

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

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The Honourable George Hickes  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Eighth Legislature**

| <b>Member</b>            | <b>Constituency</b> | <b>Political Affiliation</b> |
|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 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, Hon.  | 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.                       |
| 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.                       |
| McFADYEN, Hugh           | Fort Whyte          | P.C.                         |
| McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.   | Lord Roberts        | N.D.P.                       |
| MELNICK, Christine, Hon. | Riel                | N.D.P.                       |
| MITCHELSON, Bonnie       | River East          | P.C.                         |
| NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom        | Interlake           | N.D.P.                       |
| OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.    | Seine River         | N.D.P.                       |
| 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                | 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.                       |
| VACANT                   | Kirkfield Park      |                              |

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

## PRAYER

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 14—The Family Maintenance Amendment  
and Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders  
Amendment Act**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 14, The Family Maintenance Amendment and Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'obligation alimentaire et la Loi sur l'établissement et l'exécution réciproque des ordonnances alimentaires, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, this bill will assist individuals in dealing with recalculations, as well as dealing with inter-jurisdictional awards to help Manitobans to recover maintenance and other support payments. Thank you.

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

**Bill 211—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) that Bill 211, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Bill 211 will provide that individuals who are considered for appointment to the board of Manitoba Hydro undergo screening by a legislative committee of this Legislature before the appointment is made. The screening would involve a question-and-answer session by the committee, and this screening would be on the public record so that it could be clear what the qualifications are and what

the view is of the individuals with respect to Manitoba Hydro and the future of Manitoba Hydro.

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

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

## Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs

## First Report

**Mr. Daryl Reid (Chairperson):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

**Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk):** Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its First Report.

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense.

*Meetings:*

*Your committee met on Tuesday, December 5, 2006, at 6 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.*

*Matters under Consideration:*

*Bill 28—The Manitoba Museum Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Musée du Manitoba*

*Bill 39—The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur le recouvrement des petites créances à la Cour du Banc de la Reine*

*Bill 214—The Good Samaritan Protection Act/Loi sur l'immunité du bon samaritain*

*Committee Membership:*

*Hon. Mr. Chomiak*

*Mr. Derkach*

*Mr. Dewar*

*Mr. Goertzen*

*Mr. Jennissen*

*Ms. Korzeniowski*

*Mr. Nevakshonoff*

*Mr. Reid (Chairperson)*

*Hon. Mr. Robinson*

*Mrs. Rowat*

*Mr. Schuler*

*Your committee elected Mr. Nevakshonoff as the Vice-Chairperson.*

**Public Presentations:**

*Your committee heard one presentation on Bill 28—The Manitoba Museum Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Musée du Manitoba, from the following:*

*Claudette LeClerc, Manitoba Museum*

*Your committee heard two presentations on Bill 214—The Good Samaritan Protection Act/Loi sur l'immunité du bon samaritain, from the following:*

*Leah Ross, Private Citizen*

*Eileen Jones, Manitoba Heart and Stroke Foundation of Manitoba*

**Bills Considered and Reported:**

*Bill 28—The Manitoba Museum Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Musée du Manitoba*

*Your committee agreed to report this bill without amendment.*

*Bill 39—The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur le recouvrement des petites créances à la Cour du Banc de la reine*

*Your committee agreed to report this bill without amendment.*

*Bill 214—The Good Samaritan Protection Act/Loi sur l'immunité du bon samaritain*

*Your committee agreed to report this bill without amendment.*

**Mr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), that the report of the committee be received.

**Motion agreed to.**

**TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2006 Annual Report for the year ending March 31, 2006, for the Manitoba Floodway Authority, copies of which will be distributed.

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2005-2006 Annual Report for the Economic Innovation and Technology Council.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the following: a report pursuant to section 20 of The Public Officers Act being chapter P230 of the Continuing Consolidation of the Statutes of Manitoba, and also a report, scintillating reading I might add, pursuant to section 13 of The Trade Practices Inquiry Act, being chapter 110 of the Statutes of Manitoba 1970.

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women**

**Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Today we pause to remember the 14 young women killed in a vicious attack at l'École polytechnique in Montréal on December 6, 1989. At that time, Canadians were stunned to learn that these 14 young engineering students were targeted and murdered by a man who blamed women for his personal failures.

Seventeen years later we continue to feel shock and horror over this tragedy. This date has become a national day of mourning, not only mourning the victims of the Montréal massacre but also for all women who are victims of violence. At the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council sunrise memorial at the Legislature this morning and at other events today, Manitobans will gather to remember these women and to reflect on the complex issue of violence against women.

Today we also remember three Manitoba women who were killed since December 6, 2005. They are Angela Proulx, Jaylene Lindsey Crane and Audrey Daphne Cooper. Our government is committed to protecting women from violence through innovative and advanced supports for victims of domestic violence, comprehensive funding of shelters for women and children, and justice initiatives that address crimes against women.

Let us remember December 6, and together move forward to make our society a safe place for women and children. Let us be steadfast in our efforts to advance the lives and rights of women.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that following the statements of my colleagues, we join together to remember in a moment of silence.

\* (13:40)

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for the statement that she has just made.

On this very day, 17 years ago, an enraged gunman roamed and terrorized the corridors of Montréal's École polytechnique killing 14 young women. Marc Lepine, age 25, separated the men from the women before opening fire on the classroom of female engineering students. This horrific scene is ingrained in our collective memory as a galvanizing moment in history where mourning turned to outrage about all violence against women.

And so, every day, on December 6, Canada's day of remembrance and action on violence against women, we continue to remember this terrible event, and we also bring attention to all manifestations of violence that women face. We hold events such as this morning's sunrise memorial which was attended by members from both sides of the House. We attend memorials, deliver speeches and remind ourselves of the horror that we felt on that day.

When reflecting on the events of December 6, 1989, what should remain in the forefront of all of our minds is the memory of the 14 women whose lives were lost in a matter of minutes. They were slain solely because they were women, ambitious young women with promising futures who were poised to make their mark on this world and to make their contribution to society.

While the terrible events of December 6 were an attack on women, abuse and violence affects us all, whether it be based on gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion. It is the collective responsibility of all of us to ensure that abuse and violence cease to exist. Thank you.

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

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leave has been granted.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I join other members of this Legislature in speaking out against violence directed against women, in fact, violence directed against people no matter what their gender is. Clearly, we need to not only remember what happened at École polytechnique, not only remember what happened this year at Dawson College, but commit ourselves to making changes in our society

that will prevent such events from occurring in the future.

It requires a spirit of dedication, a willingness to speak out against abuses, but also an understanding of what we can do to treat and to better deal with mental illness, with addictions and other matters which are clearly sometimes the root cause for certain of these problems.

So I join other members of the Legislature here today in remembering what happened and in dedicating ourselves to achieve improvements in our society in the future.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there a willingness for a moment of silence. *[Agreed]*

Please rise for a moment of silence.

*A moment of silence was observed.*

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Mr. John Petrinka from Winnipeg, who is formerly from Churchill, whom I've known for many years.

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

Also in the Speaker's Gallery we have with us today Napatchie Kolola of the Government of Nunavut who is with the Communications branch in Iqaluit, Nunavut.

*[Inuktitut was spoken]*

### Translation

*We're very proud and honoured that you're able to join us today.*

### English

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

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Emergency Rooms Physician Shortage

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, our ERs are in a state of crisis and it is getting worse. We have just heard that there are two more doctors leaving the Victoria Hospital ER at the end of the year. One doctor has told me that this has become a complete disaster under the NDP.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health what she is going to do now to deal with this severe critical shortage of ER doctors now that her quick-fix Band-Aid solution is falling apart.

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans want to know and need to know that when they need emergency care in Manitoba, they are going to get it. That is certainly why we have made health care a priority. That is why we continue to make investing in health care a priority.

We know that there are currently 9.9 vacancies out of 69 positions in Winnipeg ERs. We need to continue to work on staffing those ERs, not only with doctors, but with nurses, with health care aides as well. We want to make sure that people are cared for when they need to be. That is why health care is our priority, as opposed to members opposite who publicly declared in the paper that they no longer care about it.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, it is a doctor who has told me that this has become a complete disaster under the NDP, and they are making a mess of the whole ER situation. The ER crisis is such a mess that three out of four of the new grads of this year's class don't even want to stay here and work in Winnipeg hospitals; 75 percent of these grads have left. They don't want to work here. They've fled Manitoba.

So I would like to ask this NDP government why they are not doing a better job of keeping our graduates of our medical colleges, especially the ER grads.

**Ms. Oswald:** Mr. Speaker, I would say again that emergency care is very important in Manitoba. I really do find it curious strange that the member opposite should reference medical graduates, the same legislative assistant to the Minister of Health who made the decision to cut spaces to the medical school when they were in office. They went down to 70 spaces. It's taken some time for us to restore that.

I was very pleased to attend the white coat ceremony of the first-year class of medical students that was the largest in 30 years, Mr. Speaker. How in the name of what is all good, just and beautiful can members opposite talk about medical graduates leaving when they didn't even have the positions in place in the first place? It's just poppycock.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the Minister of Health that this mess is happening under her watch. They have had seven years and

they've done nothing. Two more doctors are leaving our ERs; three of the four graduates have fled Manitoba. In the past year, 19,000 patients have left our ERs without being seen. Almost 19,000 patients walked away from our hospital ERs because they could not get care.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health: Why are our ERs failing? Almost 19,000 patients who got frustrated waiting for care, couldn't get the care and they walked out of our ERs. How many of those were put in a very unsafe position because of this government?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, we need to have a look at history. Just recently, the members opposite, the Member for Charleswood, in particular, who was so very quick to fearmonger about disaster and the sky falling, who said such a thing in reference to last summer, because of the unbelievable dedication of our doctors, our nurses and our teamwork in ensuring that ERs stay open, no ERs closed this summer.

The member opposite speaks from a place where positions in medical schools were cut; where nurses, over 1,500 of them, left the province during their time; where a hundred doctors left. With a promise of no longer caring about health care, I fear for the future under that potential government.

### **Emergency Rooms Physician Shortage**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** What we are seeing are patients lining the hallways in our ER departments on a daily basis. Contrary to what the Premier has said about zero patients being in hospital hallways, almost 19,000 patients have walked away from emergency rooms without being seen and 75 percent of the ER doctors trained here this year left to work elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, a very simple question for the government: When will this minister take the blinders off, recognize that there is a crisis in our ERs and fix it?

\* (13:50)

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, we have a full and clear vision of the importance of investing in training and investing in our ERs. We know that Manitobans care deeply about getting the emergency care they need when they need it. That's why we're committed to ensure that our ERs are fully staffed, to ensure that our

nurses are there. We are not making speculations and mentioning about closing ERs, in fact, as was the case with members opposite. We are not closing ERs; they were going to.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Again, I would ask that this government take the blinders off. How about looking at investing in patients, Mr. Speaker? Under this government's watch we're seeing doctors overworked, nurses overworked and patient care compromised.

What assurance can the Minister of Health give patients and their families that walk through emergency room doors that their care will not be compromised?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Well, we continue to invest in patients here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, because that's our government's priority. In fact, I believe it was just yesterday or was it a couple of days ago or was it last week when members opposite were criticizing this government's continued robust investment in health care? Which day was it?

But what I would say most definitely is that as we continue to increase our investments every year for doctors, every year for nurses, we know that members opposite during the 2003 campaign committed a paltry 1 percent to health care. What does that mean? It's the equivalent of closing the Grace Hospital altogether, in fact. That's a problem, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Health Care Patient Safety**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** I'm told by professionals within the health care system that this government's quick fix to trying to solve hallway medicine is to cram five patients into four-patient rooms, a policy that creates safety issues. How do you get a crash cart into a room with five beds? How does the patient call for help when they have no call bell? Where is the privacy with a fifth bed right up against the washroom?

Will this minister tell us how many patients have been placed in unsafe situations because of the government's e-bed policy?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, patient care and patient safety are paramount when it comes to our priority with health care. I need to point out to members opposite, in

addition to investing and ensuring that we have doctors here, in fact, as recently as our Throne Speech, we cited even more opportunities for training for ER docs. But, in addition to ensuring that our ERs stay open and that our patients are safe, we also have the Pan Am urgent care clinic that opened in 2004, which is open seven days a week and which helps take pressure off our ERs. Misericordia urgent care is also open assisting with this. We know that fast-track services at Seven Oaks, Misericordia and HSC are in place. There are a number of initiatives. It's a collaborative approach. Patient safety is job one.

#### **Manitoba Economy Business Climate**

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, the recent Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce report indicates that 71 percent of Manitoba businesses believe that this NDP government has only done a fair or a poor job of creating a proper business climate in Manitoba. This was borne out recently in Manitoba when our own Richardson family decided to build a Canola crushing plant, not in Manitoba but in Saskatchewan. Big Sky Farms, now a former partner of OlyWest, also commented that it was disappointed with the recent actions of the NDP and has decided to refocus their priorities in Saskatchewan.

I ask the Minister of Competitiveness: Why has he failed to create a business climate in Manitoba capable of retaining and expanding businesses in Manitoba?

**Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade):** Mr. Speaker, our recycling program here in Manitoba is doing very well by the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, to put factual information on the record, the member opposite should pay attention. Small business tax in Manitoba, when we came in in 1999, was sitting at 8 percent, the second-highest in Canada. The masterminds over there didn't change it. We brought it down, now, to 3 percent for next year, the second-lowest.

If members opposite want to swagger in with their toothpick, as has been mentioned in the restaurants in Winnipeg, they did nothing with business tax. We've reduced it now to the second-lowest in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Business recognizes that.

### Tax Rates

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has done so well that he's produced an economy in Manitoba that has consistently grown at a rate less than the national average for each of the last seven years. That is his record.

