

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

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

Vol. LVI No. 10 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, December 6, 2004

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 6, 2004

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a matter of privilege. I understand there are two conditions that must be met. Number one condition is that it must have been raised at the first opportunity and seeing as the event took place this morning, I believe that this would have been the first opportunity.

The second condition that had to be met was that there was a prima facie case that a member's privilege had been breached, and I would refer, Mr. Speaker, to page 59 of *Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceeding of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba*, in Appendices, under Matter of Privilege, to the last sentence, "Libels upon Members and aspersions upon them in relation to Parliament," and this is more to the case, "and interference of any kind with their official duties are breaches of the privileges of the Members."

Mr. Speaker, on this morning's Order Paper, there is listed No. 10, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, a piece of legislation that is on the Order Paper but has not been introduced to this Chamber and to the members of this Chamber. This morning there was a briefing held on Bill 10 before it was introduced into the House. I would like to table for you a copy of not just a news release which says, "Proposed pension legislation overhauled" and goes on to speak about it, and also it has a set of bill details called a backgrounder, a two-page listing of what the legislation is about and what it is supposed to do.

Mr. Speaker, it is my belief, as one member, that this is an attack on the traditions of the legislative process. Legislation, by tradition, by convention, is

introduced into the Legislative Chamber first before it is made public.

There is another tradition of a briefing by the government to official critics on proposed legislation which is usually done by spreadsheet as well as the bill, and that is usually done after legislation is introduced. No such briefing was offered to the opposition. There was no mention made that this legislation was going to be introduced.

* (13:35)

Yet, this morning a briefing was held by the government to the media, of which I have already released copies to you. The concern is that the Chamber, the 57 members in this House, have all been by-passed and that we had no prior knowledge, yet individuals outside of this Chamber have full knowledge. In fact, I had two media requests as the official critic to ask my thoughts on the legislation, legislation that de facto does not exist because it has not been introduced into this House.

A couple of days ago last week, we debated the issue of the attack on democracy and its institutions in the Ukraine. Mr. Speaker, if we continue down this path, and we have seen this government do it on numerous occasions, we will see that within the Ukraine someday there will be debate about the attacks by the Doer government on democracy in Manitoba and its institutions. This is a grave and serious matter. We have seen it occur in other forms where legislation is introduced and then it is hollow legislation and everything else is by regulation. This is even more to the point because it really does attack what we do here as members. We are legislators. We are here to debate legislation, and the debate is not supposed to begin first in the public and then we just be referenced as a footnote. This Chamber and the 57 members here are supposed to see the legislation first, be briefed on it and be versed on it, and then it is supposed to be public.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen this government, and we know that there is a capability on that side when they want to ram through legislation, when they want to run legislation through, the briefings are all done, the legislation is introduced, then it is made public. It is all done in the proper fashion. We know this

government can do that and has done that in the past. In this case, they have circumvented this Chamber and, I believe, that, as I read to you from the rules, and, again, page 59, that, and I take the sentence, "... and interference of any kind with their official duties are breaches of the privileges of the Members."

It is a definite interference of our official duties as members of the Legislative Assembly. As legislators, that legislation should have been tabled today and then press conferences should have been held. The briefing should have been done after it was introduced in this House and not before. This was an attack on my privileges as one member, as the official opposition critic, and it was an attack on this Chamber and on every one of us as legislators, and it must not continue. It is bad precedent, and it goes against the traditions and conventions of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I ask to move, seconded by the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that this be referred to the Speaker, and that Mr. Speaker report back to the House on this matter.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the key issue in terms of the matter of privilege in this case is not whether this was raised at the first opportunity but whether or not it satisfies the definition of privilege. The member pointed to our rules, but, of course, members will know that *Beauchesne* is the text that very specifically points to the issue of parliamentary privilege, and I say it is an area that has resulted from hundreds of years of evolution of the parliamentary system outlined in *Beauchesne* Citations 24 and 25. I point out to the member that if he had perhaps taken the time to read *Beauchesne* Citation 31(10), he would have noted that *Beauchesne* states very clearly that the question has been asked whether honourable members are entitled as part of their parliamentary privilege to receive such information ahead of the general public. I can find no precedent to justify this suggestion.

* (13:40)

This is an issue that has been raised in the House of Commons and also in this Legislature as well, the issue of information being made available to the media. We often talk about the media as some sort of

separate entity, but presumably, I think in this case, we all recognize the media play a huge role in terms of communication to the public. So I would point to Citation 31(10) as indicating clearly this is not a matter of privilege.

In doing so, I would suggest that the member might want to keep a little bit of perspective. I, for one, took great offence when the member talked about the developments in Ukraine, particularly coming after what we have been discussing in this House where we had a unanimous resolution in terms of democracy in Ukraine. I point out, by the way, it is ironic that what the people of Ukraine are fighting against is vote-rigging, Mr. Speaker, vote-rigging.

I will not get into what could be a partisan interpretation of that, because I took by our vote last week that all 57 members of this Legislature support the struggle of Ukraine for freedom and democracy, and they understand what it means, Mr. Speaker, and it starts with fair elections. I take great offence when we have come to a point of agreement on something that we all should agree with, that that should be somehow put in the context of a matter of privilege on something that has been raised numerous times in this House, and in each and every case has been ruled not to be a matter of privilege.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that certainly it was not the intent of the minister or the government to show any disrespect to anyone. I point out that this government and the previous government, for example, at a time of the most, probably the most confidential of documents in terms of its public release, the budget, where briefings are routinely made available to the media prior to the actual release of the budget; embargoed press conferences, I believe, is the official term. So it is not as if this government and previous governments have not done things of this nature.

Mr. Speaker, in this particular case, I can indicate again, attaching what should probably be the greatest test of what we do in this Legislature, a bit of a sense of perspective, that certainly there was no intent by this minister to do anything other than in this particular case, to provide a detailed briefing on what is a very complex piece of legislation. I would suggest it is not a matter of privilege. We repeatedly have had announcements made not by just this

government but by the previous government that were not made first in this House about legislation.

I can think of major bills, Mr. Speaker, that were not first released in this House. It has been fairly standard practice, and I would suggest that if members take great offence, we can certainly review whether providing this information by embargo to press conferences should be continued. It really was done, and this again should be the real test here. This was not some great affront to democracy. It was a fact that we recognize this is an important item of legislation, and it is important when we are sharing this with the public, who I believe also have a certain privilege to the right to get full information that we take the time to make sure that members of the media have the opportunity to have a technical briefing on a very complex item of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a matter of privilege. I would ask when you rule that the member may also wish to withdraw his comments about comparing this to Ukraine, because that does a disservice to the people of Ukraine who at this moment are fighting for democracy and freedom. Free elections, we should all be supporting that rather than turning it to cheap political advantage in this House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think I have heard sufficient argument. If the honourable member has new information, I will hear him.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I think on new information, I know the minister, the Deputy House Leader, had a lot of hullabaloo that he wanted to put on the record and a lot of rhetoric. I think it is important that as you make your deliberations, you do it on the basis of what is democratic, what is right for this Legislature, and in fact, what is right for all Manitobans and all members of this Legislature, certainly not just us as opposition members but all members who serve the general public.

I do not suspect in your deliberations, Mr. Speaker, you will have difficulty in terms of the first instance, the first opportunity, but when you are making your deliberations about a prima facie case, in terms of whether or not a matter of privilege has been breached by us as individuals members, I think you will find that it is very, very difficult for us as individual members to do our jobs when we do not

see that the government respects us, respects our democracy, respects us as individuals to go about the proper process to ensure that the legislation is brought here as a matter of first instance. Certainly, I know we have young people in the gallery here visiting from schools, and they will no doubt be taught that this is the Chamber where legislation is made and where legislation is introduced. I do not suspect that upon their tour they will be told that the first time that legislation is introduced is to the media or through the spin doctors of the government.

* (13:45)

I think, Mr. Speaker, it is instructive for you, and I would ask you to take the opportunity when you are making your deliberations to look at the true motive because the Deputy House Leader referred to the true motives. I think you will find that the true motives are because, in fact, this issue had been raised. This issue had been raised by our leader, by the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), and by the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), and I think, in fact, that the government was embarrassed. They were embarrassed that this issue had been brought forward first by the opposition, and they wanted to ensure that their spin doctors had got out and the rules did not really interfere with them. They did not really care about the rules and practice and disrespected us, I would say. It was not respectful to us as individual members because they simply wanted to get their spin out.

The Deputy House Leader talked about the fact that he does not believe in his interpretation of *Beauchesne* that members have a right to information prior to the general public. I would say to you, Mr. Speaker, that if that legislation is introduced here in the House, then all of us as members and the public would get it simultaneously by virtue of it being broadcast in the House. I would say that there is no right that exists for the media to have this information prior to members, that that is certainly an affront to democracy and that certainly will be disrespectful.

I hesitate, Mr. Speaker, because this is not the first time this week that I have had to rise in defence of a matter of privilege because something is seen as undemocratic and disrespectful by this government. I think there is a very disturbing pattern, and I think in your deliberations you need to seriously consider this in context, as the Deputy House Leader talks about

context. The context of this situation, this is not the first time this week.

This is not the first time in a week that we have had to stand up and talk about an undemocratic situation. One, of course, was, and it is under deliberation still, of where they tried to shut out an individual member from the process of hiring an independent officer. So, in that context, we see that this is not an isolated case, but it is a pattern of disrespect.

An Honourable Member: Arrogance.

Mr. Goertzen: A pattern of arrogance, a pattern of undemocratic behaviour, and it is a pattern that cannot stand in this Legislature. It is a pattern that does not serve Manitobans. I think the Premier (Mr. Doer) himself should call his own government to order and tell them to get it together.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I rise on this matter of privilege today because I think it is a very serious matter.

We have seen the conduct of this government over the last number of years and more recently over the last number of weeks, where the privileges of members of this Legislature are completely ignored. It may be subtle, but at times it is very overt. I rise on this matter because I do believe there is sometimes a courtesy that goes along with being a member of this Legislature that is extended to each other, and it is especially incumbent upon the government to ensure that at least a common courtesy of respect is given to the members of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, when the government wants to push through a piece of legislation in a hurry, it is not a very great effort on their part to come to members of the opposition and say we have this piece of legislation that we have to have passed in the next two days. I remember seeing that from the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) today who was then the Minister of Energy and Science who said we have to have the bill on ethanol passed within short order because there is this federal money that this Province can get, and if we can pass this bill in a hurry we can access those dollars.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we went along with that hoax and, to date, some year later, we have not seen any money from the federal government coming forward,

because this government cannot get its act together in order to be able to move on some of these projects.

Not that long ago, the government came to us again on Bill 4. They said we have to have Bill 4 because the City of Winnipeg requires it. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the Order Paper today, we have not even got the bill on the Order Paper for third reading today.

This is the way the government operates. The government knew that had a pension freedom bill on the Order Paper. We discussed this with the House leaders, and we said we will leave this bill off till the fall because the government wanted certain legislation passed in fall. We said, in the name of people and seniors who have a right to access their pension funds, we wanted to see Bill 212 dealt with in the fall sitting, which the government agreed to.

* (13:50)

Now, Mr. Speaker, if they have a piece of legislation that will complement Bill 212, then I would think they would have wanted to share that with the opposition, as they should in the House here, and then deal with the legislation in an up-front manner, but this is all about publicity on their part. This is all about wanting to take credit on their part, because if the Premier (Mr. Doer) really had a genuine interest in making sure that the right thing was done to people who have pension plans, he would have approached the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) and said look, we have a bill that we would like to present to complement your bill or to replace your bill, and then some accommodation could have been made. Instead the media are coming to the critic who is responsible for this area and are saying what is your response to the proposed legislation by the government. Well, there is no legislation. It has not been tabled in the House yet. To think that this is not a breach of members' privileges is insane.

Now, the member from Thompson can stand up, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), in his place and huff and puff all he likes. The fact of the matter is that Manitobans would expect that there be some respect given to this Legislature and that we do not set out on a course that is autocratic in nature, if you like, that simply disrespects any processes of the Legislature and simply says that we are the

government and we will do as we choose. That is arrogance, Mr. Speaker. That is disrespect.

Mr. Speaker, what are they afraid of in bringing the legislation to the Chamber first, introducing it? Then go ahead and have your news conference. Then, when the media come to the critic and they ask for a reaction, there is some basis to react on, Mr. Speaker, rather than simply saying well, I am sorry, I cannot respond to something that has not been tabled in the House yet.

This is not just an action of government. This is not a budget speech where it is detailed, where the media are given information on an embargoed basis. This is a bill. This is legislation. This is law, and if we cannot afford each other the respect and the courtesy of bringing it forward to the Chamber in an up front way, then what is this government really all about?

So, for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member who has brought this matter forward. I would request that you would consider this matter very seriously and bring it back with a ruling to this Chamber. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Member for Inkster, I hope with new information, I just want to remind all honourable members that this is not an opportunity for debate. It should relate to whether there is a prima facie case.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I think that it is a valid concern that has been brought to your attention this afternoon. We share in that concern. If we take a look in terms of what has actually taken place, Bill 10, known as The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, has not been circulated inside this Chamber, meaning that no MLA inside this Chamber actually has a copy of Bill 10. Yet, we realize that members of the media and whoever else, we do not know, has already been advised of the bill. We do not know, in terms of its actual circulation, who else might have been provided this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect the government is doing it in the sense that they feel that this is a bill that they are going to be introducing. There could be an emergency debate immediately following Question Period. There might not be an opportunity for even

this government to stand up and request leave in order to have the bill circulated within this Chamber.

I think that there is an overriding concern that we have had in the Manitoba Liberal Party in terms of just the general lack of respect for democratic process from this government. This seems, on the surface, to be another example of that. I think what we need, Mr. Speaker, from your office is very clear indication that it should not just be a yes or no in terms of a matter of privilege. I think we need a very clear indication. Let us not forget our budget. If the minister speaks of the budget in advance, it could cause the minister to be forced to resign. A budget will ultimately become a law.

* (13:55)

If the government can do it on Bill 10, can they do it on a budgetary piece of legislation also, Mr. Speaker? We have got to be concerned with the liberty this government is taking in terms of running the operations of this Legislative Chamber. That is why we do think that there is merit for this particular matter of privilege. We look forward to very clear indication coming from your office as to clearing up this matter once and for all. We do not know if there was a moratorium, or I should say, an embargo put on at that press conference. We do not know what the time frames were.

I do find it very disturbing that the government would take this Legislative Chamber for granted. I trust and hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will be provided the adequate time to be able to come back and protect the rights of all members of this Chamber on this issue. Thank you.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Pension Benefits

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Pension benefits for thousands of Manitoba health care workers are being cut because the government has refused to support the front-line health care workers in their desire to maintain their existing Healthcare Employees' Pension Plan (HEPP).

The government is doubling the early retirement penalty to 6 percent a year from 3 percent.

There will be no cost-of-living benefits for retirees in the foreseeable future, which means that inflation will erode retirees' pension cheques over time.

The government's refusal to support the existing pension plan will have a negative impact on hundreds of front-line health care workers.

The government is demonstrating a lack of respect for front-line health care workers by its decision to allow administrative costs in the regional health authorities to skyrocket by millions of dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider redirecting administrative cost savings to front-line health care workers.

To request the provincial government to treat front-line health care workers with the respect they deserve, and to consider supporting the health care employees' pension plan by not cutting pension benefits.

Signed by Debbie Giesbrecht, Janet Brako, Monica Vieweg and others.

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

Provincial Road 270

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

It is unacceptable for the residents of Manitoba to travel the unsafe gravel roads of PR 270 in the constituency of Minnedosa.

Inclement weather can make PR 270 treacherous to all drivers.

Allowing better access to PR 270 would ease the flow of traffic on No. 10 highway.

Residents along PR 270 are not as accessible to emergency services due to the nature of the current condition of the roadway.

The condition of these gravel roads can cause serious damage to all vehicles, which is unacceptable.

