is near the top end of the scale, or I say I am a politician which is, obviously, at the lower end of the scale.

But the truth of the matter is we are the authors of our own problems. Because we are so anxious to get the upper hand in the perception of the public that we use tactics that call into question our motives we can be accused from time to time of stating things in a slanted manner or, more often, we are accused of what we do not say when we are talking about something we know will have an impact on our constituents.

I think there have been some remarkable examples in the last four or five years, and there is about to be another one in this session, where ministers and Opposition have co-operated on amendments to legislation. That is very unusual, especially when it is done in a formal way. Usually, arguments are made pro and con in the committee, and the minister will seize the opportunity to make the amendment and go with it. It is very seldom that opposition amendments are accepted. That is just the way life has unfolded.

All of this is at risk when we start to impugn improper motives on each other when we are debating in this Chamber and when we are debating some of these matters. We all do it from time to time and we look back in history at what somebody has done to somebody else for which we have not yet forgiven them. You saw a little bit of that earlier, Mr. Speaker.

The bottom line is that I am standing using the one grievance that I will have available during this session to try and emphasize to anyone who cares to listen around here that if the Government really wants to move the agenda forward that they really believe is the right agenda for this province then they need to make sure that they realize that they have got to work with the Opposition in a manner that is logical, a manner that has, at least, a modicum of respect. Respect is a mutual thing in this House. I never thought that I would hear myself standing up and talking about respect in this Chamber. But, when so many people in public life are starting to talk

about the matter of respect, understanding and support of the public, then we need to look at ourselves and decide what kind of an example we are setting.

I am of a generation that is a decade or so older than quite a few of the new members in this House, and I think that, for the future of this House, we do not need to have that 20-year-old debate. If anybody in this Chamber wants to believe that there really is a new way of doing politics—it used to be an exception if you ever got a briefing on a bill. Secondly, it was an exception if you ever had a friendly amendment and, thirdly, it would never happen that you would get an amendment that was jointly approved by a minister and a critic. All of those things have begun to happen in the last 10 years. The other thing is that both sides of this House strive to get more women into this Chamber to represent that part of our society in the way that they can do so well, then we have to treat this Chamber for what it is meant to be—a place for respectful debate.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I would like to rise for just a few minutes to put a few words on the record in this period of grievance. One really has to wonder some days when we, as members of the Legislature, especially those of us that have served here for some number of years. I think it is almost 16 years now; it will be 16 years in May, that I have been present in this House. The first number of years that I served in this Legislature I served as minister, and I considered it a great honour to serve as a minister of the Crown, the first year of serving as Minister of Natural Resources.

I want to reflect on this, Mr. Speaker, simply because of how vividly one is taught lessons in this House on what not to say and what to say and when to say when one is a minister of the Crown, and how one must carefully weigh before making accusations, accusations that can reflect on another person's character and be carried through for the rest of their lives.

Being labelled as one of our members was today outside of this Chamber—and the minister for Thompson and the minister in charge of the new water legislation, water portfolio were absolutely correct. What is said outside of this Legislature really is not the matter for address here. However, character assassination is a matter that we all need to be very careful of when we make comment outside of the

Legislature about each other and about each other's character.

I think that is what is at issue here, Mr. Speaker. That is why I wanted to put a few words on record in this session of grievance. That is what this process and this House allows for, for us to put on record how we feel about certain matters.

* (16:40)

I want to reflect back to 1988 when the Rafferty-Alameda debate took place in this House. The most severe attacks that were levelled by the then-opposition—and the current Minister of Water was one of the leading members in opposition that attacked. There were others that are not serving whom I will name. They did an absolutely exemplary job of attacking the comments that a brand new novice minister had made in regards to a major water project being developed in another province.

We, really, as a province and as a minister had no jurisdiction there. We were forced to constantly answer the questions on the Rafferty-Alameda projects. During that debate, I voiced support for the building of water projects, whether it was in Manitoba or Saskatchewan. I guess that was one of the biggest mistakes that a minister of that day and era could have made, voicing support for the development of major water storage projects.

I was accused of supporting the decimation of an environment that would never be restored, could never be restored. I was accused of supporting a project by the current minister, a project that would never see enough water in it to support a fish population. Yet, four years after they were built, both of them were full to capacity because we happened to have a small flood event. It filled both those reservoirs.