To improve the business climate in Manitoba, 45 percent of Manitoba businesses say that the Province must lower taxes to be competitive with other provinces. Manitoba has the highest personal income tax west of Québec, and, according to the Chamber of Commerce, six out of ten provinces in Canada have lower overall corporate tax burdens than Manitoba. Business leaders have clearly stated that Manitoba's business climate and its overall tax rates are not competitive with the rest of Canada.

So I ask the Minister of Competitiveness: Why has he failed to make Manitoba's tax rates competitive with other provinces?

**Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade):** The member opposite talks about jobs. Over the last six years, there has been an average of 5,180 full-time jobs created per year. That's a 140 percent increase over their record in the '90s, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at the retention of people in Manitoba, they lost over 1,100 people per year every year throughout the '90s. We have gained about 1,500. That's a difference of about 2,700 people per year, times by seven, is the city of Portage la Prairie, Glenboro, and the member's riding.

### Opportunities for Young Manitobans

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** The minister wants to talk about jobs. Well, 93 percent of Manitoba businesses believe that this NDP government is doing a poor job creating job opportunities for all Manitobans who live and work in Manitoba. Manitoba is fertile ground for B.C. Hydro and other companies who recruit skilled workers in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, 72 percent of Manitoba businesses were having difficulty finding new employees because this government has failed to create hope and opportunity for young Manitobans.

So I ask the Minister of Competitiveness: Why has he failed to create hope and opportunity for Manitobans? Why do they have to leave Manitoba for hope and opportunity?

**Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade):** I am glad the member opposite mentioned things that are important to business, Mr. Speaker. When they did nothing with training and jobs and growth in Manitoba, we got a 30 percent increase in our post-secondary institutions helping business along, their No. 1 priority.

The taxation, for the first time, Mr. Speaker, on corporate income tax was reduced from 17 percent with us, now almost 23 percent down as of next year.

Mr. Speaker, our economy is growing. Our debt is going down. More people are coming to Manitoba, more youth retention in Manitoba. Manitobans recognize the difference. All you have to do is ask a Manitoban what their house price has done in the last six years. It's pretty obvious our economy is booming.

### Wind Power Development Request for Proposals

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** In November 2005, this NDP government announced that they were taking in expressions of interest for an additional 100 megawatts of wind generation. Yet, over a year later, still no request for proposals has been issued.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines: Why has his government dragged its heels for over a year and responded to the expressions of interest? What are they waiting for, an election?

\*(14:00)

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that the members opposite finally have identified a new source of energy, one that they did nothing on, one which we are developing.

I invite the members opposite to go to St. Leon, a wonderful new wind farm. It is one of the largest in Canada so we are very proud of it. What I am also happy to say is that, not only are we moving forward with 100 megawatts, we're moving forward and very quickly presenting a request for a proposal for 300 megawatts, and moving forward to 1,000 megawatts.

I encourage the members opposite to look at what we've done for potentially good, green energy versus what you did, which was nothing.

**Mr. Schuler:** But, Mr. Speaker, that answer and a quarter won't buy you a cup of coffee. When are they going to get on the program? Manitobans have a lot



of money invested in this process, and every day that this government stalls in issuing a request for proposal it means that they are losing money. Over and over they are told that the RFP is coming, but now they have waited a year and have seen nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why is his unfriendly-to-business government content to string these companies along while they lose money waiting for action. They are waiting for some kind of action. Why don't they make the announcement?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite never even heard of the wind. The only wind came from members opposite when they were in the Chamber. What we're doing is we're harnessing the green energy. You can go to St. Leon, see a 100-megawatt wind farm currently in existence. It works.

We also are moving forward very quickly to put in a request for proposal for 300 megawatts, which will be coming forward very, very quickly, but we're going to work with Hydro. What the member opposite doesn't understand is that they never had a strategy for green energy. They never had a strategy for developing Hydro. They were going to concentrate on selling Hydro. What we're doing is expanding green energy. We're expanding alternate—and pay attention to the new green energy tax credit, more and more economic benefits will continue to grow because we can expand. We can plan for the future and move forward.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, once again, this boils down to NDP politics. In November 2005, they announced expression of interest will be received, yet, to date, nothing. In September 2006, the NDP government re-announces the same thing and, again, nothing.

What are these groups supposed to do? Wait till the next provincial election to see what happens. Manitobans deserve better than the economic strategy dependent on NDP campaign literature handed out during the next provincial election. They want answers now, and what they don't want to see is the Premier (Mr. Doer) running around during election making all kinds of commitments that, again, he won't live up to. Make the announcement now.

**Mr. Rondeau:** Mr. Speaker, this is not politics, it's policy. It's a policy where we're moving forward, and if you don't believe in the policy, go to St. Leon. There you can see a wind farm, the first wind farm in Manitoba done under our government, not under the

Conservative government. It's bringing lots of economic development, not only to the farmers but to the residential areas for tax base, new jobs, and, may I say, the members opposite didn't even have a policy, didn't have politics on it. We're moving it forward expeditiously, creating green energy jobs for the future. You're back in the past. You never even thought about it when we're moving it forward expeditiously.

### **Hog Barns Moratorium**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier refused to set a time line for the Clean Environment Commission's review of the hog industry. The ban forced on the hog producers is, therefore, open-ended and uncertain. The Minister of Agriculture has failed our farm families by her silence on this moratorium and by deliberately avoiding the issue.

Will the Minister of Agriculture, today, finally take some initiative and commit to meet with the hog producers and Manitoba Pork Council on this very important issue?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** I've met with them, Mr. Speaker, and yes, I will meet them.

**Mr. Eichler:** We need more than just lip-service, Mr. Speaker. This Minister of Agriculture could and should be working on behalf of all producers by urging the NDP government to move forward with the CEC review based on an established deadline that meets this moratorium.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture finally do the positive thing, commit to meet with producers and the Pork Council's advocate for an end date to the moratorium? That's the question.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Speaker, once again: Yes, I have met with them. Yes, I will meet with them.

**Mr. Eichler:** Yesterday, a news release from OlyWest clearly lays the blame for the loss of his partners at the feet of the NDP government. This Minister of Agriculture has created an uncertainty on hog production with this moratorium, Mr. Speaker.

How long will it be in place? Will it be four years like Québec which drove that province's industry out of business? Will the minister provide stability and certainty for Manitoba's hog industry by calling an end date to the moratorium?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** If the minister is asking if it looks like four years like Québec, Mr. Speaker, no.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. If members wish to have a conversation, we have two empty loges here. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers.

The honourable Member for Emerson has the floor.

### Hog Barns Moratorium

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On October 24, Jim Carr, the president of the Business Council of Manitoba, wrote in a letter to the editor, and I quote: The Business Council of Manitoba opposes your government's announced pause in the generation of new activity in the province of Manitoba hog industry. We react with concern and anxiety at the unilateral decision that you have taken without consultation with the industry itself and without a tight time frame within which an assessment of the industry contribution to the problem will be made.

After yesterday's announcement of Madam Minister of the pullout of Olymel of Québec and Big Sky of Saskatchewan, does the minister realize that the politically motivated pause will cause huge economic losses to the province of Manitoba?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mr. Carr for his very positive comments on our immigration targets being met this week. I believe we had a meeting this week to confirm that—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The target of 10,000 people has been reached and the Business Council of Manitoba was very, very positive. So that was this week's feedback from the Business Council.

I would point out on September 27, Olymel—*[interjection]* Well, you know we have the Wellington West correspondent, if she wants to ask a question, go right ahead.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** On September 27, Olymel declared that it lost \$150 million in Québec. It declared that it was going to close down plants, it was going to reduce

the number of workers in the province of Québec. We had no illusions at that time that it would have a direct impact on the decisions being made here in Manitoba and, of course—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

### Manitoba Economy Opportunities for Young Manitobans

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Well, it is clearly evident, Mr. Speaker, that the Province of Manitoba and the Premier of this province have given up an economic opportunity and put impediments in place to cause those people not to want to come to Manitoba.

I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk): Is the minister really intent on driving all our young people from the province of Manitoba? Is it imperative that she will see the young people leave here without allowing industries such as Olymel, such as Big Sky out of Saskatchewan to come in here and provide jobs for those young people before all of them leave this province of Manitoba?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, there was a presentation from Manitoba Bureau of Statistics made at the Winnipeg summit which indicated the net decline in young people between the ages of 15 and 24 in the 1990s. Every year the member opposite was part of the leadership of the former government, part of the team that was leading that government. The average reduction in net number of people was 2,000 a year.

We have turned a corner. We've gone from loss to gain of young people between the ages of 15 and 24. We have admitted that it is not enough. We're going to continue to work on more young people. But I would point out that the member opposite said the Simplot potato plant would never come to Manitoba; it's here today.

### Hog Barns Moratorium

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, we have an agricultural industry that has made huge investments over the last seven, eight years in the hog industry. There have been large investments made; there are many people employed in this industry. We have now an opportunity to add, not only a Maple Leaf operation in Brandon, but another one in eastern Manitoba to process those very hogs and add large numbers of jobs to this province of Manitoba. Yet, this Province and this Premier and

his minister have put a moratorium in place, similar to what Québec did which drove Olymel out of Québec. Here we have a Premier that is now saying we have created a large number of jobs. These young people are leaving this province.

When will the government recognize its irreparable damage that she and her government have done to this province by putting in place this moratorium?

\*(14:10)

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** I ask the member to take a little bit of time and think about this. The company that was planning to come to Manitoba lost \$150 million in September. They announced that they lost money in September. The pause was not in place, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite talks about a moratorium. He is fearmongering.

I would ask the member—they asked me if I talked to the pork industry—I would ask them to talk to the people who still have confidence and ask him to talk to Hytek about their plans, rather than fearmongering about those people who have made a financial decision based on their operations out of this province, rather than saying that we cannot proceed. Value added is a very important part of this government's plan, and we will continue to work on it.

#### **Premier's Office Conduct of Chief of Staff**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, the Premier's chief of staff, Michael Balagus, is under investigation for criminal wrongdoings. This includes issues such as political intimidation and bullying, unethical and illegitimate pressure, corruption and bribery. Every other premier across Canada would have at least suspended their chief of staff if there was an investigation of this nature going on today.

My question specific to the Premier is: Why has the Premier not suspended Michael Balagus as his chief of staff for the Province of Manitoba? Why has the Premier not done it?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, in order to get attention you either raise your voice or up the rhetoric.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable Attorney General has the floor.

**Mr. Chomiak:** The member has said in this House that he saw a letter in September. He hasn't done anything with that letter, I guess. The member's also indicated the Chief Electoral Officer is looking at this situation. That's what the member has said, Mr. Speaker. That is hardly criminal, firstly.

Secondly, if the member has any information that he wishes to bring forth that he uncovered in September, and he, all of a sudden, raised in this House in November, I think that the electoral officer or anyone else would be prepared to look at that.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, it's noteworthy that the Premier sits in his place in order to avoid the serious issue that's facing his chief of staff in the Premier's Office. Elections Manitoba is conducting interviews—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** This is very serious, Mr. Speaker. I ask the Premier: Why will he not suspend the chief of staff from his office, given that Elections Manitoba is even conducting interviews in regard to the behaviour of his staffperson, Michael Balagus? Why have you not suspended this individual?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, I believe Elections Manitoba is conducting interviews with respect to ministers on this side of the House concerning allegations made by his leader.

Elections Manitoba is conducting interviews with respect to a candidate who is running for the Liberal Party. Elections Manitoba will conduct investigations when they are asked, Mr. Speaker. When they come back with any evidence or any information, it will be incumbent upon those who receive that information to act upon it.

But an investigation and allegations by that member, Mr. Speaker, are a long way from where the member talks about crimes, et cetera. I think he ought to tone down his rhetoric or say what he wants to say in the hallway when he's not protected by the privilege that is offered to members of this House.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I'm asking that the Premier gather the courage—[interjection]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I'm asking the Premier to gather the courage and to do the right thing and suspend his chief of staff until, at the very least, the investigation

by Elections Manitoba has concluded. That's a reasonable thing to ask for. If the Premier's not prepared to do that, quite frankly, he should resign as the Premier.

I'm not going to stand by and let this Premier deceit Manitobans time and time again. He's got to start being honest with Manitobans—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable Member for Inkster, when the Speaker is standing, members should be seated and the Speaker should be heard in silence. I shouldn't have to try and over shout another member in this Chamber.

We're all elected by our constituents, and we should have more respect for this Chamber than just has been shown. We have strong feelings at times, but we must never forget that this is the Manitoba Legislative Chamber, and we all must have respect for the dignity of this Chamber.

Using the words of an individual member or individual minister of "deceit," that is totally unparliamentary, and I ask the honourable Member for Inkster to withdraw that comment.

**An Honourable Member:** Apologize.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I am now instructing the honourable member to withdraw the word "deceit."

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, in good conscience, I could not withdraw that comment.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I am now directing the honourable member to withdraw that word immediately.

I have requested, directed and instructed the member to withdraw his comment. I have no alternative but to name Mr. Kevin Lamoureux, the honourable Member for Inkster, pursuant to our rules for disregarding the authority of the Chair, and to direct that he withdraw from the Chamber for the remainder of this sitting.

I would advise the honourable member to please leave the Chamber immediately because if I have to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms, there will be further consequences.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, we are now on question No. 8 and that belongs to the government.

\* (14:20)

### **Canadian Wheat Board Single-Desk System**

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** The disdain of members of the Conservative Party opposite for the grain producers of our province has become only too obvious in the past few weeks as they continue to parrot the position of Prime Minister Harper on the gutting of the Canadian Wheat Board. This government has stepped up to the plate in defence of our farmers and will soon hold its own plebiscite on the question of the single desk.