Residents of Manitoba deserve a better rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) consider having PR 270 significantly upgraded with ongoing maintenance, preferably paved, from the junction of Highway No. 16 to Highway 25.

To request the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) to consider supporting said initiatives to ensure for the safety of our Manitobans and all Canadians who travel along Manitoba highways.

This petition is presented by Trent Hedley, Lois Sharpe and Lesley Hedley.

Pension Benefits

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Pension benefits for thousands of Manitoba health care workers are being cut because the government has refused to support the front-line health care workers in their desire to maintain their existing Healthcare Employees' Pension Plan (HEPP).

The government is doubling the early retirement penalty to 6 percent a year from 3 percent.

There will be no cost-of-living benefits for retirees in the foreseeable future, which means that inflation will erode retirees' pension cheques over time.

The government's refusal to support the existing pension plan will have a negative impact on hundreds of front-line health care workers.

The government is demonstrating a lack of respect for front-line health care workers by its decision to allow administrative costs in the regional health authorities to skyrocket by millions of dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider redirecting administrative cost savings to front-line health care workers.

To request the provincial government to treat front-line health care workers with the respect they deserve, and to consider supporting the health care employees' pension plan by not cutting pension benefits.

Signed by M. Maurer-Stewart, Fay Sapinski, Elaine Lorn and others.

* (14:00)

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, and 2004 is not much better.

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 Reginald Reyes, Rodrigo Vidaira and Romulo Porcioncula.

Physician Shortage—Westman Area

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Westman region serving Brandon and the surrounding area will be without an on-call pediatrician for 20 days between November 10 and December 31, 2004.

As a result of the severe shortage of pediatricians to serve the Westman area, Brandon and area women with high-risk pregnancies as well as critically ill children are being forced, at even greater risk, to travel to Winnipeg for urgent medical attention.

The chiefs of the departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Family Practice and Anesthesia at the Brandon Regional Health Centre have publicly voiced their concern regarding the potentially disastrous consequences of the shortage.

Brandon physicians were shocked and angered by the lack of communication and foresight on the part of the government related to retention of a local pediatrician.

The Minister of Health has stated that Brandon has to put its best foot forward and recruit its own doctors.

Doctors have warned that if the current situation is prolonged, it may result in further loss of services or the departure of other specialists who find the situation unmanageable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To strongly urge the Minister of Health to consider taking charge and ensuring that he will improve long-term planning efforts to develop a lasting solution to the chronic problem of pediatrician and other specialist shortages in Brandon.

To strongly urge the Minister of Health to treat this as the crisis that it is and consider consulting with front-line workers, particularly doctors, to find solutions.

To strongly urge the Minister of Health and the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending highway medicine now.

Signed Dave Martinussen, Terry McNabb, Lorne Patterson.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs First Report

Ms. Marilyn Brick (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

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

Meetings:

Your committee met on Thursday, December 2, 2004, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters Under Consideration:

Bill 4 - The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act (Differential Business Tax Rates)/Loi modifiant

la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg (taux de taxe d'entreprise différentiels)

Membership Resignations / Elections:

Your committee elected Ms. Brick as the Chairperson.

Your committee elected Mr. Schellenberg as the Vice-Chairperson.

Substitutions received prior to commencement of meeting:

Mr. Caldwell for Hon. Ms. Wowchuk

Mrs. Driedger for Mr. Cummings

Ms. Korzeniowski for Mr. Nevakshonoff

Mrs. Stefanson for Mrs. Mitchelson

Mr. Swan for Hon. Mr. Rondeau

Public Presentations:

Your committee heard one presentation on Bill 4 – The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act (Differential Business Tax Rates)/Loi modifiant la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg (taux de taxe d'entreprise différentiels), from the following organization:

Mr. David Sanders, Deloitte & Touche LLP

Bills Considered and Reported:

Bill 4 - The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act (Differential Business Tax Rates)/Loi modifiant la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg (taux de taxe d'entreprise différentiels)

Your committee agreed to report this bill with the following amendment:

THAT the proposed clause 334.1(5), as set out in Clause 3 of the Bill, be amended by adding the following at the end:

The tax collector must amend the business tax roll to conform with the hearing body's decision, and section 343 applies, with necessary changes, to the amendment.

Ms. Brick: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), that the report of the committee be received.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [Agreed]

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin), I would like to table the Quarterly Financial Statements for the periods ending June 30, 2004, and September 30, 2004, for the Communities Economic Development Fund.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

National Day of Remembrance

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, I have a ministerial statement for the House.

Because of an event that happened 15 years ago today, we pause to remember the 14 young women killed in an act of mindless violence at École polytechnique in Montréal. The shock and the horror do not subside over time. Once again, our hearts go out to the families and the friends of those young women who died on December 6, 1989.

At the time, we were stunned to learn that these young women were murdered for no other reason than their gender. This event was so horrific that this date has become a national day of mourning, not only for the victims of the Montréal massacre but for all women who are victims of violence. They had done nothing wrong, but in the eyes of one man they had taken places in a learning institution that belonged to men. So he killed them.

Today, as we commemorate the loss of those 14 young lives, we must pause and reflect on the phenomenon of violence against women in our society. It is also a time for special thoughts for all women who live daily with the threat of violence simply because they are female. Despite the best efforts of governments, victim services, organizations and shelter systems violence against women continues.

I regret this year we have to read out the names of six Manitoba women who were killed since December 6, 2003: Ruby Verna Genaille, 45, from Shoal River; Brenda Levasser from Ebb and Flow; Precious Pascale, a 14-year-old youth from St. Theresa Point; Sophie Jaworski, 83; Sandra Chabuty, 52 and Veronica Lynn Crop, 31, all from Winnipeg. Six lives ended before their time.

We must remember December 6 in order to move forward toward our goal of eliminating violence against women, making our society a safe place for women and children to live. We must also pay tribute to the many men who support women, honour their work and advocate for women's rights. We must honour the memory of these women, and we must never waiver in our goal to eliminate violence against women.

Please join me in renewing our commitment to keeping women safe. I ask you to observe a moment of silence to remember those 14 young lives, those women of École polytechnique and to remember women everywhere who have died from violence.

*(14:10)

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the words by the minister in the Chamber, as well as her words this morning at the sunrise breakfast. On behalf of members on this side of the House, I would also like to make comments on the 15th anniversary of the Montréal massacre.

The violence occurred on this heartbreaking day at the hands of one man, Mr. Speaker. December 6, 1989, 14 women were senselessly killed while studying engineering at the École polytechnique: Geneviève Bergeron, age 21; Hélène Colgan, 23; Nathalie Croteau, 23; Barbara Daigneault, 22; Anne-Marie Edward, 21; Maud Haviernick, 29; Barbara Maria Klucznik, 31; Maryse Leclair, 23; Annie St. Arneault, 23; Michèle Richard, 21; Maryse Laganière, 25; Anne-Marie Lemay, 22; Sonia Pelletier, 28 and Annie Turcotte, 21, the victims who were tragically killed some 15 years ago.

As legislators did back then, so, too, today do we stand and send our condolences to the families, the friends, the loved ones who lost a mother, perhaps a sister, a partner, a niece, a schoolmate, an employee and a friend. This senseless loss of life, this calculated violence against women must not and cannot be tolerated in our country. Manitobans and Canadians will not stand for gender violence because we value inclusion, peace, justice and equality.

As legislators and Manitobans, we grieve over the violence that has occurred and the violence that continues to occur in our society. I know that all honourable members agree that violence is a serious issue especially when it is violence targeted at one group, women.

Mr. Speaker, because of the tragedy, December 6 has been declared a national day of remembrance, an action on violence against women. I know that all honourable members who remember those 14 women and all Manitoba women, as the minister read into the record, we all believe that our constituencies are constituencies of peace, harmony. I know that we will not rest as legislators, as human beings, until violence against women has come to an end.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, we remember today the 14 women whose lives were so tragically ended on December 6, 1989. The events of that day are etched in our collective memories, and they are etched in the history of Canada.

It is an occasion for us not only to remember the 14 whose lives were cut down at such an early stage, the 14 who showed such tremendous promise, it is an occasion for us to renew our commitment, individually and collectively, to do whatever we can to make sure that such tragic events do not occur again, and to prevent, to do our part to ensure that we can have a province and a country, indeed, a world, where we do not have such violent acts against women, and where we can have women contributing without fear of such acts in many ways to our society, including here in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker: Can we please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 10—The Pension Benefits Amendment Act

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk), that leave be given to introduce Bill 10, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, and that same be now received and read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, this bill makes extensive amendments to The Pension Benefits Act and incorporates consensus recommendations of the Pension Commission of Manitoba and provisions based on consultations with Manitoba citizens. Provisions relate to such areas as minimum standards, ancillary benefits, phased retirement, surplus and unlocking of balances held in locked-in retirement benefit plans.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

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 with us athletes that were representing Manitoba at this summer's 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens. They are: Rhea Schmidt, who is in swimming; Travis Gaertner, of basketball; Joey Johnson, basketball; Glenn Mariash, shooting; Jared Funk, rugby; Kirby Côté, swimming; Tom Hainey, who is the coach of swimming; Bill Johnson, who is the team leader for basketball. These athletes brought home a total of seven gold and three silver medals. Congratulations.

They are the guests of the honourable Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick).

Also in the public gallery we have with us today Mr. Justin Schinkel of Steinbach. This visitor is a guest of the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

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

Also in the public gallery we have with us today 25 Journalism students from Red River College Princess Campus. These students are under the direction of Mr. Duncan McMonagle.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Izzy Vermette Employment Status

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in October the Doer government was made aware that \$40,000 in

taxpayers' money was being used to hire Izzy Vermette, a well-known gang member to, quote, "get the kids out of gangs." The hiring occurred against the advice of the Winnipeg Police gang unit.

Under the Doer government, we have seen 32 murders. We have seen vicious beatings. We have seen gang muggings. We see more frequent and more violent crimes. Gang activity and other violent crimes are on the rise under the Doer government, and what is the solution of the provincial and federal governments? To contract with companies with known ties to the Hells Angels. This government did. They are hiring known gang members.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier (Mr. Doer) tell all Manitobans what action has he taken to put an end to this absolutely irresponsible use of taxpayers' money? What has he done?

* (14:20)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), I will take this specific question asked by the Leader of the Opposition with respect to a particular individual under advisement.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, this was brought to the Doer government's attention over a month ago. Over a month they have known about it, and they have done nothing.

This is incredible that a known gang member is sitting and working for something that this government funds, and the best that they can do is say that that they are going to take it under advisement after they have known it for over a month. That is absolutely shameless, and I expect the Premier to stand in his place and answer the question.

We know that this gang member, this known member, is involved, and now we know that the known gang member also sits on a working committee, a working committee that the Doer government is aware of. How does this Premier justify his inaction? How does he justify providing provincial funding to an organization that it knows that this gang member is working there and that he sits on a committee? How does this Premier expect Manitobans to have any respect for his justice?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the Leader of the Opposition with respect to the previous question that he asked with respect to that particular individual, I would take that question under advisement on behalf of the Minister of Justice.

I might add, with respect to the second question asked—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When ministers take a question under notice, there should be no preamble or postamble. I heard him taking the first question as notice for the honourable minister. If the honourable minister is answering the supplementary question, that is a different matter. The initial question has been taken under notice, and if the honourable member is also taking notice of the supplemental question, there is to be no preamble and no postamble.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker. There are many things that we can do as a government and as a Legislature and as a society to deal with issues of crime, gang-related crime, et cetera. This government's record with respect to organization of gang units, with respect to prosecutions is unparalleled in this province. I find it very strange that the members opposite who make so much of this voted against the establishment and putting on the street of 40 additional police men and women to protect the citizens of Manitoba. They voted against it. Their actions speak much louder than their words.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, that is cold comfort to the 32 murders that have taken place here in Manitoba under the watch of this Premier; 32, an all-time record. When asked of the question, this is what I find somewhat astonishing. This is a very serious issue. Justice is very important to all Manitobans, and this Premier does not have the ability to stand in his place and answer a very straightforward question.

Mr. Speaker, this year a committee was struck. The Proposal Fund Allocation Committee was established to address homelessness in Winnipeg. Sitting on that board, one Izzy Vermette, a known gang member. Also on that board, an ex officio of the Doer government.

We can get all sorts of comments from this minister, but it begs the question of what is the Premier's strategy to deal with gang activity in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, what other organizations or

organized crime is the Doer government helping to fund through some kind of a partnership? Why does the Premier not stand in his place and defend this senseless spending?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I understand the Winnipeg Police Service Gang Unit had a recent meeting of the big-10 in Winnipeg which was attended by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) and the official opposition. The Minister of Justice noted that the gang unit presentation included comments suggesting the Province had directly employed an active gang member against the advice of Winnipeg Police Service.

I understand that department staff have consulted with provincial government departments and provincial funding sources. We are advised that the individual in question was not at any time, and is not currently, employed by the Province, and records have been checked back to 1999. However, the individual referenced in the gang unit may have been working at Thunderbird House, and the anti-gang program there is federally funded. Federal officials were unable to confirm as to whether the individual was employed there, Mr. Speaker. That is the information that has been provided to me. I hope the member will stand corrected with respect to information that he has provided earlier.

Izzy Vermette Employment Status

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, Izzy Vermette is a known gang member. He was hired by Thunderbird House. Thunderbird House is partially funded by the Province, and he was hired against the advice of the Winnipeg gang unit. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) continues to talk about his gang strategy as being leading edge and working.

I ask the Minister of Justice, Mr. Speaker, is the hiring of a known gang member a part of the Justice Minister's gang strategy, and is it working.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, just two comments to that member's statement. Firstly, from the information provided to me, the provincial government did not hire this particular individual. Secondly, I just want to point out to members opposite, if they were serious about crime I find it passing strange, indeed, I find it

incredible that the funding of 40 additional police officers in the province of Manitoba has been voted against by members opposite. At this time when we need to support our police services, members opposite have voted against them which is a slap in the face to the men and women of this province who put their lives on the line every day to help protect all of us.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, this government knew that he was a gang member and knew that he was hired months ago. The Justice Minister promised to make Manitoba a hostile environment for gang members and criminal organizations. In the meantime, a known gang member is hired by an organization that is funded partially by the Province, and a few months ago the Province even hired a towing company with connections to the Hells Angels.

I ask the Minister of Justice does putting gang members on government payrolls create a hostile environment for gangs.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, just to put in context, again, the inaccuracies that have been brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition and by the member, I am advised that a meeting was held with the Minister of Justice, opposition officials and the Winnipeg Police department. Comments were suggesting that the Province had directly employed an active gang member. Department staff had consulted with a number of provincial agencies and were advised that the individual in question was not at any time and is not currently employed by the Province.

However, the individual referenced by the gang unit may have been working at Thunderbird House. The anti-gang program there is federally funded, and federal officials have been unable to confirm to us whether or not the individual was employed there.

Mr. Speaker, the important and fundamental issue is has this government taken action with respect to these matters. The record speaks for itself in terms of the legislation and in terms of the—
[interjection]

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, we just heard the minister confess that he knew he was hired, and he knew he was a gang member. The number of gang members in this province is increasing. The Hells

Angels came to Manitoba under the watch of this Justice Minister in the year 2000. The Hells Angels opened a retail store down the street from the Justice Minister's own constituency office. A towing company was hired by the Province with connections to the Hells Angels. Now we see a known gang member is employed by an organization that is partially funded by the Province.

When will this minister get it right? When will he combat gang members instead of hiring them? When will he create that hostile environment that he has promised, and when will he implement an effective gang strategy?

* (14:30)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the information that I have provided to the House, the information concerning this individual, was provided via a letter to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) dated November 25. So the great revelation brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition was sent in a letter that I have provided advice from to the Leader of the Opposition. So perhaps the Leader of the Opposition would either like to clarify the facts provided in the letter, or perhaps, correct his initial question which was, according to the letter provided, not accurate.