The environmentalists today that were so supportive of the current Minister of Water in this province, those environmentalists would today argue as vehemently that if we took out the dams today, we would be destroying a huge environment that he supported in stopping. They would talk about the decimation that we would cause by doing away with the dams or blowing up the dams and the environmental chaos that it would cause.

So, Mr. Minister, I think there are times when we should be careful about comments we make in

this House because they do eventually come to haunt us.

I want to reflect on another issue that is rather near and dear to my heart because I was chairman of the standing committee that heard all the public comments on the sale of the MTS corporation.

I will never forget the current Minister of Water for the Province of Manitoba, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), publicly making one of the longest speeches I have ever had the opportunity to listen to or been forced to listen to as chairman, where he constantly referred to his party if and when they would form government, but that one of the first actions for them would be to buy back the Manitoba telephone corporation.

Well, they have been in government for four and a half years now, yet I have seen no action of the current NDP party, or the NDP government, the Doer government, being in favour of repurchasing MTS. Why not? Well, what became apparent is what the minister, the now-minister, the then-critic said did not have any substance to it. Did it?

Basically, what Manitobans heard from him at that time was only talk. Nobody has accused that minister of being dishonest with the members of this House because he openly said, we will buy it back, and yet they have not.

Maybe they will some day, I do not know, but we have not accused that minister of being dishonest. We only wonder at the character.

It is interesting that when I ask as critic for the member who is the minister responsible for one of the biggest portfolios, most important portfolios in this House, when she is not taking the action that is needed to restore an industry or keep an industry on its feet, namely the livestock industry—when I asked for that minister's resignation because she has not shown the capacity to be able to deliver the kind of programs in a manner that has sustained our cattle industry, when I asked for her resignation, the reference today from the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) outside again, to the media, was that I was attacking that minister because she was a woman, the farthest thing from the truth.

If we are, as members of the Legislature in Opposition, not able to ask the ministers, no matter

what their gender is—we make no differentiation in their gender and we should not. I have been one of the biggest supporters of women's rights, but I am also one of the biggest supporters of men's rights. We are equal. Under God's law, we are equal. We are both created equal under God's law and we should never forget that, but when women are given the responsibility of carrying the load of a ministry, or men are given that responsibility, we in opposition are charged with the responsibility of representing the issues that are prevalent in the general public and are of a concern to the general public in a manner that supports the public's best interest. That is our job. If we did not do that properly, we would be guilty of not carrying forward our task in an honourable way, as duly elected representatives of this Legislature.

We must do so, I think, with great care. We must do so, I think, with integrity. It behooves all of us, I believe, to do that in a manner that we can have and can hold the respect of the general public, and the good Lord only knows that all of us are guilty from time to time of breaking that trust. We should do everything in our power to stem our enthusiasm from time to time. And I, above all, am probably the most guilty of that. I apologize for that to this House.

However, when I hear what was said today about our Labour critic, when I hear what the Labour Minister said or referred to, to my role as critic for Agriculture, and when I have asked for the Minister of Agriculture's resignation, I did so in all honesty and with integrity because I truly believe that she has misrepresented in an integral way and in a knowledgeable way the programs that this Government has put forward for the protection and the help of our livestock industry, our livestock producers. I think that is unfortunate; that is truly unfortunate.

But will I accuse her of being racist? No, never; I have far too much respect for her office. I have far too much respect for that minister's integrity. I think she is an honourable person but I do think that her Government and her Cabinet gave her direction to do what she has done, and she has carried out that task to the best of her ability. I give her full marks for that. But I do not give her Government the marks that they have delivered the programs that they have announced.

That is unfortunate because I had a visit on Saturday of this week from a rancher who lives three

miles from my place. I did not know that this rancher was in the dire straits that he is. He came to me and he said this, Jack, they announced program after program after program. I have received, out of those programs, \$560, and it came out of this last cow program.

* (16:50)

He said: I was told by the agency that I made the application to that I was going to get \$11,000 and the cheque was 500. I do not know what to do anymore. I have no feed for my cows and my cows have calves at their heel. I have nine bales left and I have 20 straw bales left and a load of potatoes. That is all my cows have to eat.

So I went down there and had a look, and he was right. And yet this minister and this Government have advertised \$180 million have been delivered to farmers. Yet farmer after farmer that have cows, tell me that they have received nothing. *[interjection]* Not a pure cow-calf operator.