Can the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives give us the details of our latest announcement?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Indeed, I do thank my colleague for raising this very important issue. I am quite disappointed that the members opposite do not see the Canadian Wheat Board as an important enough issue that they would not raise a question in the House, Mr. Speaker.

Our producers and producers from across the west have said they want a fair vote on wheat and barley. We have asked the federal government for this vote. They have refused. The members opposite continue to talk about their desire for market choice.

This is not what the producers are asking for, so today I announced that wheat and barley producers will have an opportunity to have a say. Ballots are being mailed out to them. I would encourage all wheat and barley producers in this province to take this opportunity to have their say.

Unfortunately, the federal government will not give the producers this voice. We will, and I hope members opposite will recognize how important this is, Mr. Speaker.

### **Broadband Technology Hub (Brandon) Government Initiatives**

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** My question is to the Minister responsible for Advanced Education. Brandon University is not only the post-secondary hub for rural and northern Manitoba, but it is also becoming the established centre for broadband technological hub facility for not only Brandon but, indeed, the surrounding communities.

The federal government, through CANARIE, has provided funding for those kinds of facilities to be established in rural Manitoba. I want to ask the Minister of Advanced Education whether she can tell

this House that, in fact, long-term funding has been put in place for broadband establishment at Brandon University and the Brandon area.

**Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** Well, Mr. Speaker, it certainly is a red-letter day when we get a question on Advanced Education. I want to assure the member opposite, in case he doesn't remember, that in last year's budget we introduced a multi-year funding strategy for our universities and colleges; the first multi-year funding strategy in the history of the province with the highest rates of funding in the history of the province: 5.8, 5, 5, which will translate into over a 16 percent increase or \$60 million to this post-secondary education system.

**Mr. Derkach:** Mr. Speaker, it will be a glorious red-letter day when we can get any minister on that side of the House to answer a question directly.

Investment into technology is critical for providing access to students at our universities, to facilities and communities. I have asked this minister whether or not she has established a long-term agreement with Brandon University for funding so that Brandon University can become the backbone, if you like, the hub for technological information in the area.

**Ms. McGifford:** Mr. Speaker, a question on Advanced Education is even more interesting when it targets students and students' interests because all I saw that government, that party opposite when it was in government do was cut bursaries to students, cut operating funds.

The answer to the question is, of course, we've given 5.8, 5, and 5. This is adequate money to fund the priorities of the institution, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Crocus Investment Fund Minister's Actions**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Let us review the record of the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith). In November 2003, the Member for Brandon West is put in charge of the Crocus file as Minister of Industry. In September 2004, the board at Crocus approves a drastic write-down in its investment portfolio of \$15 million. One month later, the Member for Brandon West is removed as Minister of Industry, minister responsible for the Crocus file. Two months later, on December 10, Crocus halts trading of its shares.

This record is reprehensible. I ask the Member for Brandon West: Is he proud of this appalling record? Why will he not stand in this House and defend himself?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I've never seen a better example of a man on a witch hunt. He takes a bunch of unrelated facts, weaves them together and tries to develop a conspiracy theory. Then he has the audacity to expect us to account for his paranoia. Perhaps he should account to himself for why he dreams up these cockamamie schemes.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, I've never heard of ministerial responsibility being referred to as a witch hunt but, whatever.

In this session alone, we have asked the minister responsible for Crocus, the Member for Brandon West, 23 questions on the Crocus file, and do you want to know what, Mr. Speaker? Do you know how many questions this member has answered? Not one.

Is the Member for Brandon West so inept, so weak, that he can't even answer one single question on the Crocus scandal, one of the most important issues facing his ministry and one of the most important issues facing 34,000 Manitobans? Get up and defend yourself. Get up and get on your feet. Tell us what happened.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, nothing underlines the authoritarian character of the members opposite. They think they can stand from their chair in opposition, break all the rules of the House and order people to do things because they are somehow given the God-given right to order what goes on in Manitoba.

I want to inform them we've been operating under a parliamentary democracy since 1870. They don't have any inherent rights to order people what to do. They're supposed to follow the rules of the House. They know all questions are questions to the government. They're completely misleading the public about how this House operates. If they want to operate in a dictatorship that's their choice, but Manitobans have chosen to democratically elect their governments.

#### **Crocus Investment Fund Fonds de Solidarité Loan**

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, I look at the answer just given in this Chamber, and it demonstrates clearly that this government is

unwilling to be accountable for their activities when the Crocus Fund was crashing. The Minister responsible for Competitiveness was the minister when this fund undertook a dramatic and drastic, in terms of the shareholder dollars, write-down. They lost millions of dollars in one minute.

So I ask the Member for Brandon West, the Minister responsible for Competitiveness, who is now, again, responsible for the monitoring of Crocus, whether or not he knew that the money borrowed from Solidarité, known affectionately on this side as the Fond, did he know, as the Auditor reported, that this created a situation that grossly overstated the value of the fund and grossly understated their liabilities?

\*(14:30)

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that the fund, as structured by the members opposite, was set up as an arm's-length body to be operated by a board of directors in the community. The auditors, every year, reported on the financial health of the fund. The auditors said that there wasn't any problems. The Auditor General disagreed with that analysis. The members full well know that, and now they want to after the fact, construct a conspiracy theory.

If they really want accountability in the Legislature, can they explain why Isobord lost \$7 million in the Crocus Fund under their watch, why the Province lost \$29.6 million? Can they explain why Westsun lost \$21 million and the Province lost \$3.5 million. Can they explain why Winnipeg logistics caused a \$7.6 million loss to the Crocus Fund and \$5.6 to the Province under their watch?

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for Oral Questions has expired.

#### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us Maxine Diamond who is the guest of the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan).

Also in the public gallery we have from Whiskey Jack Treatment Centre 32 visitors under the direction of Joan Muswagon. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin).

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

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Todd Davison

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Speaker, I rise with sadness today to recognize a young individual whose passion, strength and indomitable spirit is known by many. I stand today to mourn with many others the loss of Todd Davison, a 20 year old who was born and raised in Winnipeg in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I've known the Davison family for many, many years. They've been a very positive influence on the community at large, on their family, their three boys and volunteered and made a significant commitment to North Kildonan.

Todd played at Gateway Recreation Centre where he first began his hockey career along with his brothers Wade and Joel, and both Barb and Bob were a very important part of their community life and supported their boys in every way as they grew.

A few years ago, Todd was diagnosed with cancer and had to travel to Toronto for diagnosis for treatments. The community rallied around the Davison family at that time, and many, many within the community volunteered their time and their energy to put on a fundraising social so that the family could be supported and Todd could travel and the family could be with him while he underwent the significant treatment that he did, but Todd's spirit never died and he continued to have a very positive attitude towards life.

He played hockey as long as he could. He coached hockey. He was very involved up until the last days of his life. I know, Mr. Speaker, there will be many, many that will mourn Todd's death not only in our community but throughout the hockey community, the sporting community. I know that we have lost a young man with energy, drive and compassion, and he will be missed, but his legacy will continue on as he has very much impacted the lives of many others around him.

Mr. Speaker, he will be sadly missed in our community and tomorrow many of us will be spending a day in celebrating his short years on this earth and with our community. Thank you.

### Brandon East (Constituency)

**Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East):** Mr. Speaker, Brandon East is one of the most dynamic constituencies in Manitoba. The citizens in Brandon East are engaged in their community, proud of their

community and active in working together to make Brandon East the best it can be.

It is an absolute privilege to represent my home constituency in the Manitoba Legislature, and to labour together with fellow citizens on behalf of a better Brandon.

Mr. Speaker, this session's Throne Speech continues to place Brandon East at the centre of the provincial agenda. In past years our government built the Brandon Regional Health Centre, provided our community with its first MRI unit, committed to the redevelopment of the Westman Laboratory and developed the downtown Health Access Centre. This Throne Speech announced the installation of a new linear accelerator for Brandon, a move which will make Brandon a regional centre for cancer care by investing in a model of treatment that combines radiation therapy and chemotherapy. In addition, reversing a discriminatory policy imposed by the former Conservative government, we have announced that patients requiring inter-facility ambulance transfers will no longer be charged a fee for this service. Building health care excellence in Brandon, Mr. Speaker, remains a top priority of the Gary Doer NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, we are also building educational excellence in Brandon through the historic development of ACC at BMHC, an unprecedented investment, which will forever establish Brandon as a centre for post-secondary education in Canada. Combined with major investments in public school infrastructure and the construction of the health studies building at Brandon University, all educational sectors in Brandon are being positively supported by our government. Our historic tuition cut and freeze, in addition to increased bursaries, means that young people are staying and studying here in Manitoba.

Infrastructure improvement, specifically the twinning of the 18th Street Bridge over the Assiniboine River and the repaving of 18th Street, Richmond Avenue and 1st Street, is also being undertaken by our government.

In the community, Neighbourhoods Alive! has funded the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation supporting the development of children's parks and playgrounds, Mr. Speaker.

Brandon East has been central to all of these accomplishments. I am proud to call Brandon East home.

### **Manitoba Farm Animal Council**

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Today I wish to draw this House's attention to an important organization, the Manitoba Farm Animal Council or MFAC. It is a group of dedicated livestock industry professionals. Established in 1990, MFAC promotes the humane treatment of farm animals and general animal welfare.

MFAC also works to bridge the gap between urban and rural cultures by raising awareness among school children about the realities of farming. They offer children an opportunity to learn about farming and to interact with livestock populations.

Even more important, MFAC's commitment to animal welfare includes training emergency response personnel for what to do when livestock are involved in an accident during transport. Through a series of training seminars, first responders learn to free trapped animals without causing injury, and are taught to assess the health of animals to determine the need for euthanization.

Lastly, MFAC operates the CARE line offering information about farm animal care and enabling people to report incidents of animal mistreatment.

MFAC is funded through member contributions and although an effective organization has requested that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) assist with funding for a CARE line.

Ensuring good animal welfare in Manitoba is an important aspect of our agricultural industry. I urge the government to show its support for this important service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Manitoba Student Leadership Conference**

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living):** Mr. Speaker, it was with great pleasure that I participated in the 18th annual Manitoba Student Leadership Conference held at the nationally renowned UNESCO school, Vincent Massey Collegiate, in the constituency of Fort Garry.

The theme of the conference was "Voices Motivating Communities: Leadership Olympics", and its mandate was to provide students with an opportunity to enhance student leadership skills and learn about how they can bring about positive change in our community.

The event began Thursday, September 28, with a barbeque, and I was privileged to give a welcome

speech to open the conference. During the day, Friday, participants attended various workshops, and I offered a workshop on women in politics. Approximately 300 students from 50 schools across Manitoba, along with the teacher advisers, were in attendance. Additionally, over 600 students from Vincent Massey attended the workshops on Friday. Additionally, students had many opportunities to develop new skills and gain valuable knowledge.

Events such as these are important for the future of our province and our country. They nurture and encourage young talents who will, undoubtedly, be the leaders of tomorrow. We need these young leaders to inspire others to be part of the continuing building of a province that we all will be proud to call home.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the staff and students for organizing this important event and to commend Vincent Massey Collegiate for their dedication towards helping students to develop a global perspective on issues which affect their everyday lives. I would also like to praise all the students who participated in the conference for their interest and involvement in their communities. Thank you.

\* (14:40)

#### Health Care in Aboriginal Communities

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, the provincial NDP government has shown total disregard for the health care crisis in our province's Aboriginal communities. Grand Chief Ron Evans has recently written to the Premier as follows: I'm writing to express my extreme disappointment in the lack of substantial Manitoba First Nations participation at the national summit on Aboriginal health held on November 27 and 28, 2006, in Vancouver, B.C. The lack of pre-planning and discussion to identify Manitoba-specific First Nation health issues and solutions to table at this forum clearly indicate your government's lack of movement towards addressing the First Nations health crisis in our province."

The Grand Chief continues: "I am greatly offended that the invitation for my attendance at this meeting was merely to provide the optics that First Nations in Manitoba are working in partnership with your government and support the minimal work Manitoba has done to date with respect to First Nation health in our province.

"In light of the strong partnerships between other Provincial governments across Canada and First Nations in other regions, it is an embarrassment that the Aboriginal Health report card delivered by Manitoba at this summit spoke only of six dialysis units established in 2004 to address the health crisis of First Nations in our province."

Mr. Speaker, I personally visited many First Nations communities in Manitoba. This fall I was in Pimicikamak, Mosakahiken and Chemawawin First Nations. In Pimicikamak First Nation in Cross Lake, there has been a major health care crisis, and the Province has done little. Indeed, the state of emergency declared in Cross Lake over its nursing station has been met with complete silence by this government.

There have also been major needs for better roads to communities like Chemawawin and Mosakahiken First Nations, but, again, the Province has done little. At Mosakahiken, as at many other First Nations, there is a need for more activities for young people, more adult education, but the Province has done little.

It is time for dramatic change at the provincial level with a real and effective partnership with Manitoba First Nations. The NDP haven't done it. It's time to elect a provincial Liberal government to achieve it.

#### GRIEVANCES

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

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a grievance. Our health care in this province has been touted by the NDP government as one of the best in the world. We have, in our family, reason to question those statements.

The reason I say we have reason to question those statements is because we have a personal situation in our family. It is my daughter who was diagnosed with a very severe back failure some 15 years ago. Three years after that, she had back surgery for the first time in the city of Winnipeg. That did not solve the problem. Then, about three years after that, she had another surgery and that also did not solve her back ailment. She has been on morphine for roughly about seven to eight years. She was told only in the last year and a half to two years ago that she would probably have to live with her situation for the rest of her life. At that time she was on crutches and part time in a wheelchair.



Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, a young woman, aged 47, being told that for the rest of her life she would have to be on crutches or in wheelchairs? So she spent her time at home trying to live with her situation as best she could. In the meantime, she became quite good at her computer. Some of us called her a computer geek. In searching around the Internet, she found a Web site, and the Web site was called getadr.com. All those people with back problems should make a note of that Web site, getadr.com, Mr. Speaker.