Izzy Vermette Employment Status

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier (Mr. Doer). The Premier knew over a month ago that his government was funding an agency that had a known gang member. That is the issue. They knew a month ago. The best they can do is try and send some kind of a letter to say, "Well, we know about it, but we are not really part of that funding of that particular person. Yes, we fund the organization."

They have known about it and they have done nothing. That is the kind of justice we see under the Doer government. Do nothing. Stand in your place and take responsibility.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, if I recall correctly, the Leader of the Opposition stood up and accused the government of employing a gang member, despite the fact the

Leader had in his hands and quoted from a letter dated November 25. The Leader had it in his hands with respect to that particular information.

If the member has additional information, if the member has new information, but trying to make cheap political gain on the backs of individuals is beneath this House. I suggest he better would have instructed his members to vote in favour of hiring 40 police officers than taking the cheap political shots that he does on a daily basis in this Chamber.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, now we have heard it all. Now the Doer government is basically taking a position that because Izzy Vermette, a known gang member, is sitting on the Proposal Fund Allocation Committee, is working for an organization that is funded by the provincial government, somehow they are resolved, somehow it is a revelation, that because that person somehow has nothing to do with the provincial government.

Well, everybody knows that known gang member is working at Thunderbird House, funded by the provincial government. Everybody knows the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) was made aware of this over a month ago, and everybody knows that this Premier does not have the ability to stand in his place and take responsibility. Do the right thing for a change.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I will table in this Chamber a letter sent on November 25, actually November 26, to the Leader of the Opposition saying, "That meeting was attended by the Minister of Justice and the Official Opposition. The Minister of Justice noted that the Gang Unit presentation included comments suggesting that the Province had either directly funded or employed an active gang member." "Department staff have consulted with a number of provincial government departments and provincial funding sources. We are advised the individual in question was not at any time and is not currently employed by the Province." "We have checked records back . . ." "However, I understand that the individual referenced by the gang unit may have been working at Thunderbird House."

This letter was sent to the Leader of the Opposition three weeks ago. Now he stands up and says, "You are directly employing a gang member," despite this. Now you see the tone of the question is changing because members opposite know that they

cannot simply try to ride the back of a particular unfortunate circumstance as regarding the situation to make political gain out of it.

Mr. Murray: The unfortunate circumstances that we see from this Doer government is, No. 1, the Premier has the inability to stand up and answer a very straight-ahead question about justice, when he knows, as the Premier, we have had 32 murders in the province of Manitoba under his watch, Mr. Speaker.

What is unfortunate about this is that we hear from the Doer government that somehow, because they only knew over a month ago about this known gang member that was working at Thunderbird House, and because, somehow, that particular individual was not being funded provincially, even though they fund the place he is working at, even though he sits on a committee, this Premier does not have the ability to stand up and take responsibility. Why do you not send a signal to Manitobans, Mr. Premier, that you take justice responsibly rather than shoving it to somebody else? It is time to stand and take responsibility.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, all weekend long I heard from Manitobans—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will look at the issue of Thunderbird House. I know that Mrs. Richard, I think, is the executive director, and I will have to check out all the other arrangements. The letter also mentioned the direct provincial funding. Having said that, all weekend long individuals were coming up to me and asking me how the Conservative Party of Manitoba could vote against 40 additional police officers. They may laugh, but they are going to be held accountable for their own vote.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind all honourable members, the clock is ticking.

Regional Health Authorities Amalgamations

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the *Brandon Sun* reported on Saturday that the Doer government is considering amalgamating the Brandon RHA and the ARHA without the knowledge or support of the Brandon RHA or the ARHA.

Mr. Speaker, residents in west Manitoba have been seeing the Doer government introduce highway medicine to pregnant moms and very sick children. We have seen wait lists more than double under the Doer government. We have seen their hospitals threatened to be closed, and there are no words or actions that can give any cause of hope for the future to reverse this that we see what the Doer government is doing to rural Manitoba.

Will the Premier commit today that, rather than creating a single super-sized health region in the western corner of our province, he will stand in his place and commit to not closing or converting one rural hospital, and will he commit today to put an end to highway medicine?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have reduced the number of administrative boards set up by former members, the regional health boards, from 13 to 11. We have also, as I mentioned last week, increased the out surgeries. Effective in the new year, there will be a 25% increase in surgical procedures and days at the Brandon regional hospital. There will be an increased amount of diagnostic tests in Brandon with the first MRI outside of the city of Winnipeg.

Again, the people I talked to over the weekend from the western part of the province want to know why members opposite voted against the largest reduction in taxes on farmland in the history of the province.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, rather than—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers. If members wish to have a conversation, they are more than welcome to use our loges, but I need to hear the questions and the answers.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have seen, and this Doer government has a very clear record on what happens when they force amalgamation. It is well-documented. Costs skyrocket. Despite assurances, by the way, by this Premier that forced amalgamation, there would be all sorts of savings. That is what we get from the Doer government. Say one thing, but the facts contradict what they are saying. The admin costs of the ARHA have increased from \$3 million in 1999 to \$5.5 million last year, and the admin costs of the Brandon Regional Health Authority went from \$1 million to \$2.5 million.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, given this Minister of Health's track record of mismanagement and inability to control spending, will the Premier today commit, rather than forcing amalgamation of the ARHA and the Brandon Regional Health Authority, to undertake a review of regional health services throughout the province? Will he commit to that today?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I recall members opposite, in fact all these members of the front bench that were in Cabinet when the regional health authorities were established. I do not know whether the member opposite caucused with his former members of Cabinet that established all these regional health authorities. In fact, there was not just one regional health authority in Winnipeg, there were two. There were 13 vice-presidents in the city of Winnipeg.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know members opposite do not like to be held accountable, but when I was visiting with people from across Manitoba, they wanted to know why members opposite voted against 40 more police officers, why they voted against the largest tax reduction on farmland in the history of the province. To go further, why did they vote against the new entertainment complex in the city of Winnipeg? The would-have, could-have, should-have party is not very credible in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, as the saying goes, to the Premier, when in doubt, shout.

We know that this Premier has made commitments in 1999 and again in 2003. He had all of the solutions to end hallway medicine, to fix health care. He said in 2003 that he would not close

or convert one rural hospital. That is what he said. Rather than standing on these election promises, the Doer government has what? Created highway medicine; more than doubled the wait list; proceeding with plans to close or convert rural hospitals, and now is going down a path of forcing the Brandon Regional Health Authority and the ARHA to amalgamate.

The people of Westman are justified in wanting to know if this Premier's commitments were only for the purposes of getting re-elected. Hollow, hollow commitment. Will he do the right thing today and clearly state that, rather than forcing amalgamation of the ARHA and the Brandon Regional Health Authority, that he will direct a review of regional health services throughout Manitoba, and that he will stand by his election commitment to not close or alter one rural hospital? Will he make that commitment today?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the House that we have altered health care, and we will continue to alter and innovate health care. We have altered health care by doing the renovations that were promised seven times in Brandon. We have altered health care by putting an MRI machine outside of the Perimeter Highway. We have altered health care by putting a new CAT scan in Steinbach, in Selkirk, in Thompson, in The Pas. We have altered health care by having more home care. We have altered health care by innovating with more telemedical sites. Yes, we will alter health care and improve it every day for Manitobans.

Assiniboine Regional Health Authority Service Decline

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, the Premier cannot stand in this House and crow about how he has altered medicine until he has talked to a woman, who was giving birth to a child, was taken to Brandon, and then shuttled to Winnipeg because there was no room and no ability to deal with her in Brandon. That is the truth of the health care system today. We put people on highways, we put them into ambulances, and we find facilities en route.

Mr. Speaker, the Health Minister has made comments about the possibility of amalgamating the Brandon health region with the Assiniboine health region. The Assiniboine health region's administrative costs have escalated from \$3 million to \$5.5

million. Now the minister is talking about amalgamating, but the services in that Assiniboine Regional Health Authority have diminished to the people.

We had a dialysis unit promised for Russell four years ago. It still has not been delivered. Doctors are leaving the region. I want a commitment from the Minister of Health today that he will not only do the right thing, but ensure that health services are delivered properly to the people in the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): We did the right thing when we finally built the Brandon Regional Health Centre. Mr. Speaker, we did the right thing when we bought 80 new ambulances. We did the right thing when we put a CAT scan into Portage la Prairie, and the hole was dug last week, and the machine will be installed and in place by June. We did the right thing when we transferred hip and knee surgeries to Boundary Trails Hospital. We have done the right thing in rural Manitoba to strengthen health care over and over and over, and we are not finished. Fourteen hundred surgeries are going to Selkirk. A hundred new dental surgeries are going out to Beausejour. There are new cancer care sites in Pinawa and Deloraine. We will alter and improve and strengthen health care, every time we take action in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, the minister and this government have decimated the health care system in western Manitoba. Today, a community that services 7000 clients is down to one doctor. Out of 47 doctors hired in that region, 37 have left. Is this what we call quality health care? Is this what this minister refers to as an improved health care system? I would ask the minister whether or not he will pay attention to services to clients rather than tinkering with the system.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in answers to similar questions, there are 139 more doctors today serving Manitoba than there were when we formed office. When they left office there were 116 fewer doctors serving Manitoba than when they started. As I have said in response to this question before, some 52 of these doctors are in rural Manitoba.

We are very proud of the record that we have achieved, but there is much more to do, and I want to

tell the member opposite that some people from rural Manitoba have some very helpful suggestions. One of them, in particular, a doctor's partner, gave me some very good advice and very helpful advice that I have told her that I will follow up on very quickly, to strengthen our recruiting because of her experience with our system. There are people out there who want to strengthen our system, and we will work with them every day.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the people do not believe this government because it was the Premier (Mr. Doer) who went through the region two days before the election and said in Erickson, we will not close your hospital, we will not alter your services. He went to Rivers and he said the same thing, "We will not alter your services, we will not close your hospital." He said, "I am the Premier, I will make those decisions." Today we have four hospitals in that region that do not offer the services they used to before the election. Will this minister ensure that those services are reinstated?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, we work every day with Doctor Burnett in the regional health authorities of Manitoba association to help staffing efforts that are going on in all parts of Manitoba, including in Winnipeg. I simply remind members: 139 more, 116 less and, by the way, I want to table for the information of the member the actual savings for the regional health authority on the amalgamation that happened in western Manitoba of \$1.1 million savings. I want to also inform the House that from 2001 to 2002-2003, the last date of which we have complete, the administrative costs declined from 7.7 percent to 6.6 percent.

Rancher's Choice Beef Co-op Federal Funding

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): The Minister of Agriculture, from time to time, has blamed farmers, she has blamed co-operatives, and she has blamed other people for not being able to build a processing plant in Manitoba. Now she is blaming the federal government for not participating in building a processing plant in the province of Manitoba. Will the Minister of Agriculture today tell the people of Manitoba which minister she has discussed with in the federal government the participation of building a processing plant in Manitoba?

* (14:50)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I hope when the member is asking this question that he is now on side and agrees that we should increase the slaughter capacity in this province, because from what we heard in the past from him, he has not been on side.

With respect to which minister I have raised it with, I have raised this issue with the federal Minister of Agriculture and Food, and my Premier (Mr. Doer) has raised the issue with the federal minister. We were very pleased when the federal minister came to Manitoba on September 10 and said that they were providing a loan-loss provision. Unfortunately, they are not being very flexible and, in fact, the programs that they are proposing are not working for producers. I hope that they will look very seriously to the business plan for Rancher's Choice which I also provided to the federal minister. I also hope I can count on his support to lobby the federal government so they would be involved.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, I have personally had discussions with the federal Treasury Board chairman of the federal government, and also, on another occasion, his staff, and both have confirmed that there is significant money available to build up processing capacity in Manitoba.

Would the Minister of Agriculture today table the business plan that she presented to the federal government when she requested support for a processing plant?

Ms. Wowchuk: I am really, really surprised that the member would not understand business and does not realize that that is not my business plan. It is the business plan of Rancher's Choice. It is Rancher's Choice, right or not right, to provide a business plan. They asked me to give that business plan to the federal minister. I did it on their behalf, and I am disappointed that he would expect us to make public somebody's private business plan. That is not the way you do business.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that a Minister of Agriculture from this province of Manitoba would approach a federal minister without any indication as to what was going on in the province and ask them for money.

This minister also has constantly said that our borders would open when we had discussions with

our American counterparts. Now we hear that the Hong Kong borders are going to be open to Manitoba beef, although it is a bit too much of a distance to ship live cattle to Hong Kong.

Would this minister today be prepared to partner with private industry investors, the federal government, to build a processing industry to handle the 500 000 head of 30-month-and-under cattle produced in the province of Manitoba? Would she do that today?

Ms. Wowchuk: We all realize that the situation we were in when we had very little slaughter capacity in this province when the border was closed is one that we do not want to continue. It was under the member opposite's administration that the slaughter capacity in this province declined, and they did absolutely nothing about it. They did absolutely nothing when they were in office to increase slaughter capacity.

We have been in discussion with many people in this province who are looking at how they can increase their slaughter capacity. We will continue to work with them. There has been a commitment by our government that we will work with them, and we worked on a daily basis with Rancher's Choice and other people who have said they have an interest in increasing slaughter capacity in this province. I only wish the opposition would get on board rather than being critical and saying that Rancher's Choice cannot go.

Aiyawin Corporation Operational Review

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, at Aiyawin Corporation—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think we need a little clarification here. For the information of all members, we are now on question No. 7.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, at Aiyawin Corporation, there are hundreds of thousands of dollars unaccounted for. A brother of the general manager has been receiving untendered contracts and using the corporation's credit card. The board is said to have hired the manager's brother, but there is no record of this in the board minutes. The present government has been missing in action for five years. There was not even a proper membership base, let alone a proper membership-elected board and board

meetings. For five years this government has stood by and done nothing while public dollars have been walking out the door.

I ask the Minister responsible for Family Services and Housing why was her government missing in action when it came to monitoring and mentoring the Aiyawin Corporation. How could her government have so badly let down low-income Aboriginal people in Manitoba?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Again, Mr. Speaker, I will correct the record. The department was concerned about Aiyawin. We began an operational review earlier this year.

I will quote from the CBC story this morning, "This review was conducted by staff and auditors at the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation. They started their work in February, and it was sent to Aiyawin on November 22."

This review is very thorough, Mr. Speaker, and that is quoted from CBC this morning. The department has not been missing in action. We have been taking action and will continue to do so.

Mr. Gerrard: For four and a half years, until this February, this government was missing in action. For five years this government has been letting taxpayers' dollars walk out the door. For five years the normally expected oversight of public funds provided to Aiyawin Corporation has been absent. The present Minister of Family Services and Housing has been slow to act at every step. Only after she learned that the Liberals and the media were on to this issue did she write to the Auditor General to say, "You better investigate."

I ask the Minister of Family Services and Housing to table today the operational review of the Aiyawin Corporation so Manitobans can know—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Melnick: Again, Mr. Speaker, I will stand and correct the record. We have been monitoring Aiyawin. We had taken action long before the member became aware that there was a concern. There was a process in place. The process is that we are awaiting Aiyawin to respond by the 13th of December to see if they will be able to put a plan in

place for corrective measures. If not, we will move to remove that funding.

The department has been on top of this issue. We will stay on top of this issue, and we will move through the process as is appropriate.

Government Advertising Costs

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Over the weekend I had opportunity to see a commercial. In the commercial, this government tries to send out this warm and fuzzy feeling to Manitobans that they are cutting back on taxes. Yet I reflect on the budget, Mr. Speaker, and I do not recall seeing any commercials that said you are now going to have start paying taxes on legal fees, or taxes on accounting.

In an attempt to push out propaganda to the public as a whole, the government now is saying, "We are providing tax breaks." What is the cost? How much money is the taxpayer going to have to pay to put this kind of propaganda out on the airwaves? I truly believe that it should be the New Democratic Party paying for this propaganda, not the Manitoba taxpayer.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I am surprised the member opposite has not apologized to the House for using pages for delivering material. That is against our rules, Mr. Speaker.