Mr. Speaker, I believe honesty and integrity should be a trademark for all of us, whether we are government, government representatives, ministers or whether we are in opposition. So I say I rise today to grieve because of the reflections made by a minister of this Crown, the Minister of Labour but what was said reflects on all of us, on each and every one of us, and it saddens me that the decorum in this House outside of this Chamber has degenerated to that level.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to put a few words on the record.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call third reading debates on Bills 8 and 13 and then second reading on 26 and then adjourned debates on second reading in the order they appear.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce that the meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, scheduled for Tuesday, March 23, 2004, at

10 a.m., is rescheduled for Tuesday, April 5, 2004, at 10 a.m.

I would like to announce that, in addition to the elections report already referred to that committee, the 2002 report for Elections Manitoba will also be referred to the April 5 meeting.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs scheduled for Tuesday, March 23, 2004, at 10 a.m., is rescheduled for Tuesday, April 5, 2004, at 10 a.m., and, in addition to the Elections Report already referred to that committee, that the 2002 Annual Report for Elections Manitoba will also be referred to the April 5 meeting.

DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 8—The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act (One-Tier Assistance for Rural and Northern Manitoba)

Mr. Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on a proposed motion of the honourable Minister for Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick), concurrence and third reading for Bill 8, The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act (One-Tier Assistance for Rural and Northern Manitoba), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa? *[Agreed]*.

Bill 13—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), Bill 13, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS

Bill 26—The Certified Management Accountants Act

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 26, The Certified Management Accountants Act; Loi sur les comptables en management accrédités, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the proposed act modernizes the legislation governing CMAs in accordance with provincial standards for other self-governing professions in Manitoba, including practices other than accounting.

The new act places CMAs and their governing body, the Society of Management Accountants, on a level playing field with the legislation in governing chartered accountants, CAs, and certified general accountants, or CGAs, in Manitoba, and CMAs, CAs and CGAs in other provinces.

A new feature that was not permitted under the existing act, but is explicitly allowed under the proposed act, is the right for a member to provide professional services using a professional corporation or a limited liability partnership. CGAs and CAs in Manitoba, as well as accountants in other provinces, have the right to provide accounting services using such business structures.

The new act adopts a number of governance standards for the society. For example, the society is now prescribed to be a natural person and is subject to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The society is required to convene a special general meeting, and if at least 5 percent of the voting members provide a written request, a by-law resolution approved by the board of directors must be confirmed at the next general meeting of members, or it will lapse.

The public safeguards contained in the proposed act are in accordance with current provincial standards used for other professional organizations subject to provincial legislation in Manitoba. Under the existing act the rules regulating a member's conduct were provided for in the by-laws. The proposed new act enhances public accountability and ensures that the public is better informed of any negligence or misconduct by a member. The by-laws of the society must be made available to the public. Disciplinary hearings into a member's conduct are open to the public. The decision of a disciplinary panel, including any sanctions against a member, must be made available to the public. A complaint can be filed against, and an investigation undertaken and discipline imposed on, former members. This prevents a member from escaping an investigation or disciplinary measures by resigning his or her membership.

A complainant has the right to appeal a decision of the disciplinary board. Public representatives must serve on the board of directors and on the disciplinary committee. The society, as a self-governing body, has the authority to investigate and discipline a member for misconduct or negligence. The new act explicitly sets out the procedures to follow, and establishes the rights of complainants, members and the society to investigate members, to make decisions and to appeal decisions. The society has new authorities to ensure members comply with the new act and by-laws, including the right to inspect a member's practice and records. In this way, misconduct or negligence by a member that is not instigated by a complaint can be pursued.