In that Web site, it indicated that there was a facility in Germany, a hospital in Stenum, Germany, that could do back surgery that, in fact, would install artificial discs in a person's back. What they do over there, they do not do back surgery from the back in, they go in through the stomach, and where there are no nerves or anything like that to deal with, and they take the old discs out and replace the new disc with steel or metal discs. Our daughter had two of those replaced and put in her back. She will now re-enter the workforce right after Christmas after having been told that she would never work again.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, that this an absolute must that this province investigate the possibility of using that procedure on a regular basis for people who are constantly walking around in pain and are being told that they cannot be helped, because there is help. When I was in Stenum, Germany, and speaking to the specialists and the surgeons over there, I asked them this question: If we sent some young surgeons over there, would you train them in this same procedure? They said: Absolutely, as long as we don't have to pay them a salary while we're teaching them. They would teach them for nothing, this procedure, and we could bring that back to Canada if we would.

However, what concerns me more than anything else is this NDP government has constantly said that they will help people attain a cure in our health care system in this province and it will be dealt with under our totally funded system. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has personally has said: If we can't do the procedures in this province, we will send them outside of the province, and we will pay for them to get a cure in another part of this country, in Canada. Then he said: If we can't do it in Canada, we will send them where it can be done.

Well, Mr. Speaker, our family has gone a number of times to the Minister of Health, to a number of ministers of Health, and indicated what

could be done for her, and asked them to provide funding to a young person wanting to gain her health back so she could re-enter the workforce. Yet these ministers, both of them, have said: You know, we can't do this; we can't do this.

So, finally, our family made the decision that we would take our daughter to Germany, and if we had to we would pay for that procedure ourselves, and we did that. We made the arrangements.

No sooner had we made the arrangements, we were talking to the specialist that our daughter was dealing with here in the province of Manitoba, no sooner had we made the arrangements to go, the Health Department phoned and said, oh, we found now somebody in Manitoba that will do this surgery. He has moved here from Africa. He's practising in Brandon and talk to him in Brandon. So we phoned this person in Brandon and made an appointment with this person in Brandon, this so-called doctor in Brandon, and he said, yes, I can do this. And then we said, when can you see her? And he said on such and such a day, I will be able to see her. When the day came, he cancelled.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that that doctor had a change of heart when he went on the Internet and saw what they did in Germany. Then, later on, the specialist that had referred us to this doctor in Brandon, after we came back, admitted in writing—we have this in letter writing, and the doctor in Brandon that we also have a letter from—saying, sorry, we don't do these procedures in Manitoba.

I believe it was an attempt by somebody, and I'm not pointing fingers, by somebody in the health care system to try and put a stop to us going to Germany to get the procedure done. Secondly, I believe it was an attempt made to ensure that this health care system would not have to pay, because if we went to Germany without a reference to Germany by the minister or by the department or by the specialist, they need not pay. We know that.

However, we believe that those kinds of activities are now preventing our daughter from having her surgery dealt with by Manitoba Health, as they should. But there was a way out for the Department of Health and maybe the Ministry of Health. We don't know quite who is responsible for this.

\* (14:50)

However, we are elated that we found help for our daughter. We're elated that she is no longer

suffering back pain. We are elated that she is now working full time. We're elated that she will be able to go back and make a living for herself as a productive worker in the workforce of Manitobans, and we believe it is imperative that this government should meet the commitment that the Premier (Mr. Doer) made and help that young lady, even though she be my daughter, should help her with the costs that she incurred to get herself fixed and be able to be a productive member in society of this province of Manitoba.

I know I spoke to the former Minister of Health, and he agrees with me that the Department of Health should look at this and take heed, or pay attention to what was done here. If we could do this in this province, we would help a huge number of people, and we would have a huge number of people that would no longer have to suffer throughout their lives because of back pain. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the attention.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Ste. Rose, on a grievance?

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, yes, I'd like to exercise my right to grieve. The purpose of my grievance is that there are a number of issues in and around health care and housing that jointly have come to a situation in the town of Neepawa, which is a major part of my constituency that I believe have come very close to reaching crisis proportions.

There're a number of other communities I know that have problems of a similar nature, but I would like to put the facts, as I see them, about this situation on the record so that other communities may well realize that they are not alone in the approach that this government has taken to dealing with a number of our rural communities and in capital expenditures and health care provision.

It isn't that long ago, Mr. Speaker, that we saw in this government a willingness to put forward a program of assisted living within housing projects in this province for those who are not fully capable of looking after themselves, but do not need extended care, who do not need continuous supervision, but are able to live on an independent basis within their homes if they get a little bit of help, particularly, to check on whether or not they're taking medication appropriately, whether or not they're taking the proper dosages that have been prescribed for them.

Now, take that situation, Mr. Speaker, and put it in context of what we have in Neepawa. We have a request and, in fact, a project that was announced in 1999 where there would be a replacement of the senior care home in Neepawa because it needs to be replaced, not because it's falling down on the outside, but because the level of care of the people within that facility has risen so much and so dramatically that there is almost no one in that facility now who is capable of anything other than receiving long-term care.

With that in mind, the facility, the hallways are too small. The elevators are too congested and, frankly, would be unuseful in a case of an emergency and evacuating the building would become a significant problem, and is probably a potential disaster in waiting if we don't move aggressively to deal with the replacement of that facility. At the same time, and something which I wholeheartedly support and I believe the community supports, is that extended care can be relieved to some extent by having assisted living.

We had an announcement, Mr. Speaker, an announcement that said the government of Manitoba would be able and willing to participate in an assisted living project. That assisted living project was going to take place in a facility that we call Yellowhead Manor, which was a Plus 55 facility when it was opened. Now, that facility is managed, as I understand it, by Manitoba Housing. That facility is a very important part of how we provide services and care to the elderly in our community.

Everybody was on board to move ahead with the assisted living project, and now, for whatever reason, it seems to have been a disconnect between the Department of Housing, the Department of Health and the community. The community came on board. They started meeting with the Department of Health. They started meetings with the Housing Department and what should happen over the last six months? We have now seen this facility where there are at least 20 empty suites. Now, 20 empty suites in a facility which probably only has about 40 in total, and in a community of 3,600 people that's a significant impact.

Now we have no plan from this government. We have had no meetings with the RHA lately. There has been no response from Manitoba Housing in terms of repairing any simple repairs in terms of water leaks. Everything has just come to a crashing halt.

To compound the problem, Mr. Speaker, the seniors drop-in centre is attached to this same building. There is a kitchen facility and a dining area whereby collegial meals were going to be served. The community has invested between \$16,000 and \$17,000 in this kitchen facility which would have been used for—a better term is congregate meals, where those who are retired and who don't in many cases cook every day or as often as we might assume would live healthier and would benefit from the opportunity of, first of all, joining each other for a congregate meal. Secondly, by going to the congregate meal, we know that not only are we helping their mental health, we're helping their physical health because we know they will get a balanced meal while they're part of that program.

But Manitoba Housing has suddenly taken the view that there's a security problem. Because they share the kitchen facility, they're going to have to make sure they lock the doors on a regular basis. I've been told—and I cannot confirm this, Mr. Speaker, I didn't have time to confirm it before I had to rise for this grievance—that it is apparent that this new security regime that has been put in place created a situation where emergency response people, i.e., in this case, the ambulance personnel, may have had to break a lock to get in to provide emergency response to people living in the building.

*Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Now that strikes me that all of this could be dealt with with a better co-operative and congenial approach to dealing with this problem, but what seems to have happened—and I've talked to the former Minister of Health; I'm pretty sure he was on side. We have seen a number of pieces of correspondence from the tenants' organization going to the Department of Housing talking about the repair of the facility, and now the local organization we know as HAND, which works with the seniors in the community to provide needed services, is trying to get some kind of an understanding about what will happen with all of these vacant suites in what we call, as I said, the Yellowhead Manor, to no avail.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are now in a situation where we are at a stalemate, but it's one of those situations where it's a stalemate that is unexplainable. It's unexplainable. I will give the government the benefit of the doubt as to whether or not they intended to proceed with this project. I can see no reason why they wouldn't proceed with the project. It

helps deal with ongoing health costs. It makes for a better transitional situation for those going into extended care. It allows them to live in their own suites, their own privacy, with some level of supervision, and frankly it's something that's been talked about in my community for 25 years.

**An Honourable Member:** How long?

\* (15:00)

**Mr. Cummings:** Twenty-five years. The Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) probably isn't even that old. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact is that for 25 years seniors in the community have been talking about assisted living. Finally we have a situation where it would be the perfect opportunity to transition into an assisted living, and we all of a sudden have come to a stall.

I don't want to attribute motives to the government on the eve of an election, but, unfortunately, I can come to no other conclusion. I believe that the ministers, of their own volition and their own good management and common sense, felt that this should go forward, but what we're seeing now is a disconnect, and what could cause that? A disconnect I'm afraid has been caused by the fact that there's a looming election and, perhaps, a little bit closer to the election we will get an announcement. I would like to believe that that's what's going to happen, but I cannot forgo the opportunity right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to put this on the record to urge the government, the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh), the minister responsible for Health, past, present and future, all have a stake in this, and it's called service to the people of this province. It's got nothing to do with whether it's in the town of Neepawa or the riding of Ste. Rose, which I represent, but I'm putting them on notice that this is going to be an issue from now until they fix it because the community has tried every other polite approach to deal with this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see that I may have burned up my time. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to bring this forward, and I just hope that the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak)—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member's time has expired.

The honourable Member for Portage la Prairie, on a grievance.

**Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie):** Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today on a grievance.

I have the privilege and honour of representing Portage la Prairie, a community where I was fortunate enough to be born and raised, and had the opportunity to go away for a few years to university, and also to have employs with the RCMP in both The Pas and Arborg, which gave me a deep appreciation for my community of Portage la Prairie.

So the decision was made that I return to Portage la Prairie where I met a young lady some 25 years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and which we just celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary on November 14. We chose and we are very proud to have the privilege of raising our children in Portage la Prairie. It is a community that offers so many amenities to the quality of life, and, when elected in 1997, it was incumbent upon me to work with the community to make it an even better community, not only for my own family, but all those who have chosen to reside in Portage la Prairie.

I am very proud of what has been able to be accomplished within my tenure as the MLA for Portage la Prairie, but I have stated on numerous occasions in this House my disappointment as to the priorities as established by the current government. What I speak of this afternoon in my grievance is that of the attention to our infrastructure here in the province of Manitoba.

The infrastructure here in Manitoba continues to deteriorate under this current administration, even though recent announcements of substantive increases to the highways' budget here in the province of Manitoba. If the honourable members seated on the government's side of the House would take but a moment to ask the officials within the Transportation Department what is the required expenditure annually just to keep even with the occurring wear and tear here in the province of Manitoba over a year's time.

Having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the current additional money announced recently to the Transportation budget will not even get to the break-even point to which the wear and tear that occurs on our highways here in the province over a year. So we continue to see more and more of a deficit in the highways and roadways of Manitoba. It is incumbent upon ourselves here in the Legislative Assembly to recognize that we cannot continue to see our highways deteriorate and to leave it to future generations to rebuild our crumbling roads.

I, as representative of Portage la Prairie, have seen first-hand, as not any other MLA in the Chamber has seen, and that is the closure of the major artery through their constituency. The Trans Canada Highway was closed in mid-October because the bridge that goes over the Canadian National Railways main line was determined that it was indeed considered unsafe, and imminent peril could come the way of the motorists should they continue to travel over the bridge.

The bridge itself could possibly have carried light traffic, so the light traffic could continue on the Trans Canada Highway around the city of Portage la Prairie. But it was determined that the light traffic would require, through the wintertime, snow removal in order to get passage over the bridge, and it was determined that the bridge was not sound enough to effectively carry the weight of the Transportation Department's snowploughs. So that option, too, was rejected.

They also considered a closure of one side of the bridge for reconstruction and having two-way traffic. But that, too, was determined as not being practical and would be considered unsafe because the motorists, when travelling on a two-lane highway, are recognizing that they are passing within a metre or more of oncoming traffic, but on a divided highway motorists get accustomed to two lanes and to not looking for oncoming traffic. So to go to a section of highway with oncoming traffic, when you are on a divided highway, is not what the highway officials wanted to see happen because it is dangerous.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of the traffic that road statistics stated was upwards to 18,000 vehicles was then diverted through Portage la Prairie because of the closure due to the bridge being unsafe. So that caused significant concern to persons residing in Portage la Prairie especially about the public schools. There are four along the major thoroughfare of Saskatchewan Avenue which was one of the designated detour routes after the bridge's closure.

I must commend the highways department officials who worked long and hard to make the detour as accommodating as possible, but I will say it did cause for significant concern. So, therefore, much modification was made, and there is now a detour which takes a significant volume of traffic around Portage la Prairie and reconnects with 1A outside the major business district so that the downtown congestion that we saw for upwards to

three weeks is no longer the case in Portage la Prairie.

But having this experience, I want to emphasize to all members of the Legislative Assembly that it is not an experience that any one of us wants to see happen in our community. It is something that concerns us all because every constituency has roadways and highways within it, and they are all deteriorating at a pace that we should not be accepting of in this Legislative Assembly.

\* (15:10)

I want to state also that it's not only our roadways, but it is our wastewater treatment plants that are putting significant volumes of phosphate and nitrates back into our watercourses that is unacceptable to any of us here in the province. As well, we have more than 50 communities in the province of Manitoba now on boiled water orders, the highest number of communities ever that our department has listed at any one time, and it's coming under this New Democratic Party's administration.