We need no lectures in this House. Both sides of the House that have been in government in Manitoba have not taxed the motive fuel tax on farmland and farmers. The federal Liberal Party of Canada does.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Livable Communities Awards

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): I rise today to bring attention to and applaud the Town of Gimli for being chosen a finalist at the 2004 International Awards for Livable Communities.

The awards ceremony was held October 14-18 in Niagara Falls to acknowledge communities that

exhibit dedication to best practice for management of the local environment. Finalists are judged on environmental practices, heritage management, landscape enhancement, citizen community involvement and future planning. Along with being nominated a finalist among communities of 20 000 or less population, Gimli also received a gold award for their walking trails project and a bronze award for community involvement.

* (15:00)

Gimli should be very proud of its accomplishments. The International Awards for Livable Communities is a prestigious competition that draws applications from countries all over the world, and is endorsed by the United Nations environmental program.

Mr. Speaker, although Gimli was not chosen the most livable community in the world, there is reason to celebrate. Gimli is a fantastic place to live, and this competition put it on the world stage where it deserves to be.

In addition, the conference and awards ceremony provided officials from Gimli a priceless opportunity to meet with other communities and share ideas and approaches to common problems such as energy conservation, education, health and attracting outside investment. This valuable experience will benefit the citizens of Gimli in the future and will bring the town closer to becoming the most livable community in the world.

I would like to thank Peter Partington, the chairman of the Regional Municipality of Niagara and the host of the event. I would like to thank Patrick Robson and Florrie Neufeld, who, I have been advised, organized the details of the event. I extend my deepest thanks to the citizens of Gimli who provided crucial input for the presentation, as well as Catherine Strong and Mayor Kevin Chudd, who made the formal presentation in Niagara Falls. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dan Lussier

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and congratulate a constituent in Southdale, Mr. Dan Lussier, who recently was awarded the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship, which is presented to students who

excel in academics, student activities, volunteerism and athletics. Dan Lussier is a graduate of St. Paul's High School, which is one of the many great schools in Winnipeg. Currently he is in his fifth year of mechanical engineering at the University of Manitoba and is focussed on the aerospace program within his department.

Dan has not only excelled in academics but also in student activities. While attending high school, he was an academic tutor and captain of the varsity volleyball and basketball teams. Dan's involvement has also continued into his post-secondary education as he is involved with the university student council in volunteering at the Habitat for Humanity and the St. Amant centres, both residential and resource facilities for Manitobans living with developmental diseases.

Rhodes Scholarship recipients face an extensive application process, and those chosen receive financial coverage for books, tuition and housing while studying at Oxford University in England. In total, the University of Manitoba has had 86 Rhodes Scholarships awarded to their students over the years, which is more than any other university in western Canada. Rhodes Scholarships have acknowledged the outstanding accomplishments of 11 applicants this year in Canada, 2 in total from the province of Manitoba. Again, I would like to congratulate Dan Lussier on his tremendous accomplishment and wish him continued success in his future academic career. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Breakfast with Santa

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, December 11, 2004, it is my pleasure to be an invited guest at St. Norbert Community Centre's Second Annual Breakfast with Santa. I am very excited to be attending Breakfast with Santa this year. I had the honour of assisting with last year's event, and feel that this event reflects the generosity and community commitment of St. Norbert residents. The staff and volunteers of St. Norbert Community Centre work hard to make Breakfast with Santa a successful and joyous event for St. Norbert children.

The community centre, in co-operation with local businesses, ensures that St. Norbert children receive a gift from Santa and that all children and parents enjoy a breakfast of pancakes and sausages. Residents and local St. Norbert businesses donate

their money, food and time to make this event successful. Through the generosity of local merchants and residents, last year's Breakfast with Santa served over 200 meals and provided over 100 gifts to local children. This is something all volunteers and local businesses should be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to support St. Norbert Community Centre's Breakfast with Santa again this year. I will be helping other volunteers in the kitchen and also helping Santa hand out gifts. The volunteers who willingly give up a Saturday morning to help with this event are to be commended for their generosity and community spirit. I would like to thank St Norbert Community Centre, especially Rick and Kathy Thiessen for their hard work in preparing this event. I also want to thank the following businesses for generously sponsoring this event:

Niakwa Pizza, St. Norbert Motor Hotel, Foodland, Fairbairns Foods, The Pony Corral, General Gems, Jim's Home Improvements, R. J. Friesen Roofing, Co-op Gas Bar, Councillor John Angus, Mac's, K. W. Distributors, On Location, Vantis Credit Union, Cadara Sales and Hilker Enterprise. Their dedication and community spirit is an inspiration to us all. Thank you.

Boonstra Barn

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): An investment in the future. Dotted the prairie landscape is a common sight of the family barn which has become familiar to Manitobans. Unfortunately, many of these structures have fallen into disrepair as farming industry has changed. However, I do not rise today to speak of the past but rather to address the future and new developments in my constituency.

Mr. Rob Boonstra and Brian Boonstra of Meadows recently unveiled their brand new 52 000 square foot barn. I extend my congratulations to the Boonstra family as they begin operation as a state-of-the-art dairy barn. Their optimism is contagious as they invested in the stalls of 260 cows, even though they currently milk 130 cows. The Boonstra brothers have committed to this project for the comfort of their livestock. A simple matter of decreasing the slope of the approach to the rotary parlour makes it easy for the cows to enter and exit. It may seem like a small detail, but such changes are signs of ingenuity and empathy. As Manitoba farmers face adversity, this family, like many of their fellow

agriculturists, do not abandon hope. Rather, they stand steadfast. Confident in the strength of their business, the Boonstra family should be applauded for embracing new technology and investment in the future. Thank you.

Victoria General Hospital Guild

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Fort Garry, I had the honour of attending the 50th anniversary Come and Go Tea of the Guild of Victoria Hospital on September 23, 2004. This event was enjoyed by over a hundred past and present volunteers. One of the highlights was a fashion show representing the fashions over the decades. I would like to share with you and my colleagues some information about this special group. It was established in 1954. The Victoria Hospital guild plays an important role in the lives of patients and staff of Victoria General Hospital. Guild volunteers help serve meals to patients in the hospital and also greet and assist hospital visitors. Guild volunteers also reach out to family members awaiting news of loved ones in surgery, often offering them words of encouragement.

Guild volunteers are active in hospital fundraising and raise funds which helped the hospital purchase a CT scanner in 1989, the first scanner in any community hospital in Manitoba. The guild also donated \$500,000 toward a filmless imaging system and is committed to help furnish the new oncology unit. The guild's more than 300 volunteers have raised over \$2.5 million for hospital projects. This is no small feat. The guild has a strong community commitment. The guild sponsors the Mattie Hanna scholarship for young volunteers interested in health care and the Bea Dunstone scholarship for support staff wanting to advance their careers. The guild also co-ordinates volunteer programs for high school and university-age students. This strong community commitment earned the guild the Mayor's Volunteer Service Award in 1994.

I have had the honour of attending guild fundraisers in the past, including the Christmas Dickens of a Sale and the Bridge Luncheon. It always makes me happy to see the strong commitment that guild volunteers show.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Marilyn Nash, president of the guild, and all past and present guild volunteers for their ongoing commitment and

wish them continued success in the future. Thank you.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I rise to use my grievance to express my dismay about the ongoing concerns around how this government has handled Hydra House. Even today in Question Period we saw the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) say he was not responsible. He has demonstrated he has not been responsible in the way Hydra House has been managed.

* (15:10)

The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) said she was not responsible in her area. The Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) has delayed, avoided and covered up and is not responsible.

So I ask you, Mr. Speaker, who is on third. When will this government stand up and start taking responsibility for the management of the areas which have been placed under their responsibility and their authority?

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that concerns me the most is, when there has been found to be misappropriation or mishandling that occurs in management of government, that people scramble to say, "Well, it was not me, it is not my area. It must have been somebody else who made the mistake." This government does not stand up and say, "As a minister, I take responsibility. I take the final responsibility for what has happened in my department. What is happening in the case of vulnerable persons in care, I take responsibility for what occurred, and by golly, I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that it is corrected, to make sure it doesn't happen again, and to make sure that the people who need the care get the care appropriately, and that the finances, of which the taxpayers of this province worked so hard to provide for this government, that those tax dollars are managed for the best interests of where they are intended to be spent."

In a \$7-billion budget, everybody understands that the fact is the minister will not know where

every dollar is being spent, but, by golly, they are responsible for directing the actions of the people within their department and within the public service to make sure that they are doing everything they can, everything within their power and their authority, to make sure that there is appropriate action being taken.

When I look at the current situation in Hydra House, as we go forward to deal with the issues that are out there right now, we have been asking and we have asked in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the report that we believe was put together by LeVan Hall. That report may not be a controversial report. We do not know what is in it. Mr. Hall suddenly ended his responsibility, or in the public sense, we were told that his responsibility was ended, very quickly and without explanation.

Given all of the concerns that have been raised and given the fact that, as we approach the holiday season right now, there are a lot of families out there who will be saying to themselves, "One of my loved ones is resident in Hydra House. I wonder what it is going to be like for them for Christmas. Will they be dislocated from where they are currently located? Will their residence be changed? Will those that work with them and help them be changed? Can they expect to have a comfortable Christmas if I am unable to provide additional supports that might be necessary?"

Those questions are being asked in a legitimate way by a lot of very caring families and individuals out there, who would like to know where this is government going with its responsibility on Hydra House. I tie that very clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to what is a very disturbing trend. While I started my comments, in what, in the eyes of some on the other side, might be slightly light-hearted, it is a very disturbing trend when questions are asked of government and government either avoids the question or does not answer it.

We know in Question Period that can be a strategy and that can happen, but in the bigger sense, when there is a larger issue at play and the public wants to, and I believe has a right to certain information, and that information is somehow subverted, and I choose that word very deliberately, when that information is subverted, and I want the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) to think about the definition of that.

The Hall report, I will use that term to refer to it, because I do not know how else to refer to it, or the interim report, it has been referenced, which raises as a question, "So exactly what is in it?" Secondly, it has been, apparently, released to some members of the media, and we saw a very disturbing parallel just today being raised in a matter of privilege. I know that has been taken under advisement so I will not comment further on it. But my point is that when, as in this case, a report or a paper has been asked for in this Chamber and is not released or tabled but it is released in another form, that causes considerable concern about what might be the motive. I hope I get the government's attention when I ask about motive. What in the world could be the motive?

If the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) was to say that his finances are off, there may be an answer, inasmuch as he has not yet received an accurate estimate from the federal government what the transfer payments would be, or his tax revenue is a projected income based on the activity of the economy if something significant changes then he can say, well, the information going in was not as good as it should have been, but in this case the information is there.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

In this case, forward-looking plans are needed in order to deal with the concerns of the public and concerns of the residents. At the same time this government has shown a disturbing trend to not be willing to either undertake the responsibility that is necessary when concerns are raised or avoid publicly discussing that responsibility because we now have the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick) who has two agencies under significant scrutiny. Aiyawin Housing, there are some very, very disturbing trends that are being raised there, and this is the same sort of situation that arose when questions were being asked about Hydra House. There were disturbing questions being raised.

In this case the government seems to be responding more directly to the Aiyawin but what did they know before Aiyawin concerns started to become public? Is indeed the Liberal Leader in this Chamber correct when he says, "Well nobody would have done anything if I had not asked the question." You know, there is a parallel with Hydra House there.

The CBC did an inquiry years ago on Hydra House and raised some very disturbing questions at that time as well, and what happened? What happened? Not much, Mr. Speaker. As we look forward about the current situation with Hydra House, we are not getting any forthcoming answers or direction from the government as to what their plans are or should be. We know very simply that if they intend to assume responsibility for the residents, for some of the residents, they are going to have to explain publicly how they are going to acquire a value to place on those properties if they take them over.

What kind of arrangement are they going to have about keeping staff? We do not know today whether or not some of the senior management staff is still in place. No doubt they are under some scrutiny, but are the same people who were making decisions two years ago, three years ago, are some of those still making decisions today? That strikes me as being a serious, serious concern that this government needs to stand up, publicly address, indicate where they are moving with this issue.

Mr. Speaker, the government has stated, and correctly, many times, that the safety and security and the happiness and well-being of those who are clients and residents in the houses of Hydra House should be the first consideration.

* (15:20)

They should not be disadvantaged and they should not be forgotten in the shifting sands of management that are going to undoubtedly have to occur within their lives, but, in a publicly accountable way, I fear that this government has decided that they have manoeuvred the opposition into a very short session, one where the Premier (Mr. Doer) could have called us back sooner, there were issues that would have been very legitimate, to have an earlier call. The strategy seems to be if we take a little bit of bruising during this session, if we take a manageable amount of negative hits in this session, we will be out here by the ninth, and then who is going to be able to keep track of what is going on? We will be out of here by the ninth.

I look across the way at some of the members sitting in the government benches, and I would suggest that they are probably kind of uncomfortable with what is happening with the issues that are being

raised here. I see at least one minister of the Crown looking at me and not being too sure that I am very convincing, but I look around at some of the faces of her colleagues who may wonder if there is maybe more going on in the problems around Hydra House, around Aiyawin, around the accountability of expenditures within health care, policy decisions in natural resources.

You can slip through these issues during a short session, but if you have a session where more accountability is, in fact, acknowledged by government, government can come out looking an awful lot better. Why should I be putting forward good advice for the government, but the fact is government, if it has nothing to hide, has everything to gain by putting it on the table. Tell us where you are going. Tell us what your plans are.

I know that there are members in the government benches over there who have been relegated in some cases to sit near the potted plants and are, in fact, uncomfortable with what they see happening because they believe, as I just said, that it would be a lot better if they could put the information out there, and it would not be a situation of where they are burying the information, or submarining what they are doing would be actively defending in a proactive way where they are going to take their responsibilities as a government.

In burning out my grievance, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to spend all of my time being critical of the government, I want the government to listen. I want the government to talk to the public, talk to this Chamber directly, about what their actions might be, what they intend to do on behalf of people who are affected by some of the situations that are out there today. If they do not do that, they will spend the rest of the winter defending what I think for this government are some very unfortunate situations. They are not just unfortunate, they are troubling. They are all the more troubling because the current Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) is unwilling to acknowledge that he might have had information, and the fact is we believe very firmly he had information that he did not act on.

The current Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) has information, and she set the trend, frankly, in committee, in the last sitting of this House, she would not answer, avoided answering, provided misleading information regarding the

children in hotels. Now that information is starting to come out, and we realize that the minister was, in fact, I will use the sports vernacular, ragging the puck. She was playing with the topic and not forthcoming with information.

Every time government goes down that route, they are starting to be in a situation where they are opening the third envelope. I think most of who have been elected members know the story about the three envelopes that are sitting on a minister's desk when they come in to government. On the first day, you open the second envelope and when you get to opening it, then you get into trouble, you open the second one. Then when you get to the third one, you know that you have reached the end of your mandate because you have to start preparing three envelopes.

Mr. Speaker, I am comfortable that this government will not accept good advice, but I had to put on the record my concerns. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Pembina, on a grievance?

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is with hesitation that I get up because, during the period of time that I have been in this Legislature, this is the first time that I am getting up on a grievance. However, I feel that it is my responsibility as the MLA representing the constituency of Pembina, but also representing Manitobans, that I need to get up to express my concerns. As a result of this session, and our trying through Question Period, our trying through the Public Accounts process, to get some answers from this government, certainly we have not gotten answers. I believe it is important for all Manitobans to find out what really is the underlining issue regarding Hydra House.

So it is with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, that I am getting up today to express my concerns, the concerns that we feel on this side of the House regarding the specifics. As the result of not getting answers to the questions that we have, be that in Question Period, it leads one toward suspicion, like what are they hiding? Are there issues out there that the general public should not be made aware of?

Consequently, I feel that it is important that we continue to drive this issue, to ultimately hope that the government of the day is going to be listening to the appeals that we make, and will in fact, as we

have called for a number of times, we will be calling for a public inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, when a government is alerted to the possibility that taxpayer dollars are being misspent, they must do everything in their power to ensure that the allegations are investigated and answers are provided. This is what the Doer government should have done when they were alerted to the financial mismanagement occurring at Hydra House in November of 2000, but they did not. The question is why they did not. As I have indicated at the outset, I believe it is important for all Manitobans to know where these monies are going.