The new act sets out fines for committing an offence and the right to recover costs against an investigated member with respect to the investigation and any conditions imposed. Otherwise, the society must absorb the financial impact of investigating a member, which may impede its capacity in this regard or increase the fees imposed on members. Thank you very much.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that debate on this bill be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* (17:00)

Mr. Speaker: Prior to moving on to resume debate, I just want to make a correction for the House. For the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs scheduled for Tuesday, April 5, 2004, 10 a.m., it should read Monday instead of Tuesday. It should be Monday, April 5. So that will read Monday, April 5, 2004, at 10 a.m.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 5—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Claimant Advisers)

Mr. Speaker: Now we will resume debate on Bill 5, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Claimant Advisers), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there agreement for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain? *[Agreed]*

Bill 6—The Cross-Border Policing Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 6, The Cross Border Policing Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there agreement for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet? *[Agreed]*

Bill 9—The Manitoba Immigration Council Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 9, The Manitoba Immigration Council Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Springfield? *[Agreed]*

Bill 10—The Gaming Control Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 10, The Gaming Control Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there agreement for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain? *[Agreed]*

Bill 11—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Protection of Crown Assets)

Mr. Speaker: Bill 11, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Protection of Crown Assets), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik)

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet? *[Agreed]*

Bill 12—The Highways and Transportation Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Trucking Productivity Improvement Fund)

Mr. Speaker: Bill 12, The Highways and Transportation Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Trucking Productivity Improvement Fund), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina? *[Agreed]*

Bill 14—The Gas Tax Accountability Act (Financial Administration Act Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Bill 14, The Gas Tax Accountability Act (Financial Administration Act Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 15—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act
(Police Powers Respecting Unsafe Drivers and
Miscellaneous Amendments)**

Mr. Speaker: Bill 15, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Police Powers Respecting Unsafe Drivers and Miscellaneous Amendments), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lakeside? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 16—The Manitoba Public Insurance
Corporation Amendment Act
(Denial of Benefits for Offenders)**

Mr. Speaker: Bill 16, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Denial of Benefits for Offenders), standing in the name of the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is it will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for River East? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 17—The Domestic Violence and Stalking
Prevention, Protection and Compensation
Amendment Act**

Mr. Speaker: Bill 17, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act, standing in the name of the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), who has 14 minutes remaining.

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? It is also standing in the name of the honourable Member for Fort Garry, who has 28 minutes remaining.

The bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, and the

Member for Fort Garry, who has 28 minutes remaining, will now speak.

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, domestic violence is an unfortunate part of our society that impacts individuals, families and communities. Bill 17 will improve victim rights and attempt to better secure their safety.

The cycle of violence impacts all individuals. There is no preference on gender, age, socio-economic or educational levels, rural or urban communities. Our Government has worked diligently with community members, agencies and justice officials to develop a continuum of services that include prevention, secondary and tertiary programs; specifically, education programs, emergency shelters, crisis intervention and second-stage housing projects, as well as specialized counselling services for victims, offenders and other members affected by violence.

Bill 17 works with the victims and service providers and police officers to better protect our constituents. It improves victims' rights, acknowledges and clearly defines the role of advocates when applying for protective orders, and allows the advocate to go with them and make the request. Accessibility has improved by the simplified process, as well as the clarification of the advocate.

As well, this bill will ensure the confidentiality of the victims due to a ban being publicized. We must remember that the impact of family violence is not only seen with black-and-blue marks, but there are instances of emotional, sexual and financial abuse. Offenders are not only people that reside in the same household. Therefore, this bill addresses and expands on the definition, and will apply protection for victims from people that have or have not lived with them.

Strengthening the need of counselling by giving the Court of Queen's Bench prevention orders, they can state that victims must go for counselling. As a service provider, I am aware of the resilience of survivors, but also aware of the services that are necessary to require them to overcome their challenges, and further support them as they move forward in their healing process.

I am proud to stand up as a social worker and as a Member for Fort Garry and support Bill 17. I think

that it will provide an opportunity for a safety net to broaden and to strengthen. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Bill 17, any other speakers? No?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, when this matter is again before the House, Bill 17 will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), who will have 14 minutes remaining.

Bill 18—The Improved Enforcement of Support Payments (Various Acts Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Now, we will move on to Bill 18, The Improved Enforcement of Support Payments (Various Acts Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

Bill 20—The University College of the North Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 20, The University College of the North Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): I am very proud to be able to speak today on what I consider to be one of the most important legacies of our Government, and, I hope, what will be one of the most important legacies of this Legislature. That is the fulfilment of a dream that northerners have had for literally decades, and that is to have our own fully-fledged post-secondary educational facility and institute, the University College of the North.

* (17:10)

I want to put on the record, too, Mr. Speaker, I do not normally get into caucus discussions and debates, but I do want to put on the record something that I did say. I want to state this for the public record as well, and that is I want to give particular credit to the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) because she has done a tremendous job in spearheading this bill through the various processes and consulting with northerners.