This is unacceptable. We have to do a better job, and I know that in the budgeting process, yet the Water Stewardship Minister's responsibility, it is incumbent upon the Finance Department to recognize the needs in the Water Stewardship Department and the Department of Infrastructure of the gravest nature for the future of our province where we all want to reside and to see that our children look to residing here as well, but we need attention to our infrastructure. Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Member for River East, on a grievance?

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** On a grievance.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** On a grievance.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand and exercise my democratic right as a member of this Legislature to grieve. I've chosen to make comments on the health care system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and talk about the crisis that our health care system is in today.

I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the NDP, in 1999, the new NDP, ran on five major promises and one of those promises was to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. I know that many in

Manitoba bought into that promise thinking that the NDP were going to come into government and be the saviours of health care in the province of Manitoba.

I know I went door to door, and it was difficult in that election campaign, and health care was the No. 1 priority, the No. 1 issue on the minds of many many, especially the seniors in my community. You know, I never ever indicated that we had all the answers, and I know that we certainly didn't when we were in government, but I do know that we made significant progress in the years that we were there. I never ever promised any of my constituents an immediate quick fix to the problem in health care, and I did indicate to them at the time that it was a complex issue and that nobody had an easy quick fix, but there needed to be some long-term planning associated with trying to get our health care system on track.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those words were right at the time. Those words are right today. We've had seven years of New Democratic government, and we see that the health care budget has increased significantly. We don't see any results for the significant increase in spending. I know, if we had a motto that could be used by this government, it might be "spend more and get less." That's exactly what we're seeing after seven years of mismanagement and crisis management of our health care system.

You know, today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the opportunity to ask some questions on health care and the crisis in our emergency room services. These are nothing new. From seven years ago when the NDP promised to end hallway medicine, we see today that hallway medicine is alive and well. We've seen the Premier (Mr. Doer) stand up in the House and misled the public of Manitoba when he says statistics show that there are zero patients in our hospital hallways today in our emergency rooms.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that that is as far from the truth as anyone could get. You only need to talk to the front-line workers in our health care system to know that the Premier is way off track when he makes those kinds of statements, and it just shows the disrespect that he has for the front-line workers that know full well that our hospitals are lined on a daily basis with people waiting to be admitted to beds on the wards. We know that it does a disservice to the front lines, to those that are working so very hard to try to ensure that patients in

our health care system are receiving the care that they should be receiving.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it speaks volumes to the arrogance that we're seeing from a government that hasn't been able to live up to one of the very basic promises that it made seven years ago to end hallway medicine. No one that works in our health care system is fooled by a Premier who can stand up in this House or our Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), and there have been several over the seven years who stand up continually and talk about how great our health care system is today. That's not fooling patients that are walking away from emergency rooms because they can't be seen. That's not convincing people that have laid on stretchers for hours and days because there has been no hospital bed. That's not saying anything to families of patients who have seen their loved ones moved from a two bedroom to a four bedroom, only to find out that they were the fifth bed in a four bedroom, that their mother didn't have an emergency cord to pull if she had a problem or needed some help, that she was stuck by a washroom in a four bedroom as the fifth bed, that the front-line staff were complaining that if there was an emergency and they had to call a crash cart they couldn't get that cart into the room because there was no room to move.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

What does that say about the dignity that is deserved by seniors within our community? What does that say to patients' safety? What does that say to safe working conditions for staff, for front-line staff in our hospitals? Yet, when you hear the Premier and the ministers of Health, successively in this House, standing up and talking about what a wonderful health care system they have created and how they have fixed everything within the health care system, I say, shame on them for trying to mislead Manitobans into believing that they have had a positive impact, that they have fixed the problems, that they have lived up to their commitment to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million.

Well, they haven't fooled many Manitobans. More and more now, when people enter our hospitals seeking the care that they need, they find that there is not enough staff to deliver the service. They see doctors and they see nurses very frustrated, extremely frustrated with their lack of ability to meet all the needs of all of their patients because they are short staffed, Mr. Speaker. They are just at their wit's end some days in trying to do everything that they

would like to do, but find that they don't have the time to do because there aren't enough of them, and there aren't enough hands to go around.

Mr. Speaker, I know because I spent 18 years on the front lines in our health care system attempting to meet the needs of my patients. I didn't have an administrative position, and I didn't work in a bureaucracy of any kind within the health care system. I worked on the front lines in the intensive care units, in the recovery room and on many wards. I had the opportunity to try to do my best for those people, and I knew there were times when there just weren't enough pairs of hands to try to get the work done. I understand the frustration of those on the front lines in our health care system today who, maybe, were led to believe that the NDP was going to be the saviour of the health care system.

\* (15:20)

Mr. Speaker, we've seen, time and time again, that those front-line people have been let down by this government that made promises that they couldn't live up to. Those promises are coming back to haunt them today when we see that patients are not receiving the kind of care that they should be because we are understaffed within our system, and this government promised to fix it all and promised to be not only the saviour for the patients but the saviours for the front-line workers within our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, they have failed, they have failed miserably. Manitobans know that this government with their flippant promises some seven years ago could not be met. Today Manitobans know, and I am sure their thoughts will be reflected when the next election is called.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** I do rise on a grievance this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. The subject of my grievance is the cynical way in which the government of Manitoba, this morning, announced a vote on the Canadian Wheat Board, just a day after we had a major processor in Manitoba announce that it was pulling the plug on Manitoba simply because of the way in which government has mishandled its affairs.

Mr. Speaker, my grievance, I think, is echoed by many Manitobans today because they feel that the government has mainly created a diversion here today by putting the focus on the Canadian Wheat Board and trying to deflect from the real issues that the Province has responsibility for in terms of developing the economy, making sure that we provide opportunities for businesses in this province as well as our youth.

The government is in trouble because its attempted policies, if you like, to keep young people in this province show that people in Manitoba don't have the confidence in this government, and our youth are leaving along with our professionals.

Mr. Speaker, the Province can boast that we are training doctors and nurses in this province, but the fact remains that these people, upon receiving their certificates and their graduation papers, leave the province for other jurisdictions because of the tax regime in the province, because this is an unfriendly province to do business in under this government.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at some of the quotations from the reports with regard to the OlyWest investment in our province, it speaks volumes to what this government really is about and how they have really abandoned our province.

Mr. Speaker, one of the people who is involved in the hog industry, the CEO of the OlyWest consortium, said this of the moratorium: The moratorium is the main reason that his company is saying goodbye to friendly Manitoba. That speaks volumes to what is happening with this government. If you don't believe us, and if you don't believe Manitobans on what is happening with OlyWest, then I suggest you ask the Richardson company why they chose to move their facility from Manitoba to Yorkton, Saskatchewan. Is it because we have a friendly government, friendly to business, friendly to taxes, friendly to doing business in this province? No, not at all. We have a government, a hostile government when it comes to business in the province and this hostile government is driving business out of our province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, now what is this government going to do to opportunities in agriculture? Well, let's take a look at their record. I will be happy to go out to a campaign and hold this government accountable for what they have not done in agriculture. I point to the BSE crisis which hit this province hard, hit our agricultural producers hard and, you know, the former minister responsible for Industry, Trade is

chirping from his seat. He would do well to keep quiet and look at his own record of inactivity when he was minister responsible for Industry in this province.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the record of this government in agriculture, all you have to do is look at how they mishandled the issue of the BSE crisis in this province. They promised Manitobans that we would have a processing facility for cattle in this province very quickly because they were doing everything they could to ensure that we had a facility that could process those excess numbers of cattle that we had in our province. Well, we waited with bated breath. We waited for a plan; we waited for a strategy, but none was coming forth. Other provinces moved ahead, provinces like Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario. All moved ahead with processing facilities. The one province that did not is the province of Manitoba. We had an increase in cattle numbers in this province, but we could not, we could not organize ourselves well enough to establish a processing facility in Manitoba.

Now, there were people who were interested, and I point to Natural Valley and people in Dauphin who were trying to form a co-operative to try and establish a plan. But the player that wasn't coming to the table was the provincial government. They talked a lot. Oh, they made a lot of announcements. But the action did not follow their words. Three years later, they decided that they would put a compulsory confiscation of money in place for farmers who were selling their cattle. This is how they were going to fund the facility. Well, too little, too late. If we built the facility today, it could never compete with the facilities that are now in place across Canada and the United States.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the capacity that we have in processing across this country, only 70 percent of it is being used right today. As a matter of fact, there are plants that are in danger of closing today because we have had an oversupply and overbuilding. But where's that supply? Is it in Manitoba? No. We would have done well to build a facility in this province so that we could at least recapture some of that loss that we have had under a former NDP regime as well.

Mr. Speaker, it is almost cynical today that we have Bill Uruski leading up the, what do they call it, the group that are gathering all these funds from farmers, you know, this \$1.6 million, who are paying themselves in excess of a quarter of a million dollars,

and they are now going to determine where this money is going to go. The head of it is Mr. Bill Uruski, the same man who, when he was Minister of Agriculture in our province, killed the livestock processing industry in Manitoba. Now, that is cynical in my view. That is how you are treating the agricultural producers in Manitoba.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let's fast forward to OlyWest. Now, the government announced that it was in favour of OlyWest. But, all of a sudden, there were people who had concerns where the plant was going to be located. They were legitimate concerns. They should not be ignored. But the government had put the cart in front of the horse, had made the announcement without doing its due diligence, without being consultative with the people in the city who were going to be impacted severely by this development.

Well, after that, OlyWest did its homework. It certainly went through a long process to try to comfort those people who had concerns. They were doing the job of the government because it's the government that needs to do its homework, lay out the plan before the people, have comment on the plan and then move ahead. But they did not. Then, after the pressure got so intense that it was fearful that in an election this was going to become an issue in the city of Winnipeg and the surrounding area, the government found a cynical way, again, in which it was going to kill this plant and impact, if you like, a lot of other economic activity in our province. What was it done for? Political purposes only, because this Premier is now facing the potential of an election where he knows he's in trouble.

\* (15:30)

Mr. Speaker, how do you cure this? Well, you put a moratorium on hog facilities in the province. Well, all of a sudden, that sends some signals out. It says that we are now going to put a moratorium in our province. You can't renovate; you can't build new barns; you are just going to have to deal with what you have. At the same time, the government is still saying they're supporting OlyWest. Well, people in the industry are not stupid. They know when they've been duped. They're going to move on with life. So we had, OlyWest, when they looked at their experience in Québec with a moratorium, they said, are we going to live through that same experience here in Manitoba? I don't think we want to do that.

So Olymel said, no, we are not going to invest in this province. This is not a province that we find friendly.

What about our friends out in Saskatchewan who were also partners in the endeavour as well? What did they say about Manitoba? They said, we are going to refocus our attention into Saskatchewan because Saskatchewan doesn't have a moratorium. It doesn't have the kinds of issues that Manitoba has. It doesn't have the hostile government. Even though it's an NDP government in Saskatchewan, they are more business-oriented than this bunch is, and, Mr. Speaker, they have chosen to move out of this province as well.

The minister who was responsible for these kinds of things says you don't get it. Well, the people who don't get it are on that side of the House. It is that minister who doesn't get it, has never gotten it. Mr. Speaker, he can read from briefing notes and that is about as far as it goes. But that's where we are at.

Mr. Speaker, my light is flashing and I think I might have two minutes left?

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been flashing for two minutes.

**Mr. Derkach:** It's been flashing for two minutes. Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I thank this House for giving me the opportunity to grieve against the government that is going in the wrong direction in this province and is doing our province a great deal of harm. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for River Heights, on a grievance?

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, I rise on a grievance, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for River Heights, on a grievance.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a grievance with major concerns with what has been happening and is happening today in health care in our province.

We sadly have done and are doing very poorly right now in terms of health care delivery and health care services. It is true that the NDP inherited a mess from the previous Conservative government, but the present NDP government has been there for seven years. They have no excuse anymore. It is a system now which they are and have been responsible for



seven years and they are fully responsible for the huge problems that there are today.

The problem today, sadly, has become bureaucracy-centred instead of patient- and family practitioner-centred. It has become dysfunctional when a family practitioner can't get information from a hospital and has to order duplicate tests. We are wastefully spending, duplication, poor co-ordination, poor organization, dysfunctional, when a family practitioner has a patient arrive in their office directly from hospital wanting to know some answers and what's going on and making sure that things are being looked after and straightened out after being in hospital, and the patient doesn't have any records and the hospital has sent no information. It is a system in which the family practitioner is working in the dark without adequate information, without adequate support.

The worst of this is when a family practitioner, whom I know, was looking after a patient and that patient went into hospital, and he was not informed by the hospital that the patient was there. The patient sadly died in hospital and the family physician was not informed that the patient had died. He had to read about it in the newspaper.

The system sadly has become dysfunctional in its organization. It is a sad testament to the incredibly poor management of this NDP government.

The system under the NDP has failed to deliver. We have huge problems in emergency care, a huge shortage of physicians providing emergency care, and we hear daily of problems in various hospitals related to emergency care and long waits. Indeed, I have had many concerns about the quality of care as well, medical errors occurring because of the disorganized approach and the problematic management of the NDP.

There are huge problems in terms of timely access to care. Reports recently of eight weeks waiting for an MRI and 11 weeks waiting for a CT scan, well, sadly that isn't even correct. It's not eight weeks, it's three months because you have to have a specialist visit first before an MRI, so it's five months' wait for an MRI. Even eight weeks and 11 weeks are far too long.

When an MRI is needed it means delays in care. It means duplication. It means extra pain medication. It means medical conditions getting worse. It means problems and problems in the health care system because this government has not been able to deliver

on what should be delivered, which is timely access to critical care when it's needed.

We have seen a government which talked about getting rid of hallway medicine but has failed time and time to deliver. We have seen a government which is not paying attention to the needs in assisted living. We have seen a government which has failed to deliver a plan to ensure that we have adequate numbers of rural physicians and communities are well served.