I continue to ask the government to come clean and to give us these answers. I also do it for the fact that I represent an area, and I am very proud of it, that we have an area and a facility known as Gateway Resources that houses and that looks after those who are vulnerable in our society. They do a wonderful job of looking after these people, and I believe that, as Manitobans, as individuals, we have that responsibility to look after those who are vulnerable. Again, if there are finances that are needed in order to be able to accommodate those people, certainly we need to be out there, and we need to give that.

Mr. Speaker, coming back to the issue at hand, this is about finances. This is about mismanagement of finances. Where did these monies go? I believe it is important that we know that the monies that are out there, that they are directed in the proper channel. Yet, though we have asked, as I have indicated through Question Period, through Public Accounts process, we have asked time and time and time again, where did the dollars go, the misappropriation of the funds. Then I would go back to it is not only us who have been asking these questions, but the Auditor General, in fact, came out and highlighted some of the issues that are out there. Consequently, I believe that there is a responsibility, that the onus is on the government of the day to come forward and to give us the answers to these questions.

Mr. Speaker, the Doer government had at least five opportunities to address the misspending of taxpayer dollars at Hydra House. Why did they let these opportunities go by without taking action? Again, I know that there have been all kinds of blame that have been put out there, but the issue is that when the Auditor General came out and

specifically addressed the concerns that were out there, why did the government, why did the now-Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), the then-Minister of Family Services, not come forward and indicate listen, we have got to do an investigation into to this.

* (15:30)

That leads me to the point where the minister of the day, the now-Minister of Health, said that he had done everything that was needed. In fact, he had done an extensive, extraordinary review of this, and basically left it at that. I know that we asked questions within the House here about this extraordinary review that had taken place which was basically, the indication was, "Well, I talked to them, and I saw or heard nothing, and I just let it go." Now I know that we have some lawyers within the Chamber here, and I think if they would go through an investigation, it would be simply more of asking a question than just like, "What do you know? Oh, you do not know anything? Oh, thank you very much. Now we will go and we will look at the other issue."

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we have tried getting answers during the Public Accounts Committee, but the Doer government refused to allow those directly involved with this fiasco to appear before the committee. All we are asking, again, is what the Auditor General has asked for. We have asked that we do an investigation, that we find out where these discrepancies have taken place. But are we getting anywhere? The answer is no.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) needs to call a public inquiry so the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), the former Family Services Minister, along with senior departmental staff and executives at Hydra House, will have to provide answers to Manitobans under oath. I believe that this is extremely important, that we have this take place. Again, why is it that we want to have the answers to these questions? It is so that the monies that had been redirected, whether they have been spent inappropriately, that we find out the answers to these questions so that we can give those dollars that had been spent, redirect them and give them to those who are vulnerable within our society.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague who spoke and had the grievance on the same issue indicated very clearly, it almost appears that because the government of the day has determined that we are going to

have a very short session, and I knew that at the end of the previous session our then-critic for Family Services did raise this, but it almost appears as though there is something that, because of the duration of time, now they are trying to say, "Let us quickly move on, let us quickly get through this session. Hopefully, somehow, people will forget, and we can wash this underneath the rug." That is why, again, and I want to reiterate the fact that we have asked time and time again, I know that the opposition members have stated and have asked the question, let us call for a public inquiry. Let us get down to the bottom of the issue.

I know that the MLAs on the other side, I am sure many of them, have no idea what the issue is about, because the minister of the day, the then-Family Services minister who today is the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) probably did not advise them, probably did not give them any information, and so they, I would suspect, would be wanting to know what the issues are as well. I would assume that they would want to know what the issues are, the things that we are concerned about, and I am sure they would be concerned about them, too because again, as I have indicated, this is not about us. This is about those who are vulnerable out there; this is the children out there, even the adults who have disabilities. Again, as a province, a government, we have a responsibility to them. We need to be able to address the issues that they have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, despite pressures in 2002 by our caucus, as I indicated, the former Family Services Minister continually denied that there were problems and, instead, questioned the credibility of the former Hydra House CEO who brought allegations of financial mismanagement forward and the CBC investigative reporter who broke this story. So, as we have seen time and time again in this House, it is always a deflection. It is someone else's fault. Rather than taking ownership for the problems that are out there, it is always someone else's fault.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

We heard that today in Question Period. As soon as we are short of an answer, it is either the federal government's problem or oh, way back when, you know, when there was a different party in government, it must have been their problem. Rather than taking ownership for the concerns, the issues that are out there and addressing them, they are

trying to deflect this on a different department or a different government or the federal government, whatever.

What we are saying, and this is the concern that I have, that we go out there, that we continue to pressure the government to call for an independent public inquiry which would get down to the bottom of this. That is the only way they would be able to address the shortcomings that are out there. Further, we also believe the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) should apologize to both the individual who brought the concerns forward and to the CBC reporter who broke the story. He should apologize to Manitobans for misleading them and for the contradicting statements.

I want to highlight some of those statements he made. First, he said he did an extraordinary review. I just mentioned that briefly before. The then-Minister of Family Services, who today is the Minister of Health, indicated and he said, "We did an extraordinary review. We have made all the normal and some quite extraordinary checks into the issue. We are satisfied that what we are seeing is quality service, adequate accountability and a dispute between a former employee and his boss."

Then he said he did not have the capacity, and then he said he sought the advice of legal counsel who told him he had no right to seek information from a private corporation's financial affairs and that the focus of the investigation should be on adequacy of service. This extraordinary review, as I indicated before, is simply one of asking, "Are there any abnormalities? Is there anything you think is different from what it should be?"

I would submit to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, if I were asked that question and I were a part of the investigation, I would try to shrug that off and say there is no real issue here. Rather than the minister of the day going out and really doing an accounting of what had taken place, that did not take place. He continues to say, "We are satisfied that what we are seeing is quality service, adequate accountability and a dispute between a former employee." Then he says he has had legal counsel, and he goes on to say that the investigation is adequate and he just wants to move on. I submit to you that is not adequate. That is what we have been endeavouring to determine within the last while.

I want to proceed to a comment the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) made in this House. First he says that in 2000, when the allegations of misspending at Hydra House came to his attention, he did an extraordinary investigation. Then he said that he could not do an investigation, and then he said that he was not allowed to do an investigation.

I move on to continue, and I hasten, I realize my time is short, but the Premier (Mr. Doer) has also indicated, and he has said this time and time again, "The truth will set you free." We have heard that many times. We have heard this for years. I agree with that. Again, if the Doer government would simply call for an independent public inquiry, it would give Manitobans an opportunity to put this to rest because they would be able to get the witnesses they need in order to determine the spending habits, the things that are taking place, and would then be able to correct them.

Again, I want to speak on behalf of those who are vulnerable within our society, that we give them every opportunity and every possibility to be able to utilize the funds in the way that they are of most benefit to them and as they are directed by government. Again, I would call on the Doer government to call for an independent public inquiry. Thank you very much.

*(15:40)

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I take the opportunity today to rise on a grievance. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a grievance is a very serious and important matter, and I do not bring it lightly. I had the opportunity to think long and hard about this before I rose to my feet here today to bring to your attention, and to other members of this House, and I hope, really, to all Manitobans, this very important issue.

I want to commend both the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), and the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), who spoke prior to me rising on this issue, because it was one that really strikes at democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There has been a lot of debate about democracy in this House over the course of the last few weeks and I think that that in itself is healthy, you know, when we protect democracy. I heard earlier on, the

Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) talking about how no analogies or comparisons should be made to what is happening in Ukraine because that is a special situation of democracy in peril. But I would say that any time there is an affront to democracy we should be vigilant in raising it and in defending our democratic rights that we have, because democracy is usually not, I would venture to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I suspect you have probably done some research on this yourself, but it is not usually something that falls away like a crumbling wall and one day it is standing and the next day it is in ruins. I would say many times it is a chipping away.

It is a chipping away of democratic rights, and one more chip in the wall here, and one more chip in the wall there, and then suddenly after all these various offences come forward then there is a collapse. So, when the Member for Pembina and the Member for Ste. Rose raised issues about the lack of democracy, and we heard it on a matter of privilege here from the member from Springfield today, it is a chipping away.

I would venture to say that our friends around the world who are fighting for democracy, whether it is in the Ukraine or other countries, would stand by us and say from their own lessons, you know, never to take any democratic right, however small or large one might put it on the scale of democratic spectrum, never to take any one too lightly and to defend every one with passion and to defend every one with vigour, because every time you lose a little bit of democracy, you are moving down that road to not having the freedoms that are valued.

So that is essentially why I rise today because there have been so many instances that we have seen from this government over the last, well, really, over the last 18 months, since the past election, but then prior to that for the four years previously, of kind of an affront or a lack of respect for us as members and for democracy as a whole, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, I think back not too many days ago when we were in a committee and there were discussions regarding the participation of an independent member of this Chamber on a committee that would elect independent officers for this House, for the Child Advocate and for the Ombudsman. Of course, we know that those offices are filled by people who do not just serve the government or just serve the opposition or just serve

the members of the Liberal party. They serve each and every one of us and we have relied on their information in the past.

We have relied on it recently, with the issue of Hydra House from the Auditor General, an independent officer who brought forward a report, kind of did the work of the minister, the now-Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), because he had not done his own investigation that time ago. So that kind of an affront to democracy, where you have a government who says, "You know what, we have the majority of number of seats so we are going to do whatever we want. We are not going to allow independent members to sit on a committee that they rightfully should have significant input on. We are going to make announcements before they are brought forward, before legislation is brought forward to this Chamber. We are going to do that. You know, we are going to find out, we are going to sweep investigations, internal investigations in the department, under the rug and then only when we are kind of called into the bright light of a public scrutiny are we going to do anything about it."

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, I say to you, as the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has said from his seat, that it is a slippery slope, and, when you go down that road, you do not know where it is going to lead. So, just as we, as members of this Legislature, stood up and spoke in unison I would say last week regarding the issue of democracy in the Ukraine, you know, that in itself is important. I would not diminish that for a second. I am glad that all members were able to work together on that issue and to stand as one and say that, yes, we are going to support real democracy and ensure that real elections happen in the Ukraine. How would it look to them, though, when a week later, we ourselves are chipping away at our own democracy and saying, "This democratic issue really is not important, and, oh, this democratic issue isn't important, and this one is not important," and we just push them all aside? That is essentially what the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) was saying should be done.

When you look at the scale and the very, very difficult things that are happening in the Ukraine, they do not compare at all to what is happening in Manitoba. On the broad spectrum, I know the

argument that he was trying to make, but I would say to him that, if we truly were going to do something in support of democracy, we would ensure we would support our own. We would ensure that we did not chip away at the foundation, at the underpinnings, of our own democracy. Certainly, one way to begin with that is respect for the Legislature, to ensure that all members, whether it comes to dealing with independent officers of the Legislature or whether it comes to issues related to Hydra House, have that kind of a voice and there is respect here.

The Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) was talking about accountability. I would say to you, Mr. Speaker, that accountability and transparency are hand-in-glove. They go hand in hand when you are talking about democracy and when you are talking about the protection of democracy. How can you have a real democratic system if you cannot see the actions of a government, if you cannot view what is happening in a democratic system?

Really, at the nub of it is what happened in the whole issue of Hydra House, because we discovered some time later, of course, that the government, the now-Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), the former Minister of Family Services, had been presented with a report that should have sent up the red flags. It should have sent the alarm bells going all over the Department of Family Services and particularly in the office of the Minister of Health. When the issue was raised by the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), we were assured by the current Minister of Health, the former Minister of Family Services, that everything was taken care of and that we had, really, nothing to worry about.

An Honourable Member: Oh, were we wrong.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, we were wrong. Now the curtains have been pulled back. It reminds me, it is the Christmas season, and I know that every Christmas season we are lucky when we turn on our TV to see the Wizard of Oz, one of my favourite movies, and you know, there is that scene in the movie, in the Wizard of Oz, where Dorothy and the rest have just come in from the march on the yellow brick road and they see the grand wizard, and he is all full of puffery and remarks, and then they pull back the curtains, and what do they see there when they pull back the curtains? It is a little man pulling levers, and it is all an illusion.

Now, I have caught the attention for the member of Wellington, of course, who talked about an illusion, right? But that is what is happening here with the government. The curtains have been pulled back, and there is the former Minister of Health, hands on the levers and he was doing his best to cause a smoke screen and to cause a big ruckus. But, in fact, when you see it now for what it is, we should not have had to go and pull back those curtains. We should not have had to go and call in the Auditor General to do the work. I know there is a lot of things that the Auditor General does that, of course, are done out of necessity, because it is a function that they best perform, but in reality, in this situation, this is something that never had to come to this point. The Auditor General never should have had to use the limited resources of that office to do the investigation on Hydra House. The minister himself, the minister of the day, the current Minister of Health, had the information. He just chose not to act on it.

That is certainly one element, Mr. Speaker, and when I talk today about my grievance about this lack of transparency, lack of democracy, it is only one issue, when we discuss about why the Minister of Health did not act on the information that he had in his department. Certainly, that would have been the prudent thing to do. You would have looked at this report and said, "Well, clearly something has gone wrong here and there needs to be a further investigation," and to send it in to his department.

* (15:50)

We have now seen, some four years later, some of the information that the Minister of Health had at his disposal, at his fingertips, when we find that it would not have taken an exceptional investigation to have gotten to the bottom of a lot of the allegations. Clearly, just a little bit of digging, Mr. Speaker, by the former Minister of Family Services would have unveiled what was happening when these allegations came forward in the year 2000.

I think that all Manitobans would say that one of the key priorities they would look for in an effective minister is to take responsibility. Not only did he not go about and ensure that investigation was done, that follow-up, the minimal follow-up that it would have taken, Mr. Speaker. He did not do that, and he did not do a lot of other things. He came to this House and stood in this Legislature, in this very Chamber,

and assured all members, or really all Manitobans, but assured all of us that an extraordinary investigation had been done. Not an investigation. Not a small investigation. Not a cursory look. Not a little bit of digging. An extraordinary investigation. That is the assurance.

Mr. Speaker, I know you caution us as members when you are giving your rulings that in fact all information that is brought forward by members is factual information. That is the caution that you give us and, of course, anything else is just simply a dispute over the facts. But I say, when we look at what was discussed by the minister, an extraordinary investigation, I would say outside of this Chamber, which has its own unique rules and rules unto itself, and rules that have been crafted over centuries of parliamentary debate, I think if we would take what the minister said and took it to the streets, and that often is where a lot of these issues should be considered, that is the light they should be considered in. If we went to the 1.1 to 1.2 million Manitobans and said to them, "Do you think the Minister of Health, the former Minister of Family Services, did an extraordinary investigation?" They would say no, and we say no.

Therein lies the difficulty that we have because in the public test where all of us are really tested when we leave this Legislature and we need to go out and justify decisions and justify actions that were taken, it would not pass the public test. The smell test, Mr. Speaker. It would not get past that public scrutiny that each of us as legislators needs.

It is difficult to understand why the Premier (Mr. Doer) has not taken more action. Certainly, the action that we have been calling for is a public inquiry because we think that is the only way we are going to get to the bottom of this whole issue and the whole thing will be cleared up. The government has tried their very best, and to some degree, I think they feel they have been successful in putting up smoke around this issue so nobody can really see what is happening. They put up a lot of dust. They have tried to make a diversion here and throw a red herring there and hope that they will simply confuse Manitobans. Then they will just throw their hands up and think they will never get to the bottom of it.

That might be the kind of politics that the members opposite want to play, but I do not think it is what we expect.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to say that we as legislators demand better. We do not demand better for ourselves, but we demand better for all Manitobans who believe in transparency, who believe in accountability, who believe in democracy, who will fight for democracy in the Ukraine, yes, but who will protect democracy here in Manitoba too.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of urgent public importance.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member would have to move the motion first.