What I said, and I am sure my other northern colleagues will concur with this, that we are going to have to make her an honorary northerner. Because not only has she taken up the responsibility, I think, of a Minister of Advanced Education, and really taken on the challenge of extending post-secondary opportunities for northerners, but I tell you, she is starting to sound like a northerner, too, when she talks about it.

You know, there is a real passion and depth of feeling that I know comes from a heartfelt sense that it is time for northerners to have—for us to have our day in the sun. So I really want to put on the record that I thank the Minister of Advanced Education.

There is a history to this, Mr. Speaker, because I want to go back to about the mid-1980s, and, in fact, at that time, as a rookie MLA for Thompson, I held a meeting, we established a committee to look at a university for the North. In fact, the term that was used then was polytechnic. In fact, Stella Locker and Bob Mayer, who both—I think, actually, Bob Mayer was on city council; Stella Locker became a city councillor—co-chaired the committee.

You know what we talked about? We talked about the fact that there was a real opportunity to extend educational opportunities to northerners. I want to just take a little bit of the history here, because I think this is important to note.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach)—you know, it is standing in his name—will have a great opportunity to get up and maybe explain why he was one of the ministers of education that did nothing in terms of putting forth the University College of the North. I mean, for 11 years, the members opposite ignored northern Manitoba. They ignored northern Manitoba and, I will tell you, I do not strictly want to talk the politics of this, but, can you imagine, you know, the Leader of the Opposition of the last election was going to pay for

all of his campaign promises by cutting the humble, the flexible, the innovative University College of the North; he was going to cut it. That was going to pay for all of his unreasonable and unachievable campaign promises.

I digress because, you know, the bottom line here is northerners know the history of education. I want to put on the record, here, a little about what the history of post-secondary education here is in Manitoba.

I graduated from R. D. Parker Collegiate in 1972. Let me tell you, in 1972, if you wanted to continue your post-secondary education, you had to do what I did. You had to come to, in my case, the University of Manitoba. I left home at 16. I had to, like so many others from rural and northern Manitoba, go through residence, finding a place to stay, the adjustment of being away from home, the adjustment to a university environment. You know what, Mr. Speaker? The only thing that was available in 1972 was a handful of courses through IUN, which was just starting up in those times.

Now, I want to run you through the experience because there is a common theme you will see with this. It is a political commitment. Let us look at what then happened. In the 1970s, the Schreyer government brought in one of the most innovative programs, I think, we have ever seen in northern Manitoba, New Careers. Mr. Speaker, you know it well. The Schreyer government started with a premise that we could build on IUN; we could build on training programs and offer education to northerners. Imagine that.

The PENT Program, which later became BUNTEP—the same concept that you could offer post-secondary education outside of the institutions in southern Manitoba—[interjection]—pardon me, yes, and then the BUNTEP, which was developed in the 1970s.

But I tell you, Mr. Speaker, you know, it is amazing there was a major expansion of activity in the 1970s. Then, along came the election in 1977 and, you know what? I coincidentally then happened to be the president of UMSU and, you know what? The first thing that was going to be cut by the Government was IUN. We did not have very much to begin with, but, you know, Tories got elected and they wanted to cut something in the North. They

wanted to cut a lot in the North, and they went after post-secondary opportunities.

Well, I want to run through this, Mr. Speaker, because the then-government of the 1980s—there is a pattern here; you may notice this. The government of the 1980s, the Pawley government, brought in the Social Work Program, one of the most innovative programs that we have yet seen anywhere in this province, established in northern Manitoba. Again, there were doubters. There were people who said you could not take a full social work degree in northern Manitoba. It would not have the quality, the standard. Well, I think we are up to about 20 years now of the program, and it is one of the best programs anywhere, combined with the Winnipeg Education Centre. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), of course, knows that very well. The bottom line is we proved them wrong.

Now, it was not just that. The Northern Nursing Program was put in place, a very important project. I have to say this, by the way, because we also put in place the Limestone training program, another program that you, Mr. Speaker, know very well was an excellent program that provided training for northern Manitoba. And, by the way, we had a project labour agreement for Limestone, and we had training for Aboriginal people. We had record employments for Aboriginal employment and for all northerners, and we built it for a billion dollars under budget. But that is another debate.