I hear day by day from communities in the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority because of problems there because of a lack of planning and nobody knows where the authority and the health plan is. There is a problem in terms of access of individuals to their own medical records in hospitals. I've introduced a bill this week to make sure that's available in 24 hours because that's what's needed, not the 30-day wait that the present government is working with. By that time patients may be home or dead or the medical problem is changed. When you're in hospital or in a personal care home you should have access right away.

We've seen incredible deterioration under this government of relations with the First Nations community. Indeed, as I pointed out earlier today, Grand Chief Ron Evans of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs has expressed extreme disappointment at this government. He has indicated that he's greatly offended by the way this government has acted. He has indicated that the delivery of health care by this government and the attention by this government is an embarrassment to the rest of Canada. He's indicated that there is, as I well know because I've been in northern communities like Pimicikamak, a health care crisis in First Nations and Aboriginal communities in Manitoba, and this government is not addressing it in the way that it should be addressed.

There are huge problems that this government has in the way it is managing health care: the lack of ability to develop effective partnerships to make sure that individuals in Manitoba have adequate care and prevention and research related to diabetes; fetal alcohol spectrum disorders; dental caries prevention programs; a whole spectrum of areas where things should have been better. The poor co-operation by this government is evidenced by their approach to Bill 32 where they failed to consult with the Aboriginal and First Nations communities, a very poor record by this government. That is for sure.

There has also, as I pointed out this week, been a failure of the NDP government to invest adequately in research. The Manitoba Health Research Council has been shifted to the Industry Department. The Industry Minister talks about this being relevant only to industrial development and irrelevant to health care. The funding is the same as in 1989. That's a decrease in 30 percent of the actual funding. Funding now is \$1.9 million, exactly what it was in 1989. If it had increased even with inflation it would be about \$2.8 million. If it had been increased in proportion to the increase in health care spending, that's where it should be tied. At a minimum it would be \$4.7 million.

If this government had any ability to think for the future they would have at least reached the kind of level that there is in Saskatchewan where it is \$6 million a year. The record of this government in terms of the Manitoba Health Research Council is appalling. It is abysmal. Our record here in Manitoba in terms of the number of CIHR grants accepted has been going down, whereas Saskatchewan is going up 5 percent a year.

\* (15:40)

We are seeing the results in a crumbling health care system which is dysfunctional, and as I've said, has huge problems. We see this in an overly costly health care system. We see this day by day in a system which doesn't have the accountability that it should have. I have on several occasions introduced a bill to establish accountability as a fundamental principle in health care, but this government is not interested.

This government is only interested in optics and appearing to do something, not in really doing anything. In fact, I don't believe that they really know how to make a difference. They may, sometimes, have good intentions, but those good intentions are just led astray because they don't know what they're doing. All they're interested in is the optics of seeming to do something. As Grand Chief Ron Evans pointed out, all they were interested in inviting him to Vancouver was the optics of his being there. They weren't interested in any more than just optics.

It is sad that we have a government which has performed so abysmally, which is only interested in optics and not in substance, and which has done such a poor job of managing our health care system, in spite of the fact that we are one of the highest spenders in health care in all of Canada. The record,

sadly, is not anywhere near what it should be. We need to get rid of this government because they've not performed. We need a Liberal government in this province that can make a real change and make real improvement in the health care system. That's what we need, Mr. Speaker.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, at this point, I will just call concurrence and third readings of the bills in the order as they appear, which would be Bills 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 29, 32, 33 and 38.

### CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

#### Bill 2—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan), that Bill 2, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), that debate now be adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Government House Leader.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I'll call Bill 4.

#### Bill 4—The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Prepaid Purchase Cards)

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan), that Bill 4, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Prepaid Purchase Cards); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur (cartes prépayées), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale):** Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to put a few words on record in regard to Bill 4, the prepaid purchase card amendment that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has brought in. It's actually a bit appropriate at this time of year because of the fact that, when a lot of the things that are happening with the season of gift buying and looking for gifts, this is an easy way to fulfil some of the stocking stuffers by buying gift certificates and having them given out, instead of doing all the shopping and looking around for presents. *[interjection]* Yes, I've done that, and I think everyone in this Chamber has wondered what they're going to buy for some of their relatives. I've had a hard time picking out gifts for some of my friends in government there, so I'll have to settle for some gift cards, Mr. Speaker. This way, you know, it's easier to buy a gift certificate, and, as has been brought in by the government, the fact that the members can then use that card at their leisure. They don't have to worry about the card getting out of date, and the fact that it still has a value when they go to buy something with that money that they've got.

A lot of businesses use prepaid gift cards. It's becoming more and more of a norm because of its convenience, and the fact that people then have the ability to pick out what they want. It's been pointed out that Ontario has introduced this type of legislation already, and that the bill was, in a sense, modelled after Ontario's introduction of their bill, and, from what I understand, it has been modified to more or less look at what Manitoba and what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has implemented here for the cards.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's something that I think is of merit. It is something that I think that a lot of people will recognize because from time to time I have noticed, and I have received gift cards from time to time that have expired when I wanted to buy something and the money is gone, in a sense. People go to the store to buy a gift card, \$50 or \$25 or \$10, whatever it is, and, if the person puts it away and forgets about it or is saving it for something that they feel that they want something special, and it's got an expiry date of six months or even a year, and they go to use it, and they can't use it, that's money that has actually just gone out the window, in a sense, and it has no value at this time. So this bill here protects that purchaser and the person who receives the card, that they can utilize the cash or the value that is indicated in that card.

With those short words, I believe that we're willing to let this bill pass and go forth in its condition.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak briefly on Bill 4, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Prepaid Purchase Cards). This is a bill which we will support. We wonder why this legislation wasn't actually brought forward last year so it could've been in effect for this holiday season. But what's happened now we will certainly support, but I want to raise a few issues. I want to raise a few issues before moving on.

I think that the first thing that I would point out is that, when we look at a bill, and this one is a good example, it has a good intention, and basically what it does is very reasonable. Consumers should not be misled to think that the gift card amount will stay the same forever, that they can just wait and wait and that amount will be exactly what it is at the beginning. Some gift cards, in fact, after a certain period, there is a monthly charge on the gift card, and that monthly charge, of course, then eats into the value of the gift card. Now, that charge may not start for 15 months, but there's nothing in this bill which would prevent that charge starting at three months, or six months, or nine months, or what have you.

\* (15:50)

What is important is that consumers are not misled by this government and what they are bringing in, that, in fact, what is happening here is that each of the gift cards will have certain rules around it. They may not be able to, now, do certain things in terms of loss of value, but there are clearly other ways that retail stores or shopping malls, or whoever is providing the gift card, can operate so that the gift card will, in fact, lose some value over time.

What I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and indeed to all Manitobans, is beware of the optics of this government, because it's not always what it seems to be, and make sure that you read the fine print and don't make an assumption, because with this government there is a lot of focus on optics and illusion, and it's not always as real as they would have you believe.

I would like to also raise a couple of issues that were also mentioned by the Retail Council of Canada, which is an important industry-funded association representing tens of thousands of storefronts, and it has a major role in promoting

retail as a profession. Of course, they are very interested in this bill.

In Manitoba, the retail sector contributed, in 2005, slightly more than 6 percent of provincial gross domestic product, and retail sales in Manitoba were at a level of about \$12 billion a year. Mr. Speaker, there are about 7,000 retail establishments in Manitoba employing about 69,000 Manitobans, about 11 percent of the province's workforce. Put this in context and in the approach that the Retail Council had recommended, which was that the provincial government take a harmonized approach to developing rules, similar, for example, to what was done in Ontario.

The Retail Council of Canada was, in fact, quite disappointed with this government and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the process by which the legislation was introduced. The Minister of Finance failed to appropriately inform retailers of his intention to introduce the legislation and failed to provide retailers with information in terms of his department's time frames or how the legislation was developed. This caused some confusion for retailers at quite a busy time of the year.

There, clearly, were some unnecessary problems because of the way that this government handled things and the way this government behaved. One area, for example, instead of introducing harmonized legislation similar to Ontario's, Bill 4 differs from Ontario's by including a definition of prepaid purchase cards and, indeed, is a rather vague definition which could mean that cards not intended by the government to fall under these rules could be captured in the legislation. While it may be that this problem, once the regulations are there, may or not be a problem, it would have been better to use similar legislation to Ontario's in this context so that there's harmonization, and it would have been better not to create this sort of confusion as the government has done, unfortunately.

We understand that the Retail Council of Canada has got some verbal indication that promotional and charitable cards will not be included in the legislation when the regulations are proclaimed, but the fact that we don't have this clear has, of course, led to some uncertainty. That is one of the things that business, and in this case the retail business, needs, is clarity and not uncertainty in terms of their planning process and their business arising.

So, Mr. Speaker, with these words about this bill, caution in terms of what will actually happen, a

concern, not only from the point of view of consumers but from business owners, that having put these words on the record, I will indicate once more that in spite of these problems, we will support this legislation but we will be looking carefully and will be vigilant in terms of how it's operated and what the regulations are. Thank you.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question before the House is Bill 4, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Prepaid Purchase Cards).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Bill 5, The Personal Investigations Amendment Act (Identity Protection).

#### **Bill 6—The Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 6, The Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act; Loi sur la protection des régimes enregistrés d'épargne en vue de la retraite, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), that debate now be adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Bill 6, The Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, I think I just gave you Bill 6 on the previous engagement. Now we are dealing with Bill 6—now we are dealing with Bill 5. I wonder if I could have that Order Paper back, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** That should confirm for the House how carefully I read motions. Has it been sorted out? So we will go back to No. 5 then?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay. I'll call Bill 5.

**Bill 5—The Personal Investigations  
Amendment Act (Identity Protection)**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Bill 5, The Personal Investigations Amendment Act (Identity Protection); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêtes relatives aux particuliers (protection de l'identité), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Take two. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Lac du Bonnet, that debate now be adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Bill 6, The Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act. *[interjection]* We've already dealt with that? Okay, that has already been dealt with. *[interjection]* When I called Bill 5, I had read out Bill 6. As far as the House is concerned, if it is okay with everyone, the matter has already been dealt with.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** If you want to go back then, is there agreement to go back?

**An Honourable Member:** Leave.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leave, okay. So we'll go back to it.

**Bill 6—The Registered Retirement Savings  
Protection Act**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 6, The Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act; Loi sur la protection des régimes enregistrés d'épargne en vue de la retraite, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** I would like to make a few comments for the record. This is an issue that is something that has always been very important to me as a small business owner. I started

in the late '80s, early '90s getting into business, and I had lots of opportunity to deal with serious issues relating to business. At this point in time, I am not involved in any business. I have divested myself of them, but I can tell this House that, having been a small business owner, there have been many times when things got a little dicey.

I can remember one year it was a streak of about minus 39, minus 40. I think we must have had it, seemingly, for a couple of weeks in a row. I had purchased some product from a supplier in Toronto, and he had shipped it right away and was expecting payment. If I remember correctly, it was about \$15,000 maybe \$20,000 worth, and he shipped it. Then he called me and started to ask me about payment. I can tell you that there were three days in which we sold nothing. It was so cold there was literally nothing to do. There was only so much dusting staff could do and only so much cleaning staff could do, and they basically had nothing to do. There was just no commerce being driven. This individual, Tony Yee think was his name, from Toronto—and the name of the company escaped me—kept phoning me the next day and next day leaving me messages. I had trouble sleeping because I knew he wanted his money, and I didn't have the money and things were looking pretty grim. It was absolutely one of the coldest times I can remember as throughout my years, ever. It was just one of these terrible cold snaps.

Finally, I decided that the best thing to do was to call him up, and I did so. I said, Tony, listen, we are in one of these Winnipeg cold snaps, and I am selling nothing in the store. In fact, we had three days in which we had sold nothing, and I am paying staff, and I am paying rent, and I am paying everything else, and would you be so kind as to cut me some slack? He said absolutely. I was wondering why you weren't returning my phone calls. I figured, you know, things with the cold wouldn't work that well. I said, well, you know what I am prepared to do? I am prepared to send you \$100 a week in good will just to tell you that I am not walking away from my debt, and, as soon as things get better here, as they usually do in spring, I'll pay you back. Fine, he said. Just wanted to know good will, that you are willing to stand by your debt. No problem. We made the agreement. I sent him \$100 a week just so that he knew that I was serious and that I was going to pay him back. It took three months; we had it paid off, and I'd have to say that \$15,000, in some cases, on stuff that I paid 17 cents a piece, we sold it for \$1.95.

It was just a great stock, and it was stuff that he had wanted to get rid of, so he had given me just amazing discount on it.

It shows you how quickly as a business, as a small business person, you can get yourself into trouble. I should have told him, please, don't ship it for three months. You know, there were a lot of things that I could have done to mitigate it, didn't think of it and, all of a sudden, I was in a tough spot. Keep in mind that, as small business people, we don't have a pension plan. We really only have retired RRSP or retirement savings plan and, often, those RRSPs, then, are at stake when a small business gets into trouble.

That's where I think this bill is definitely something that we need. I think it's important to protect registered retirement savings plans. I think it's important to protect individuals who go up there and risk a lot and do so, sometimes, at the peril of everything they own.

I would point out to this House that, often, the small business is the nest egg. That's what you sell at the end, with capital gains being at about \$500,000, you have an exemption and, basically, that's meant to be your pension plan. Well, if that goes bankrupt, the only thing you really do have left is your RRSP, and that's why I know they always encouraged us, when I went to trade shows, whether it was in Canada, North America or across to Europe, you'd go to presentations, and they'd say make sure you put away money in some kind of a savings plan for your retirement. Again, the problem therein being that it was seemingly open to creditors.