Mr. Derkach: I move, seconded by the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck),

THAT the regularly scheduled business of the House be set aside in order to consider this government's lack of attention and accountability to the recommendations of the Children's Advocate regarding the Pauingassi report, which was given to the Department of Family Services and Housing on October 15, 2003, in which 11 recommendations were made and, to date, none have been acted upon.

Mr. Speaker: Order. To be fair to the honourable member, I want to give him an opportunity to move the motion that he filed with me this morning before twelve o'clock.

Mr. Derkach: I can move that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by, again, the Member for Pembina, in accordance with Rule 36(1),

THAT the regularly scheduled business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance on the Children's Advocate's report.

I might just add to that, Mr. Speaker, I guess it is a matter of procedure that I made the error because I thought this was a notice of motion, but the actual motion was to be read in the House. Otherwise, I would have filed it with the notice.

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

As stated in *Beauchesne's* Citation 390, "urgency" in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

Mr. Derkach: Just to continue with regard to the motion, Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of urgent public importance because we are talking about a situation which has been commented on by the Children's Advocate where recommendations have been made to the government from the Children's Advocate. Those recommendations with regard to the Pauingassi report have not been acted upon. There were 11 recommendations that were made to the government. They were very serious and strong recommendations that were made to the government. None of those recommendations have yet been acted upon.

Mr. Speaker, this is our only opportunity to debate this particular issue. I make the argument that we do not have another avenue or another venue for debating this particular issue because there has been no committee called to examine the Children's Advocate's report. The House does close on Thursday, and, when we return in the spring, the Children's Advocate will have retired because, I think, her last day of employment with the Province is on the 11th of February. It does not give this House and members of this House an opportunity to deal with the debate on this particular issue with the Children's Advocate leaving while the House is not in session.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we discuss this issue. It is important that we have an opportunity in this House or in a committee of this House, to be able to address those concerns which were raised by the Children's Advocate. I ask the Assembly if we do

not have the opportunity to debate this issue in this forum, then where are we to debate the issue?

* (16:00)

We have finished the debate on the Throne Speech. That does not give us an avenue to discuss this. There is no other opportunity in the next three days or four days to be able to have a debate on this issue. This issue is important because it talks about children. It talks about the children of Pauingassi who were put into cells rather than into sheltered homes. Now these are young people, who are children of a society, who were treated like criminals. Now you do not put children into RCMP jail cells; you put prisoners into jail cells. You put people who have committed a crime into jail cells, not children.

Now the Children's Advocate came down with a scathing report on the Child and Family Services Department and on the government and made 11 recommendations and expected to have implementation of those recommendations immediately. Some of those were counselling. How long are we going to leave counselling aside before we address it? Some of those issues had to do with providing for a proper environment for these people. Now, when are we going to discuss it, if we cannot discuss it now?

Mr. Speaker, I think it is incumbent upon the government, they received this report on October 15 of this year. Nothing has been acted upon. Now, if we are going to have that debate and the minister is going to have the opportunity to respond to that, this is the forum to do it in, or in a committee. But having the Child Advocate leave on the 11th of February does not allow members of this Chamber, any time to debate this issue. For that reason it is important that we have a matter of urgent public importance, which I think it is, being able to be debated right here in this Chamber.

We as legislators, if we can only sit 35 days, as has been alleged by the member for the Liberal Party, in one year, surely we can set aside one day of debate in that 80 days, or 75 days, or whatever it is that we should be sitting in, to debate an issue that is of this magnitude, of this importance. We are talking about children, vulnerable children who do not have an ability to defend themselves and have been treated like criminals.

A report was issued to the government in October and nothing has been done about it. We must have an opportunity to debate that issue and to ensure that there is accountability on the part of the government, that there is some transparency in how the government deals with this issue, and that members of this Legislature have an opportunity to adequately address the issue and to, perhaps, hold the government accountable. The public of Manitoba want the government to be accountable to them. They want the government to be accountable to the people that they are supposed to serve and this is our opportunity to raise the issue and ensure that we give it adequate and proper discussion and debate.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): I think it is important to note, again, as you indicated, that our rules in regard to this matter of urgent public importance, do specifically refer to not just the urgency, but also whether other opportunities are available for discussion of issues. I point out first of all that the report that the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) was referring to was tabled in this House last week. That was the first time that report became public information and, again, we received the report from the Child Advocate's office, it is an independent office, at that point in time.

I point out, Mr. Speaker, we were in debate on the Throne Speech at the time, so members opposite could have raised these issues that concern them. They did raise these issues in Question Period, but they chose not to raise the issues in Throne Speech. I point out we saw a demonstration today of the opportunity of members to use their grievance procedures to raise matters of concern, but I point out that the grievances that were put forward by members opposite dealt with other areas of concern, and that is their right. But, indeed, if it was that urgent, obviously members opposite, those that spoke, two members who used their grievance, could have used the grievance for that purpose. Other members could have spoken. The Opposition House Leader could have used his opportunity for a grievance. He chose not to. So clearly there have been opportunities, and clearly it does not meet the test, in terms of that.

I would also like to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, that, as was pointed out in Question Period last week, indeed, this is an issue that goes back to 2002 and significant action has already been taken. So this is not a new issue. In fact, the minister

outlined some of the progress, that the Southeast Child and Family Services Agency has already begun implementing the recommendations of the Children's Advocate. In fact, the department is going to be meeting with the Children's Advocate, I believe, next week—it is this week, pardon me. It is imminent. Two of the three staff who were involved are no longer with the agency. The use of jail cells was unacceptable, completely unacceptable under any circumstances, and that no longer takes place. Southeast Child and Family Services does not use jail cells.

Issues of solvent abuse are also being identified at the community level. Regarding the recommendation in terms of the department's need for developing procedures for local workers, Southeast Child and Family Services instituted a process on how to deal with children under the influence of solvents. Their staff has received better training in how to deal with children under the influence of solvents.

Mr. Speaker, the recommendation 9, which is in the report again, the department has been conducting a program audit of Southeast Child and Family Services, the Pauingassi unit focussing on record keeping, assessments, case planning and more specifically, the use of alternate placement agencies, placement agreements, pardon me. Southeast Child and Family Services identified the need to institute internal processes for conducting file audits to ensure compliance around the use of voluntary placement agencies.

I could go on at length, Mr. Speaker, but I think the point is quite clear, and that is there has been significant follow-up on an incident that did not occur recently, an incident that occurred in 2002. Much of what is in the Child Advocate's report that was here last week was already being acted on. I stress again members opposite had the opportunity to raise these concerns during the Throne Speech. They had the opportunity today in terms of grievances to raise their concerns. The report itself came out last week. Many of the items that are in the report are being acted on so by any of our precedents in terms of matters of urgent public importance, clearly there is not the case been established to set aside the business of the day.

I do encourage members opposite to reuse their opportunity to raise this in Question Period, to use

their opportunities in terms of grievances, that many other options are available because I know we will be more than pleased to talk about the significant progress that has been taken. What happened two years ago, Mr. Speaker, was not acceptable. Unlike members opposite who perhaps have not acknowledged this, we have been working and have acted because our goal was to make sure that this kind of incident does not happen again.

That is already very much what has happened in terms of the response since 2002. Not only that, the department is going to be meeting with the Child Advocate this very week to deal with this. Our commitment, Mr. Speaker, has been to make sure that what happened two years ago does not happen again. I wish members opposite would acknowledge the significant progress that has been made. If they can identify further areas for progress, we will more than prepared to listen.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would ask for leave if I can contribute, given the very nature of the independence of the office, to add my comments to this issue.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable Member for Inkster have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we have long acknowledged the importance of the Child Advocate's office and how important it is that it truly remain independent and answerable ultimately to the Legislative Chamber.

It is very important from our perspective that we see a debate occur inside the Legislature. Ultimately, government of whatever political stripe could argue that you never have a matter of privilege, I mean a MUPI, for the simple reason is that there is always Question Period. I think using the argument of Question Period in order to address this particular issue is somewhat bogus, Mr. Speaker.

I think that, if you take a look at it, the Throne Speech debate is now concluded. The budget debate will not occur until at the very earliest time it would appear would be in early March, mid-March. The hiring that is going to be taking place as has been

pointed out is going to be for replacement. The person has to be in position by February 11. There seems to be a roadblock that has occurred in terms of the committee that has been requested to come up with a special committee in dealing with the Child Advocate's office and the replacement of our Child Advocate.

* (16:10)

I think there is an urgency that is needed here, Mr. Speaker. Grievances are something, every member is provided the opportunity to give one grievance. We have already seen three members that have grieved, and, once again, I am not convinced that an issue of this nature would be best addressed by members of this Chamber by using their grievances.

Rather, I believe that there is a need for a genuine debate back and forth between the government benches and the opposition benches as to why this report needs to be addressed. It would be a mistake of the Legislature, given the very nature of the topic of debate, if they were to overlook this issue. As such, I look forward to your ruling. Hopefully, that will be in favour of allowing debate to occur, because if that debate does not occur today, there really is no other opportunity outside of the possibility, if the government would allow for, on relatively short notice, some form of an opposition day for it. But, beyond the government stating their intentions to support that to occur in relatively short notice, there is really no other opportunity. I would call upon the Speaker to allow the debate to occur on this very important issue. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I thank honourable members for their advice to the Chair on whether the motion proposed by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) should be debated today. The notice required by Rule 36(1) was provided. Under our rules and practices, the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter. I do not doubt that this matter is one that is of serious concern to a number of members in this House. Issues involving youth are very serious matters, and I can appreciate the concerns that members do have.

I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward. However, I was not persuaded that the

ordinary business of the House should be set aside to deal with this issue today. Although this undoubtedly is a very serious issue that the member has brought forward, I do not believe that the public interest will be harmed if the business of the House is not set aside to debate the motion today.

Additionally, I would like to note—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will ask the co-operation of all honourable members when the Speaker is making a ruling. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Additionally, I would like to note that there are other avenues for members to raise this issue including questions in Question Period, raising the item under grievances. In addition, there is also the option of having this topic presented as a subject of an opposition day motion. Therefore, with the greatest of respect, I must rule that this matter does not meet the criteria set by our rules and precedents and I rule the motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

Now we will move on to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, will you please call the following bills, which are on second reading: Bills 2, 5, 6, 7 and 9; and, if time permits, could you then call report stage amendments on Bill 22?

SECOND READINGS

Bill 2—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, moved by myself, and seconded by the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), that Bill 2, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Child Protection Penalties), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Melnick: This bill will amend The Child and Family Services Act to significantly increase the penalties for child protection offences, including the sexual exploitation of children.

The need to increase penalties in this act was recommended as part of the Manitoba strategy to address the issue of children and youth exploited in the sex trade. The objective of the bill is to deter persons from acts that cause children to be in need of protection, including abuse. These amendments will mean that the penalty for an offence will be increased from a maximum fine of \$500 to a maximum fine of \$50,000. This increased penalty more appropriately reflects the appalling offences that are involved in cases of child sexual exploitation.

In 2002, our government launched a strategy to address child sexual exploitation. According to the strategy, sexual exploitation is described as an act of coercing, luring or engaging a child under 18 years of age into a sexual act and involvement in the sex trade or pornography, with or without the child's consent, in exchange for money, drugs, shelter, food, protection or other necessities.

Further, the definition of abuse within The Child and Family Services Act includes sexual exploitation of a child with or without their consent. Within The Child and Family Services Act, the definition of a child in need of protection is broad enough to allow agencies and the police to intervene in any situation where a child might be in need of protection. Children who are victims of sexual exploitation are particularly vulnerable victims. They are children whose trust is abused and whose circumstances are taken advantage of. They are often children with few supports. It is imperative that we recognize the impact of offences on these children.

These amendments are dramatic increases. It is time that they were made. With these amendments, Manitoba will have the highest penalties for child sexual exploitation offences in western Canada. Maximum penalties for similar offences in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan are \$25,000. These increased penalties are intended to give police and agencies another option when they intervene to protect a sexually exploited child.

The strategy to address child and youth sexual exploitation has several elements. As part of the

strategy, we have made amendments to The Highway Traffic Act that allow vehicles to be seized when they are used in prostitution-related offences. We have made changes to deny offenders the option of going to john school where their offences involve children.

I am proud to note that our Justice Minister has introduced The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, which allows buildings used in prostitution to be shut down. We amended The Limitation of Actions Act in our first mandate to remove any limitations for persons suing on the basis of sexual or physical abuse. As well, we have set up child-friendly courtrooms and waiting rooms. Almost immediately after taking office in 1999, we brought in a child victim prosecution policy, which addressed the needs of children, both as witnesses and victims.

In 2002, a new six-bed safe house called Honouring the Spirit of Our Little Sisters was established to provide a special resource for sexually exploited youth. We have introduced CyberTip.ca, which allows for reporting of on-line child pornography. This Web site has been hailed for its innovative approach to fighting child exploitation, and I understand that it will soon become a national initiative.

*(16:20)

The fight against child sexual exploitation has to take place on our streets, on our computers, and in our courtrooms. We have already made important changes to help protect children on-line and on the street. The penalties in these amendments will go a long way toward ensuring that protection follows through to the courtroom. With these penalties, an offender will face up to a \$50,000 fine and/or up to 24 months in prison. These penalties make it clear that these crimes will simply not be tolerated in Manitoba, and our multisectoral strategy recognizes the many levels on which this battle must be fought.

I am particularly proud to be the Minister of Family Services at times like this when I have the honour and the privilege of amending a law to strengthen penalties for exploitation and to send a clear message to offenders that child sexual exploitation offences are reprehensible and will be treated as such. Our children are our most valuable resource, but they are also our most vulnerable. We

have a responsibility to ensure that they have the protections they deserve, and as a government it is our privilege to do our best to make those changes. Thank you.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I move, seconded by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

**Bill 5—The Manitoba Public
Insurance Corporation Amendment Act
(Injury Compensation Appeal Commission)**

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Robinson), that Bill 5, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Injury Compensation Appeal Commission); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba (Commission d'appel des accidents de la route), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, that Bill 5, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Injury Compensation Appeal Commission), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Selinger: I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, that Bill 5, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House, but this bill proposes three amendments related to the Automobile Injury Compensation Appeal Commission. One amendment will allow the chief commissioner to determine whether the panel for a hearing will consist of one or three commissioners based on the nature of each case. Currently, each hearing must have a panel of three commissioners. This will reduce waiting time for a hearing for a number of cases.

Secondly, the other two amendments relate to the commission's processes. While the current act states that a review decision from MPIC can be appealed to the commission, the act does not specify what form the notice of appeal is to take. As a section in the act requires the commission to keep a

copy of the notice of appeal that is part of the commission record, the act implies that the notice of appeal will be in writing. The proposed amendment will clarify that the notice must be in writing.

The last amendment will set out the manner in which notices related to a hearing and commission orders are to be served. The act is currently silent with regard to these matters and the commission has encountered difficulties in serving some appellants with notices or with the commission's decision.

Mr. Speaker, with these amendments, I am pleased to recommend this bill for consideration.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I move, seconded by the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 6—The Real Property Amendment Act

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux), that Bill 6, The Real Property Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Transportation and Government Services, that Bill 6, The Real Property Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Selinger: As I mentioned, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Government Services, that this Bill 6, The Real Property Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Bill 6 amends The Real Property Amendment Act to allow parties to a registered encumbrance, such as a mortgage, to increase the lands affected by way of an amending agreement. This amendment will address concerns to the clients of the Land Titles system. Currently, parties to an existing mortgage can amend any term of the mortgage other than the affected lands.