So what happened in '87, in '88, Mr. Speaker? You know, the bottom line is—and the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), when he was Minister of Education, cut the Limestone training program, hatcheted that program. He is still showing to this day that he did not understand what he did because there was no replacement. In fact, the Northern Nursing Program was absorbed by KCC, and the campus in Thompson stopped offering the program a number of years ago. It had to be restarted.

I want to put in place that it was NDP governments that led the way in terms of the ACCESS programs, in terms of building and saving IUN and then building on IUN afterwards.

I also want to talk about the experience since 1999, because one of the first things we did—you know, the Member for Russell still has not learned. Northerners knew that only an NDP government

could really be trusted to follow up in terms of educational opportunities. They had 11 years and they did not move ahead in terms of the University College of the North.

I say to the members opposite: When we were elected, we immediately started building on the growing momentum that was out there, working with MKO. What an original idea, working with Aboriginal organizations, working with KCC, our facility.

You know what is interesting, Mr. Speaker, can I use the name Duff Roblin again? Can I use Duff Roblin, because Duff Roblin was Premier of Manitoba, and also was very important with the report that was put out by the previous government that recommended that KCC play the key role, recommended the expansion of post-secondary education to include a degree program through KCC. The bottom line here is we took up the principle and the spirit of the Roblin report, which talked about both doubling enrolments in the college system and involving KCC in a prime role in terms of post-secondary education.

The bottom line was we worked with MKO; we worked with KCC. We went to the meeting of northern mayors and chiefs, which showed there was a clear, an absolutely clear consensus. What was the consensus? The consensus was that we needed our own institution.

Let us be up front about the politics. It was not just in the election, but throughout the last four years there was nothing but criticism from members opposite. Not only that, it is funny the Member for Russell talks about UMSU presidents. I remember the president of the party, former UMSU president, writing op-ed articles opposing a University College of the North.

* (17:20)

Mr. Speaker, what I find interesting is that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray), since the announcement, is saying, well, now, maybe, just maybe, he actually really supports it. I mean, the announcement that we made was exactly what we committed to in the election. It was based on the MKO-KCC report, the consultations in northern Manitoba. Nothing has changed. But now, maybe, just maybe, the Leader of the Opposition now has understood that, you know, it did not look good. It is bad enough when you do not even visit the North,

but when you want to cut a program that has not even started yet, that is not going to cost multimillion dollars, that is a flexible, innovative program—and then turn around when the bill is introduced and say, well, maybe now you support it.

Mr. Speaker, let us be up front here. As far as anyone can remember in northern Manitoba, when you have an NDP government, things happen in northern Manitoba. You build post-secondary education. It happened in the seventies; it happened in the eighties; and it is happening now in the year 2004 with a University College of the North. If members opposite have not figured out why people in northern Manitoba have supported the New Democratic Party to the degree they have, it is because NDP actions speak louder than Conservative words any day, and nowhere is that the case more than on post-secondary education.

I want to say to members opposite, including the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach)—I say to the Member for Russell, it is never too late. It is never too late; you can admit the error of your ways. Now, I know there are a lot of hidebound Conservatives over there. But you know what? Let me put it this way: Just look at the election results. You know, people do notice these things. There are people that voted for me in this election and the New Democratic Party in other northern constituencies—I was shocked, former Conservative riding presidents, people who have been very active in the Conservative Party.

I will tell you one of the main reasons, Mr. Speaker. I will tell you what they told me. The University College of the North, because they said to me—I can think of several people who specifically said, one long-time—and I will not mention his name because I respect the privacy of the discussion, but very, very involved in the civic level. He said, you know, I am not a New Democrat, but, he said, there is only one party that has a vision for northern Manitoba. He, for the first time, at the time, I think, ever, voted NDP. *[interjection]* The Member for Russell says, and that was a Conservative. He was a Conservative.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, let us look at what the University College of the North is really all about. Separate out the knee-jerk reaction from members opposite that cuts anything that benefits northern Manitoba. You know, the bottom line is, let

us separate that out and look at what University College of the North does.

First of all, it takes what is in place. It takes what is in place and brings it under one umbrella. That is important because, let us run through what we have in the North. The IUN program, for example, has a long history of bringing together courses from different university programs. I have actually lectured for its University North, and I can say the transferability of credits is quite unique across the country. It is a very good program.