I am glad that that's going to be covered off. I remember being in one banker's office in which I was looking for a little line of credit and the banker—I won't put his name on the record because he'd probably be humiliated, as he should be for what he said to me. I was looking for a couple of thousand dollars line of credit, and he said to me, well, you should be prepared to sign up your house, your car, your everything. He said, you should be prepared to put everything on the line. I pointed out to him and I said, oh, you mean like bankers should be prepared to. You know, they give really bad loans, they should be prepared to put their house, their car, their everything on the line. He said, oh, well, we're a credit union, not a bank. I pointed out to him that three months ago he was the manager of a bank. So it was a little gratuitous. It's sort of how poorly financial institutions treat small business. We talked

about what kind of collateral, and he indicated that RRSPs were fair game. He indicated that they were something they would look at if the business got in trouble, they would go after the RRSPs.

I think this legislation is there to protect small businesses from unscrupulous bankers like that, that they would go so far as to try to strip an individual of their last little bit of savings. The worst part behind that then was that if a financial institution took the money out of your RRSP to cover debt, you still had to cover off the taxes. So not just did you lose your RRSP, not just did you not have that income, but you also still were liable for the taxes owing on it.

So I think that it's important that this be covered off. Again, it does not protect against maintenance enforcement, which is rightfully so, especially when it comes to the division of family property. It still is there because, as we know, there is sometimes more room in one spouse's RRSP than in the other. A decision is made between a couple to put more money into one RRSP than the other one, but it still is the family money, so it clearly should be divided equally according to how the courts rule. But I think that it is very important that we protect individuals and their pensions.

Back in 1995, and I know my colleague from River East can attest to this, I was campaigning in the apartment blocks on Henderson Highway. It shocked me, quite frankly, that 70 percent, 80 percent of the apartment blocks were widowed or single women, older women. Again, whenever it was too cold or if it was raining outside I would go canvass those apartment blocks. It always surprised me at the demographic in those buildings. In fact, my mother-in-law said to me, it's just shocking how many women, when they retire, actually live at the poverty level. Those apartment blocks had women who were in poverty conditions. I can remember how often I'd be invited in, you know, perhaps even come and have a glass of milk and a cookie, or just come in and talk to them a little bit. They were terribly lonely. The apartments were terribly poorly and sparsely decorated, but they were so happy that somebody was actually canvassing at their door because they had no mobility to get out of their suites. That's where it shows that we have to make sure we protect people's RRSPs, because in the end it is often older women that suffer the most under these consequences. Their husband makes a business decision—in those days they probably had little or no say in—and the money was lost, their RRSPs were stripped of them. Afterwards, when their husband

passed away, they basically had nothing to fall back on.

\*(16:10)

So I know that there are some who don't believe that this is a piece of legislation that should go forward. I actually believe that it should be. In fact, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business reports that in 2004, Department of Finance officials approached them regarding their members' opinions on the subject. A poll revealed 66 percent of CFIB members were in favour of legislation that gives RRSPs the same protections, 25 percent were against, while 9 percent were undecided. So I think you can basically say that is an overwhelming support. That would be in large part, I would suggest, younger people who know that they have no pension plan and women. There was a statistic out years ago that said that women, small business entrepreneurs in the United States, employed more people than all the multinational corporations in the United States. I think this is very much an opportunity to protect women who, I know, have an awful lot of roadblocks thrown in their way when they want to get into business.

I know how tough it was for myself to move ahead in business and I had advantages. There was a banker by the name of Gerry Spindler, outstanding individual. He's now the honorary consul for the German government here in Manitoba. He was a banker at that time and he gave me a line of credit, basically with no assets. I'm always indebted to him and I do wish Gerry Spindler all the best. He was just an outstanding person and he would give a lot of small businesses an opportunity. I appreciate that, and I know others did.

But women trying to get into business are so disadvantaged to try to get their business off the ground. I think that they, along with all the rest of us, deserve recognition and deserve to have any monies that they've put away for their retirement protected.

So, certainly, I as one individual, as an individual who spent a lot of time in small business, think it's a bill that is a long time in coming and certainly appreciate that it's in front of this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** I'll just say a few brief words regarding Bill 6. We were in favour of Bill 6 in second reading and we heard one—well, we didn't hear—we heard in committee as well from ourselves that, of course, we are in favour of

this bill. We are concerned somewhat about the bill itself and that concern was raised in committee.

There was one possible objection to the bill, and that came from the Manitoba Bar Association. While they are in favour of this kind of legislation, they believe that more should be done to protect retirees. They suggested, basically, that the income that comes out of an RRSP, when it gets converted to a RRIF or another income-producing vehicle for a retiree, that income itself should be protected as well, because in fact it forms a large part of small business owners, or a large part of their retirement incomes.

So I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, though, that the bill does exempt a number of areas, in terms of allowing people to access the RRSP in appropriate circumstances. First of all, it protects spouses in a split up of a marriage. It allows the pension capital to be split between the spouses, as you can in Canada Pension Plans and Old Age Security pension and also other private pension plans. So it does allow for that kind of protection of spouses in a divorce or a separation, so that's important, I believe, in this bill.

Similar legislation has been passed in Saskatchewan and other provinces. This kind of bill is good for small business owners and for those who may not be small business owners but may wish to top up their pension plans that they have coming from other sources.

So it is important, I think, to support this bill, but certainly the minister should take into account the submission of the Manitoba Bar Association when they indicate that we should be also allowing a certain amount of exemption, if nothing else, to create a situation where creditors are not able to attach.

So, with those few brief words, Mr. Speaker, I'd hope that this bill is passed. Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak briefly on Bill 6, The Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act. As members of the Liberal Party, we will be supporting this legislation. We believe on balance that this is a good move and that it will provide protection for small business owners and for anyone who has money in a registered retirement savings plan.

I think that the comments of the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) with respect to conversion to RIFs reflect concerns about what happens when individuals retire and when there are changes, whether the money be used in a RIF or for

other purposes. Certainly, there are aspects of this bill that I expect over time we may need to come back and visit and that there are issues which individuals will come forward with, but in terms of today that it is a reasonable step to provide the protection, indeed a good step to provide the protection for a registered retirement savings plan or what's the equivalent for pensions for those who have money in registered retirement savings plans and that we certainly will support this bill and this measure.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question before the House is Bill 6, The Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

**Bill 9—The Grandparent Access  
and Other Amendments Act  
(Child and Family Services Act Amended)**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk), that Bill 9, The Grandparent Access and Other Amendments Act (Child and Family Services Act Amended); Loi sur le droit de visite des grands-parents et apportant d'autres modifications (modification de la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Mr. Speaker, if there ever was a piece of legislation that deserved to be named after a member of this Chamber, this would be the legislation.

I know the members on both sides of the House would feel quite comfortable giving some recognition to the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat). She is an individual with unbelievable passion, with very, very deep felt convictions. This was a burning issue for her and she is to be commended. We are very proud of her in this House for the way that she has approached this.

We have seen other pieces of legislation. The Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) brought in legislation the other day and we did that

unanimously. I think this one also is a piece of legislation that we agree on really on a bipartisan basis and is a piece of legislation that stems out of the hard work of legislators. When individuals across this province say, so what do legislators actually do, this is one of those pieces of legislation that should be held high to say, this is what we do. It's a very important piece and I know that the Member for Minnedosa is pleased that the government has finally seen fit to recognize the rights of grandparents, something for which hundreds of grandparents from across the province have been advocating for years.

\* (16:20)

For the past two years the Member for Minnedosa has travelled the province and has met with some extraordinary people, all of whom share a common goal, to one day share a loving, caring relationship with their grandchildren. I pause here, Mr. Speaker. I mean, it seems almost unimaginable that there would be grandparents who would not be able to hug their grandchildren. I know from personal experience. My children and their grandparents on my wife's side, seeing as my parents are no longer alive, but I know my wife's parents just absolutely love their grandchildren. Their eyes light up when they see them, and my kids just love being with their grandparents. I mean, it's just inconceivable that somehow somebody would say no to a grandparent. No, you may not spend time with your grandchildren. However, cases do exist where that has happened.

I know that the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) has introduced similar legislation twice in the past, and, unfortunately, most of the members opposite did not even see fit to come and speak to it which was unfortunate. We find it interesting that they suddenly have such an interest in grandparents' rights. Nevertheless, what is really important is that this legislation would finally be passed. What is really important is that grandparents will now be more easily able to maintain healthy relationships with their grandchildren.

*Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

The legislation instructs the courts to consider existing healthy relationships between children and their grandparents when making decisions about a child's care. We fully support these provisions. I think we all agree that children can most certainly benefit from caring relationships with their grandparents. Children should not be deprived of this opportunity, and the ability to build these relation-



ships is certainly in the child's best interests. Something that the generation of the past can do, grandparents can mentor the generations that are coming after them with the kind of lessons that they've learned, with the kinds of things that they've gleaned over the years. The best education, as we know, is life. That is by far the best education. That teaches you really about the ways things work and don't work, and that's what we learn from grandparents.

We also think that grandparents have already waited far too long to see their rights in trying the legislation, and would be glad to see this passed on and given Royal Assent.

We also know that the government has announced funding for a grandparent adviser and new staff, and we hope that they will exercise accountability and good management for this funding. We would like to see a clear role for the grandparent adviser, and would like to see grandparents made fully aware of the options available to them. We are cautiously optimistic about the programs the government has announced along with this legislation, programs like For the Sake of the Children, and mediation and conciliation will, hopefully, be able to address problems before court proceedings need to begin.

It's unfortunate that often children are made pawns in some of these cases in the courts. Again, we would like to see as much of this kept out of the courts as possible, but the reality is that the situation for some families has progressed beyond the point where the mediation will be effective, and some grandparents will be forced to apply for access through the courts. This government must take steps to reduce court backlogs. If cases need to proceed to court, families must be afforded a timely resolution. It is, of course, in the best interests of children to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, we are cautiously optimistic about the government's ability to adhere to the spirit of the legislation. In order for these provisions to work to the benefit of children, backlogs in the court system must be addressed. Grandparents have waited far too long for this legislation, and we are pleased that this government has finally recognized potential benefits of positive relationships between grandparents and grandchildren.

I want to conclude by one more time giving some credit where credit is due to the honourable

Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), who worked so terribly hard on this issue, who advocated so terribly hard on behalf of grandparents, who listened to the stories and was more than just a mere politician, who took the stories to heart, put it into legislation and laid it in front of this Chamber so that at some point in time all of us would see fit to bring forward legislation to protect one generation's right to be able to embrace another generation, and we would like to see this proceed on and get Royal Assent so that grandparents may have the right to have access to their grandchildren.

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** It is a pleasure to be able to speak to this bill and, indeed, if we can pass this bill today, it will be a good day for grandparents and other extended family members in the province of Manitoba. More importantly, it will be a great day for children in the province of Manitoba.

Now, this is a road that began in the spring of 2005 when a grandparents' support group in Brandon wrote a letter to all 57 MLAs in this Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they told us that they felt that they did not have rights, that the 1998 amendment to The Child and Family Services Act, which provided the right of access to a grandparent was not sufficient. Certainly, when that happened, on this side of the House, we began to work, not simply on one piece of legislation which might be forgotten about in a month or a year or five years' time, we began to work on an entire strategy, not only to provide a better legislative framework, but also an overall framework for the benefit, again, of grandparents, extended family members, but, most importantly, for the benefit of Manitoba children.

I suppose that's the difference in approaches. When an issue arises, sometimes we see something, in this case, well meaning, yet misguided, from the opposition. On our side, a complete package, a complete proposal to really move family law forward in the province of Manitoba. So we listened to what grandparents had to say, certainly, the grandparents in Brandon. I know the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) met with these grandparents. I was very pleased to meet, together with the Member for Brandon West, the Minister of Competitiveness (Mr. Smith), with the grandparents in Brandon. I know that my colleague the MLA for Dauphin, the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers), has been very active, and I had the chance to go to Dauphin to meet with grandparents there. I've heard from grandparents across the province, from Cranberry Portage to Virden to Winnipeg to the

Interlake about what they really, really wanted to have done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the one thing that I can tell you every single grandparent, every single great-aunt, great-uncle told us was that they were fearful of the court process. They didn't want to go through the financial and the emotional cost of having to go to court to try and get a right of access to their grandchildren.

Again, the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) put forward, not once, but twice, a bill that was well meaning, but didn't actually address what every grandparent that I spoke to, and my colleagues spoke to, told us about wanting to avoid court at all costs. So I'm very pleased with the bill, which I hope we can pass today, takes into account, not only the need for a legislative framework, but truly a need to direct people, wherever possible, to other ways to resolve these kinds of cases in a way that promotes healing, that promotes some reconciliation within families.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

I'm very pleased that the bill that contains not only provisions to assist grandparents in applying for access, but also extended family members, for the great aunts, the great uncles, the kookums, and, for that matter, people who stand *in loco parentis*, who, effectively, have stepped into the role of a parent, to be able to seek access.

Certainly, we know that, in Manitoba, extended families can play a very important part in children's lives, and it seems to us to make sense to extend the right to apply for access beyond simply grandparents, but all other extended family members who have such an important role to play in their young ones' lives. As well, I'm very pleased this bill will be beneficial, not only to grandparents seeking access, but also to grandparents seeking guardianship.

I found it interesting that the Member for Minnedosa spoke about a woman named Marlene Carriere, who lives in Cranberry Portage. Marlene Carriere walked from Cranberry Portage to Winnipeg to call attention to her situation. Ms. Carriere wasn't aware that there was absolutely nothing in what the Member for Minnedosa had put forward to this House that would assist a grandparent in seeking guardianship of children. So we believe that a more inclusive approach, access and guardianship, makes sense because, again, it's the

rights of the children to enjoy those extended family relationships that's so important.