The proposal also broadens the type of documents that can be amended. As a result of the amendments, the description of lands and existing mortgages and other instruments such as caveats will be able to be altered without having to discharge and reregister the document. This will simplify the process of dealing with such encumbrances, particularly on a subdivision of land or on consolidations of lands such as when a road is closed.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will also establish the 30-day time frame for appeals from decisions to the district registrar concerning the taxation of costs that will allow the address for service of notices of legal proceedings concerning documents registered in a land titles office to be anywhere within Canada instead of limited to an address within Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, with these comments, I am pleased to recommend this bill for consideration.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 7—The Personal Investigations Amendment Act

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson), that The Personal Investigations Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêtes relatives aux particuliers, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth, that Bill 7, The Personal Investigations Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Selinger: Mr Speaker, as mentioned, I have moved, seconded by the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth, that Bill 7, The Personal Investigations Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of the House.

In recent years, concerns have been raised with the Consumers' Bureau and my office by stakeholders regarding bankruptcy information being retained on personal credit reports for 14 years. In this bill, the number of years for reporting this information is being reduced to 6 years unless the subject has been bankrupt more than once, in which case there will be no time limit. This change is consistent with reporting periods in other western provinces.

An additional change is proposed to reduce the period of time for retaining adverse factual or investigative information from seven years to six to make this provision consistent with the time frame for bankruptcy.

Mr. Speaker, our rapidly changing marketplace has resulted in stakeholders requesting amendments to the act that will allow for other means to obtain consents for personal investigations. The amendments proposed will allow the manner and form for consents, including electronic processes, to be specified in a regulation. This change will benefit both consumers and business.

Amendments are also proposed to eliminate conflict with the federal Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act regarding consent requirements for personal investigations conducted by business in connection with applications for credit, insurance, employment or tenancy. There are also a number of changes that incorporate gender neutral language throughout the act.

With these comments, I am pleased to recommend this bill for the consideration of the House.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 9—The Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Act

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux), that Bill 9, The Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Act, be

now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

Motion presented.

Mr. Robinson: I am pleased to introduce the second reading of Bill 9, The Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Act, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:30)

Bill 9 replaces and modernizes the act that regulates the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation. The Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation was established in 1968 for the development and management of a permanent arts centre of Manitoba in the city of Winnipeg. The permanent arts centre includes the Centennial Centre complex and is the province's principal memorial of the centennial anniversaries of the Confederation of Canada and the inclusion of Manitoba as a province of Canada. The modernized act is an opportunity to clarify the mandate and statement and purpose of the Centennial Centre Corporation. It will enable the MCCC to take advantage of best business and governance practices enjoyed by similar facilities in the Crown corporation sector.

Many of the changes in the new act are minor in terms of impact and include current legislative language as well as the renumbering of existing provisions. Significant changes include the following: Art space is now being included within the definition of the Centennial Centre as Part (b). This enshrines in the legislation the long-standing agreement between the City of Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba, the Centennial Centre and Art Space. This current act restricts the corporation from sponsoring or promoting any performance, concert or play in the Centennial Centre. The new act will remove this barrier and allow the MCCC to explore new revenue sources and operate as a Crown corporation in the 21st century. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I move, seconded by the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

Bill 22—The Water Protection Act

Mr. Speaker: Amended Bill 22, The Water Protection Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the amendment to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for River Heights? It has never been moved? Oh, I am sorry.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I am not a hundred percent clear in terms of the actual procedure at this point. The Member for River Heights, I know, would like to be able to move his amendments. I realize that his name was up at first when Bill 22 was being called for report stage, but I am sure with the will of the House, Mr. Speaker, the Member for River Heights stands prepared to move them at this time.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster,

THAT Bill 22 be amended by renumbering Clause 2 as Clause 2(1) and adding the following as Clause 2(2):

No net loss of wetlands

2(2) Given the unique role that wetlands play in Manitoba's aquatic ecosystems, another purpose of this act is to ensure that there is no net loss of wetlands in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for River Heights, seconded by the honourable Member for Inkster,

THAT Bill 22 be amended by renumbering Clause 2 as Clause 2(1) and adding the following as Clause 2(2):

No net loss of wetlands

2(2) Given the unique role that wetlands play in Manitoba's aquatic ecosystems, another purpose of this act is to ensure that there is no net loss of wetlands in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: This amendment would provide for a goal of this bill to have no net loss of wetlands. During the committee stage, there were several

presenters who talked with passion about the importance of wetlands when it comes to water quality. Clearly, when one looks at the quality of our waters, the wetlands and the presence of wetlands have a very important role in ensuring the quality of the water. There were presenters when I asked the question: Should there be a no net loss of wetlands policy? They were very supportive that this would be a good idea, and that if we have an objective no net loss of wetlands, that this would be a positive step forward for Manitoba.

I think that there is a good example of wetlands and the role that wetlands play. It happens to be in the constituency of Carman, and I am sure it is well known by my honourable friend, the MLA for Carman. This is along the south Tobacco Creek. It is not far from the constituency of Pembina. The interesting thing here is that there were 26 small dams put in place. In each case, there was a small wetland, and those wetlands have played a very important role in the south Tobacco Creek watershed.

If one compares the south Tobacco Creek with the north Tobacco Creek watershed, what one sees in a heavy rain, June a couple of years ago, that there was a big decrease in the peak flow, that there was a big decrease in the amount of flooding of farmland, I think it was three-quarters reduction in the amount of flooding of farmland, and there was a very substantial decrease in the amount of damage to infrastructure, to culverts and roads and other infrastructure.

So, in north Tobacco Creek, they had to spend tens of thousands of dollars fixing up the infrastructure as a result of the heavy rain and the flood damage, and there was very, very little in south Tobacco Creek.

The implications of this for water quality are also clear, because the studies have shown that not only is this good for farmers and infrastructure costs, that it removes the ground water and, at the same time, the amount of phosphorus downstream from these dams is reduced by about 40 percent. After all, we are looking at Lake Winnipeg, and one of the major problems is phosphorus content in Lake Winnipeg, and here we are, a positive farm-based solution to the problem. Put in some wetlands which are beneficial for the farmers and they are also beneficial for Lake Winnipeg. Instead of trying to do

some of the other things that the members of the government side are trying to do, here is something that is modest in scale, can be putting wetlands back in, can improve the water quality and reduce the damage to infrastructure and, in fact—

An Honourable Member: What about the Pembina dam?

Mr. Gerrard: Well, we will start out with these small ones and we can look at other areas where one can build up wetlands.

* (16:40)

Our view here is that the government should learn about the importance of wetlands in keeping the water quality in top shape. At the same time, we feel that there is a balance that needs to be struck here, and that balance is in terms of making sure that we are addressing the concerns of a lot of farmers, and that what needs to happen, as we have advocated, is that we should have the same type of legislation in Ontario, where the farmer in his own farmland should have a legal right to drain that farmland. In fact, what we can do is to balance off a policy with no net loss of wetlands where you are creating new wetlands in places like South Tobacco Creek or other areas, and at the same time, a policy that allows farmers on their land to be able to drain so that they have less risk for their crops. There is a good, sensible balance here in the approach.

What we are talking about here is no net loss of wetlands province-wide. We are not talking about applying this policy district by district, because that would not work because of the big differences from one difference to another in terms of what is needed. This would work as a reasonable approach on a province-wide basis to have no net loss of wetlands.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is why we have moved this report stage amendment because we believe that this would be sensible, balanced policy and that this would be one good way of improving the water quality in Manitoba. So that, in brief, is our approach here, and I would hope that all members of the Chamber would be ready to come forward and support this amendment because, after all, what we are doing is setting an important objective which I believe the government members surely should agree with. Maybe they do not. Maybe they want more loss of wetlands, but that is up to them to decide, it is up

to the opposition to decide what their approach is going to be. Our approach is to have no net loss of wetlands, and we hope that the members on both sides will look at this carefully and give it some support. Thank you.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I just want to briefly comment on the proposed amendment. I, first of all, point to the fact that riparian areas are already in the Purpose section of this act, that they are inclusive of wetlands. Clearly, both in the act and through government policy, for example, the riparian tax credit, we have already begun to identify the need to protect wetlands and, I would, in fact, say, go beyond protection, in many cases looking at restoration.

The difficulty with the proposed section, though, is obviously one of definition. There is not a definition in terms of wetlands, in terms of are we talking about significant or other wetlands, and if there would be any real concern, in this case, will be having a provision in it which I believe is certainly a matter of policy, and is something that is actually at the point where we are looking at restoration of wetlands rather than just no net loss.

Given the difficulties that are currently faced by municipalities, farmers and others in terms of the drainage approval process, et cetera, I would be reluctant in this case to put in a section that, again, due to definitions, might create a whole additional difficulty when we are dealing with many areas of the province with a significant number of potholes, et cetera. Our goal is, as I said, to see restoration of wetlands. That can be accomplished through government policy; that can be accomplished through the rest of the act, without putting people in a difficult situation.

So my suggestion to this House would be to recognize the fact that the bill already recognizes wetlands, in terms of the definition, in terms of riparian areas, and that without a proper definition in this section it would actually, if anything, make it that much more difficult to accomplish our goals and, certainly, would make it difficult for producers, given the current licensing process and other processes. So I appreciate the intent of the amendment, but respectfully, we believe the public policy issues are already dealt with in the rest of the act, and this amendment would, given the problems in terms of definition, create significant difficulties out there

without accomplishing the real goal, which is, again, to see not only preservation of wetlands but actually restoration. We believe that can be accomplished by amendments we will be bringing in that will reference the need for not only regulatory approaches but also incentives as well, a very significant series of proposals put forward by KAP and other presenters at the committee.

Mr. Speaker, my recommendation to the House would be not to proceed with this proposed amendment.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I would like to adjourn debate on this amendment.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I was just going to speak at this point.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. I recognize the honourable Member for Ste. Rose to rule to adjourn debate, but, if there is leave of the House, I will recognize the honourable Member for Inkster and then revert back. If there are other speakers, I will let members speak.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I must admit I am a little bit discouraged with the minister's response to what I think is a very admirable amendment that is being proposed by the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party. I am not too sure how it is and why it is the government would oppose the concept or the idea of having no net loss of our wetlands. It is either a question of whether or not you support it or you do not support it. I think the member from Thompson was trying to have it both ways. He says, "I do not think this is an amendment which we as a government can support." After all, we do not have to worry about it by the sounds of what it is that the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) was stating. We have heard those types of statements before. You know, do not worry. He makes reference to the fact that he has other amendments. Well, maybe those other amendments might take into consideration what the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party has put forward.

The reason I was wanting to stand up at this point in time was because I recognize that there are a number of amendments to Bill 22. You do a quick addition and you have 25 amendments, which is an amazing number of amendments, in total, 25, 12 of which are from the minister himself. You have 13 amendments being proposed by the two oppositions.

I want to state the obvious, and the obvious is that it is not just the government that has good ideas. There are other ideas and we are going to hear about a number of those ideas in the form of other amendments being brought forward to the government in regard to this particular bill.

The government is going to have a choice. They can either say, no, if it is not our idea, we do not want to accept it, or they can have an open mind. An open mind can be a dangerous thing for a New Democrat, but I would suggest to you that the government would do well for all Manitobans if it would, in fact, have an open mind to the amendments that are being proposed to Bill 22. This particular amendment, I would suggest to you, would be a good illustration or a demonstration of just how genuine this government is when it comes to environmental issues, especially dealing with our water because it is not like we are asking for the world. We are asking for no more than what the New Democrats would preach from a pulpit in terms of preventing and ensuring that we are going to have no net loss of our wetlands. It is something which the New Democrats should be behind, and I would suggest to you that if it was the minister who was bringing forward this amendment it would not have a problem in passing.

Well, equally, Mr. Speaker, no one owns a good idea, but seeing this good idea adopted by the government of the day, just say yes. As other amendments are brought forward, I think we should approach this with an open mind, and the net winner out of all this open-mindedness will be Manitobans as a whole. So just say yes when you hear something good inside this Chamber. With those few words, I will stop my comments.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), that debate now be adjourned.

* (16:50)

Mr. Speaker: Just for the information of the House, when I recognized the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I had recognized the honourable Member for Ste. Rose, who had already adjourned the debate, but, by leave, we just reverted back to allow him to put a few comments on record. Is there a problem?

* * *

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster,

THAT Bill 22 be amended in Clause 21(1) by adding the following at the end, "at least one of the five must be an active farmer who is representative of agricultural practices in Manitoba."

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), seconded by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux),

THAT Bill 22 be amended in Clause 21(1) by adding the following at the end, "at least one of the five must be an active farmer who is representative of agricultural practices in Manitoba."

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I think the intent of this amendment is very clear. It is to recognize that the proposed council will have an important role in discussing what happens with water quality, water management and farm management issues. Therefore, it is logical that the council has a farmer on the council. I think that this is responding to the request by the representative from Keystone Agricultural Producers. I think it was Mr. Ian Wishart, who was speaking at the committee stage, that there should be a farmer representative on the council, and this would accomplish that objective.

Mr. Ashton: I point out the act, as it is currently drafted, clearly includes the need for broad representation in the province. We have already indicated very clearly that agriculture will be represented. We also believe it is important to represent all of the province. I think, in this particular case, Mr. Speaker, the intent of the amendment, is more than well addressed currently.

I am surprised the member did not also reflect on some of the other significant areas that need to be represented as well, because I think certainly commercial fishers would come to mind, others in terms of other activities. I point out that, under the act, we may see, in fact, certainly more than one agricultural spokesperson involved. Given that, as I said, the act already provides for specific reflection of the diversity of the province, and clearly agriculture would be included as part of that.

We have chosen to go the route of the broad representation being right in the act. That is

something that does not exist with many other acts in terms of similar bodies, so we believe this amendment is perhaps well intended but not necessary, given the clear statement in the rest of the act that there will be broad representation. Agriculture will clearly be represented on the council, as it has been in all our other deliberations. The Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board will be included very significantly, and the Lake Manitoba Stewardship Board that we have committed to appointing. Agriculture is already a part of the solution. So, indeed, it is already covered in this act.

Mr. Faurschou: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Ste. Rose, I forgot to put your motion back to you because I said I would recognize you during debate. Would you kindly do so on the first amendment. I forgot to go back to you in doing that.

The honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), on the first amendment.

On the first amendment, it has been moved by the honourable Member for Ste. Rose, seconded by the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that debate had been adjourned.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now we will go to the amendment.

Mr. Gerrard: I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster,

THAT Bill 22 be amended by adding the following after Clause 31:

On the appeal

31(1) Any person who is affected by an order or decision of the Minister under this act may, within 30 days after the making of the order or decision, appeal the order or decision to the Municipal Board and, the decision of the Municipal Board notwithstanding, any direct thing to the contrary in The Municipal Board Act is final and not subject to further appeal.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), seconded by the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux),

THAT Bill 22 be amended by adding the following after Clause 31:

On the appeal

31(1) Any person who is affected by an order or decision of the Minister under this act may, within 30 days after the making of the order or decision, appeal the order or decision to the Municipal Board and, the decision of the Municipal Board notwithstanding, anything to the contrary in The Municipal Board Act is final and not subject to further appeal.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the intent of this is to follow through on suggestions made at the committee stage that it was very important there be an appeal process for this legislation. This amendment would put in place an appeal process through the Municipal Board, and that would be a logical place, given the role of the Municipal Board. I suggest that members consider the adoption of this amendment in order to have a reasonable and fair appeal process to decisions made under this act.

Mr. Ashton: I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that I have had the opportunity not only to listen to the presentations at the legislative committee stage but also to receive significant feedback from KAP and the AMM and others.

I would like to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, that KAP has welcomed the proposed amendments we have put forward, particularly the proposals in terms of the appeal process. We believe the appeal process that will be dealt with by our amendments later on will provide the scientific basis for an appeal mechanism that is absolutely essential.

I would advise the member that certainly while he is reflecting what was discussed in September, we have tried to listen to some of the proposals at that time and moved beyond that. I do think it is very important to acknowledge the degree to which agriculture is part of the solution, and I think that is pretty much the key element.

* (17:00)

In fact, I know the KAP president, David Rolf, has stated very clearly that farmers are aware of safe and abundant water because we depend on it for our families and for our livelihood.