The former FYDE program was established in the 1970s, now Campus Manitoba; KCC, Mr. Speaker, is a very important improvement; ACCESS programs; the social work programs survived despite the Tories.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) says they improved it. By what? By cutting it? By hatcheting its core funding? I remember that, you know, when I used to go to social work graduations and rallies organized by the students against the latest round of Tory cuts, the Northern Nursing Program now that is in place, these are existing components.

What does this bill do? It takes the spirit of IUN and allows for transferability, Mr. Speaker, of credits between the community college system and the university system. Once again, that is something that is in place, currently, but is going to be transferred throughout this.

The ability to have joint degrees, Mr. Speaker, similar to what happened with St. Boniface College—I think that is very important because we are going to continue the programs that are in place and there will be an opportunity for those programs to have that unique identity. The social work program at the U of M, the BUNTEP program with Brandon University, that will be in place.

I want to add, Mr. Speaker, that, consistent with the Roblin report, there is also the opportunity through this act for the University College of the North to do a number of things to have its own degree programs. I think, particularly, in the area of Aboriginal studies, that is a very important area. It is of growing interest, and not just with Aboriginal people, because there are many non-Aboriginal people living in northern Manitoba who understand

the importance of understanding about Aboriginal culture and the unique Aboriginal perspective.

There is also built in, as well, something that is very important, which is a research institute, ability for this institution to do what all full-fledged, post-secondary institutions do. That is, to conduct research.

I say to members of this House, Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of discussion back and forth and, you know, I find it really kind of ironic when you look at the members opposite. You know, the Leader of the Opposition will lobby about certain educational institutions and their facility needs, but, you know, they never, ever, ever accepted the real reality of what we are dealing with in terms of the capital needs in northern Manitoba.

I have said this on the record before. Much of the expansion in northern Manitoba took place in Thompson because of the availability of single men's residences. That is what they were. They were bought for a dollar from Inco.

There are some real challenges. This minister, to her credit, has been working with cases to deal with mould and asbestos in those buildings. Mr. Speaker, we do need improved facilities for northern Manitoba, not just in Thompson, but for the many satellite facilities that are expanding. You need classrooms, as by way of an on-site instructor—this is for the Leader of the Opposition—or distance ed hook-up; you need a classroom for instructors. You need space for students. You need space for offering those opportunities. We are dealing with that, but, you know, that needs to happen whether or not there is University College of the North. We have to deal with the building challenge.

The University College of the North and, I will say this on the record. I keep getting asked this, including by members opposite. Where is the main campus going to be? The University College of the North is not about main campuses. That is a 1960s concept. In this day and age, building what is in place, it is about having regional centres; it is about having local centres. The University College of the North will exist wherever there is an opportunity to offer post-secondary education to northerners.

I put on the record another thing, Mr. Speaker. That is that I also believe that this facility, down the

line, will do something that has happened with the University of Northern British Columbia, which is, perhaps, a larger institution, but is doing one thing.

Forty percent of the students at the University of Northern British Columbia come from southern British Columbia. I look forward to the day when people are going to be driving up Highway 6 and Highway 10 to travel to educational opportunities, instead of the one-way traffic that has been the case for the last 10 and 20 and 30 and 40 years.

I look also forward to the day when more people from my own communities are able to stay in northern Manitoba. It is about retention of northern students. But I want to put on the record, as I said when the social work program came in and the Northern Nursing Program and many other post-secondary education programs: this comes from the perspective of someone who is not only a long-time resident of northern Manitoba, but somebody who has also had the privilege to actually lecture Inter-Universities North—to see first-hand and work with social work students; that this institution will be second to none.

This institution, as it evolves, will reflect the dreams and aspirations of northerners, and I believe it will provide opportunities over the next number of years that simply have not existed in terms of northerners.

What is the bottom line? I will tell you what our vision was 10 and 20 years ago. Our vision was that northerners should have the same educational opportunities as all Manitobans. Mr. Speaker, that was our vision, and with the passage of this legislation I want to put on the record, I believe our vision will come true. I really do believe that, with the passage of this act, what we will have is a legacy for decades to come, not just for northern Manitobans, but for all of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Does the House call it 5:30? When this matter is again before the House, it will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 9, 2004

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