I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that this bill includes a truly inclusive consideration by the court so that a positive, nurturing relationship between a grandparent or an extended family member and a child is a positive. Unfortunately, the wording that my friend, the Member for Minnedosa, had put forward actually contained provisions that could be a negative for a grandparent seeking access where there had been a break of four or five years or more in the relationship.

\* (16:30)

Certainly, I'm very pleased that Manitoba courts will be able to use this piece of legislation to come up with constructive remedies, which will assist relationships in beginning over again. So many grandparents told me, Mr. Speaker, that what they really wanted to do was to be able to go to a child's concert, to go to a dance recital, to go to other important events in the child's life. Tragically, there are situations where grandparents' gifts and cards are returned or never given to the child, and we thought it very helpful to give those specific remedies to the judge so that parties, their lawyers and courts are aware of these remedies so we can truly let the children know the love that exists for them through their extended family members.

Of course, this was only one part of a larger strategy which again separates this side of the House from the other side of the House. Our Grand Relations Strategy will do a number of other positive things aside from the court process. As the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) mentioned, we have designated a grandparent adviser who can help families to find the best solutions and services when access and guardianship disputes arise, and I believe that grandparents across the province will have great confidence in the grandparent adviser who works with the Family Conciliation branch to steer them through what can be a very difficult and very painful path.

I am very pleased that Manitoba is embarking on a new leading-edge alternative to court, the First Choice dispute resolution service. I was very pleased to travel down to Minneapolis and meet with court officials from Hennepin County where they've had tremendous success with an early neutral evaluation system. This allows parties to get a fairly frank and open discussion of the merits of their case early on in a way which will encourage settlement, encourage

more resolution of high-conflict cases, and result in fewer and fewer people having to go all the way to a contested court hearing.

I'm very pleased as well that Manitoba, already a leader in providing alternate dispute resolution systems, is going to be mandating For the Sake of the Children. This is an excellent education program. Any parent, grandparent, anyone involved in a dispute can take this program. We are now going to make it mandatory in almost every case for individuals to receive this information. Again, we believe that we can reduce the number of high-conflict cases. We can reduce the amount of pain and suffering that families encounter when a dispute of this type arises.

I am very pleased that we are working on developing an Aboriginal model of dispute resolution. We know that in many ways Aboriginal peoples in Manitoba are well ahead of southerners when it comes to some innovative ways to settle disputes, and our government is interested in working with Aboriginal people to make sure that some of their teachings and some of those things which have been existing for a long time should become part of Manitoba family law.

I know the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) had mentioned the need for some education on this. I am very pleased that there is now a pamphlet, there is a Web site, there is an entire strategy out there to provide information on this which will be beneficial to grandparents and to extended family members.

So certainly we've been assisted by a number of very good people, most importantly the grandparents across this province who shared their stories with us. I know there's a lot of pain involved in situations where access, contact has been cut off. Those grandparents have told us what they want, and I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that we've listened to that.

I want to credit the excellent people that work for Family Conciliation services. They deal with families in crisis each and every day. They assist people in finding solutions when sometimes it seems like a solution is not possible. They do very good work, and they will continue to do so.

I want to thank the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) for being able to be a part of this project. I think we have done something which is truly going to benefit, as I said, not just the grandchildren but also the children of Manitoba.

So, with those comments, again, this is a great day for Manitoba children, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I want to talk briefly on The Grandparent Access and Other Amendments Act. Clearly, it is in the best interests of children that, to the extent that we can, we facilitate positive relationships between children, grandparents and extended members of the families and clearly, whatever ethnocultural background we have, I think that there are very few where grandparents are not recognized as making an important contribution to their grandchildren.

This of course is well known, for example, in the Aboriginal community where grandparents in many circumstances would be considered elders and given a particularly high regard, valued for their knowledge and their wisdom and their contributions, not just to their grandchildren but to the community. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that in one way or another all groups would have traditions which would encourage and facilitate and respect the knowledge of elders and the contributions elders make to not only grandchildren, but to the well-being of families and the well-being of communities.

Having said this, let me speak briefly to compliment the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) and her efforts in this area to push for access by grandparents to their grandchildren. I think it's unfortunate that the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) would attack the MLA for Minnedosa in this regard. Certainly, let's recognize the contributions that the Member for Minnedosa has made to pushing for better access for grandchildren, and let's not try to quibble as the Member for Minto has done about certain aspects.

I want to talk briefly about one of the pieces of this bill which purpose is to facilitate relationships between children and their grandparents and other family members when the relationships are in the child's best interests. I think that clearly this is the intention, to facilitate positive relationships between children and grandparents. However, having said that, I think that it is worthwhile putting on the record because one day maybe judges will be looking at what was meant by this bill, the interpretation, or the potential interpretation, of the child's best interests.

There are clearly times when discipline may be in the best interests of a child, but one can certainly imagine that a grandparent going for access who

talks about discipline might be turned down by a judge who is sceptical that discipline might be good for a grandchild. And that, in the same context one could say, well, when we're talking about what's in the best interests of a child, is it in the best interests of a child to have lots of sweets and candy, for example, from a grandparent. Nutritionists may argue that there are problems with sweets and candy leading to diabetes and perhaps problems with teeth and so on.

\* (16:40)

One needs to look and be careful in interpreting perhaps too narrowly the child's best interests because grandparents should not be excluded from having relationships with their grandchildren because they may provide discipline or they may provide candy. And let us make sure that what we are about here is to facilitate positive relationships between children and their grandparents and other family members, and that the court should look in making recommendations at ways in which such positive relationships can be facilitated and helped, because such positive relationships can benefit both parties. It can certainly help grandparents and keep them involved and concerned and interested in what is happening. It can certainly help with the grandchildren in a whole variety of ways to have a nurturing and positive relationship with their grandparents.

I know from my personal experience with my mother and her grandchildren. My mother has recently had some health problems, and one of the things that are particularly important to her at the moment is her relationships and contact with her grandchildren. Certainly, I'm pleased that we are passing this legislation today, and we are going to move it forward and, hopefully, to have Royal Assent tomorrow, because I think that my mother, as a grandparent, and knowing what is involved here and how important, particularly at this juncture, relationships with her grandchildren are, that this legislation will be passed. I don't think that she would ever need to use this because of the relationships within our family, but I think that it is there, and it's good to have that kind of relationship and that kind of legal basis for promoting relationships between grandparents and grandchildren.

So, with those comments, I will indicate that, from a Liberal perspective, we are certainly in support of this bill. We look forward to having it

brought forward to the best interests of grandparents and children and extended families.

**Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale):** Mr. Speaker, I was trying to get my thoughts in order here. That's why I was a little hesitant, you know, because this bill brought forth by the government, Bill 9, is something that I think that is very, very familiar on our side. It's familiar in the sense that we have been exposed to it through the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat). She has lobbied very, very hard in response to requests from her constituents and people in all our areas in regard to having a grandparents' rights bill, as it's called. The bill's proper name is The Grandparent Access and Other Amendments Act, brought forth by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh). It's something that I think that we're in favour of. We've lobbied very hard towards trying to get this bill before the House in our own venue, as members of the opposition, but the government seemed fit to bring in their own bill. But it is addressing a lot of the areas that we were very, very concerned about.

I had the opportunity to travel around with the Member for Minnedosa, and we went to a town hall meeting with grandparents in Selkirk. We had a very good exposure to a lot of people talking to us about their concerns. Some of the conversations, at times, were a bit heart wrenching and very poignant in the sense of how the people are faced with some of the difficulties in trying to see their grandchildren, and the fact that they, because of certain situations and circumstances, there's situations where it's hard for the grandparents to see their grandchildren. You could identify with that, Mr. Speaker. We could identify with that in the sense that we all want to see children. We all get involved with children; we all get involved, sometimes, with grandchildren, and the areas where we feel it's very, very beneficial. There's a certain amount of sharing knowledge that we can all impart upon grandchildren and that type of situation.

Particularly, Mr. Speaker, when you look at this time of year. This time of year when we're going into the festive season, family is a very, very big component of get-togethers. There are families with extended families coming together. There are people that travel throughout Canada and United States, visiting and calling on each other. Grandparents are always a big part of any type of festive situation, especially at Christmas time or the holiday season when there's sharing of gifts and expressions of getting together, and people travel.

Having this type of legislation, it's unfortunate that sometimes there are situations where children have not been able to have access to their grandparents, and grandparents have not been able to see their grandchildren because of either a marriage break-up or a situation of parents not getting along, of that nature. The children, in a sense, suffer for the fact that they don't get the chance to be with their grandparents, and the grandparents lose out on a very, very precious commodity of being part of the learning process and the maturation, and the growing up of these small children in the community and part of the family.

So it's something that I think that, as members have spoken before have said, it's something that we support. We look forward to the passage of this bill. We realize that it's a little different than what was first brought forth by the Member for Minnedosa, but at the same time I think what it did was it ignited the compassion, if you want to call it, in the government to also see that they had to move it up.

Mr. Speaker, we're willing to let this bill now pass and go on to the—pass.

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, just, at the same time, to put a few words on the record on this bill.

Being a grandparent, one realizes full well the worth of the ability to be able to enjoy the company of a grandson or a granddaughter at any time and how much joy little kids bring, but even more joy when they grow older and you can go fishing with them together, and all those kinds of things. One must always recognize that the total family is the vehicle that brings the total perspective to the upbringing of a child. We have many times said that it takes a community to raise a child. Well, it takes a whole family to raise a child, as well. I believe that it is absolutely imperative that we should recognize the tremendous job the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) in her attempt over the last two years to bring to the attention of this government the need for a bill such as this, to give those grandparents that, for some reason or another, were disenfranchised, the right to be able to visit with their children and to attend to their well-being as grandparents, and instil in those grandchildren the need for the grandparental involvement in their lives as well, and the extended family.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I want to pay a lot of credit to the Member for Minnedosa. I want to say to the government and the minister that we

appreciate you listening to the parents that came to the many meetings that the Member for Minnedosa held across this province and made their views known in support of this bill. We appreciate the government having listened and coming forward with this piece of legislation, although it is a bit different, but, at least, coming forward with a bill that will give the recognition of the grandparents' rights.

\* (16:50)

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a few comments on the record on Bill 9, the grandparent access legislation that has been introduced and will be passed today.

I want to say at the outset that, back when I was the Minister of Family Services, there was a private member's bill by the Member for St. Boniface, the late Neil Gaudry, who brought a bill forward, wanting greater access to grandparents. Mr. Speaker, I want to give him full credit for that, and want, also, to just, sort of, share with the House the difference between then and now.

At the time, we valued, as government, the legislation that was put forward. We were looking at comprehensive changes to The Child and Family Services Act.

At that time, we had dialogue and discussion with the Member for St. Boniface and mutually agreed to have his amendment to the legislation incorporated into our larger Child and Family Services Act. I think that was in the spirit of co-operation at the time and working together.

I've said many times in this House that, very often, there is legislation that comes forward that is good legislation that all members of the House can agree on. There are very few bills that are actually really controversial. You find very polarized opinions on opposite sides of the House, but it was something at the time that we all agreed was good.

That was then, Mr. Speaker, and I just want to point out the difference between then and now, again, because my colleague the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) twice, two years in a row, brought forward a private member's bill that looked at—and after working with the changes that were made in the '90s, realized that grandparents wanted and needed further access, and that's what happens. Most pieces of legislation that come into this House are amendments to legislation, and, after you work with a piece of legislation for a period of time, you

find that sometimes there are changes that need to be made to modernize, to update and to reflect the realities of the new day and the new era. So most legislation is amendment to legislation.

I noted with great interest that members on the government side of the House, when my colleague introduced a private member's bill, rather than giving her some credit and trying to work with her, condemned her and spoke against the legislation, voted against the legislation, and then, miraculously, found some newfound interest in giving grandparents some extra rights, and brought in their own legislation this time rather than working co-operatively, rather than giving the Member for Minnedosa some credit.

I notice that comments about the Member for Minnedosa were absent in speeches that were made by government members of the Legislature. Mr. Speaker, I really feel that that's unfortunate, because I think that many times working in co-operation—I noted with The Pharmaceutical Act and the creation of the pharmaceutical college that there was good co-operation with all sides of the House. The Leader of the Liberal Party brought in several amendments, not all that could be accepted, but there was co-operation.

I know the new Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) did accede to some of the amendments, and we agreed to them also. That was co-operation. That was looking at a piece of legislation and trying to make it just a little bit better. It's unfortunate that we didn't see that kind of co-operation on allowing grandparents more access.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just comment, on a personal note, that I became a grandmother for the first time this year. I am very proud to have a beautiful, healthy, six-month-old granddaughter who brings much, much joy to our family. It's one of the most moving experiences, I guess. Sometimes, when we have our own children, we are caught up in all of the day-to-day activity that surrounds becoming parents, and we don't really have time to appreciate or enjoy every stage of growth and development of our new babies.

But I want you to know that, with a grandchild, there's that special experience when you see the next generation continuing on the heritage of the family. You see certain traits that sort of reflect your own children, your daughter's-in-law or son's-in-law and the extended family. It's one of those very, very special experiences. I know first-hand that I would always want to be able to have access to my grandchildren should, God forbid, anything happen in my daughter's relationship with her husband.

I have every confidence that it will be a good relationship for many, many years to come, and that I will have that access. But I know that there are grandparents that don't have that opportunity, and I would want to ensure that with the passage of this bill we see a further step in the right direction.

So, with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I do support this legislation. I want to stand here today publicly and give much credit to my colleague the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) who was the catalyst to having this government do the right thing after three years and bring in this legislation. We're pleased to support it.

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

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 9, The Grandparent Access and Other Amendments Act (Child and Family Services Act Amended).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 29, The Degree Granting Act.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, with agreement of the House, I think we are going to call it 5 o'clock.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow (Thursday) at 10 a.m.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

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