We did listen in terms of the need for an appeal mechanism. We have an appeal mechanism. I know KAP, certainly, in a general sense, with a number of the amendments, has been very positive, and that is why it would certainly be my view that this, while again perhaps a well-intentioned amendment, perhaps based on some of the feedback in September, it does not reflect some of the subsequent work that has been done since September.

The member opposite, I think, will see later that we are bringing a specific appeal that goes, in fact, beyond the feedback received in committee, that targets the scientific basis, the declaration of water quality management resources and also brings in a mechanism to deal with transition situations, because we recognize, again, that whatever is decided in terms of this act can have an impact and we have to balance the clear vision of improving water quality in this province with a common-sense approach in terms of how individuals are affected on the ground.

So, once again, we believe our proposed appeal processes, because there are actually two processes, go beyond what is proposed in this amendment, and it is therefore redundant. We would suggest that members vote no, not against the spirit of the proposal, which again is well intentioned, but vote for the improved amendment that we would be bringing in later on when we get to further amendments on this bill.

Mr. Faurshou: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), that the debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster,

THAT Bill 22 be amended in Clause 24

(a) by striking out "and" at the end of clause 3(b), and adding "and" at the end of clause 3(c) and adding the following after clause 3(c):

(d) to pay compensation to an owner or occupant of land who suffers loss or damage as a result of

(i) a previously permitted use, activity or thing associated with the land being governed, regulated or prohibited because of the lands being within an area designated as a water quality management zone; or

(ii) anything done by the minister due to a serious water shortage being declared;

(b) by adding the following after clause 4(a):

(a.1) compensation paid under clause 3(d) but not exceeding the amount contained in the fund on any terms and conditions a minister considers appropriate.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for River Heights, seconded by the honourable Member for Inkster,

THAT Bill 22 be amended in Clause 24

(a) by striking out "and" at the end of clause 3(b), and adding "and" at the end of clause 3(c) and adding the following after clause 3(c):

(d) to pay compensation to an owner or occupant of land who suffers loss or damage as a result of

(i) a previously permitted use, activity or thing associated with the land being governed, regulated or prohibited because of the lands being within an area designated as a water quality management zone; or

(ii) anything done by the minister due to a serious water shortage being declared;

(b) by adding the following after clause 4(a):

(a.1) compensation paid under clause 3(d) but not exceeding the amount contained in the fund on any terms and conditions a minister considers appropriate.

Mr. Gerrard: This amendment would provide for a reasonable mechanism for compensation for individuals who are adversely affected by this legislation. We believe that this would be a positive response to some of the concerns raised at the committee stage

that there was need for a mechanism for compensation. Thank you.

Mr. Ashton: I want to indicate that the second part of the first part of this amendment will be dealt with in terms of the serious water shortages. We will be bringing in amendments that will clearly indicate that the mechanisms that will be followed will follow the basic framework of The Water Rights Act and will respect that. That was certainly the intent of the legislation and that was a significant concern. I would be concerned about this particular clause. There is every ability for anybody that has been affected in terms of rights to the courts that has not been affected here in terms of any action under common law, but when you are talking about permitted use, is this by permit, is it by regulation?

We often, as a province, have made decisions that what was previously considered possible is no longer considered possible. We just passed a smoking ban. Many people previously were able to have premises and public areas where smoking was permitted. I think that what is important here is the ability to preserve the right of the Province, on behalf of the people of Manitoba to move forward to, in this case, protect water quality. We do have provisions that are built in that will deal with a whole transition process that is in place.

We have clearly identified we are already putting in place incentives as a matter of policy. The riparian tax credit, we have actually enhanced that tax credit, so the bottom line here is this proposed amendment, as it is currently structured, I believe and we believe, would not be in the best public interest. The concerns that were expressed at committee are going to be dealt with by a brand-new process of appeal in terms of transitions. The bottom line here, again, is that the Province, I think, we all owe it to the public of Manitoba to have a clear ability in this particular case to identify matters that impact in terms of water, and this amendment, while, again, it may be well intentioned, I think it misses the mark, and I would suggest to members of the House that it does not deserve support.

Mr. Faurichou: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We will now call amendments proposed by the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou).

Mr. Faurichou: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen),

THAT Bill 22 be amended in Clause 4(2),

(a) in the part before clause (a), by striking out "may" and substituting "must"; and

(b) in clause (b), by adding "salt" after "nutrients".

Motion presented.

Mr. Faurichou: I appreciate having the opportunity to debate Bill 22 this afternoon. It is a bill that has received extensive debate, including that of committee reports where 16 presentations were made, all bringing forward concerns in various areas of Bill 22, in fact, the introduction of 25 amendments. The sheer number of amendments speaks volumes as to the lack of forethought that has gone into this bill.

* (17:10)

It is something that I, as a legislator, have never been privy to in my tenure of seven years, to see the volume, the number of amendments proposed, both by opposition party members and the government itself.

I would like to make mention at this time that there was a great deal of debate near the end of the committee whereby I presented a motion that the committee adjourn and reconvene after having ample time to digest the information that had been presented before it on the evening of September 13, 2004. Mr. Speaker, it was quite obvious by the body language that members on the government side of the House recognized that there was need to digest the information received that evening and to contemplate required amendments by the government side of the House to address the concerns that had been brought forward that evening.

I did, in the motion, allow background as to the motion was not out of order insofar as it had been

previously proposed in one committee by the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) that adequate time be allowed for the minister to contemplate amendments and to bring amendments back to committee for consideration prior to going line by line. The minister at that time was the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), and the honourable Member for River East recognized that there was valuable information presented before committee and did indeed express her appreciation for the motion from the member of Burrows.

It was accepted by members on the government side of the House, and the motion passed. The committee took time out so that amendments needed to be drafted based upon the information received at committee. Then committee was reconvened, and the bill was proposed line by line before committee. At the appropriate junctures amendments were presented and voted upon. At that time the opposition members thanked the minister for addressing the concerns that had been heard and for the initiative to bring forward the amendments after there had been allowable time for preparation of the amendments.

So, Mr. Speaker, it was with great disappointment that the government members at first demonstrated that they, through their body language, would be supportive of the motion; however, obviously, there was information brought to the table that convinced the voting members of the committee on the government side of the House that they would not be supportive of the motion.

This is why we are faced with lengthy debate here in the Chamber. I know all honourable members have a lot of work in front of them; their time is very valuable. This is why I say at this time that members' time could have been much more worthily spent if the committee had adjourned and had an opportunity to work on amendments and bring those amendments back to committee. Instead of engaging the entire Chamber, we could be dealing with these amendments at committee level. I am certain that the members today, sitting in the Chamber, would certainly appreciate that happening rather than sitting today here, engaged in debate over 25 amendments, Mr. Speaker.

So, having said that, Mr. Speaker, it was heard in a number of presentations concern regarding the

definition and inclusion of scientific information and also, too, in the consideration of inclusion of salt as being a potential pollutant, rather than just including, at the present time, as the bill is written, phosphates and nitrates.

Mr. Speaker, in other jurisdictions in Canada, it is recognized that there is considerable tonnage of salt used to enhance the roadways of the provinces when there is an ice condition. Road salt allows for the melting away of the ice on the roadways at temperatures in about the freezing level. Though the road salt then is literally washed away by the water precipitation that washes the salt off the roadways, the salt goes into solution and, as the water drains away into water bodies, it carries with it the road salt that is in solution.

Mr. Speaker, it has been recognized in other jurisdictions that this, although at the present time is not cause for great concern, we believe that the bill should be forward-looking and essentially look to potentially engaging this in the text of the bill at the present time, and allowing for the situation, should it become a concern in the water bodies here in Manitoba, that this legislation will allow for the adequate addressing of a concern that, fortunately, we in Manitoba have not yet seen, but in other jurisdictions, certainly, that is the case.

Also, Mr. Speaker, one would want to see the minister engaged with the greatest of knowledge, and it should be a consideration within this bill that the minister take scientific information and be able to base his decisions on sound scientific data. The changing of the legislation from "may" to "must" recognizes that the minister, through this legislation, must, to the best of his or her ability, ask from the Department of Water Stewardship and Conservation or any other department, all available scientific information before a decision is rendered in regard to the responsibilities of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I want to express at this juncture in time, being that it is the first amendment and my first opportunity to truly debate Bill 22, that this bill is a very encompassing bill. In fact, this is a bill that, within its text, recognizes that it takes precedence over a number of other existing bills, one being The Water Protection Act, as one bill. The Water Commission Act is essentially rescinded, The Water Rights Act, this bill takes precedence over as well as The Ground Water and Water Well Act, The

Environment Act and The Planning Act, as well as The Water Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

All of these acts are named within Bill 22, and by way of being named and amended within this Bill 22, Bill 22 takes precedence. So it is of great concern that this bill as being totally encompassing does have and can have and will have a significant impact on all jurisdictions here in the province of Manitoba. Basically, all entities that are engaged in this natural resource and our most precious resource, and that being water.

* (17:20)

Mr. Speaker, it is of significant concern that we deal with this bill in an appropriate manner that affords us the opportunity to understand the length and breadth of the impact of the passage of this bill. Having named those other bills, that is the reason why we have proposed a number of amendments, to address how this bill affects other acts of legislation and, in that way, fully understanding the impact, and how each and every one of us will be affected by Bill 22.

Mr. Speaker, I have to recognize that a lot of effort has gone into this bill, and I would like to compliment the minister that this particular bill is one headed in the right direction, insofar as that it draws a lot from the experience of the conservation district known as the Whitemud Conservation District. I will say that I have been farming under the rules and regulations and the operation of the Whitemud Conservation District on my own farm for virtually my entire farming career.

I do appreciate what a conservation district can do for an area, insofar as looking to this most valuable resource and providing guidance, understanding through rules and regulations that appreciate the value of water, as well as appreciate the harmony that must take place, because water does flow downhill. One has to be understanding that the neighbour that is upstream from oneself has to manage that water when it is in his or her jurisdiction, going through their property, that it is managed and handled in a fashion that does not detract from its quality. Nor does it essentially go to the detriment of the downstream individual by increasing the volume of the water, such that it would cause damage such as erosion, or in some

cases, to public property, where increased volumes have been known to wash out municipal roadways in the water travels to water bodies.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I hope I have not given rise to the minister's belief that Bill 22 will see an easy ride through the House debate, because I do believe that points raised in committee had great merit. I wish only that we would have had opportunity to discuss some further in committee rather than in the House, but I look forward to the opportunity for further debate as we progress through the 25 amendments before us today.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I want to stress that, we on this side of the House make no apologies for listening, and I remind people, again, of what KAP has said. They have indicated that they are very pleased with the kind of amendments that are being brought forward. Many of the amendments are not significant revisions to the bill, but, and I realize, in opposition, it is tempting at times to try and have it both ways, but I would know that members opposite have been putting forward amendments.

We will consider them, and I can indicate that there is at least one of the amendments that they have put forward, that certainly we, on this side of the House, think makes sense. It is not a huge impact on the bill. It does not change the purpose or the intent of the bill, but I think one of the marks we have, as a government, is the willingness to listen. So, if we have amendments before us, we are prepared to listen to those amendments and, I think, also respond with the kind of courtesy I would expect in the sense of when amendments are put forward, even if they are perhaps well intentioned, do not necessarily fit into the act, but we will respond accordingly.

This amendment to the bill falls in the category, I think, of probably well-intentioned, Mr. Speaker, but not advisable. There is reference to salt. That is already covered as a pollutant in terms of the definition of this legislation. But I would suggest to the member that I would be very concerned that this proposed amendment would create a DFO-type level of scrutiny for any and all factors related to water quality management zones. For example, if we are looking at protecting drinking water sources, issues related to endangered species would not be issues that would be a prime focus in terms of that. That is a separate area we would look at, Mr. Speaker. But I would suggest that taking all factors into account all

of the time is an approach that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the federal department, has taken, and I know the member knows what that has meant in terms of practice. I do not think any of us here would want to see a DFO-style element to this bill. That is why it may have been well-intentioned, but I do not think the member really perhaps had considered what it would have an impact to. That is why I suggest that members respectfully decline this amendment.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. Faurschou: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck),

THAT Bill 22 be amended

(a) in Clause 7(1), by striking out "If the minister" and substituting "If the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council"; and

(b) in Clauses 7(1) and (4), by striking out "minister may declare" and substituting "Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council may, by order, declare".

Motion presented.

Mr. Faurschou: Mr. Speaker, once again I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to debate Bill 22. This particular amendment recognizes that everything in this bill, which is an all-encompassing bill which takes precedence over many other bills including The Planning Act, including The Environment Act, which I am certain the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) is concerned about.

I am certain the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Smith) is concerned that this bill does override acts that govern their particular ministry. I believe that it is vital that the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) has the support of his Cabinet colleagues in respect to declaring a water shortage. I would shudder to be in the minister's shoes should I make a declaration of a water shortage that would impact grievously on constituents of the honourable Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), for instance, that would cause him grief without dialogue. His constituents of Dauphin would believe that there should have been consultation take place before an order is issued. I believe also the Water Stewardship Minister would be comforted in the fact that he has or perhaps she, the ministers in the future, the support of Cabinet colleagues in issuance of a declared water shortage.

As in my own personal experience, it is best to have a complete understanding in making a significant decision as this one is, and I believe that the minister would look with favour on this particular amendment, that he has the support of his Cabinet colleagues and the Premier (Mr. Doer) in issuance of a water shortage state that would be potentially faced in this province. That could in fact bring adversity to many people who ultimately would have to see their way through to applying to government for compensation. So it is vital that all Cabinet understand the repercussions of an issuance of a shortage-of-water order and that one would want to comprehend the impact of the loss that could essentially be inherited.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou) will have 12 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 6, 2004

CONTENTS

Matter of Privilege		Oral Questions	
Schuler	385	Izzy Vermette	
Ashton	386	Murray; Chomiak	394
Goertzen	387	Hawranik; Chomiak	396
Derkach	388	Murray; Chomiak	397
Lamoureux	389	Murray; Doer	398
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Regional Health Authorities	
Petitions		Murray; Doer	398
Pension Benefits		Assiniboine Regional Health Authority	
Driedger	389	Derkach; Sale	399
Provincial Road 270		Rancher's Choice Beef Co-op	
Maguire	390	Penner; Wowchuk	400
Pension Benefits		Aiyawin Corporation	
Faurschou	390	Gerrard; Melnick	401
Minimum Sitting Days for Legislative Assembly		Government Advertising	
Lamoureux	391	Lamoureux; Doer	402
Physician Shortage—Westman Area		Member's Statements	
Cullen	391	Livable Communities Awards	
Committee Reports		Bjornson	402
First Report of the Standing Committee on		Dan Lussier	
Intergovernmental Affairs		Reimer	403
Brick	392	Breakfast with Santa	
Tabling of Reports		Brick	403
Quarterly Reports for the Communities		Boonstra Barn	
Economic Development Fund, Three Months,		Eichler	404
April 1 to June 30, 2004, and Six Months, April		Victoria General Hospital Guild	
1 to September 30, 2004		Irvin-Ross	404
Robinson	393	Matters of Grievance	
Ministerial Statements		Cummings	405
National Day of Remembrance		Dyck	407
Allan	393	Goertzen	410
Murray	393	Matter of Urgent Public Importance	
Gerrard	394	Derkach	413
Introduction of Bills		Ashton	414
Bill 10—The Pension Benefits Amendment Act		Lamoureux	415
Allan	394		

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Second Readings

Bill 2—The Child and Family Services
Amendment Act (Child Protection Penalties)
Melnick 416

Bill 5—The Manitoba Public Insurance
Corporation Amendment Act (Injury
Compensation Appeal Commission)
Selinger 418

Bill 6—The Real Property Amendment Act
Selinger 418

Bill 7—The Personal Investigations Amendment
Act
Selinger 419

Bill 9—The Manitoba Centennial Centre
Corporation Act
Robinson 419

Report Stage Amendments

Bill 22—The Water Protection Act
Lamoureux 420, 422
Gerrard 420, 423, 424, 425
Ashton 422, 423, 424, 426, 428
Faurschou 426, 429